

Pirkei Avot

Ethics of the Fathers

with a select treasury of commentaries
compiled by Rabbi Yosef Sebag

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All Israel

"All Israel has a share in the World to Come. As it reads (Isaiah 60:21): "And Your people are all righteous, for ever shall they inherit the land, the sprout of My plantings, the work of My hands, to glorify Me".

כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, שְׁנֵאֲמַר (ישעיה ס) וְעַמְּךָ כָּלָם צְדִיקִים לְעוֹלָם יִרְשׁוּ אֶרֶץ יִצְרָר מִטְעֵי מַעֲשֵׂה יָדַי לְהַתְפַּאֵר.

Rabbi Chananya ben Akashia says, The Holy One, Blessed be He, wanted to give Israel merit; therefore He multiplied for them Torah and mitzvot..."

רַבִּי חַנְיָא בֶּן אֶקָשְׁיָא אָמַר, רָצָה הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְזַכּוֹת אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, לְפִיכָּה הִרְבָּה לָהֶם תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת, שְׁנֵאֲמַר (ישעיה מב) ה' חִפְץ לְמַעַן צְדָקוֹ יַגְדִּיל תּוֹרָה וַיֵּאֲדִיר.

Q Level 1

Rama M'Pano, Asarah Maamarot, Mamar Chikur Hadin perek 19 - it seems that in the early generations, they would first read this chapter of Mishna ("all Israel has a portion..." Sanhedrin ch.10) in Israel when Isru Chag (8th day of Passover) would fall on the Sabbath... (For then there are 7 Sabbaths until Shavuot, in order to finish the 6th chapter of Pirkei Avot before Shavuot). This saying is along the lines of the Haftorah of Chol HaMoed Pesach which speaks of the Resurrection of the Dead and which is destined to occur on Nissan...

Q Level 2

Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer end of Vayikra - "All Israel has a share in the World to Come" - Rashi there explains: " 'all Israel' - even those who incurred the death penalty by Beit Din mentioned earlier." The mishna continues there: "these do not have a portion in the world to come: 'one who says the torah is not from Heaven, the Apikorsim (heretics)'".

I.e., those who deny the words of the Sages and their received tradition. Therefore, he brings here this mishna: "all Israel (even the wicked) have a portion in the world to come", provided he believes "Moshe received the torah from Sinai..etc.", "Yehoshua received..etc", and "they said three things, etc." So too for the whole tractate. Even though he does not fulfill those things but he believes and transgresses them - he will certainly be punished, but afterwards, he will have a portion in the world to come...

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - they set this mishna ("all of Israel...", Sanhedrin ch.10) at the beginning because the sages of the generation saw the long and difficult exile of the Jewish people. Thus, they instituted these words to console their hearts and so they recognize their great and lofty level. Even though the nations are joyous of their material success and prosperity, but the Jewish people should rejoice in their portion and ultimate success.

Thus, they ordered these words one after the other. First "All of Israel has a portion..". This is not at all reward for mitzvah. It is only due to their being created by G-d (i.e. the main creation and closest to G-d, as explained there), as written "a branch of My planting, the work of My hands in which I will glory". For in their being the work of His hands, they have a lofty level. Therefore, they merit the World to Come. Likewise, the sages said in Chelek (Sanhedrin 110b): "when does a child merit to come to the World to Come? When he is born..." Thus, from the very being created as a Yisrael, who are "a branch of planting" of the Holy One, blessed be He, they are worthy of Olam Haba, and this is not from the aspect of the Mitzvot and deeds.

Afterwards, they also have another quality, namely, good and just character traits. This quality also grows out from their origin of being a good and just creation in essence. Thus, the good character

traits follow naturally. Unlike one whose early origin is evil and bitter, of those who do not have good character traits, steeped in lewdness, bloodshed and performing all abominations.. This is the second level.

The third level is the Torah, the crowning level which Yisrael has. Therefore after this comes the saying of Rabbi Chanania ben Akashia "the Holy One, Blessed be He, wanted to give Israel merit; therefore He multiplied for them Torah and mitzvot..." All these levels follow one after the other...

Q Level 4

Ruach Chaim

Question: Why does it say "All Israel has a share *TO* the World to Come", instead of "All Israel has a share *IN* the World to Come"? (literal hebrew reading is "to" not "in")

Ruach Chaim - it is known that when a person thinks to do a mitzva, it has an effect in the higher worlds. An Ohr Makif (surrounding light) is roused (mitorer) on him from the side of holiness and imbues him, surrounding him and helping him to complete the mitzva. It is then as if he is sitting in Gan Eden, quite literally (mamash) in a place of Holiness. The holiness enclothes him (mitlabesh) and through completing the mitzva, this garment (of holy light) strengthens and illuminates within him. Afterwards, the light departs to Gan Eden and this will be his reward in the future.

It is likewise so for the opposite, G-d forbid. Through committing a sin, an evil power clings to him and surrounds him similar to before. And after the sin, everything departs to Gehinom, and the person feels separated from holiness, as written: "But your sins were separating between you and your G-d" (Yeshaya 59:2).

Likewise Chazal said (Eruvin 19): "...Gehinom is made deep for them", which means they themselves deepen Gehinom for themselves. Thus, there is no greater refuge to save oneself from sin than acts of mitzvot. Because through them he becomes covered with this sukkah of holiness and the scent of Gan Eden enters in his life and there is no room for the yetzer hara (evil inclination) to rule over him... This is what our sages said (Avot 4:2): "a mitzva brings another mitzva, a sin brings another sin..the reward of a mitzva is a mitzva".

Because the reward of a mitzva is the mitzva itself that is given to him, namely, the spiritual light that surrounds him, as before. For he sits then in Gan Eden and then it is surely easy to do another mitzva.

Likewise the opposite for sin, G-d forbid. For then he is shackled with ropes of disgrace, and the sin brings more sin.

Thus, the Tanna (sage) did not say "every Jew has a portion *IN* Olam Haba", but rather "*TO* Olam Haba". For "*in* Olam Haba" would have implied it is an independent thing already prepared, and if he merits to do mitzvot, he will be given a portion from there.

Instead, the mishna says: "*TO* Olam Haba", that he himself makes the Olam Haba through the mitzvot. It is the work of his own hands. For the mitzva itself is the reward. The light is in Gan Eden during man's life, and in the future this is his reward. Understand this.

Translator: in Nefesh HaChaim, he adds "*each person's reward is the holiness he added to Olam Haba*". If you ask: didn't the Maharal say that each person intrinsically has a portion in the World to Come? Yes, but each person builds this portion according to his deeds, or corrupts it, G-d forbid.

Q Level 4

Chida

Chida, Petach Einayim, Sanhedrin ch.10 - "the sprout of my plantings, the work of my hands, to

glorify Me" - he gave a reason why all Israel will merit the resurrection of the dead: "the sprout of my plantings", i.e. since G-d's intent in creating Adam HaRishon (the first man) was that he be eternal, like G-d Himself. But, as known, due to his sin, death was decreed on him. Thus, it follows that after rectification of the sin of Adam HaRishon, man will return and become eternal as was G-d's original intent at the time of creation. This is the meaning of "the sprout of my plantings", that he is a "part of G-d" (chelek Eloka memaal) which the Holy One, blessed be He planted in this world, in order "to glorify Me", so to speak, in man's creation and service, in the way of: "Give strength to G-d; [over Israel is His pride]" (Tehilim 68:35), and until now, G-d's intent in creating man did not yet materialize from potential to actual. But certainly, he will return to become eternal as G-d's intent.

"the sprout of my plantings" - it is known that a sinner becomes rectified through gilgulim (reincarnations). This is the explanation of "All Israel has a share in the World to Come", i.e. after gilgulim and gehinom, then: "And Your people are all righteous, forever shall they inherit the land".

If you ask: "how is it possible that all Israel are tzadikim (righteous), we see that some are not so proper? And how could he call them all tzadikim and that they will inherit the land? On this he answered: "the sprout of My plantings", to hint on the secret of the gilgulim (reincarnations). Since they are a "nice planting", I replant them again many times. This is why "plantings" is in plural form.

According to the sages of truth (kabala), if there was no rectification at all for three gilgulim (reincarnations), the soul is no longer reincarnated. Thus, when do I say "the sprout of My plantings" in plural? When "the work of My hands, to glorify Me".

Q Level 4

Chida

Chida - Maarit HaAryin - "All Israel has a share in the World to Come" - the roshei tevot (first letters of each word) have gematria "Yisrael", to hint that the name "Yisrael" shields and saves one to merit Olam Haba.

Q Level 4

Chida

Chida - Zeroa Yamin - "righteous, for ever shall they inherit the land" (tzadikim l'olam yirshu aretz)" - the Roshei Tevot have gematria "anava" (Humility), for this is the ikar (primary matter) of torah and service. Through it one will receive divine light from the Shem Havaya (Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh=gematria 26), hinted in the Roshei Tevot "Your people are all righteous (veamech kulam)" (Vuv-Kaf=26).. thus Moshe, the humblest of all men, received the torah...

Furthermore, the gematria of "anava" (Humility)=131. Thus Tehilim ch.131 begins "my heart was not haughty", to hint that whoever has humility is saved from the Samech-Mem (Samael=Samech-Mem-Aleph-Mem=131). Thus Moshe the humble "received torah", torah=611 to annul "S-amael L-ilith"=611 from "Sinai" which is also gematria Samael to annul it. Sinai is also Gematria "anava" (humility) as our sages said: "[the small] mount Sinai was chosen for humility".

Q Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Birkat Avot - "Moshe received..." - one of the reasons the torah was given by a messenger (Moshe) and the Jewish people did not hear the whole torah is as follows. The reward for a mitzva needs to be eternal. For just like a mitzva is eternal, so too its reward needs to be eternal. Thus the Holy One, blessed be He, must necessarily give man reward in Olam Haba which is an eternal world. But in this world which decays and disappears, it is impossible for reward to be eternal. The Holy One, blessed be He, fulfills the whole torah and in the torah it is written: *"you shall give him his wages that very day"* (Devarim 24:15). Due to this, it is necessary to pay the reward in this world, since the reward of fulfilling mitzvot is as the wages of a worker.

Thus, there is a dilemma either way. If G-d pays in this world to fulfill *"you shall give him his wages*

that very day", it is impossible for the reward to be eternal. And if He gives it in Olam Haba so that it is eternal, it is impossible to fulfill *"you shall give him his wages that very day"*. For this reason the Holy One, blessed be He, gave the torah through an emissary, namely, Moshe Rabeinu, who heard the things from G-d and taught them to the Jewish people.

Thus, the "hiring" on fulfilling the torah occurred by an emissary (shliach), and the halacha (law) is that one who hires a worker through an emissary does not transgress *"you shall give him his wages that very day"*, neither the sender nor the emissary. For the sender did not himself hire the worker and the emissary did not hire the worker for himself. Thus He can now give the reward for torah and mitzvot in Olam Haba for there is no mitzva of *"you shall give him his wages that very day"*..

Likewise for this reason, a man must wait on receiving his reward until Olam Haba and he cannot claim from the Holy One, blessed be He, his reward in this world...

Chapter 1 Mishna 1 - Moshe Received

Moshe received [the] Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to Yehoshua, and Yehoshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets transmitted it to the Men of the Great Assembly.

מֹשֶׁה קִבֵּל תּוֹרָה מִסִּינַי, וּמָסָרָה לְיֵהוֹשֻׁעַ, וְיֵהוֹשֻׁעַ לְזִקְנִים, וְזִקְנִים לְנָבִיאִים, וְנָבִיאִים מִסָּרִיף לְאַנְשֵׁי כְנֶסֶת הַגְּדוּלָּה.

They said three things: be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples and make a fence for the Torah.

הֵם אָמְרוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים: הֵווּ מְתוּנִים בְּדִין, וְהַעֲמִידוּ תַלְמִידִים הַרְבֵּה, וְעָשׂוּ סָגֵף לַתּוֹרָה.

Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "from Sinai" - since this tractate is not coming to explain a mitzva (commandment) in the torah like the other tractates. Rather, it is all ethics and character traits, and the wise men of the nations also conjured up books of ethics according to their hearts on how a person should live and behave towards others. Therefore, the Tanna (sage) begins this tractate "Moshe received the Torah from Sinai". To teach that the traits and ethics in this tractate were not conjured up by the sages according to their hearts. But rather, even these were said at Sinai.

Level 2

Chida

Chida - *Zeroa Yamin* - "Moshe received torah" - we can expand the words of Rabeinu Ovadiah in another aspect. The intent of the tanna is to rouse the hearts of the slumberers, who love to lay down and nap. For they consider in their hearts that it is good for a man to carry the yoke of the ethics of the philosophers, and through this the foolishness of one's heart will be subdued since they are built on the foundations of reason. But on the contrary, their evil inclination deceives them. They think wise the wisdom of the gentiles. For their tongue is quick to speak slick words, appearing right, submitting the evil inclination. Therefore, he opened: "Moshe received torah.."

To teach that these words of mussar are gufei torah (actual torah) and were said at Sinai. i.e. look and see the difference between light and darkness. For all the gentile ethics is useless for annulling the yetzer hara (evil inclination), because it cannot be annulled without torah, as written (Kidushin 30b): "says the Holy One, blessed be He, I have created the Yetzer Hara and I have created the torah as its antidote". Thus, it cannot possibly be annulled without torah and the mussar (ethics) of the gentiles (philosophers, etc.) is as nothing. Why should you err in strange things? But the mussar of the torah sages are completely torah and are capable of annulling the yetzer hara...

Translator: furthermore, one does not receive any torah study reward for learning the secular books and also they are mixed with truth and falsehood in various proportions. Another consideration is that when a person reads something, he receives a hashpaa (spiritual influence) from the soul of the author and tends to become like him.

Level 2

Rabbi Meir Mazuz - notice that the Vilna Gaon's commentary on Pirkei Avot focuses on sourcing every mishna from a verse in scripture. This is because in the talmud Shabbat, it says that something which is called "father" in the mishna is explicitly in the torah. This is why he goes through to source each mishna from a verse.

Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - a man should not think that it is enough for his soul's perfection if he toils in torah

and fulfills it, and even if he does not rectify his character traits he will merit Olam Haba. It is not so, for "the punishment of middot is more severe [than forbidden relations]" (Yevamot 21a, Bava Batra 89b). Likewise, our sages said: "one who toils in torah but does not have faithful business dealings and does not conduct himself pleasantly (b'nachat) with others - woe to him..." (Yomah 26a).

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - "fathers" - a father is fitting to give mussar (ethics) to his son. For in his being a father, the frivolousness of youth (yaldut) has left him. Likewise for the mother. They are baalei mussar (exponents of morals), and especially since it is incumbent on a father to guide his son in all matters.

Because this tractate speaks of good and just mussar (ethics), it begins by stating that it is proper to receive mussar from the fathers. And without a doubt, these men are the fathers of the world. For certainly Moshe is a father of the world, and so too Yehoshua who received the torah from Moshe, and likewise the Elders, etc... and so too Antigonus and the other sages mentioned.. They are certainly fathers of the world (i.e. of all humanity). Thus, it is proper for one to accept their mussar just like a son should accept the mussar of his father. And it is proper for them to give mussar to the world, since they are fathers of the world. Therefore this tractate is called Tractate Avot (Fathers). For it contains the mussar teachings of the fathers of the world.

Q Level 2

Chida

Chida - *Chasdei Avot* - the commentaries wrote that this tractate is called "Avot" because the mussar in it is the father of all mussar in the world.. and since the primary good trait is humility, we find the torah mentioned only this trait in Moshe Rabeinu (as written: "and the man Moses was exceedingly humble, more so than any person on the face of the earth" - Bamidbar 12:3). For humility is the main [root] of all good deeds...

Chida - *Chedrei Beten, Parsha Shmini* - the reason the name of this tractate is "Avot" (Fathers) is because the words are the fathers of all mussars, as the commentaries wrote. We can also say that it is to rouse one's heart to remember the forefathers who were perfect (Shelemim) in all these things, and our sages of blessed memory said: "a man is obligated to tell himself: 'when will my deeds reach the deeds of my forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov..'"

Q Level 3

Chida

Chida - *Maarit HaAyin* - in the way of remez (hint) we can say this tractate was called "Avot" to rouse the heart of a Jew that we are obligated to accept their words like the command of a father to his sons. See how much the descendants of Yonadav ben Rachav merited for guarding the command of their father. And do not say "this is mishnat chasidim, (extra piety), and I am not a chasid (extra pious)". Thus it was called "Avot", i.e. these were the deeds of the forefathers and thus think how to resemble your forefathers. Furthermore, if you take this upon yourself, the merit of your forefathers will be a helper and shield to help you fulfill.

Another hint: "avot" is gematria "shafal" (lowly). For he who is truly humble, it will be easy for him to fulfill everything and he will be holy, which is also gematria "shafal" and likewise, "avot".

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "from Sinai" - i.e. through being extremely humble, Moshe received the torah which is compared to water. For water flows out of high places and collects in low places. Thus, he received the torah from Sinai, [among] the lowest of the mountains (as Megilah 29a). This is to teach that a man can merit torah only through Humility, the source of all just character traits.

Q Level 2

Raz Chaim

Raz Chaim - "m'sinai" is letters "nissim" (miracles), to hint that only through the humble does the Holy One, blessed be He, perform miracles, as known.

Q Level 2

Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer end of Vayikra - "Moshe received Torah" - he wrote "received torah", not "received the torah". For the latter would imply the torah known and understood by us or at least by Moshe Rabeinu, and not more than this. Therefore, he wrote: "Moshe received torah". For he also did not understand all that is said there. Rather, the book was transmitted thus to Moshe Rabeinu with everything in it, even the fiftieth gate of Binah (understanding) was written there and Moshe did not know it. Therefore "Moshe received torah", and not "the torah".

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal: Why does it not say "received from G-d"?

FIRST ANSWER - EVERYONE RECEIVES FROM G-D

If it had said "Moshe received the torah from G-d", this would imply that only Moshe in particular received from G-d. It is not so. For He is the G-d of all and bestows wisdom to everyone. Therefore, the Mishna did not say "Moshe received from G-d", but rather "Moshe received from Sinai". He inserted here Sinai since certainly Sinai was designated in particular to Moshe's receiving of the torah... But every day we pray "illuminate our eyes with Your torah". Thus, G-d is not designated to Moshe alone in the flow of the torah... Thus, it is not appropriate to designate Moshe alone as receiving from G-d..

SECOND ANSWER - NOT PROPER HONOR

It did not say "received from G-d" because there is no comparison between G-d and Moshe. For it is not proper honor to associate G-d with Moshe, as a teacher to his disciple, to equate a human with the Holy One, blessed be He. Thus it says Moshe received "from Sinai" - that the voice of G-d came to Sinai, as if speaking to itself, and Moshe received the Torah from Sinai. If it had said "received at Sinai", then "at Sinai" would have taught only which place he received the Torah. Therefore, it said "from Sinai" [to also teach the above].

Question: Why does it change from the term "received" to the term "transmitted"?

Maharal - "Moshe received the torah from Sinai and transmitted" - it says "received" for the receiver receives according to his ability to receive. And Moshe did not receive the whole torah as brought in the talmud (Shavuot 5a), for it is infinite. Thus it is impossible to say Moshe received the whole torah and understood the whole torah. Rather, he received what he was capable of receiving.

Afterwards, it says he "*transmitted* it to Yehoshua". For it is possible for him to "transmit" all he received to Yehoshua. So too it was possible for Yehoshua to transmit all he received from Moshe to the Elders, and likewise the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets to the Men of the Great Assembly. Each was capable of transmitting all he received because their power to receive was strong. But after the Men of the Great Assembly, the generations began to diminish. Therefore, it says "Antigonus *received* from Shimon HaTzadik" and not "Shimon HaTzadik transmitted to Antigonus". For he did not transmit to him all the torah he received. Because the generations began to diminish in wisdom. It says only that Antigonus received. For he received only according to his ability. Similarly in the talmud: "Rabbi Eliezer the Great said: 'I learned much torah from my Rabbis, but received from them only like a dog who licks from the sea.'" (Sanhedrin 68a).

So too for all the pairs of sages mentioned afterwards. Only the term "received" is used. Because

after the "Men of the Great Assembly" the torah became diminished. Thus, they needed to exhort the disciples on the torah as will be explained.

Q Level 3

Maharal

Question: Why does it specify Yehoshua? Didn't Moshe teach all of Israel, including Eliezer the high priest?

Maharal - "to Yehoshua" - even though Moshe taught all of Israel, the term "transmit" is used only by one who receives and it remains by him. Therefore, the term "transmitted to Yehoshua" is used instead of "taught to Yehoshua". For "taught" implies learning it even though one may forget it. But the term "transmits" connotes something transmitted and which remains in the person's hands. Likewise, it says in Nedarim 38b: " 'He gave the torah to Moshe..' - at first he learned and forgot, until the torah was given to him as a gift". For "to grasp the torah according to its halacha requires *siyata d'Shmaya* (divine help)" (Megilah 6b), and this divine help was only by Yehoshua. For he was undoubtedly worthy of this. So too, that which it says "and Yehoshua to the Elders", the Elders were worthy and uniquely capable of receiving the torah from Yehoshua (in being the greatest sages of the generation).

Question: Why does it specify these 5?

Maharal - "Moshe, Yehoshua, Elders, Prophets, Men of the Great Assembly" - these 5 were all special levels. Moshe was like the sun, all light, as if he did not have a physical body. He was completely separate from the physical. But Yehoshua was compared to the moon, which has a [solid] body to receive the light of the sun. Thus, Yehoshua received from Moshe as written "you shall bestow of your splendor on him.." (Bamidbar 27:20). Yehoshua was on a special level. Similar and related to Moshe, like the Sun and the Moon.

The Elders' special level was "wisdom". For an "Elder is only one who has acquired wisdom". They were exceedingly fit for wisdom. Thus, they were more fitting to receive from Yehoshua because [the level of] "wisdom" is closer to Yehoshua than [the level of] "prophecy" as they said "a wise sage is greater than a prophet" (Bava Batra 12a).

But the levels of Moshe and Yehoshua were special in being like the sun and the moon, and certainly their level was above the level of "wisdom" and included it due to their exceedingly high level of prophecy. This is why it says "Yehoshua to the Elders" (and not Yehoshua to the prophets) since they are closer to him.

"The Elders to the Prophets" - for the prophets are close to the Elders (in level).. and likewise the "Prophets to the Men of the Great Assembly". These latter were a special level by itself. They exceeded in Holiness to such an extent that "Idolatry" was annulled in their times (Yomah 69b). This is a special level not like the level of prophecy. Therefore, it was necessary to designate them a special level to exclude the level of prophecy. For prophecy is on one person just like on many. But these had a level of holiness close to G-d, blessed be He... they were 120 members for an amazing reason and this is not the place to elaborate...

Thus, these 5 levels mentioned are all special levels by themselves, and it is proper for the Torah to go from Yehoshua to the Elders. For the level of the Elders is close to Yehoshua, and likewise from the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets to the "Men of the Great Assembly". And since the level of Elders is all one level, it was not considered as a special level that which the Elders received from the Elders... and likewise for the other levels.

Q Level 4

Chida

Ben Ish Chai - Zechut Avot - that which he said "from Sinai" (m'Sinai) instead of "at Sinai" (b'Sinai), this is to hint with the letter "mem", that Moshe merited to receive the torah through the power of

remaining there (fasting) 40 days. The reason for the forty is because a man has 4 physical foundations (which are aligned to the spiritual roots), and they became purified through his fasting 40 days until he became like an angel in the spiritual world. His body became ohr chiyunit (life force light).

Q Level 4

Chida

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - why did the light of the Shechina descend on the mountain to teach him torah? As we explained, if he went above to learn there, his body would have been purified to be like the angels on high and even more. Then, Yehoshua would have been incapable of receiving the torah from him. For it is impossible to receive from an angel on high.

If Moshe went for himself only, it would have been possible. But since he needed to transmit his learning to the lower creations (humans), they would have been incapable of receiving from him. For the physical of man is totally remote from the "body" (guf) of an angel to the opposite extreme.

Therefore, the lower creations would not be able to stand on his view (l'aamod al daato) and they would not understand what he taught them nor grasp his intent in what he tells them. But since he sat on the mountain, physical ground, and the Holy One, blessed be He, spread His cloud over him, and learned torah in the cloud stationed on the physical mountain, through this, Moshe Rabeinu became included of above and below.

His physical side became purified but not completely like the upper beings. Rather, he was like an intermediate type between the upper and the lower. Due to this, the lower ones were capable of receiving from him torah and wisdom and could understand what he taught them. If he were not an intermediate type, neither Yehoshua nor others could receive from him, since he would have been completely distant from them to the opposite extreme. Through this, you will understand well what the Midrash Rabba says on the verse: "which Moshe the man of G-d blessed" - (Midrash:) "half and below, man. half and above G-d"...

And the first and last letters of Sinai are Samech-Yud, which are the letters of Yesod-Mach (mem-chuf). For Moshe Rabeinu merited that the torah be given through him for two reasons. One, he was the Yesod of Chachmah, and two, he was mach, i.e. humble.

Q Level 4

Chida

Chida - Zerua Yamin - Moshe is gematria Pardes plus one. Pardes hints to the four worlds (Atzilut, Beriah, Yetzira, and Asiya), and the four levels of soul (nefesh, ruach, neshama, chaya), and the four levels of torah interpretation (pshat, remez, drosh, and sod). Each part includes the others and there is also the Sod of Sod corresponding to a [sublime] fifth level - Yechida.. It is possible that Moshe also merited a bit of torah at the level of Yechida, as written: "Yet You have made him slightly less than the angels" (Tehilim 8:6). Due to this, his holy name was one more (than Pardes). To hint that he merited to some portion of the level of Yechida. It is known that each world has the Name Havaya (Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh). Therefore "Sinai" is gematria five times Havaya ($26 \times 5 = 130 = \text{Samech-Yud-Nun-Yud}$), corresponding to the four worlds and what is above them which the Name Havaya hints to in the crown of the Yud. This is the meaning of Moshe, gematria Pardes plus one, received the torah in its divisions (Pshat, Remez, Drosh, Sod) from Sinai (five Havayot)...

Chida - Roshei Avot - likewise the Sofei Teivot (last letter of each word) of Moshe Kibel Torah = Heh-Lamed-Heh=40. To hint that he received it in forty days. This corresponds to the four Yuds in the Name Havaya (when letters spelled out), whose gematria is forty.. This is the reason they remained forty years in the desert and after forty years: "Moses commenced [and] explained this Law" (Devarim 1:5). For during those forty years they were receiving the torah which Moshe

received in forty days. One year for each day. This is the Oral Torah. They correspond to the four parts of Torah - Pardes (Peh-Reish-Dalet-Samech=Pshat, Remez, Drosch, Sod). And he who does not admit to the Sod (kabalistic meaning) remains a Pered (Peh-Reish-Dalet=mule). On him it is written: "Be not like a horse, like a mule (Pered) that has no understanding" (Tehilim 32:9). These four correspond to the four worlds, four souls, and four receivers of torah from flesh and blood (Yehoshua, Elders, Prophets, Men of great assembly).

Chida - Kiseh David derush dalet - Sinai is gematria 600 thousand, Samech x Yud x Nun x Yud=60x10x50x10=300 thousand, plus the Sinai on high (in the mystical worlds) aligned with Sinai below...

They said three things: be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples and make a fence for the Torah

הֵם אָמְרוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים: הָיוּ מְתוּנִים בְּדִין, וְעָשׂוּ סִגְלָה לַתּוֹרָה, וְרָבּוּ תַלְמִידֵי הַרְבֵּה, וְעָשׂוּ סִגְלָה לַתּוֹרָה

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "be deliberate in judgment" - a man who is quick to judge is called "poshea" (negligent). And even though he thought he was saying truth, he is not considered unintentional (shogeg), but rather close to intentional (karov l'mezid). For he did not put to heart to say to himself: "a swift heart will not understand knowledge". For error is common to all men, as they said: "be careful with your talmud (Torah study), for an error of learning is as a willful transgression" (Avot 4:12). On this Shlomo said: "did you see a man swift in his words? A fool has more hope than him" (Mishlei 29:20), and like our sages said: "be careful in ruling, for an error of learning is tantamount to a willful transgression" (Avot 4:7). Therefore, a man who rules needs to deliberate the matter and mull over his thoughts, as they said: "one must delay and let the din (judgment) ferment" (Sanhedrin 35a). For through pondering and waiting, he will find new arguments and deductions until the Din (judgment) will be absolutely true. For on second thought, he will see what he failed to see at first...

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "be deliberate in judgment" - be patient before deciding any matter, whether [for a Beit Din] in judging someone if he is righteous or wicked, or when deciding one's own affairs, not being concerned that perhaps one is mistaken. It is also not proper to justify himself and his family in all his matters. But rather he must guide them and others in the ways of righteousness. For his rebuke is more effective... Thus he said, "raise up many disciples", and all the more so does this apply to his own sons (that he must teach them torah).. Every person is also under duty to enact personal fences for himself so as to not go to places where he will easily sin. Thus, every person is a judge, teacher, and law-maker.

Q Level 1

Meorei Ohr - "raise up many disciples" - For in many students wisdom will increase. For the students sharpen the mind of the Rav and ask him questions. Through this he needs to think on what to answer them and will clarify many doubts, and our sages said: " 'it is a tree of life' - why was the torah compared to a tree? To teach you that just like a small tree can ignite a large tree, so too small torah scholars sharpen big ones" (Taanit 7a)...

"make a fence" - from the verse "fenced in with roses" (Shir 7:3). For the torah is as a vineyard. If the stones of the fence have fallen, people and animals will enter and destroy it. The fence is a great guardian for the vineyard. Thus, for every mitzva in the torah - to make a fence around it, such as the Rabbinical prohibitions on forbidden relations...

Q Level 3

Chida

Chida, Kikar Laeden - you can see that all three things stem from humility. "be deliberate in

judgment", this is from the aspect of humility, that one does not consider himself a "Chacham" (wise man), and he suspects himself that perhaps he erred. thus, he deliberates and debates it on all sides until it is totally clear. "raise (stand) up many disciples" - for then they would learn torah while standing, until weakness came to the world afterwards. And through many disciples the study will be clarified. This also stems from the aspect of humility, that one does not rely on his own wisdom and he needs many disciples, and as written: "I learned the most from my students" (Taanit 7a). "make a fence for the Torah" - for one should not trust himself that he will not stumble. Rather, he needs fences. This also stems from the aspect of humility. For he fears that he might come to tread on the Biblical prohibition and he doesn't trust himself that he will be able to guard well.

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - Question: Why was tractate Avot placed at the end of Seder Nezikim (laws of damages)? Rambam (intro to zeraim): when the Tanna (author of the mishna) completed what the judge needs to know, he began with tractate Avot. This was for two matters.

One, to make known that the rulings and the Tradition is true and correct, received generation from generation. Therefore, it is proper to honor the [torah] sage and place him in an honorable position. For the Law has reached him, and he in his generation is like them in their generation.. There is in this great mussar to people. They should not say: "why should we accept the ruling of this judge or the enactment of this judge?" It is not so. For the ruling is not of this judge, rather, it is the Holy One, blessed be He, who commanded us in it, as written "the mishpat (justice) belongs to G-d". It is all one mishpat (justice), received from one sage to another, generation after generation.

The second matter is that the Tanna wanted to bring the mussar of all these sages in order that we learn from them good middot (character traits). No one needs this more than the judges. For when a common man is not a baal mussar, the damage is not to all the masses. Rather, he damages only himself. But when the judge is not a baal mussar (ethical) and tzanua (refined), he will damage himself and also other people. Therefore, his opening words in tractate Avot were mussar to the judges, as written: "be deliberate in judgment". The judge must reprove himself in all the matters of tractate Avot...

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - Why did the "men of the great assembly" say these three things..? There is no doubt that such wise men could have said many words of wisdom and understanding without limit.

(the Maharal will now give several explanations. In the end he says: "all the explanations we gave follow along the same line if you understand")

SUMMARY:

1. To rectify Din (Halacha), torah study, and mitzvah performance.
2. To rectify Gedolim, scholars, and unlearned.
3. To rectify the 3 branches of intellect: Chachma (wisdom), Binah (understanding), and Daat (knowledge).
4. To rectify man's intellect while bound to a physical body.
5. To rectify the 3 branches of Torah - Chukim (irrational laws), Mishpatim (rational laws), Mitzvot (in-between laws).

FIRST ANSWER - GENERAL RECTIFICATION OF WISDOM

The men of the great assembly saw that the intellect already started to diminish and mastery of wisdom was lacking. When a doctor sees weakness in a patient's limb, he prescribes a medication which will help complete where the patient's nature falls short. Thus, when the men of the great assembly saw the beginning of diminishing of wisdom, they came to repair this ailment.

The lacking in wisdom causes change in three areas. One, the mishpatim (judging) between man and his fellow. Two, in [understanding] the words of torah, and three in the deeds of mitzvot. There is a need for these three things and each of them is a separate matter by itself.

In the mishpatim (judging), one must understand the root of the law in order to judge correctly, to not obligate the innocent and exempt the guilty. This area depends on the reasoning powers of the mind to delve to the depth of the mishpat (law). It is not included in words of torah. For this is solely reasoning powers of the mind (svara), even for things not explicitly written in the torah. Because the laws in the torah are just main principles. But practical cases between man and his fellow are not written in the torah.

Words of torah are also a separate matter by itself, namely, to understand the torah's words.

Likewise the deeds of the mitzvot are also a separate matter, namely, to not come to transgress a mitzvah. For example, when one sees it is permitted to cook chicken (with milk), he will also cook meat (with milk). Thus, the Rabbis forbade even chicken meat. So too, for the Rabbinically forbidden relations (arayot). If these were permitted people will come to permit those biblically forbidden. Similarly, for the other Rabbinical fences of the torah.

The general principle: these three things rectify everything, namely, the Din (judgment), torah, and the practical mitzvot themselves.

Thus, corresponding to the rectification of Din, he said *"be deliberate in judgment"*. Corresponding to rectification of the words of torah, to clarify their words, he said *"raise up many disciples"*, and corresponding to not coming to transgress the deeds of mitzvot, they said: *"make a fence for the Torah"*. For when there is a fence to the torah, this is the rectification of the deeds of the mitzvot. Thus, through these three things everything will be rectified.

Maharal - SECOND ANSWER - RECTIFICATION OF THREE CATEGORIES OF MEN

Furthermore, these three things correspond to the three categories of men. The first category is the Gedolim (great torah scholars). The second is the Talmidei Chachamim (torah scholars), and the third is the rest of the people. For the Din requires very, very, great wisdom, to the extent that even exceedingly wise torah scholars need rectification, as they said (Sanhedrin 81, Yerushalmi): "in Din, there is no wise man, and as Shimon ben Shetach said: if one requests 'on condition that you judge me a Din torah', I answer: 'I don't know Din torah' ".

But for the words of torah, the Gedolim do not need so much rectification. For they are already wise in torah and mitzvot. But the disciples (of the Gedolim, i.e. the medium torah scholars) do need rectification here. Corresponding to this he said: *"raise up many students"*. For through many students, the torah will become clarified to them (i.e. to the medium torah scholars).

Corresponding to the lowest category, namely, the people who do not learn, they need a fence to the torah.

When the men of the great assembly saw the diminishing in wisdom, such that it affected all categories of men, namely, the Gedolim, the disciples, and the rest of the men, they rectified the lacking.

By the Gedolim, the great torah scholars who sit to judge, he commanded them to *"be deliberate in judgment"*, to not rule judgment quickly.

For the lacking in the torah scholars: *"raise up many disciples"*. For when they "raise up many disciples", they stand on the torah due to the many disciples, as the sages said: "from my students I learned the most" (Taanit 7a)..

Corresponding to the rest of people who don't know, he said: *"make a fence for the torah"*. For they need a fence and protection. The torah scholars don't need. Only one who is not a torah scholar needs.

These three things are a general rectification. Thus, he said them in a counted manner, *"they said three things"*. For there is nothing at all more than this. These three things rectify everything. Thus, the men of the great assembly chose to say these three mussar teachings. For this was the most relevant for their generation.

THIRD ANSWER - LACKINGS OF THE MIND

Furthermore, these three things are all for lackings of the intellect. For the generation began to diminish in wisdom, and the divisions of wisdom are three: "Chochma (wisdom), Bina (understanding), and Daat (knowledge)", which are mentioned everywhere in Tanach. And when they saw the generation's lacking in wisdom, the men of the great assembly came and rectified all three. Namely, the lacking in "Chochma", "Binah", and "Daat", as they are written in scripture: "I filled him with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge" (Shemot 31:3), and "G-d founded the earth with wisdom, established the heavens with understanding, with His knowledge the depths were split" (Mishlei 3:19).

You will find some people who err in Chachma (wisdom). Namely, their logical argument (svara) is the opposite of a true logical argument (svara).

There are others whose logical argument (svara) is not crooked and is sound, but when they come to deduce one thing from another through pilpul (deductive reasoning), they have a lacking.

The former is called Chachma, the logical argument (svara) of the mind. The latter is called Binah, the deducing of one thing from another through pilpul (deductive reasoning).

There are also people who lack knowledge, who don't know a thing.

Corresponding to these, he exhorted on these three things. For Din (judging) depends only on logical argument (svara). There is nothing that is more inside the realm of Chachma (wisdom) than Din, as the sages said: "there is no branch of wisdom like monetary laws" (Bava Batra 175b). It is thus necessary to exhort on not erring in the logical argument of the mind. Therefore, he said *"be deliberate in judgment"*.

Corresponding to the lacking that comes in the pilpul (deductive reasoning) of Chochma (logical argument), which is a different level, he said: *"raise up many disciples"*, so that he won't come to err in the pilpul (deductive reasoning) of Chochma.

The thirds depends neither on logical argument (svara) nor on pilpul (deductive reasoning). It is only for one who lacks knowledge such that he has no knowledge. And if you don't fence the torah for those who lack knowledge, they will come to transgress the mitzvot. On this they said: *"make a fence for the Torah"*.

These three things correspond to Chochma, Binah, and Daat mentioned everywhere, and through

them is the rectification of everything. Corresponding to Din (judgment), which depends on the logical reasoning (svara) of the mind, he wrote: "be deliberate in judgment".

Corresponding to The rectification of pilpul of the torah, he wrote: "raise up many disciples"... Corresponding to the error that comes through lack of knowledge, namely, transgressing the torah, he wrote: "make a fence for the Torah".

These three things include everything. Thus he specified them in counted number (minyan). For every counted number implies there is nothing more. So too here, he comes to say that these three things include the total rectification of a man when there is a lacking whether in Chochma, Binah or Daat.

FOURTH ANSWER - INTELLECT WITHOUT BODY

And even though there was no lacking in their generation, and it was proper without lacking. But their generation was not excelling like the Elders and the Prophets. Nevertheless, these instructions are proper for a man in his [inherent limitation in] being a human being. For a human being is not completely intellect. Therefore, it is proper for a man to conduct himself according to his level of human being. Although man has an intellectual soul, but nevertheless, he also has physicality with this.

Therefore they said: "*be deliberate in judgment*". For a man is not all intellect. If he rushes to judge in Din, without mulling over, it would be as if he were only intellect, without physicality. Because the intellect without any physicality becomes clear, namely, the intellect which is not inside a physical body, it does not need to wait. But when it is in physicality like the intellect of man, it is not completely an actual intellect. Therefore it is proper for a man to conduct himself in the proper way for a man, namely, to "*be deliberate in judgment*", and not rush as if he were an actual intellect, without physicality.

Likewise regarding "*raise up many disciples*". For a man does not have a clear intellect for deep matters, because his intellect dwells in physicality. Thus, he needs many students. Through this, it is possible for him to attain a true intellect. Therefore, "raise up many disciples" to not come to error, as the sages said: "*A sword is upon the boasters [baddim] and they shall become fools? A sword is upon the enemies of the disciples of the wise who sit separately [bad'bebad] and study the Torah. What is more, they become stupid. It is written here, 'and they shall become fools', and it is written elsewhere, For that we have done foolishly...*" (Berachot 63b).

Likewise regarding "*make a fence for the Torah*". All this applies to a man inherently in his being human, with a physical body, while his soul dwells in a physical body. For if he does not make a fence for the torah, he will come to transgress it..

Therefore the men of the great assembly said three things. But before their time, in the era of the prophets and all the more so, in the era of the Elders, their intellect was on such a high level that it was as if separated completely from their body. For the prophets were not like ordinary men. Therefore, they would not exhort a man just for his being human. For the level of the prophets was above this.

But for the men of the great assembly, since they were not on the level of the prophets, their level did not go out of the realm of other humans. Unlike Moshe, Yehoshua, the Elders, and the Prophets, whose level went outside the realm of "human". For they were designated a special name of "Elders" or "Prophets", and thus their whole generation was on a super-human level. Therefore, it was not necessary to exhort them. But the "men" of the great assembly would exhort

on these things. For they are inherently necessary for a man in his being human and his intellect is not completely separated from the physical.

This is the meaning of "they said [three things]..", i.e. they [alone said] but the prophets and all the more so, before them, we do not see at all any words of mussar from the Fathers to the sons exhorting them to go in the path of the just and not in the path of a human who is inherently earthy and physical. For just like it is the way of a father to rebuke his son in his youth when the son's nature is still attached to physicality, and the father exhorts him not to go after these things. But for the prophets who were not like normal humans, there was no words of mussar rebuke at all. Only for the men of the great assembly who did not have a special name designated (for they were called "men" of the great assembly) which would have indicated a special level, and all the more so for the sages who came after the men of the great assembly, that they needed to give mussar to their generation. But before the men of the great assembly, it was not relevant to give mussar rebuke to the generation (for they were like pure intellect).

FIFTH ANSWER - RECTIFICATION OF TORAH

You must know also that these three things stated by the men of the great assembly are a rectification of torah. The men of the great assembly wanted to rectify the generation's lacking in torah, and the torah comprises three categories: statutes (Chukim - laws without reason), laws (mishpatim), and commandments (mitzvot). All the commandments of the torah are included in these three categories.

Mishpatim are those known and which reason (conscience) understands. The opposite of them is Chukim. Their reason is not revealed. There are also mitzvot that are not evident like the mishpatim but are also not revealed like the Chukim, and one can grasp their reason through study. These latter are called mitzvot. These three divisions are mentioned in scripture in many places. The men of the great assembly came to rectify them. They said "be deliberate in judgment" corresponding to the mishpatim. For the primary mishpatim in the torah are the Dinim, as written (Parsha Mishpatim) "these are the Mishpatim that you shall place before them..." (Shemot 21).

Corresponding to the mitzvot they said: "raise up many disciples". For one can grasp the words of torah through many students and through study..

Corresponding to the Chukim which cannot be grasped at all, he said: "make a fence for the Torah". For the Chukim are more in need of a fence and boundary due to their reason being unknown...

All the explanations we gave follow along the same line if you understand...

Know that all these three things stated by the men of the great assembly include most of the mussar of the sages (who came after), which are to perfect a man from all sides, as we will explain. For the number three includes a thing, its opposite and the middle between them. Thus, most of the mussar teachings in this tractate are to make a person whole in one area, its opposite, and the middle between them.

The men of the great assembly said: "be deliberate in judgment", which is completely Din. The opposite of this is: "make a fence for the Torah". This is the opposite of "be deliberate in judgment". For a fence is not Din, since according to the torah, one is not completely obligated. He said "raise up many disciples" - to clarify the torah. This is not like Din. For Din obligates every person who knows that he is thus obligated in Din, and likewise, reason obligates a person on this.

But for the words of torah, even though they themselves are obligatory, and the torah is called "mishpat" (justice) in a few places, nevertheless, it is not obligatory according to man's reason (conscience). For according to man's natural reason, the mitzva is not obligatory, unlike mishpat (justice) which a man's reason obligates him (ex. don't steal). Thus, the men of the great assembly's words include the obligatory Din, its opposite, "make a fence for the torah", which is not at all obligatory, and "raise up many disciples". The latter is not like Din which man's reason obligates, nor is it non-obligatory (like the fences). Rather, it is obligatory according to Daat Torah (torah view) For this is the matter of the students - to clarify what the torah obligates, and this is the tikun (rectification) of the torah itself, and in this they included everything. Understand this well.

So too according to what we said earlier that the men of the great assembly included Chukim, Mishpatim, and Mitzvot - it is also thus. For Chukim are the opposite of Mishpatim, whose reason is known, while mitzvot are in between - they are not so revealed but not completely concealed (like Chukim). All this is because their words are coming to rectify everything, as we said. You should understand this very well.

Level 4

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - they said three things: "be deliberate in judgment", corresponding to true in-depth study (iyun), to the utmost possible (daka min hadaka), "raise up many disciples" in order to increase torah and that it not be forgotten from the seed of Jacob.

These latter two traits, raising disciples and true in-depth study assist and bring divine help in grasping the torah...

Furthermore, be exceedingly careful to deliberate in Din, and examine it much and thoroughly. Afterwards, "raise up many disciples" who make their teacher wise by speaking out the questions that came to their minds. For the mouth is like a finger which senses imperfections. Thus when the mouth speaks it out each time, he will feel the imperfections of the intellect, as a fingernail feels the blemishes on a shechita knife. And even after all this, do not think that you have certainly arrived at the truth, after both the intellect and the speaking out have reached a consensus. On this they said nevertheless: "and make a fence for the Torah". And then halevai (would that it were) that you did not step on the ikar din (primary part of the mitzva).

They also said these three corresponding to the three parts of the soul: nefesh, ruach, neshama, which are thought, speech, and deed. For deed is in the realm of the nefesh as written "the souls (nefesh) which do" (Vayikra 18:29), "the soul that will do" (Bamidbar 15:30). Speech is in the realm of the ruach, as written: "ruach Hash-em spoke through me" (Shmuel II 23:2), and "by the ruach of his lips" (Isaiah 11:4). Thought is in the realm of the neshama. A man needs to rectify all these three levels. This is what they said "three things": "be deliberate in judgment", corresponding to thought, to delve deeply in his thoughts into the depths of halacha, to draw out the true Din. Afterwards, to teach it to the students, corresponding to speech, and "make a fence for the Torah" corresponding to deed. Understand this.

Level 4

Chida

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - "be deliberate in judgment" - to hint that if one sees sufferings and judgments befall him, he should not get angry and say bad things on Above. Rather, he should be patient and silent, and hope to Hash-em till he turns the bad into good...

Level 3

Chida

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - the oral law is called "din". On this, it is written: "min hashamayim hishmata din". As to why it is called "din", in the tikunim, the oral law has 60 tractates, and it is known that each tractate has four parts - pshat, remez, drosh, sod... thus it is called din. din is dalet-yud-nun = 4, 10+50, i.e. to hint that there are 4 parts of pardes in the sixty tractates... and

likewise "make a fence (siyag) for the torah" hints to samech, yud-gimmel, i.e. expound the 60 tractates using the 13 attributes with which the torah is expounded. They said "make" to hint the learning needs to bring to action, even when learning, he should "learn on condition to do".

Chapter 1 Mishna 2 - World Stands

Shimon HaTzadik (the Righteous) was from the remnants of **שְׁמֵעוֹן הַצְּדִיק הָיָה מְשִׁירֵי כְּנֶסֶת הַגְּדוּלָּה**. He would say, "On three things the world **הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר: עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים הָעוֹלָם** stands: on the Torah, on the service (Avodah) and on acts of **עוֹמֵד, עַל הַתּוֹרָה וְעַל הָעֲבוּדָה וְעַל גְּמִילוּת** kindness." **הַחֲסָדִים**

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "remnants" after all of them died, the Tradition remained in his hand, and he was the Kohen Gadol (high priest) after Ezra.

"he would say" - i.e. this was an expression on his tongue always. So too for all the times in this tractate when it says Rabbi so and so would say. The explanation is that he was used to saying this always.

"the world stands" - it was created for these three things.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - For these three things the world stands. The explanation of "stands" is that the world was created for these things because they are the will of the Holy One, blessed be He. That is to say, He created the world because His creations would in the future find favor before Him through doing these things... For them the world was created, in order to do them.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - i.e. one who is careful in these three things will have his world stand. His life will endure in this world and in the next.

Q Level 2

Mili D'Avot: "on three things the world stands" - the kiyum (continuance) and Shelemut (perfection) of man who is called a "miniature world", depends on three things: "torah, Avodah, and Acts of Kindness".

Torah - aren't the Avodah and acts of kindness a part of torah? Rather, torah here refers to torah study (not torah commandments). Likewise in the Talmud: "torah is greater than deeds for it leads to deeds" (Kidushin 40b). This is the first and foremost Shelemut (perfection) of man.

Avodah (service) - what is between man and G-d such as the korbanot, prayer, tefilin, sabbath, holidays, etc. It is called Avodah for G-d does not receive any benefit from this. Nor is it a kindness to G-d. It is only "avodah". To teach that G-d's intent is only that man subjugate himself (sheyishtabed) (the word "subjugate" has the same root as "avodah"), and fulfill His will.

This is as our sages taught: "what does G-d care if an animal is slaughtered from the throat or the back of the neck? Rather, the mitzvot were given only to purify human beings" (Ber. Rabba 44). Namely, to remove from them wickedness (zadon) and arrogance. These are like the impurities in silver. This is so that man will serve his Creator and subjugate himself to Him.

Q Level 2

Chatam Sofer

Daat Sofer, Lech Lecha - "on three things... acts of kindness" - all of them need to be joined with "kindness". In "torah", one needs to do kindness to also teach others, as our sages expounded: "Torah studied in order to teach it to others that is a 'Torah of kindness'" (Sukkah 49b). A person should not hold torah for himself alone.. Rather, let him learn with others and grant them merit also

with his torah. Likewise for Avodah, one needs to do kindness. For example, to pray for his fellow and join together (ex. in prayer) with the troubles of the public. All Yisrael is like one man and one body. Each person needs to feel the pain of his fellow, as our sages said: " 'Israel are scattered sheep' (Jeremiah 50:17) - why are Israel likened to a sheep? Just as a sheep, when hurt on its head or some other body part, all of its body parts feel it. So it is with Israel when one of them sins, everyone feels it..." (Vayikra Rabba 4). Thus, we see Torah and Avodah (prayer) need to be intertwined with the trait of kindness.

Q Level 3

Chatam Sofer

Ketav Sofer Avot - the [Jewish] people of the world are divided into three levels: those who sit and toil in torah always, day and night. These are the pillars of torah and their great merit shields on the rest of the world. The second level is those who are not bnei torah but they are found in the synagogues always, two or three times a day, at the prayer times. They are the pillars of service, in the way of "let us render [for] sacrifice [the offering of] our lips" (Hoshea 14:3). The third group are the businessmen who travel always around the world. Most of the year, they travel to the marketplaces to profit and amass much money. Due to this they have great ability to bestow kindness to the pillars of torah and service. This is the pillar of kindness...

Q Level 3

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "three things" - this hints to three levels of soul. Torah is the level of speech. Avodah which is the Korbanot (temple offerings) is thought. For it depends on the thoughts of the Kohen. He can invalidate it with the wrong thought (pigul). His main thought needs to be to elevate the Nefesh Behemit (animal soul) above. So too in our times, the service of prayer is in place of the Korbanot as our sages expounded on "to serve Him with all your heart" (Shema). "What is the service of the heart? Prayer."

For the matter of prayer is giving one's life (Mesirut Nefesh) to HaKadosh Baruch Hu (G-d) similar to a korban (temple offering). Since in every word one utters out of his mouth, there is a part of his soul [that comes out]. And as our sages taught: "moving one's lips is considered an act" (Keritut 4a).

Prayer needs to be primarily with heart and soul, not body alone, as written: "praise G-d, my soul" (Tehilim 146). For the soul also praises.

"Acts of kindness" - is with one's body and money. The reason he preceded speech (torah) before thought (Avodah) is in order to precede Torah. For Torah is the primary thing and on it depends the shefa (divine flow) of life to all the worlds. If the whole world were to be idle from torah study for one second (no one learning torah on our planet), then all the worlds would literally collapse to utter emptiness. Their continuance of existence is from the torah.

Q Level 4

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - (kabalistic)

Torah - because through toil in torah one pulls down shefa (divine flow) from above, the Source of blessings, to imbue life in this world. On this it is written: "you shall contemplate it day and night" (Yehoshua 1:8). For this bottom world is the world of the klipot (shells, i.e. forces of evil), far from holiness, the life-force of the worlds. It has no life or kiyum (continued existence) except through continual toil in the spiritual torah. Through toil in torah, shefa descends from above to the person toiling in it and then all the worlds receive life and shefa through him. This is why uninterrupted toil in torah is necessary always. For if the toil in torah is interrupted, the shefa which is mekayim (sustains) the world also interrupts (and all the worlds collapse).

Avodah - this is the work of the temple offerings when the temple existed. Today, it is the "avodah of the heart", namely, prayer. For the kavana (in them) was to stir up a rousing from below to

above (lehaalot hitorerut mimata lemaala) in the Sod (secret) of mayim nukvim as explained in the Zohar. Through this, the shefa descends to all the worlds to sustain and bestow life to them.

Acts of Kindness - i.e. the yichud elyon shemashpia tzadik b'tzedek, and they bestow kindness to each other. This occurs through the power of acts of kindness, as known to the kabalists. We may also say that through word, thought, and deed, the divisions of the creation endure. For through toil and words in the toil in torah, the world of yetzira endures. Through the avodah of the heart, namely, thought in prayer, the world of Beriah endures.. and through action, namely, acts of kindness, the world of Asiyah endures. This is the meaning of "on three things the world stands.." (see the book Shaarei Kedusha for an intro to the mystical worlds).

Level 4

Chida

Chida - Roshei Avot - he chose torah first because torah includes all three. For when one toils in torah, it is as if he brings an offering (menachot 110a). And it is said: "torah of kindness was on his tongue", for he bestows kindness to the whole world.. (as before since he pulls down shefa to all the worlds).

Chida - Marit Haayin - "the world stands" - it is referring to man who is a miniature world. There is no kiyum (existence) for man to annul the evil inclination except through torah, as the talmud brings: "I created the evil inclination and I created the torah as its antidote". From there he will ascend to fulfill the mitzvot. This is the meaning of "on three things the world (i.e. the miniature world, i.e. man) stands. On torah (to nullify the yetzer hara, and after nullifying him,) on avodah (positive mitzvot between man and G-d) and acts of kindness (mitzvot between man and his fellow).

Perhaps also, these three hint to (the sefirot) chesed (kindness), gevurah (might), and tiferet (splendor). The avodah hints to gevurah, that one mitgaber (strengthen himself) to do the service of G-d against the yetzer hara which wages war with him always. Torah corresponds to tiferet (as known) and acts of kindness corresponds to chesed.

Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - It is proper to ask: why was it necessary to say he was "*a remnant of the men of the great assembly*", and not just that he was "*of the men of the great assembly*"?

This demonstrates the explanation we said (last mishna), that the mussar rebuke is according to the generation. Thus, we do not find mussar before the men of the great assembly, as we said (last mishna). Only from after the men of the great assembly. For they were all together a holy assembly. And certainly the generation was on a higher level before these men departed to their eternal abode and then only Shimon Hatzadik was left as a remnant.

When he alone remained alive, the state of the generation was already like the next generation, for there was no longer all the men of the great assembly except for this single sage. Thus, the generation was similar to the next one, whereby only singular sages were found who were fathers of the generation. Hence, next mishna it continues "*Antigonus.. who was after Shimon Hatzadik*", and likewise the pairs of sages after Antigonus..

"He would say on three things the world stands" - such an exhortation is before everything. For one must first build the foundation. Therefore, Shimon Hatzadik who was the remnant of the men of the great assembly would exhort them to be careful on the things which are the foundation and pillars of the world upon which everything is built.

According to our explanation, the words of the men of the great assembly come even before this.

They said: "be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples and make a fence for the Torah".

Those things stated by the men of the great assembly are the rectifications and inherent lackings in a man in his being human. It is human nature to err in these things, namely, the torah, and wholeness (shelemut) is necessary there. And since it is the rectification of torah and torah is first and foremost over everything, the men of the great assembly rectified that first.

Afterwards, Shimon Hatzadik exhorted on that which is the foundation of the world. This is after torah..

It is proper to ask on what he said: "*Torah, Service (Avodah), and acts of kindness*". Why on these things and not on others? On the Brit Mila (covenant of the circumcision), for examples, it says: "If you break My covenant (Brit)..." (Yirmiya 33). Similarly for other things that are fitting for being what the world stands on.

(the Maharal will now bring several explanations. The following first explanation will also answer why it says "on three things the world stands" instead of "on three things man stands", as they seem to be things to rectify man, not the world.)

FIRST EXPLANATION - man must be whole in three areas

Summary of First Explanation

- Only that which has good is worthy of being created and enduring
- The world was created for man.
- Man has 3 relations which he needs to be whole in: between man and himself (Torah), between man and G-d (Service), between man and his fellow (Kindness). When man corrupts these three and turns to their opposite, the world has no longer any foundation and destruction comes, as indeed happened during the generation of the flood.

The background for explaining this mishna is as follows. The creations were created because they have good. If they did not have good, they would not have been created. For a thing which is not itself good, it is not proper for it to be granted existence. It is more proper for it to not exist than to exist. Thus, existence of something is because of the good it contains. And just like its creation is because of the good it has, so too, and how much more so, that the whole world and all its creatures are granted existence and continuance because they contain good. If the creations did not have any good, it would not be proper for them to exist. Each creation's existence is only due to the particular good it contains.

It is because of this that G-d sealed each stage of creation with "*and G-d saw that it was good*" (Genesis ch.1). This was stated for each and every detail by itself, and likewise for the totality of the whole creation: "*and G-d saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good*" (Gen.1:31). For when a thing is good, it is worthy of being created and of existing, and likewise a thing only has continuance (kiyum) due to its good aspect.

In all the six days of creation, the torah says: "it is good" except for the second day. Our sages said: "*because dispute (machloket) was created*" (Midrash Gen.Rabba 1). This is what our sages said: "*any dispute which is not for the sake of Heaven will not endure*" (Avot 5:17). For "it is good" was not said on this. And even though the dispute which broke out on the second day was for the sake of Heaven and it was needed for the world, but nevertheless, since in and of itself dispute has no continuance, only from G-d's side it endures when it is for the sake of Heaven, therefore, it

was not proper to say there "it is good". For that is only for something which endures in and of itself.

We have clarified that a thing has continuance only due to the good it contains. Thus, when a created thing has a lacking (evil), thereby becoming not good, it draws nearer to total non-existence. But that which is good, without evil and lacking, is far from non-existence and it is proper for it to be created and have continuance of existence.

G-d testified on the general things that they contain good, even though there may exist lackings in their individual particulars (one particular individual), and thus, those particular individuals are certainly subject to non-existence (destruction). But the general things stand, and on them G-d testified that the creation is good. For each species created has good. Likewise for the totality of creation as a whole, the torah also testified on it saying *"and G-d saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good"* (Gen 1:31).

There is no need to elaborate further on this. For they are clear matters which everything testifies on, namely, the non-existence (destruction) a created being is subject to is due to the lacking it has, that is to say, the evil which attaches to it subjects it to non-existence (destruction).

When this has become clear to you, you should know that all the creations depend on man. For they were created for man. Thus, if man is not as he should be, everything becomes useless. This is as written regarding the generation of the flood: *"for all flesh had corrupted its way on the earth"* (Gen:6), and in the Midrash:

∴ "An analogy to this is of one who made a wedding for his son. He built a canopy with elaborate decorations, etc. for his son. But afterwards, he became furious on his son and smashed what he built. The king explained: "Did I not build all this only for my son. Now that he is gone what need have I for all this?" Thus, "behold I am bringing the flood.. to destroy all flesh with spirit of life.. all that is upon the earth will perish".

Thus, all the creations were created for man. Hence, when man is no longer worthy of existence, everything becomes useless and the world ceases to have a reason to exist. Our sages have expressed this concept in many places - that everything was created for man.

When it is clear to you that the world exists for man, it follows that man must contain good. For then it is proper for him to be granted existence. And when it is proper to grant him existence, then it is also proper to grant existence to the whole world. For everything depends on man.

The torah does not explicitly say "good" by [the creation] of man. It hints only "[and G-d saw all that He had made, and behold] it was very good", and the Midrash (Gen.Rabba ch.9) teaches "very" (meod - mem-aleph-dalet) - these letters spell "Adam" (aleph-dalet-mem). This is tangibly visible because human [nature] is lacking and a "man is born as wild donkey" (Iyov 11:12).

Afterwards, man ascends to the level of good. Thus, man needs to acquire for himself the level of "good". This "good" is on three levels:

One, when he is good in and of himself, from his own intrinsic aspect.. (between man and himself)

Two, it is proper for him to be good towards G-d who created him. Namely, that he serves G-d and does His will.

Three, it is proper for him to be good towards other human beings around him. For a man does not exist by himself. Rather, he exists alongside other people.

A man needs to be good in all these three aspects with which he is tested.

(1) He needs to be good in and of himself. For after the creation of the world, the torah immediately says regarding the world that it is good. Thus, we see from this that the world needs to be good in and of itself.

(2) Likewise, man needs to be good with respect to the Cause whom he owes his existence.

(3) Thirdly, he needs to be good with respect to other human beings.

The general principle: he needs to be good in all these three aspects, and each one is not like the other two as we explained in the introduction to this book.

In the talmud (Kidushin 40a):

∴ "A good Tzadik (righteous man)... will eat the fruits (dividends) of his deeds' (Isaiah 3:10) - are there Tzadikim who are not good?! Rather, a Tzadik who is good to G-d and people is a good Tzadik. A Tzadik who is good to G-d but bad to people is not a good Tzadik" (Kidushin 40a).

And certainly, and all the more so, that a man needs to be shalem (whole) with himself (the first of the three levels). Since otherwise he is not a tzadik at all. For it would have been superfluous to say on him ("a good tzadik"), since every creature itself has good (at creation as explained earlier).

Thus, the tzadik needs to be good from all sides. Therefore, this Tanna (sage) opened his words saying: *"on three things the world stands, on torah..."*. For when a man has torah, in and of himself he is considered good in his having the torah intellect (hatorah hasichlit).

But if he does not have torah, he is not considered good in and of himself. For he lacks the torah which is the completion (hashlama) of man's being, and he is like an animal. Such a man is not considered a proper creature and is not worthy of existence. On this, our sages said:

∴ "there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day" (Gen.1:31) - What is the purpose of the additional word 'the'? This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, stipulated with the Works of Creation and said: 'If Israel accepts the Torah, you shall exist; but if not, I will turn you back into emptiness and formlessness.'" (Shabbat 88b).

Why man must have torah

The explanation of this is as follows. All the creatures that were created do not have the supernal divine wisdom (chachma Elokit elyona). Even though man possesses an intellect, but this is merely human intellect which is associated with physicality. The world is not worthy of existence just for this [small] good. For mere human intellect is lowly and deficient. Rather, only for the torah which is the divine, transcendent intellect. It is the complete good.

Then the world has a virtue, for it contains the divine torah intellect, and this is not human knowledge and human intellect. Therefore, the shelemut (completion) of man himself, such that he is considered the important creature which has the good, this is through torah. Namely, when one can say on the man that he is a baal torah (possessor of torah).

This matter does not need a proof. For without a doubt, the creation of man is lowly when he turns to become like an animal. Rather, man's loftiness is when he is separate from the animals. This is only through the torah intellect. Through possessing this transcendent intellect, he is considered a good, whole creature, possessing virtue in and of himself. There is nothing else in the world

besides torah through which a man can be considered possessing virtue (baal maala) in and of himself. This is explicit. For the torah is called good, as written "For I gave you good teaching" (Mishlei 4:2). And in the Talmud (Menachot 53b):

⋮ " 'Let the good come and receive the good from the Good for the good' - 'Let the good come' — that refers to, Moses, as it is written, 'And she saw that he was good' (Shemot 2:2); 'And receive the good' — that is the Torah, as it is written, 'For I give you good doctrine' (Mishlei 4:2)..."

Thus torah is called "good". This is entirely because it is completely [transcendent] intellect, not human intellect, like other wisdoms.

This is as we explained at length elsewhere, that [in general] a thing which is intellect (sichli) is separate from the physical completely, and is complete good. Therefore, the torah is the complete good in particular. Conversely, a thing which is physical is complete evil. We have already explained this in several places already. Here is not the place to elaborate. For it is clear that evil attaches to the physical, as we explained in the introduction. Thus, that which is far from the physical, like the torah, which is clear divine intellect (sechel Elokei habarur) - it is complete good.

Therefore, the torah intellect is what elevates man beyond the animalistic and above the status of lowly creature. Through the torah, man attains transcendent intellect (sichli), separated from the physical, and then he becomes a whole creature, worthy of existence. Therefore, the wholeness (shelemut) of man in and of himself is only through the torah and nothing else. Thus, the holy Tanna (sage) said that the torah is one pillar upon which the world stands. For the torah is what completes man such that he is a whole creature in and of himself.

Man Between G-d - Avodah (service of G-d)

Afterwards, he said "Avodah". For the Avodah (service of G-d) which is Avodah (service) foremost and in essence is the service of the Korbanot (temple offerings). There is nothing more "foremost" than this. But all the other things whereby one performs mitzvot (commandments) to fulfill the will of G-d are all included in the term "Avodah".

Thus, the Avodah is a pillar of the world. For from this, a man will be considered shalem (whole) and good to He who created him. This is when man serves G-d. For man needs to be whole and good towards his Creator.

THIRD LEVEL - Man with other people

Corresponding to man's need to be good towards other human beings, this is through "acts of kindness". When a man does kindness to his fellow for free, there is no doubt that in this he is good towards his fellow. [In this area,] there is nothing more good than this, namely, doing good to his fellow for free. For then, he is completely good.

We have clarified that it is proper for these three things to be pillars of the world. For they complete a man so that he is good in all three levels we mentioned.

For nothing exists besides G-d, blessed be He, since He is the mechuyiv hametziot (Necessary Existence, First Cause) and also the existing beings which He brought into existence. Thus, certainly a man has a relationship with his Creator in that G-d created man and man is created by G-d. Hence, it is proper for man to guard this relationship. For if he does not guard this relationship, his creation is for nothing.

Furthermore, a man was created by himself. And if he himself is corrupt and unimportant, then he

is a shallow, insignificant creature.

Thirdly, this man is not alone in the world. Rather, G-d created him with other human beings. Therefore, he needs to guard this relationship he has with other people. Thus, he said: "*acts of kindness*".

To summarize: through the "*torah*", a man himself is not an empty insignificant creature. But rather, an important creature. And through the *Avodah* (serving G-d), he guards his relationship towards his Creator who granted him existence. And through "*acts of kindness*" the man has a connection to other people. For a man was not at all created by himself, but rather, with other people. And when a man does kindness to his fellow, he has a connection to his fellow. Through this a man is [just] as G-d created him. For man was not created to be alone in the world. This becomes apparent when he does acts of kindness to others. Man should not tell himself: "I have no business with other people". These things are evident.

With this explanation, we have already clarified why the mishna used the expression "the world stands" instead of "a man stands". For man is the foundation and pillar of the whole world, as we explained...

In the generation of the flood, the world was not destroyed until they sinned in all three things the world stands upon and came to their opposite. When they turned to the opposite, the world, from man to beast, was destroyed. They sinned in idolatry, which is the opposite of the pillar of *Avodah*, as our sages said:

" 'And the earth was corrupt before G-d' (Genesis 6:11)' - anywhere that the term 'corrupt' is stated, it is referring to licentiousness and idol worship " (Sanhedrin 57a).

These two things are the opposite of the two pillars the world stands on, namely, *Avodah* and *Torah*. They also had theft as written "and the earth became full of robbery" (Gen.6:11). Theft is the opposite of "*acts of kindness*". For it is stealing of his instead of giving him. These three things are the complete opposite of the three things upon which the world stands. Thus, when they uprooted the three pillars and they tended to the complete opposite, that generation did not have a foundation and pillar to support them and destruction came to the world.

From this, you will understand what our sages said: "if a man is commanded: 'transgress and you won't die' he may transgress and not suffer death, except for idolatry, forbidden relations (ex.adultery) and murder" (Sanhedrin 74a). Although they gave a logical explanation for murder, namely, "who knows that your blood is more red? Perhaps his blood is more red". But for "lewd relations", they did not give a reason. We only learn it from the verse, as explained there. Nevertheless there is a logical reason. For those three cardinal sins are the opposite of these three things upon which the world stands.

For example, without a doubt, idolatry is the opposite of *Avodah* which is to G-d. Murder is the opposite of acts of kindness. For the latter is bestowing good to another and doing to him something he is not obligated to do, while murder destroys him completely.

"Forbidden relations" is the opposite of *torah*. For we already explained above that the quality of *torah* is that it is transcendent intellect, completely separated from the physical, and that only through *torah* can a person become separated from physicality.. The opposite of this is "forbidden relations" which is going after *zenut* (lewdness). In this he is going after the physical until he is considered completely like an animal and a donkey.

Likewise, our sages taught that the act of zenut (lewd relations) is an animal act. And in tractate Sotah (15a) "just as her actions were the actions of an animal, so too, her offering is animal food".

No proof is needed for this. An act of zenut (lewd relations) is an animal act of base physicality. They also said there:

"if a man's wife go astray (lit.folly)' (Bamidbar 5:12) - this teaches the adulterer does not commit the transgression unless a spirit of folly enters into him " (Sotah 3a).

We learned from here that a man goes after zenut only after a ruach shtut (spirit of folly) enters him. He becomes like a base physical animal, and then there is adultery. Therefore, the zenut (lewdness) of forbidden relations is the opposite of the level of torah. The latter is torah intellect, while the former is an act of physicality.

Thus, for these it is proper to give up one's life rather than transgress them, since the continued existence (kiyum) of man depends on these three things taught here, which the world stands on. And if he wants to transgress and not give up his life, then nevertheless it is as if he has no existence whatsoever. Better that he die meritorious (zakai) than live guilty (chayiv). For when he is the opposite of good, it is as if he has no existence at all. And even in the case where he is forced (to transgress), but nevertheless, since these things turn away from existence completely, it is not relevant to say "you shall live by them [and not die]". For in these sins is the essence of death and non-existence. They don't have any existence at all, and existence is life.

SECOND EXPLANATION - three ways the world receives standing from G-d
Summary of Second Explanation

- In three ways the world receives continued existence from G-d
- Torah - without torah, the world is petty and not worth creating.

Avodah - without service of G-d, the world would not be worthy of creation, since it is outside G-d.

- Acts of Kindness - through acts of kindness between human beings, G-d sustains the world in kindness, measure for measure.

You must understand another explanation of this mishna. One who understands the root and truth of the matter will grasp that it is all one matter.

Just so that the language [of the mishna] should be clearer, that which he said: "On three things the world stands: on the Torah, on the service (Avodah) and on acts of kindness". You should know that this world G-d created cannot possibly stand on its own. Rather, [it stands] only through G-d. For everything is from Him.

Three things are needed for the world for it to receive existence (kiyum) and standing from G-d.

(1) (acts of kindness) - (after creation) the world still needs His goodness and kindness, namely, His influence (hashpa). For after it was created, the world still needs its maintenance and continued existence from Him.

(2) (Avodah) - Furthermore, it is a continuance of existence (kiyum) to the world when it is created for serving G-d. For if it were not created for the honor of G-d, and it were not entirely dedicated to

G-d, then it would not have been worthy of being created... But in this that it was created to serve G-d, it is all entirely dedicated to G-d. Through this, it has existence. For through this, it does not go outside of G-d, since it was created to serve Him.

(3) (Torah) - Another thing which is a continuance of existence (kiyum) to the world is the wholeness (shelemut) of the world. Namely, that it not be a tohu (formless, insignificant) existence and one deficient. For then, it would not at all have been worthy of existence.

Through these three things the world stands. Namely, it was created to serve G-d (Avodah). It is a whole creation and not deficient (Torah). And when G-d bestows His kindness and goodness (which happens measure for measure when humans do kindness to each other)...

Torah: the wholeness (shelemut/perfection) of the world is for the torah. This was hinted in the verse "Yom HaShishi.." ("the sixth day..." Gen.1:). Our sages said:

"there was evening and there was morning, THE sixth day" (Gen.1:31) - What is the purpose of the additional word 'the'? This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, stipulated with the Works of Creation and said: 'If Israel accepts the Torah, you shall exist; but if not, I will turn you back into emptiness and formlessness'" (Shab.88b).

This is because if the world did not have the torah, it would not have any significance whatsoever due to its pettiness. For why would G-d busy Himself with such a petty world? Without torah, the world would have been "emptiness and formlessness", without any substance. Therefore, the world would have completely gone back to "emptiness and formlessness", if not for the torah which is the importance and supernal virtue in the world. Through this, the world is worthy of creation. Thus, the torah is a pillar of the world as we explained.

Avodah: also for this the world was created - to serve G-d. This is what they said: "without the ma'amadoth (part of the temple service), the heaven and earth could not have endured" (Megilah 31b).

The explanation is that Avraham knew that the world was created only for G-d, as written: "the L-ord made everything for His praise" (Mishlei 16:4). For nothing is worthy of existence unless it is for G-d. Thus, everything is for G-d. This was explained by the sages:

"Everything that the Holy One, Blessed be He, created in this world, He created only for His honor, as it says (Isaiah 43:7): 'Every one that is called by My name, and whom I have created for My honor, I have formed it, I have made it'" (Avot 6:11).

For if it is for itself, then ch"v, there is something besides G-d. But if it exists for G-d's glory, i.e., to serve Him, in this it is *"for His praise"*.

Thus they said "Avodah". For in this serving of G-d, the world is not something by itself, whereby we would say there is something else besides G-d. For a servant has no existence by himself. The servant's existence is entirely for his master. When one is a servant to someone, he has no name of his own. Therefore, Avodah is the second pillar. Thus, automatically when people do not serve G-d and they stray away from Him, they are deserving of destruction and annihilation from the world. For they were created only for His honor, to serve Him.

When G-d answered Avraham that He will not destroy them. Avraham replied: "with what will I know" (Gen.15:8). For it is not at all conceivable that they should sin and not be destroyed, since

from the beginning, the world was created only to serve Him. On this G-d answered that He enacted for them the Korbanot (temple offerings) through which they will receive atonement for their sins and which are also service of G-d that the world was created for.

He also stated "acts of kindness". Because besides all this, without the kindness of G-d, the world could not endure at all. For they need His kindness and all the more so for their livelihood. In His kindness, G-d provides for all and bestows to all. Therefore, the mishna says: "acts of kindness". For when human beings do acts of kindness in this world, G-d also directs the world with kindness and bestows kindness to them. Thus, if there is no kindness in the world, it cannot endure...

THIRD EXPLANATION - the three forefathers

Summary of Third Explanation

- The three forefathers are fathers of the world, thus they are pillars for each of these three things
- Kindness - Avraham, Avodah - Yitzchak, Torah - Yaakov

Know that for these three things, torah, Avodah, and acts of kindness, just like they are pillars of the world, so too, they were granted to the three forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, who are also foundations and fathers of the world. Thus, it is proper for them to have these three things which are foundations and pillars of the world.

You will find "acts of kindness" was the trait of Avraham, as written in the torah. He would perform all acts of kindness with great zeal, namely, receiving guests...

Yitzchak merited the trait of Avodah. For he offered himself up on the altar. And in the midrash:

"the day Avraham placed his son on the altar, G-d enacted the two daily offerings in the temple. Why all this? When the Jewish people offer the daily tamid offerings on the altar and read the verses, G-d recalls the binding of Yitzchak, son of Avraham.." (Vayikra Rabba 2). We learn from here that the temple service to G-d was due to the binding of Yitzchak...

Yaakov had the trait of torah as written: "an innocent man who sits in tents" (Gen.25:27), and as our sages said "I dwelled with (the wicked) Lavan and nevertheless guarded the 613 commandments". Thus, Yaakov had the trait of torah.

If you ask: "Avraham also guarded the torah as written: 'because Abraham hearkened to My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My torahs' (Gen.26:5), and our sages expounded this (Yoma 28b): 'that Avraham fulfilled even the (small) mitzvah of eiruv tavshilin'".

Answer: there is a difference. For Avraham guarded the torah in deed. But torah study was specially to Yaakov. For specifically regarding him, it was written: "sits in tents", which refers to torah study. Furthermore, although Avraham guarded the torah, we don't find it was given to the Jewish people in his merit, as we find by Yaakov, as written: "And He established testimony in Jacob, and He set down a Torah in Israel" (Tehilim 78:5) - for Yaakov and Yisrael the torah was given. You can understand this also from: "give truth to Yaakov, kindness to Avraham" (Micha 7:20), and "torah of truth was on his mouth" (Malachi 2:6). Thus, the torah was specifically to Yaakov...

FOURTH EXPLANATION - the three foundations stand on these three things

⋮ *Translator:* note that in Midrashic literature, the world is viewed as being constructed of four basic elements: earth, water, air and fire (Bamidbar Raba end of 14:12; Zohar 1:27a, ⋮

2:23b-24b; Tikunei Zohar intro; Sefer Yetzirah Ch. 3; Ramban Bereishit 1:1; Etz Chaim kitzur aby'a ch.10.

Modern science has combined everything with $E=mc^2$ but this is because the scientists focus only on physical phenomena they can measure with physical instruments. But the earth, water, air, fire system incorporates the spiritual roots as well. This is why there are four types of creations in our world (inanimate, plant, animal, human), four dimensions 3D+time, four levels of soul in humans, and many other interesting things. Ultimately, they are aligned with the four mystical worlds and ultimately rooted in the four letter Name of G-d. Back to the Maharal...

These explanations we presented go out and branch out from the true explanation in this mishna from the depths of wisdom. You already know that the foundations of the world are three. They are called "Emesh" (aleph-mem-shin) in the Sefer Yetzira, namely, water, air, and fire.

The foundations are always three. The fourth one, earth, is not mentioned, for a reason known to the understanding person. These three foundations mentioned by the Sefer Yetzira are the supernal foundations, called "Emesh", which are the foundations of everything. From them, everything was created as explained there.

These three foundations connect to G-d through these three things in the mishna. He is the foundation of all, and through this, the world stands on its existence through G-d.

For the torah is a ruach chachma u'binah (a spirit/wind of wisdom and understanding). The Avodah is fire. Thus it is called everywhere, such as "My offerings, My bread for My fires" (Bamidbar 28:2), and "a fire offering, a pleasing fragrance to the L-ord" (Vayikra 1:9). This is well known. The shechita (slaughtering) of the animals is specifically in the north. For from there is the trait of fire (in kabala).

Acts of kindness is the trait of water, as written: "Send forth your bread upon the surface of the water" (Kohelet 11:1), and "Fortunate are you who sow by all waters" (Isaiah 32:20), which our sages taught refers to acts of kindness (Bava Kama 17a).. and it is known that a kind man bestows to another like water bestows (to the soil).

Therefore, they said: "on three things the world stands". For this world which is founded on the three foundations we mentioned connects to Him, blessed be He, through these three things.

The foundation of ruach (wind) is connected to torah, which is a ruach (spirit). The foundation of water is connected to acts of kindness, the trait of water. The foundation of fire is connected to the Avodah which is fire. Through these three things [in the mishna] each of which connects to one foundation, together, they connect to G-d, blessed be He. For the torah, Avodah, and acts of kindness have a connection to G-d, so that everything is connected to G-d. Thus, without a doubt, these three things are the pillars of the world.

The verse hints at this: "*G-d (E-I), G-d (Elokim) the L-ord (Hash-em), spoke and called to the earth*" (Tehilim 50:1), i.e. He called the earth to stand before Him, as written: "*Even My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand measured the heavens with handbreadths; I call them, they stand together*" (Isaiah 48:13). For this world which has the 3 foundations is connected to these three holy Names through these three things mentioned in the mishna, namely, torah, avodah, and acts of kindness. The verse stated two holy Names (E-I, Elokim) before the special Name (Ha-Shem, the Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh). The reason being in order to put it next to the [word] earth. For this Name stands up the earth first.

The verse stated the Name E-I, which is the attribute of kindness, as our sages said "E-I, this is the attribute of kindness, as written: '*E-li, E-li why did you abandon me*' (Tehilim 22:1), i.e. to the attribute of justice".

The foundation of water connects to this Name through acts of kindness. We already said that kindness is the trait of water.

The verse stated the Name Elokim. The foundation of fire connects to this Name through the Avodah. For the Avodah is from the side of Din (justice), which is the Name Elokim. The Korbanot (offerings) are called "Ishai" (My fires) in the torah..

The verse stated the Name of Ha-Shem (Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh). For the foundation of Ruach (wind/spirit) connects to this Name through Torah, which was given through this Name. It was made known to Moshe the receiver of the torah.

Thus it has been explained what the mishna stated that the world stands on three things.. Understand these things very well. For everything we stated is the explanation of the mishna. It all goes to one place and comes from the same root.

FINAL WORDS

You should understand that the words of Shimon Hatzadik, who was the remnant of the men of the great assembly, are connected with the words of the men of the great assembly (previous mishna). For they came to rectify the torah (study/clarity), mishpatim (laws), and mitzvot, all of which are relevant to the torah, so that it won't fall, as we explained earlier. On the other hand, Shimon Hatzadik came to rectify the world so it won't fall, as he said 'on three things the world stands..'. And the level of torah is above and precedes the level of the world.

When you understand the words of Shimon Hatzadik, you will know and understand that these things he said are similar to the words of the men of the great assembly. For he was also a remnant of them. They said three things: "*be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples and make a fence for the Torah*". Corresponding to "be deliberate in judgment", Shimon Hatzadik said "on the Avodah". Because Avodah and Din are connected to each other. This is what they said: "to teach that the Sanhedrin must be placed next to the Altar [of the temple in Jerusalem]" (Sanhedrin 7b).

Shimon Hatzadik said "torah" corresponding to "raise up many disciples", and "acts of kindness" corresponding to "make a fence for the torah". For the fence one accepts on himself to do is beyond what the letter of the law obligates. Likewise they said:

"The ministering angels said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, in Your Torah it is written: "The great, mighty and awesome G-d who favors no one and takes no bribe" (Deuteronomy 10:17), yet You, nevertheless, show favor to Israel, as it is written: "The L-ord shall show favor to you and give you peace" (Numbers 6:26). He replied to them: And how can I not show favor to Israel, as I wrote for them in the Torah: "And you shall eat and be satisfied, and bless the L-ord your G-d" (Devarim 8:10), meaning that there is no obligation to bless the L-ord until one is satiated; yet they are exacting with themselves to recite Grace after Meals even if they have eaten as much as an olive-size or an egg-size. Since they go beyond the requirements of the law, they are worthy of favor" (Berachot 20a).

That is to say: because they enter and go beyond what the letter of the law obligates, therefore I too will enter and go with them beyond what justice obligates. For a person should make a fence

for the torah even though he is not obligated according to the letter of the law.

We explained earlier that the men of the great assembly included in their mussar teaching a thing, namely, Din ("be deliberate in judgment"), and the thing which is its opposite, namely, "make a fence for the Torah", and a thing which is intermediate between them, namely, "raise up many disciples".

Everything was to rectify man in all, whether from the side of Din or its opposite, or the intermediate between them. Thus are most of the mussar in this tractate. So too for the words of Shimon HaTzadik when you understand the explanation above. For these things Shimon HaTzadik stated correspond to the foundations Alef-Mem-Shin, whereby water is opposite to fire and air is intermediate between them, and there is very great wisdom in this. So too for the other explanations we brought... Understand this very well for it is the true explanation of the words of the men of the great assembly and of Shimon HaTzadik.

Chapter 1 Mishna 3 - Be Like Servants

Antigonos of Sokho received [the Tradition] from Shimon **אֲנְטִיגוֹנוֹס אִישׁ סוֹכּוֹ קִבֵּל מִשְׁמֵעוֹן הַצְּדִיק**. HaTzadik (the Righteous). He would say, "Do not be as **הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אֶל תְּהִי כְעֹבְדֵי הַמַּשְׁמֵשִׁין** servants who serve their master in order to receive reward; **אֶת הָרַב עַל מְנַת לְקַבֵּל פְּרָס, אֲלֵא הוּוּ** rather, be as servants who serve their master not in order to **מְנַת עַל מְנַת לְקַבֵּל פְּרָס, וַיְהִי מוֹרָא שָׁמַיִם עֲלֵיכֶם** receive reward; and may the fear of Heaven be upon you."

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "*reward (Peras)*" - "peras" this refers to what a person gives to someone who served him but he is not legally obligated to pay him anything. For example what a person gives to his young son or his servant due to being pleased with something he did for him. Thus, do not serve G-d even for hope of such a gift. Rather, solely out of love.

"*fear of Heaven upon you*" - even though you serve out of love, also serve out of fear. For one who serves out of love is quick in the positive commandments, while one who serves out of fear is careful in the negative commandments. Thus, his service will be whole. Likewise our sages said: "serve out of love, serve out of fear. For if you verge on hating, know that you [must] love and one who loves does not hate. Serve out of fear for if you verge on rebelling, know that you [must] fear and one who fears does not rebel."

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - one should not do the mitzvot for the reward even though he should think that there will be reward for his service... but man should serve G-d due to the kindness G-d bestowed on him already and because of the exaltedness of the Master, that it is befitting to serve Him... This is to serve G-d out of love and fear. As a servant who serves his master due to his greatness and also considers that the master is capable of punishing him. Thus he serves him with fear, not fear of punishment but fear of the greatness of the master who has the ability to punish.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - i.e. do not observe your three duties mentioned previously (torah, service, and acts of kindness) like a servant of lowly character traits who seeks reward for every little act of service he does for his master. For then, his intent is only for himself. Rather, consider yourself like a pierced servant (eved nirtza, see Exodus 21:6) whose body is acquired by his master (gufo kanui l'rabo). How then could he be so brazen to seek reward? Also consider as if all your service is just a small service and is not worthy of any reward.

Q Level 3

Zerah Yitzchak

Zerah Yitzchak - "*fear of Heaven upon you*" - as written (Ketubot 111a):

"'but you who cleave to the L-ord are all alive this day' (Devarim 4:4) - but is it possible to cling to the Shechina (Divine Presence)? Is it not written 'the L-ord your G-d is a consuming fire' (Devarim 4:24)..."

For this fear should befall a person. This is why one recites before every mitzva the "I'shem Kudsha Berich Hu, u'Shechintei b'Dechilu u'Rechimu.." (for the unification of the Holy One.. and the Shechina.. with fear and love...)

For when performing a mitzva, one is clinging to the Shechina (Divine presence), and it is proper for fear and awe to befall him, lest he transgress a bit and the great fire consumes him, as the zohar writes on the verse: "ve hachayot ratzo vshav (the Chayot angels would run and return, like

the appearance of lightning)" (Yechezkel 1:14) - Zohar: "they yearn to look above and go out of their place. But they are unable to bear the intense light. Thus they run (ratzo) above and immediately return (shav) due to fear of the great fire."

So too, a man should have intent when doing a mitzva that it be with fear and love (b'rechimu ub'dechilu). And the reason he used the term "Heaven" for G-d's Name. This is because the fear here is not fear of punishment, but rather, fear from the aspect of G-d's greatness. The term Heaven teaches this. For the heaven teaches on His greatness and power in creating the heavens and vast celestial spheres, moving them without pause..

It is said of this fear: *"the fear of G-d is pure enduring forever"* (Tehilim 19:9). For the fear of punishment, suffering, poverty, death, etc., is destined to be annulled in the future. For there will be liberation from death, governments, etc. There will be no Satan nor bad mishaps. But the inner fear due to G-d's greatness will exist in the future and more, when one beholds His greatness and Almighty power.

Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - "and may the fear of Heaven be upon you" - the term "Peras" was used and not "reward" or "good", since "Peras" connotes "half", such as "your kingdom has been split and given to Madai and Persia" (Daniel 5:28)..

Some conduct themselves in fear of Heaven in the manner of a man with his wallet of money. It is hidden away in his pocket and he does not see it every second. Only when he needs to purchase an object or purchase food from the shop. But after purchasing the thing he becomes obligated to pay and the seller claims from him the money, he then takes out the wallet from his pocket and uses it to pay his debt.

So too here. The man does not remember his fear of Heaven always and he does not place it before his eyes. Only after he transgressed and stumbled in a sin, the fear rouses in his heart. For he is worried perhaps he will be punished. Then he does teshuva (repentance) on his sin. This is not the way "to the abode of light" (Job 38:19). Rather, the fear needs to be placed upon him, like a garment that he wears on his body. Every second he sees it and does not forget it momentarily (mesiach daat).

On this [fear] Rebbi Meir says in the Beraitha of Avot regarding learning torah lishma: "it clothes him with humility and fear", through this: "it makes him fit to be righteous, pious, correct and faithful". On this it is written: "I put on righteousness and it clothed me" (Job 29:14). For fear is termed with the name "tzedeq" (righteousness) as known. This is what he said here specifically: "and may the fear of Heaven be upon you". That it be visible to your eyes like a garment over you. Not like a wallet of money hidden in your pocket which you do not see, except when you need to pay to your debtors.

Level 3

Chida

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - there are some people with fear [of Heaven] who refrain from a forbidden thing and are careful to do mitzvot, but do this only when the refraining from the forbidden or the doing of the mitzva does not run counter to their temperament and nature. But if the thing runs against their nature, they will not fulfill them and will transgress the forbidden or not fulfill the positive commandments.

Certainly, there is not fear of Heaven in this. For fear of Heaven needs to be whole, without difference whether or not things run against one's nature. This kind of whole fear you will find in the Heaven as our sages said on the verse "who makes peace on high (oseh shalom b'imromav)"

regarding the fire and water which comprise the Heaven which make peace against their nature to fulfill the decree of the Creator... (note that this refers to deep spiritual matters of kindness versus justice, i.e. chesed and din)

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - we have already explained that since these men were fathers of the world and the greatest [torah sages] of their times, they would teach mussar (ethics) to the world. And the level of their mussar teaching was according to their level of greatness. For the mussar said by Shimon HaTzadik encompassed the whole world, as he taught: "on three things the world stands.." Thus too is the mussar of Antigonus Ish Socho. For his words are on the service of G-d and without a doubt, the service of G-d encompasses all of man's actions. Because all of a man's actions should be directed towards the service of G-d. Therefore, he said: "Do not be as servants who serve their master in order to receive reward.. and may the fear of Heaven be upon you". We will also explain the order of Antigonus after Shimon HaTzadik.

It is often asked on this:

how could he possibly say: "Do not be as servants who serve their master in order to receive reward". Isn't the whole torah full of this? - "in order that it be good for you" (Devarim 22:7), "in order that your days be lengthened" (Shemot 20:12), and many other places. Furthermore, we learned:

"One who says: 'I hereby give this money to Tzedakah (charity) in order that my son may live' or 'in order that I merit a share in the World-to-Come', is considered a complete Tzadik (righteous person)" (Rosh Hashana 4). How then can he say: "rather, be as servants who serve their master not in order to receive reward.."?

Another difficulty: he said "rather, be as servants..." Who are these servants who do not serve on condition to receive reward? He should have just said: "do not serve to receive reward.."

Another difficulty: why did he say: "fear of Heaven upon you", and not "fear of HaMakom (the Place) upon you" or "fear of the Holy One, blessed be He, upon you".

The explanation of this teaching is that certainly the primary service is for one to serve G-d out of love. And if he does serve for the reward, this is not the primary service of G-d.

But nevertheless, even if he serves for the future reward, he is a complete tzadik. For the good of the Jewish people is G-d's will, blessed be He. Thus, that which he said "to be in the World-to-Come" - this is G-d's will.

The explanation [of "he is a complete tzadik"] is not that he is a big tzadik. But rather, that he is a tzadik without deficiency and without added piety (bli Tosefet Chasidut).

But the higher trait is for one to be called: he who serves completely out of love, i.e. one who is completely devoid of this [trait] of: "serving on condition of receiving reward".

They said thus explicitly in the first chapter of tractate Avodah Zara (19a):

"'He delights greatly in His mitzvot' (Tehilim 112:1) Rabbi Elazar says: The person delights in His mitzvot themselves and not in the reward for performing His mitzvot. And this is as we learned in a mishna (Avot 1:3): 'Antigonus of Sokho would say: Do not be like servants who serve their master in order to receive reward; rather, be like servants who serve their master not in order to receive reward'"

Thus, it is clear that the primary mitzva is for one to yearn for His mitzvot. On this David said: "fortunate is the man..." (Tehilim 1:1). That is to say, he is the most fortunate when he desires G-d's mitzvot and not their reward. But nevertheless, he is a tzadik even if he serves in order to be in the world to come. The torah spoke of such a tzadik and therefore said: "in order that it be good for you" (Devarim 22:7).

Alternatively, one can also explain that the verse is not saying to make the good, i.e. the reward, as one's goal. Rather, the verse means that thus it will be, that the good will come from G-d. But not that one should serve the Holy One, blessed be He, for this good. Rather, the main service is for one to serve G-d out of love and to not have any objective for receiving reward. Only that the reward comes from G-d by itself. Thus, the intent of "in order that it be good for you" (Devarim 22:7), is not that you should do the mitzvot for this... but rather that this follows from Him. This is a clear explanation - that it is not proper for the primary service to be in order to receive reward.

Regarding that which he did not say: "serve out of love", this is because it would not have implied that one should love G-d due to His own intrinsic aspect instead of [loving G-d] from the aspect of the good He bestowed to him or will bestow to him.

It would only have implied that whoever G-d has bestowed good to, he should love Him and serve Him. For that is also a form of love, namely that he loves G-d because of the good He bestowed to him.

Therefore Antignos said that one should serve G-d not on condition of receiving reward. For this is not the primary service. Although he is certainly and clearly a complete Tzadik when he serves G-d for the good He bestowed on him or will bestow on him. But the primary service is for one to love G-d and desire to do His commandments. In this, one clings to G-d from His own aspect.. For the primary love [of G-d] is when one loves G-d from G-d's own aspect, namely, when he recognizes G-d's greatness and exaltedness, and that He is Truth and His commandments are Truth.

Therefore, one loves to do His commandments. This is certainly greater than one who serves G-d [only out of gratitude] for good He bestowed to him or will bestow to him...

"may the fear of Heaven be upon you" - after he exhorted on love, he also exhorted on fear. This is because it is the way that when one loves another, his heart cleaves to him and this causes an annulment of fear. For it is proper for a man to be fearful and moved upon hearing the Name of G-d uttered, due to fear [of G-d].

Therefore, Antignos said that even though I have exhorted you on love of G-d, do not consider G-d to be your beloved which you are casual with. Rather, consider it as if G-d is in the heavens while you are on the land. Thus you should regard it - the Holy One, blessed be He, is in the heaven and you are on the earth. Through this, fear of heaven will be upon you and the love will not annul the fear. Thus, he said "fear of Heaven" and not "fear of HaMakom (the Place)".

Thus, regarding fear it says "fear of Heaven", but regarding love it does not say "love of Heaven". For regarding fear, one needs to consider that the Holy One, blessed be He, is completely remote from Him. But regarding love, one needs to consider that he is clinging to Him, blessed be He, as written: "to love the L-rd, your G-d.. and to cleave to Him" (Devarim 11:22)..

We already said that this teaching is proper for Antignos since it encompasses all of the service of G-d, [establishing it] with proper love and fear. This teaching comes after Shimon Hatzadik who

gave pillars to the whole world. Now the mishna comes to give a man, who exists in the world, how he should conduct himself towards his Creator, through love and fear. For the world was created for man, so that he may serve his Creator, and the service is through love and fear.

This teaching is certainly proper to be given by Antigonus. For he is one person in place of two (subsequent mishnas are taught by pairs of sages). Because the primary love and fear stem from the same root (recognizing G-d's greatness and exaltedness as before). For a man needs to love G-d and fear Him. This is proper for man. It is not proper for him to fear without love or love without fear. For some acts have love alone while others have fear alone. But the man himself should have both love and fear simultaneously. Thus, for Antigonus who comes to exhort on both love and fear, it is proper for him to be alone, without a pair. But for the pairs of sages who came afterwards, one comes to exhort on an act which has love alone, while the other exhorts on an act which has fear alone, as will be explained. Always one exhorts on an act which has love while the other exhorts on an act which has fear.

Level 4

Chida

Chida - Roshei Avot - in the Likutei Rabeinu Chaim Vital he writes: the other sages were pairs. Yehoshua ben Perachya was the Nassi in the Sod of Chasadim (side of kindness [right line in the Sefirot]). Therefore, he said a positive commandment: "make yourself a Rav, acquire for yourself a friend and judge every person as meritorious". All positive commands from the Chasadim (kindness).

Nitai HaArbeli was the Av Beit Din (head judge) in the Sod HaGevurot (secret of justice, left line of the Sefirot). Therefore, he said a negative command: "Distance yourself from a bad neighbor, do not join a wicked person and do not despair from retribution", in the Sod HaGevurot.

But Shimon HaTzadik was in the Sod of Yesod, which is by itself (middle line of Sefirot, which is why he was called "tzadik" which corresponds to Yesod). Thus he was the remnant who collected all the Chasadim which collect there in the Sefira of Yesod. He continued there to explain the whole mishna kabalistically. That which he said they are pairs afterwards, the intent is after Antigonus who received from Shimon HaTzadik. and that which he said regarding the Nassi and Av Beit Din, you will see that almost all of the pairs afterwards are in this same way.



Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - (Kabalistic) "in order to receive reward (Peras)" - the term "Peras" was used and not "reward" or "good", since "Peras" connotes "half", such as "your kingdom has been split (Peras) and given to Madai and Persia" (Daniel 5:28)..

For the three worlds Beriah, Yetzira, and Asiya contain a mixture of evil. Thus, the good in them is not whole since they have a mixture of impurity. Thus it is "Peras" (half), and man needs to serve Hash-em, blessed be He, in order to receive Shefa (divine flow) from the Atzilut (fourth world), of which it is written: "evil does not abide with You" (Tehilim 5:4, a reference to Atzilut). For it is the complete good.

Level 4

Chida

Chida - Chasdei Avot - (Kabalistic) "and may the fear of Heaven be upon you" (vivi morah shamayim) - the Sofei Tevot (final letter of each word) is gematria 91, same as Havaya-Ado'nai, to hint that everything should be l'shem Kudsha beruch Hu u'Shechintei (the Holy One, blessed be He and His Shechina).

 Level 4
Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - (kabalistic) - Since Shimon Hatzadik said above that one needs to toil in torah, Avodah, and acts of kindness for these are the *kiyum* (existence/maintenance) of the world, as mentioned. Now Antignos comes to teach the manner of toiling in torah and mitzvot and the *kavana* (intent) in doing them. He said: "do not be as servants..." The explanation is as follows.

We already mentioned briefly earlier that there is no *yichud* (unification) above (in the mystical worlds) except through the actions of the righteous Jews (below), through toil in torah and mitzvot, and in Tefila (prayer).

Even if all the angels above and all the hosts of the heavens and all existing beings were to join together in a combined effort, nevertheless, they would not have the ability to do anything whatsoever except through the deeds of those below (humans), through their divine service, as mentioned in the Zohar (Teruma 155a, Acharei Mot 66, see also what Rabeinu wrote in Chesed l'Avraham Meain Rishon, Nahar 6).

And according to the amount of *hitorerut* (rousing) and *hechsher* (correctness) of the deed and *kavana* (intent) will be the corresponding widening of the *tzinor* (spiritual channel) and the shining of the *shefa elyon* (divine flow). For one who has intent for the *pshat* (plain meaning) of the words in his prayer is not like one who has intent for the *Sod* (mystical meaning).

Now, those who toil in torah, tefila, and mitzvot are of two types. Those whose service and toil in torah and mitzvot is in the way of "pshat" (plain meaning) of the words. These people are called "serving in order to receive reward". For one who did not study in the way of *Sod* (Kabalistic), even if he is perfect in his service, serving out of love and without any outside motive whatsoever, serving out of great love of G-d's lofty greatness, and his motive is not for any reward whatsoever. Rather his intent is absolutely perfect.

But nevertheless, he will always be referred to: "one who serves in order to receive reward". For when he prays to his Master or takes a lulav or brings an offering in the temple, etc. likewise, when he says "refaenu Hash-em veNerafe" ("heal us and we will be healed" in the Amida), or the like, all his intent is according to the meaning of the words he is uttering.

If he says "bless for us this year" ("barech aleinu.."), or "heal us..", etc., all his intent is for his own benefit, to *mashpia* (bring down) great good to the world. The more he increases and exerts himself in intent of his prayer, the more he is asking for a bigger reward from his Master, blessings, life, peace, etc., as it says "remember us for life" (*zachrenu l'chaim..*) Likewise, for his intent when shaking the Lulav to "stop bad dew" (*l'atzor telalim ra-im*) (Sukkah 37b), or the like. Thus, he is always taking a reward from his Master, since he did not learn the *Sod* of the matter.

But one who serves not in order to receive reward, he is the one whom has been graced by his Master to enter inside the inner chambers of the hidden wisdom. He knows and understands that when he says "barech aleinu" or "refaeinu", the intent in them is to draw down *beracha* and *shefa* to a certain *Sefira*. each blessing for a particular *Sefira*, as known by us. Behold, such a man serves HaKadosh Baruch Hu u'Shechintei (the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Shechina), like a son or servant who serves his master perfectly, out of love, without hoping for any benefit from him.

"and may the fear of Heaven be upon you" We may say that there is a big difference between the act of one who possesses wisdom of *Sod* versus the act of an *Am Haaretz* (ignorant person). For

when the wise man has [kabalistic] intent in his prayer, his soul ascends through his rousing (hitoreruto) from level to level and from cause to cause until it reaches favorably and appears before its Master and clings to its Source, the Source of life.

Then G-d will (mashpia) send on him great shefa (divine flow) and he will be a vessel and receptacle for the flow and from there to all the worlds, as brought in the Zohar (Teruma 133, Reyah Mehemna 177), until he cleaves to the Shechina. This is the meaning of "and may the fear of Heaven be upon you". Namely, the light of the Shechina itself, it is called "fear of Heaven", it will rest on you and you will be a throne (Kiseh) for it, and the Shefa will flow to you as mentioned. For you are in place of the great tzinor (spiritual channel), in the place of the tzadik yesod olam.

But it is not so for one who has intent for the pshat (plain meaning) of the words and does not have intent in the way of Sod, as mentioned in the Zohar (Chukat 183b). He will not enter to see the face of the Shechina, and if he will be answered, it will be through an outside messenger for he is in hester panim (concealment).

Level 4

Chida

Chida - Marit HaAyin - if you will truly merit to serve not in order to receive reward, you will merit to the resting of the Shechina and the fear of Heaven will be upon you, and you will be a merkava (chariot) to the Shechina. Some explain this to mean be careful to serve not in order to receive reward. Perhaps you will say, chas v'shalom, that He needs our service. To this he answered: "may the fear of Heaven be upon you" - everything is for man's benefit. For if he merits to serve wholly and cleanly, not in order to receive reward, his reward will be multiplied over many times. Understand this well.

Level 4

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - in the zohar (I-11:2): "there are various forms of fear, but the primary fear is to fear G-d because He is great and sovereign (shalit), and He is the source and root of all worlds".

The explanation is as follows:

"fear G-d because He is great" - i.e. due to His greatness and glory.

"and sovereign" - due to his having dominion and power to punish and exact retribution to all.

"and He is the root and source of all the worlds" - the state of all the worlds depends on His will. He grants life to everything every second... Thus it is fitting to serve Him even without reward.

To illustrate, consider if a great king would pass through the town and the king asked those standing on the street: "give me a bit of water". Certainly, all the townsmen would run to fulfill his will. The man who merited to bring the water first would undoubtedly pride himself in this always, even though the king does not recognize him and the king is from another kingdom and has nothing to do with him...

But if the visitor were from his own country then even if he was not the king and was merely a general or minor ruler, then every person would hurry to serve him due to fear of him. And if the commander were his benefactor who provides his sustenance and livelihood, he would run even if the command was for the pettiest matter. And if the visitor combined all three matters, a great king, from his own kingdom, and provider of his sustenance, how much more so, is it proper for him to be watchful and energetic, fearful and careful, to fulfill his will..

This is the intent of the Zohar. The "primary fear is to fear G-d because He is great and sovereign, the root and source of all the worlds." (all 3 conditions)

Furthermore, consider that in a kingdom, whoever is closer to the king receives greater reward. The lowly slave receives far less wages than the officer in the king's inner circle who sits with the king and can look at his face. But this high pay is only if he were an important and honorable official before this.

Namely, that due to his exceptional wisdom or talents, he merited to be in the king's inner circle. But if previously he were a mere peasant farmer working the ground and suddenly he found favor in the eyes of the king, and the king elevated him above all his officers and appointed him to be among those who sit in his innermost circle, then there is no room whatsoever to be so brazen as to ask for more reward from the king for his work..

For this privilege is already the greatest possible... so too we thank and praise on every mitzva "who sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us", and as the Zohar writes that he is among those in the King's palace, and especially for those who toil in the Torah to guard it and fulfill it, whereby from every word is made a crown and garment to the Eternal King, so to speak, and he merits to be among the "sons of the King's palace"...

Thus one who seeks reward is like a peasant farmer invited to sit at the king's table and instead of basking in the king's presence, he focuses on the food on the table...

SERVING FOR REWARD IS ACTUALLY THE HIGHEST LEVEL

Nevertheless, on a deeper level, since G-d's primary intent in creation is to bestow good to his creations, then it follows that the highest and most accepted level of service is "on condition of receiving reward". For he is serving so that G-d will bestow good to him thereby granting gratification (nachat ruach) to G-d. In truth, if one has only this intent in his service, this is the lofty form of service. But if his intent is for his own benefit, then it is the lower form which we are exhorted against.

The test is if one were to tell him "serve so that your fellow will receive reward". For in the good of his fellow, G-d will also receive gratification. If he does not want this, but instead wants that the good be to specifically to himself, then his true desire is for his own benefit, not to fulfill G-d's will. But if he truly wants to serve in order that his fellow will receive good thereby granting gratification to G-d, then this Chasid (pious person) is performing the higher form of service which ascends above. For this was G-d's purpose in creation, to bestow good...

Chapter 1 Mishna 4 - Dust Of Feet

Yossei ben Yoezer of Tzreidah, and Yossei ben Yochanan of Jerusalem, received the tradition from them. Yossei ben Yoezer of Tzreidah would say: "May your house be a meeting place for the wise; become dusty in the dust of their feet, and drink thirstily their words".

יוֹסֵי בֶן יוֹעֶזֶר אִישׁ צִרְדָּה וְיוֹסֵי בֶן יוֹחָנָן אִישׁ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם קִבְּלוּ מֵהֶם. יוֹסֵי בֶן יוֹעֶזֶר אִישׁ צִרְדָּה אָמַר: יְהִי בֵיתְךָ בַּיַּת עֵד לְחֹכְמִים, וְהָיִי שׁוֹתֵהּ וְהָיִי מִתְאַבֵּק בְּעֶפְרַר רַגְלֵיהֶם, וְהָיִי שׁוֹתֵהּ בְּצִמְאָא אֶת דְּבָרֵיהֶם

Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "received the tradition from them" - from Shimon Hatzadik and Antignos. At first they learned from Shimon Hatzadik, and when he died they completed receiving the tradition from Antignos.

Level 1

Rashi

Rashi - "may your house be a meeting place for the wise" - to study [torah].

Level 2

Bartenura

Bartenura - when the sages want to get together, let your house be ready for this. So that they are used to saying: "let us get together in the house of ploni". For it is impossible for you to not learn some wise thing from them. The analogy is to one who enters a perfume store. Even though he buys nothing, it is impossible for him to not absorb some of the good fragrance.

Level 1

Vilna Gaon - "become dusty in the dust of their feet" - i.e. go always after them as written: "He who goes with the wise will become wise.." (Mishlei 13:20). The analogy where the dust remains on him. And in Avot d'Rebbi Natan: "sit before them on the ground and receive their words with awe, fear, trembling, and sweating", in the way our forefathers received the torah at Sinai, as written in Berachot (21b).

Level 2

Chida

Chida - Kikar laeden - "your house", i.e. your best and most important house give it to the sages to meet.. if you say, yes I want my house to be a meeting place for the torah sages. But nevertheless, I want them to honor me too. On this he wrote: "become dusty in the dust of their feet", it should not be for your honor. Rather, "become dusty in the dust of their feet", to serve them like a slave.. if you honor them thus, you will merit to learn from them and: "drink thirstily their words". For they are the words of the living G-d. From this you will realize that which you did to provide your house, it was for your own benefit. For the torah is your life.

Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - "your home" - i.e. let your home be in a neighborhood where there is a meeting place of sages (i.e. a torah community).

"become dusty in the dust of their feet" - even outside the batei midrash, as written by Elisha: "he got up and went after Elyahu" (Melachim-I 19:21) (one who walks behind others becomes dusty from the dust raised by their feet).

"drink thirstily their words" - even their mundane words, as our sages said: "even the mundane words of torah scholars needs study" (Avodah Zara 19b).

Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "drink thirstily their words" - this is as written: "A sated soul tramples honeycomb, but to a hungry soul all bitter is sweet" (Mishlei 27:7). He who is satiated from words of torah and his desire is not in them, even if he is told pearls of torah, his soul will trample it. But one who is hungry for them and lusts to hear them, even if he is told something [dry] without a reason, it will

be sweet to his palate and he will rejoice in it because he knows it is truth after his Rav said it.

Q Level 2

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "*become dusty (wrestle) in the dust of their feet*" - in the 48 ways through which the torah is acquired (chapter 6, mishna 6), one of them is: "making wise one's teacher", i.e. through his sharp questions which expand the matter. It is known that torah study is called war (milchama), as written: "milchamta shel torah (war of torah)" (Kidushin 30b). If so, the students are called warriors, and as our sages said:

"they shall not be shamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate' (Tehilim 127:5), even a father and son or a rabbi and his student, who are engaged in Torah together in one gate become enemies with each other due to the intensity of their studies.." (Kidushin 30b)

And it is forbidden for a student to accept the words of his Rabbi when he has questions on them. Sometimes, the truth will be with the student, and "as a small piece of wood kindles a big piece" (so too students ignite the wisdom of their Rabbi).

This is the meaning of: "*become dusty (hitavek, wrestle) in the dust of their feet*", from the word: "Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled (became dusty) with him until daybreak" (Gen.32:24), which is a matter of battling in war. For it is a war of mitzva. So too are we against our holy teachers (buried) in the land, whose souls are on high, the famous commentaries. Their books are with us. Behold, through the books in our homes, our homes are a "meeting place" to these sages. We have been exhorted and granted permission to wrestle and battle their words and answer their questions, not to favor any man, only to love the truth. But even so, one must be careful to not speak with arrogance when finding room to disagree.. Rather it needs to be with great humility. This is the meaning of "become dusty", as before. But on condition of "in the dust of their feet", i.e. with humility and submission, to judge before them on the ground.

Alternatively explanation, "dust yourself", even if you yourself don't understand and you are just dusting yourself with the dust of their feet, nevertheless, drink thirstily their words with great desire. For it is as one who enters a perfume store and absorbs the scent (even if he buys nothing).

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - We already explained why there was no pair with Antignos of Socho as there is from here onwards. Without a doubt, this is no coincidence. The explanation is that when the Tradition passed from Moshe to Yehoshua and from Yehoshua to the Elders, etc., the latter was always on a lower level (of wisdom) than the former.

AFTER ANTIGNOS, THE TRADITION IS NO LONGER IN EACH SAGE SEPARATELY

It was not proper for the Tradition (Oral Law) to go from the "men of the great assembly" to the pairs because they are so far apart from each other. For during the pairs [of sages], the Tradition was not entirely in the hands of each one. Rather, it was in both of them together. This was unlike the Elders and Prophets. Even though they were many, the Tradition was entirely in the hands of each individual. For it does not mention how many elders or prophets so that you could deduce that the Tradition was in all of them together, as it mentions the pairs by name. This teaches that [for the pairs] the Tradition was combined in both of them together (not in each individual separately as was the case for Antignos and before him).

But the Elders, Prophets, and "men of the great assembly" were not mentioned by name. This is because the Torah Tradition was in the hands of each and every individual sage. This is why the mussar given by the "men of the great assembly" was stated in plural tense: "be deliberate in

judgment" ("be" is in plural tense in hebrew). Likewise for the mussar of Antignos: "do not be like servants.." (plural tense in hebrew). But the mussar of the pairs is given in singular tense "let your house.." (singular tense in hebrew).

The reason for the plural tense (of Antignos, Shimon Hatzadik, etc.) is because there is no one with him (for he has the entire tradition in his hands). Therefore, he speaks in plural tense just like he is considered (important) as many.

But for the pairs whereby each one was not by himself and he did not have everything (i.e. the entire Oral Law), thus, the plural tense was not used, only the singular tense, just like he was a single person (i.e. not important enough to be in plural tense since he did not have the whole Oral Law).

RECTIFICATION OF ONE'S HOME

We already mentioned that the mussar is according to the greatness of the sage. Yossi ben Yoezer comes to exhort on a man's home, where he lives, that there should be wisdom there. Without a doubt, it is of great primary importance that the place where one lives should be a holy place of G-d. For a man is always there, and when his home is on a high level, it is considered that he has a great and high level. We will explain later that he is coming to rectify man's home in the service of G-d, especially in love and fear of G-d.

We already said that Antignos rectified man himself. But man is not alone. For he needs a home, wife, and children. This pair (of sages) are coming to rectify the home he needs with love and fear. Thus, he said: "May your house be a meeting place for the wise". Namely, that there be Chachamim (torah scholars) inside his home. This is a great Shelemut (perfection), to have one's home in use by Chachamim.

He said: "become dusty in the dust of their feet". That is to say, he should not consider them as (equal) friends. For in this, he would be diminishing the virtue of wisdom since he is not yet a Chacham like them. Rather, he should connect with them, namely, lower himself under their feet. This is the meaning of "become dusty in the dust of their feet", which is their lowness (shiflutam) until he connects to their lowest part. Thus, he should mitavek (dust himself) with them to lower himself completely until he connects to their lowness (shiflutam).

This is proper because the intellect (sechel) is also separate (nivdal), and if he connects to the wise man like two friends, the chacham will not be by him at the level of Intellect which is separate (nivdal). [So too] he should not be totally separate from the Talmid Chacham, for then the talmid chacham would not be to him as the level of intellect is inside man.

Because the intellect in man is as a human being inside a house. The human is the intellect whereas the physical body is as the house. The intellect is separate (nivdal) from man. Only that man has a connection with the intellect, and through this, man is mitavek (dusts himself) with the intellect.

Thus he should relate with the talmid chacham in his house. Namely, that the talmid chacham be inside his house but that he not have a full connection to them, only "become dusty in the dust of their feet". It is proper to conduct oneself thus, just like for one's own intellect, where it is separate from man and he does not have a full connection with it. It is only found inside him. Understand this.

"drink thirstily their words" - the explanation is that just like the intellect completes (mashlim) a man, and when there is no intellect inside man, he is lacking. Hence, through the intellect man becomes complete.

Therefore so too, "drink thirstily their words". For the man who does not drink will be lacking, and if he drinks he will be complete. Therefore, (if his body lacks water) he drinks thirstily. He is very eager to fill his lacking, and all the time he is lacking, he is not in a good state. Therefore, drink thirstily their words also. For in the talmid chacham is the completion (hashlama) of men, just like the intellect is the completion of man, and when he does not have intellect, he is lacking.

Yossi ben Yoezer taught and exhorted a man on rectifying his home, that it be a house of wisdom, and that there be wise men there.

This is proper for one's home. Since, it is proper for one's home to resemble the "home" of the body. For man's body also receives the intellect. The intellect dwells in man and resides within him. Therefore, if a man wants to rectify his home so that it be proper, let his home be a "meeting place for the wise".

For all these things are also found in the intellect. The intellect is separate from man, but it has an existence within him. Corresponding to this: "may your house be a meeting place for the wise; become dusty in the dust of their feet". For this teaches on the talmid chacham, the intellect, being separate, only that he has an "existence connection" (keshar metziut) since the talmid chacham is in his home. This is only an "existence connection" (keshar metziut). For the talmid chacham is with him. But it is not a complete mixing and joining. All this follows from the way the intellect exists inside man as we explained. And because the intellect completes a man, therefore, he should also drink their words thirstily. For this shows he receives completion (hashlama) from the talmid chacham. It is proper to understand this.

Chapter 1 Mishna 5 - Home Open Wide

Yossei ben Yochanan of Jerusalem would say: "Let your home be open wide, and let the poor be members of your household. And do not converse excessively with a woman." This was said regarding one's own wife; all the more so regarding the wife of another. From here the sages said: "whoever converses excessively with a woman causes evil to himself, neglects the study of Torah, and in the end inherits Gehinom".

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 זמן שאדם מרבה שיחה עם האשה, גורם רעה לעצמו, ובוטל מדברי תורה, וסופו יירש גיהנום.

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "let your home be open wide" - as much as you can to the poor and to the rich, so that whoever seeks help whether physical, financial, advice, etc., will find it in your home.

"do not converse excessively.." - do not speak to her too much regarding the guests for "a woman is more stingy with guests than a man" (Bava Metzia 87a).

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "let your home be open wide" - like the house of Avraham, peace be unto him, which was open from all four directions so that guests would not need to go around it to find the entrance.

"let the poor be members of your household" - instead of buying servants to serve you. Better that Jews benefit from your property than the cursed seed of Canaan.

"do not converse excessively.." - as our sages expounded on the verse: "Who declares to man his speech" (Amos 4:13) - even casual talk between a man and his wife is related to a man at the time of judgment" (Chagiga 5b).. Another explanation, when a man tells his wife his happenings, such and such happened with so and so, she incites him to start an argument. For example by Korah, when he told her what Moshe did in lifting and waving the Leviim, and through her words, she brought him to start a dispute with Moshe. Alternatively, when her husband tells her how so and so disrespected him and embarrassed him, she will also scorn her husband in her heart. Thus he brought evil unto himself.

"neglects the study of Torah" - he is drawn after idle talk and does not study torah.

Q Level 1

Rambam

Rambam - "whoever converses excessively with a woman causes evil to himself" - he will acquire lowly traits, namely great lust.

Q Level 1

Ahava b'Taanugim

Ahava b'Taanugim - one who is drawn after physical pleasures becomes idle from torah. For torah and physical pleasures are like two competing wives. When one rises the other falls.

Q Level 1

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "all the more so for the wife of your fellow" - for the yetzer (lust) is very strong. For he thinks perhaps she will be permitted to me in the future. And even more so for the wife of a gentile (who is forbidden) since "stolen waters become sweet" (Mishlei 9:17).. And thoughts of torah cannot exist in one's mind while his heart turns to a woman and her talk. For they are two [opposite] types of thoughts which the heart cannot hold at the same time.

Q Level 2

Midrash Shmuel - "all the more so for the wife of your fellow" - why did he not say a single woman? It seems the answer is that the greater the sin, the greater the yetzer hara (evil inclination) to sin. Thus, there is a very powerful pull towards sinning with a married woman. For this he warned specifically against this.

Q Level 2

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "let your home be open wide" - do not be enticed by your yetzer (evil inclination), and especially in these difficult times, when he tells you: "is it not enough that you just barely provide for yourself and your household? Why should you squander your money on others?".

On this the Tanna said "let your home be open wide". On the contrary, from this you will have a "widening" (harvacha). As before, the nature of tzedaka is that it makes wealthy. And as our sages said: "the salt (preservation) of money is to diminish it" (Ketuvot 66b).. and "the poor man does more for the host (baal habayit) than what the host does for the poor man" (Midrash Ruth).

One must also appease the poor man with words and speak to him with a pleasant facial expression, as he does with the members of his household.. and on this: "*do not converse excessively with a woman*" - even for a poor woman.

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - Both are together as one pair, for one was Nassi (chief rabbi) and the other was Av Beit Din (chief judge); and both together were fathers of the generation, thus, they both spoke on one matter, namely, rectifying a man's home. This is a major matter and is necessary for one to be completely rectified.

It is proper to ask on the words of Yossi ben Yochanan, who said: "*let your home be open wide, and let the poor be members of your household*". What is the connection between these two things and "*do not converse excessively with a woman*"? It seems they are not connected to each other.

Furthermore, he said: "*this was said regarding one's own wife*". From where is it implied that their words refer to one's own wife? He should have just said: "do not speak excessively with your wife, and all the more so, with your fellow's wife".

Furthermore, what is the matter of this evil he causes himself in speaking excessively to a woman?

Another question: he says that he becomes idle from torah study. It is superfluous to say this. For anyone who speaks much useless speech is automatically idle from torah. Furthermore, "he descends to Gehinom" - what is this great fury that he descends to Gehinom?!

The explanation is as follows. Yossi ben Yochanan of Jerusalem comes to rectify man's home to make it holy. Thus, these three things apply to a man's home. For when a man has a home, people come there to borrow things or the like. Guests also come to him when he has a home. Secondly, there are necessarily members of his household living with him in the home. Thirdly, there is his wife who takes care of the home..

Therefore, he said: "*Let your home be open wide*", that there should be people coming there to ask their needs.

Secondly, he should not lock his door to the travellers. Rather, let them come in and receive sustenance. Corresponding to this, he said: "*let poor people be members of your household*". That there be always poor people in his home until the poor are members of his household, thereby

receiving their sustenance with honor.

Corresponding to the third tikun (rectification), namely, the wife, he said: *"do not converse excessively with a woman"*. For if he wants his home to be a holy home, as is proper, he should not *"converse excessively with a woman..all the more so regarding the wife of another"*.

For certainly, that which they said: "do not converse excessively, etc.". This is because he is coming to rectify man's home. And since his wife is the housekeeper (akeret bayit), for all matters of the house depend on her, therefore, it was necessary to rectify and say: "do not converse excessively with a woman", even for matters of the home, do not converse excessively without need. And all the more so, for the wife of your fellow which is not relevant to rectifying your home. Thus *"this was said regarding one's own wife - all the more so regarding the wife of another"*..

"From here, the sages said: "One who excessively converses with a woman causes evil to himself" - i.e. once they exhorted that even for one's wife, he should not converse excessively, then from here they said that "whoever excessively converses with a woman causes evil to himself". For if this were not so, why would they forbid [excessive] speech with one's wife?

The explanation of this is as follows. One who talks excessively with his wife tends and is drawn towards a state of existence which is lacking and clings to "inexistence" (he'ader) which is evil (i.e. since he fails to fulfill his role in the world).

And as we said earlier in the introduction, that once the woman was created, the Satan was created with her. For from "in the beginning.." (Genesis 1:1) until the creation of the woman (Genesis 2:21), the letter "Samech" is absent. But when the woman was created, the letter "Samech" appears to teach you that "once the woman was created, the Satan was created with her" (Ber.Rabba ch.17).

The explanation of this matter is as we said. For a woman is more physical than a man. Man is on the level of Tzura (form) relative to woman. And since the woman is more physical, the Satan was created with her. The Satan is the angel of death. He is a power from which "inexistence" comes to the creations. For inexistence follows from physicality, as known of the physicality that clinged to him (Adam) and drew him to inexistence.

This is the meaning of "once the woman was created, the Satan was created with her" (Ber.Rabba ch.17), i.e. relative to the (higher, more abstract) level of man, lacking and inexistence clings to the woman. This is the meaning of: *"whoever converses excessively with a woman causes evil to himself"*, i.e. when man is drawn after a woman on which clings the inexistence, and there is no greater evil than inexistence.

(translator - whereby he fails to full his purpose of bringing down torah to the world. The women's role is to build a home, raise children and other stage settings. Her role is not torah study and illumination of wisdom.)

This matter is known. However this is not at all a debasement of the woman herself. Only that this matter that a man descends from his level to be drawn after the woman by excessive talk, in this, he turns from existence towards inexistence. For him, this is a lacking and an evil. For he turns from his level of man to a level which is lacking relative to his level.

Because of this, the Tanna (sage) is not coming to diminish love between man and woman. For certainly one should "love his wife like his body". He is not at all speaking on this. Only that

excessive talk with the woman lowers him from his level of male and draws him towards the physicality which inexistence clings to. Due to this, he causes evil to himself.

This is also what they said: "neglects the study of Torah". For the woman is [more] physical. "Her wisdom is only in the spindle" (Yomah 66b). Therefore, whoever speaks excessively to the woman "neglects the study of torah".

Thus, when he turns to the speech of a woman who is physical, this is the opposite of words of torah. This is not similar to a case where he turns to mundane speech or the like (with a man). For that does not annul him from words of torah and immediately when he stops, he can return to torah.

But for speech with the woman, through this, he turns to the physical woman and clings to her. For a man clings to his wife. Such a thing is a total turning away from the torah. For he separates to increase speech with the physical woman. Through this is drawn the bitul (annulment) from words of torah.

"in the end inherits Gehinom" - this is the same matter we spoke. For "inexistence" clings to the woman, and when he increases speech with her, he turns from his level and turns towards inexistence (i.e. he goes down from the higher existence he has to illuminate himself and the world with the wisdom of torah - Translator). Therefore, he inherits Gehinom. For Gehinom is but absence of existence, as we will clarify.

This is not the same as the woman herself on whom clings inexistence. For due to that she cannot be called a "baalat Gehinom" (designated for Gehinom). The woman's portion is in Gan Eden just like the man.

But this that the man turns from his level to increase speech with the woman upon whom inexistence clings to relative to his level, on him it says "in the end inherits Gehinom". For in Gehinom, there is the Avadon (destruction) of man, and absence of his existence. For Gehinom is called "Avadon" (destruction). It is also called "tzia" and "neshia". All the names of Gehinom teach on he who comes there, that he is a "possessor of inexistence" (baal he'eder).. Thus they said: "in the end inherits Gehinom"..

Without a doubt, this is the correct explanation of the words of our sages, unlike those who explain this with imagination and their own logic. These things we said are words of wisdom which are also brought in other places by our sages. In the talmud (Bava Metzia 59a):

"Rav says: whoever follows the counsel of his wife falls into Gehinom, as it is stated: 'But there was none like Ahab, [who did give himself over to do that which was evil in the sight of G-d, whom Jezebel his wife incited]' (I Kings 21:25). Rav Pappa said to Abaye: But don't people say a popular saying: 'If your wife is short, stoop and whisper to her and consult with her?' The Gemara answers: This is not difficult, as this statement of Rav instructs that one not follow her counsel in general matters; and that saying instructs that one follow her counsel in household matters. The Gemara presents another version of this distinction: This statement of Rav maintains that one should not follow her counsel in matters of Heaven; and that saying maintains that one should follow her counsel in worldly matters."

There they explained all the things mentioned here:

In the first statement of Rav: *"whoever follows the counsel of his wife falls into Gehinom"* - for the

man who is tzura (form), if he is drawn after the woman, who is of physicality and the physical is of inexistence, and he listens to her and goes after her advice, without a doubt it is proper for him to fall into Gehinom. For the matter of Gehinom is nothing but complete inexistence. Thus the names of Gehinom teach, such as she'ol (pit), avadon (destruction), tzelmavet (shadow of death). And since the tzura (form) turns from its level to be drawn after the physical in which clings inexistence, he falls in Gehinom, just like [by him] the Tzura (form) was drawn after the physical.

They asked: "But don't people say a popular saying: 'If your wife is short, stoop and whisper to her and consult with her?' The Gemara answers: This is not difficult, as this statement of Rav instructs that one not follow her counsel in general matters; and that saying instructs that one follow her counsel in household matters".

The explanation is that for "household matters", it is not called that the man is turning after the woman. Because the woman is the Akeret Bayit (housekeeper) of a man. This is the normal order of the world. Thus, if he goes after her advice in this, we don't say that the man who is the Tzura (form) turns and is drawn after the physical and turns away from his level. For in the woman's being the Akeret Habayit (housekeeper), in this aspect, inexistence does not cling to her. On the contrary, she is the foundation of the existence of the house, and it is proper to follow her advice there. But for other things in which the woman is not primary, if the man follows her advice, he is then drawn after inexistence and falls to Gehinom.

"Another version of this distinction: This statement of Rav maintains that one should not follow her counsel in matters of Heaven; and that saying maintains that one should follow her counsel in worldly matters."

According to the "second version" whereby in "worldly matters" one should follow his wife's advice.. and it is not considered then that he is drawn after inexistence. The explanation is that this world, which is physical, it's level is the level of the woman who is of physicality. Therefore from this aspect he does not have a fall in Gehinom. On the contrary, it is proper for him to follow his wife's advice for matters of this world. For they are physical matters and the woman is primary in this. But in matters of Heaven whereby certainly the man is Tzura (form) and the woman is of physicality, inexistence clings to her. Then it is relevant to say that the man is drawn after the inexistence, and if he goes after her advice, he falls in Gehinom, namely, he will come to inexistence and lacking. (he will fail to fulfill his role).

We wrote these things to clarify to you that our explanation is a clear matter.

Furthermore in Berachot (61a): "after a lion but not after a woman", i.e. although a lion can kill a man, but nevertheless it is not as dangerous as one who goes after a woman. For the lion's power over "inexistence" is not like the woman's power. Thus, after a man is drawn after a woman, in this, the man who is Tzura (form) is drawn after the physical. It is total destruction for the Tzura when it is drawn after the physical. Without a doubt, it is a greater evil for him than to go after a lion. Even though the lion can inflict damage, but this is not in essence of the lion. It's intent is only to kill and eat. But the inexistence that clings to the physical, this matter is in its essence. Thus, the lion sometimes damages and sometimes does not like all incidental matters, But it is not so for one who goes after the woman. We will explain more later with G-d's help.

We have clarified that these two sages, Yossi ben Yoezer and Yossi ben Yochanan, both came to rectify man's home in the service of G-d.

You will find that Antigonus of Socho (previous mishna) exhorted man on the service of G-d itself,

that it be with love and with fear. For he was only one receiver (of the torah). He was in place of a pair (of sages).

After him, the receivers of the torah were in pairs. Therefore, Antignos gave mussar like two sages of the pairs. For in the pairs, one exhorted on the service of G-d out of love while the second exhorted on the service of G-d out of fear, so that together, they would perfect (mashlim) a man in love and fear of some matter which is proper to perfect.

But Antignos who was first, he exhorted a man on the love and fear itself. Since he was first and earlier, it was proper for him to exhort on the first matter in the service of G-d, namely, love and fear itself. For love and fear are the primary beginning of the service of G-d.

Afterwards, Yossi ben Yoezer and Yossi ben Yochanan came to rectify man's home which is a great primary matter. It is close to man himself, for that is where he resides. They came to rectify it with love and fear.

Thus, Yossi ben Yoezer exhorted that there should be sages in his home and that he become dusty with the dust of their feet.

Our sages said (Sifri Devarim): " 'to love the L-ord your G-d and to cling to Him' (Devarim 11:22) - but is it possible for man to cling to the Shechina (Divine presence), is it not written 'the L-ord your G-d is a consuming fire' (Devarim 4:24)? Rather, cling to the Sages and their disciples, and I will consider it as if you had clinged to the Divine presence".

Thus, clinging to the sages is love of G-d, or at least, a branch of love of G-d. Therefore, Yossi ben Yoezer, disciple of Antignos who exhorted on love, came to rectify man's home. Namely, that there exist there love of G-d through love of the sages which is the trait of love of G-d, or at least a branch or lower level of love of G-d.

Yossi ben Yochanan rectified man's home with fear of G-d. This is what he said: "Let your home be open wide", i.e. there should be people entering to ask their needs (ex.to borrow things), or "Let your home be open wide" to guests coming in and out. Likewise for "let the poor be members of your household", all this so that one not be stingy with his money. For one who is stingy towards people and all the more so towards the poor, he diminishes fear of Heaven. Thus, he does not pay attention (mashgiach) to people that need him. For one who fears Heaven is submitted (nichna, humble) not having haughtiness of spirit. Therefore, he does not send away the poor who are submitted (humble, due to their poverty). Likewise for the guest who is wandering (from place to place). Rather, one who fears Heaven draws close the poor who are submitted. But one whose eye is stingy towards others and does not pity the poor, he is a sinner and is removing from himself the yoke of fear of Heaven.

All the more so, "do not converse excessively with a woman", for this is lightheadedness (kalut rosh) and removal of the yoke of fear of Heaven. Thus Yossi ben Yochanan came with these three things to rectify man's home.

We already explained that Yossi ben Yoezer rectified man's home so that it be in the likeness of the man himself. For the Intellect stands in man's body and man's body is like a meeting house. Thus, Yossi ben Yoezer exhorted that one's house be similar to how G-d created man, as we explained earlier.

For the soul (nefesh) inside man sits in his body and is the master of the house. This soul which

sits in his house is "open wide" to provide for inside, namely, the inner organs, who receive their life force and maintenance from the soul. This soul, the master of the home, does not have a complete connection with the physical. Rather the soul (nefesh) is separated (nivdal). It is not fixed in it.

On this Yossi ben Yochanan said: "Let your home be open wide", to provide for those who come from outside. Through this he is like the soul who sits in the house (body) which provides [life force] for the organs who are from the outside.

He said "and let the poor be members of your household", that you provide for the poor inside. For the soul which provides for the inner organs which are considered "members of his household" (bnei beto), so that he provides for all, whether the inner and outer organs, and all the inner powers and the powers which receive their life force from the soul.

And just like the soul is separated, it does not at all have a full connection to the physical, so too it is not proper for the master of the house (baal habayit) to have too much connection to the woman with idle speech.

Understand according to this what he said: "whoever converses excessively with a woman causes evil to himself, neglects the study of Torah, and in the end inherits Gehinom". For when the soul is attaching to the physical it is certainly idle from torah. Thus, he certainly causes evil to himself. For he clings to the evil physical and certainly descends to Gehinom which is inexistence.

Understand these things very much and you will understand the theme of the words of the sages. For Yossi ben Yoezer rectified the intellect, and the intellect is the Nassi (leader, chief) just like he was the Nassi. While Yossi ben Yochanan of Jerusalem rectified the soul (nefesh). For the nefesh (soul) is the Av Beit Din (chief judge).

This is known from the words of our sages. In the Midrash Rabba (Vayikra ch.4): " 'when a nefesh sins' (Vayikra 4:27), the nefesh is set at a place of mishpat (judgment). Since it went out of its place of mishpat, therefore it must bring an offering".

Here is not the place to elaborate on this. For it is a matter of wondrous wisdom.

Now you will understand how the first pair of sages rectified a man with mussar totally like the mussar of Antignos. For Antignos rectified the man himself with love and fear. While his disciples, the first pair (of sages) rectified what is similar to man with love and fear, namely, man's home.

With this you will understand the whole order of things. For the "men of the great assembly" began with three matters of mussar related to the torah which is above everything. For all three things from the "men of the great assembly" were to rectify the torah and the intellect (sechel) whether in judgment (mishpat), or [understanding] words of torah, or mitzvot of the torah.

These things encompass everything that applies to the torah and the torah is above all existence and above the whole world. Afterwards, Shimon Hatzadik came to rectify the pillars of the world which are below the torah. Afterwards, his disciple Antignos came to rectify man himself who is primary in the world. Man is like a miniature world, a world by himself. Afterwards, the first pair came to rectify man's home. Namely, that it be analogous to man himself in everything, as we wrote. Without a doubt, this is the true and clear order of things [in this mishna]...

Level 4

Chida

Chida - Zeroah Yamin - "inherits Gehinom" - he used the term "inheritance" (yerusha) because our

sages said (as brought in Yearot Devash pg.74): the Serpent flees from fire. For it is from the foundation of earth, as written: "the serpent - earth is his bread" (Isaiah 65:25), and the foundation of earth is completely distant from the foundation of fire. In Kidushin (30b): "says the Holy One, blessed be He, 'I have created the evil inclination, and I have created the Torah as its antidote'" . For the torah is holy fire and the yetzer hara is earth which flees away from fire. This is why the wicked are sentenced to Gehinom, to burn off the filth of the serpent. For he can only be rectified with fire. This is also why they said: "The removal of chametz (leavened bread) is to be accomplished only through burning" (Pesachim 21a).

This is the meaning of: *"whoever converses excessively with a woman"*. For she is a mishkan (Sanctuary) of the Sitra Achra (i.e. man brings tumah on himself by speaking too much with a woman due to natural animalistic lust - translator). All the more so when she is a Nidda, for her Tuma is strong.

"causes evil to himself" - the black garment (gunda) of the serpent, "to himself", for it clings to him and his flesh. This leads to being drawn to idleness from torah which is the antidote to the Yetzer Hara. When it strengthens more and he stops to learn (torah), there is no medicine to remove the filth and chase away the serpent except for Gehinom.

He used the term "inheritance" which implies it is prepared and comes by itself to a man. So too from the time he came to excessive talk with the woman, one evil after another comes to him. For both the Sitra Achra and Gehinom are called "evil", and it is prepared for him like an inheritance.

Level 4

Chida

Chida - Kikar I'Eden - This person brought himself to excessive speech with the woman, bringing sin upon his shoulders. For kol b'isha erva (the voice of a woman is nakedness/incitement to lust), v'histaklut b'nashim zima v'avon plili (staring at women is lewdness and a great sin). Thus, he allowed and prepared himself for the ruling over him of the Sitra Achra, which is called "evil". This is the meaning of "causes evil to himself". The Sitra Achra strengthens over him and does not allow him to learn torah. It wraps around him and he has many beteilim (distractions) preventing him from learning. One evil after another befalls him. For Gehinom is called "evil". He inherits his fellow's portion in Gehinom for he did not merit (Gan Eden), leaving him with his portion and his fellow's in Gehinom, as our sages said:

"Every person has two portions, one in Gan Eden and one in Gehinom. If he merits, by becoming righteous, he takes his portion and the portion of his wicked colleague in the Gan Eden; if he is found culpable by becoming wicked, he takes his portion and the portion of his colleague in Gehinom" (Chagigah 15a).

This is the meaning of "and in the end inherits Gehinom", like an inheritance which comes by itself.

Level 4

Chida

Chida - Petach Einayim Eruvin 53b - Another explanation, through much talk he will come to lashon hara (slander), whereby he exchanges his merits with the sins of the person he spoke on. Thus he "inherits" Gehinom coming from another place.

Just how far is this fence of "do not converse excessively with a woman", we can learn from the Talmud: "Rabbi Yosei HaGelili was walking along the way, and met Berurya (the wife of Rabbi Meir). He said to her: 'On which path should I walk in order to get to Lod?' She said to him: 'Foolish Galilean, didn't the Sages say: Do not talk much with women? You should have said your question more succinctly: Which way to Lod?'" (Eruvin 53b).

We learn from here just how far is the fence of "do not converse excessively with a woman". He should have said: "Which way to Lod". All the rest is "excessive talk". Woe to us from the Day of Judgment, Woe to us from the Day of Rebuke.

Chapter 1 Mishna 6 - Make A Rav

Yehoshua ben Perachiah and Nitai of Arbeli received from them. Yehoshua ben Perachia would say: "Make for yourself a Rabbi, acquire for yourself a friend and judge every person to the side of merit"

יְהוֹשֻעַ בֶּן פְּרַחְיָה וְנִתַּי אֵי הָאֲרְבֵּלִי קִבְּלוּ
מֵהֶם. יְהוֹשֻעַ בֶּן פְּרַחְיָה אוֹמֵר, עֲשֵׂה לָךְ
רַב, וְיָקֵנָה לָךְ חֵבֵר, וְהָיוּ דָן אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם
לְכַף זְכוּת

Level 1

Rashi

Rashi - "Make for yourself a Rabbi" - do not learn on your own from your own logic. Rather, from a Rav and from the Tradition (Mesorah).

"acquire for yourself a friend" - some say books and others say an actual (human) friend, since "two are better than one" (Kohelet 4:9). Likewise they said: "A sword on those who hate the students of the Sages, who sit and busy themselves with Torah alone. Not only that but they become more foolish.." (Taanit 7a).

"judge every person to the side of merit" - on whatever you hear about him, say that he had good intentions, until you are certain that it is not so. If you judge thus, you will be judged meritoriously in Heaven, as explained by our sages (Shab.127b).

Level 1

Sforno

Sforno - "judge every person to the side of merit" - for without this trait no friendship can endure. For in most words the listener can find a way to judge the speaker unfavorably. Thus, any friendship will be destroyed without a doubt.

Level 1

Meorei Ohr in name of Rabeinu Yedaya hapnini - "acquire for yourself a friend" - they exhorted that one even spend money and give a house full of gold and silver. For the friend will be more beneficial and will grant you more wisdom than the Rav. This is because one is embarrassed from the Rav to ask him all his questions, and "a bayshan (shy and self-conscious person) cannot learn properly" (Avot 2:5). But he will not be embarrassed from his friend and both will ask each other and clarify the Halacha and sharpen each other, arriving at the truth of the matter.. as they taught: "I learned much from my Rabbis, and even more from my friends" (Taanit 7a). For a man will learn more with his friend than from the Rav as we explained.

Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "make for yourself a Rabbi" - even if your level of knowledge is equal to his, nevertheless make him a Rav on yourself. For a person remembers better what he learned from his Rav than what he learned by himself. Furthermore, even if both of you are equal in wisdom, sometimes you will understand better than him and wind up teaching him.

"acquire for yourself a friend" - for three things one needs a good friend. One, for torah, as they said: "I learned much torah from my Rabbis but more so with my friends and most of all from my students" (Taanit 7a).

Two, for mitzvot. For even if one's friend is less pious than him. Nevertheless, sometimes one also acts improperly due to lusting for something [bad]. But one will not desire that his friend do that [bad] thing since one does not stand to gain any benefit from his friend's sin, as our sages said: "a man does not sin unless he gains [perceived] benefit" (Kidushin 63b).

Thus, when he rebukes his friend for sinning, his friend will do the same to him and both will do

teshuva (repentance) to each other.

Three, for advice. To take him as an advisor for help in all his matters and to obtain good advice and be a trustworthy keeper of secrets... on this Shlomo said: "Plans are foiled for lack of counsel, but they are established through many advisers" (Mishlei 15:22).

He used the term "acquire [for yourself a friend]". For if you cannot find him for free, acquire him using your money. Spend money abundantly to acquire a good friend, or befriend him with nice words and a gentle tongue. Do not become insulted (makpid) by his words and bear his mouth. Even if he says something (bad) against you do not answer him. For otherwise the love will not remain and the friendship will split. Sometimes you will ask for something and your beloved friend will answer: "that is not right!" If you don't tolerate him and let it pass, the cord of friendship will unwind.

This is what Shlomo said: "He who covers an offense seeks love, but he who harps on a matter separates close friends" (Mishlei 17:9), i.e. one who covers over when his friend wrongs him - seeks love. For by bearing his misdeeds, their love will endure. But "he who harps on a matter" - if one's friend says something against him and one gets upset saying: "see what he said against me!", will nevertheless "separates close friends", i.e. his friend.

"judge every person to the side of merit" - and in a tzadik, even if his act was certainly bad without a doubt, nevertheless judge him favorably as our sages said: "if you saw a torah scholar commit a sin at night, do not suspect him at day for certainly he repented" (Berachot 19a)...

Level 2

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "acquire for yourself a friend" - even with money, in order to obtain advice from him even on religious matters. For if you are wise in your own eyes, the yetzer hara can blind your eyes and make the crooked appear straight. Therefore seek counsel with your friend. For your yetzer hara is not so close to him to deceive him (i.e. your friend is more objective in your matters, thus he can see more clearly than you in them).

Level 2

Rambam

Rambam - "Make for yourself a Rabbi" - even if he is not fit to be a Rav to you. Nevertheless, make him a Rav to you and consider him a teacher. Through this you will gain wisdom. For learning by oneself is not the same as learning through another. Learning by oneself is good, but learning from another will endure more and be clearer, even if the person is equal to you in wisdom or below you.

"acquire for yourself a friend" - he used the term "acquire", not "make for yourself a friend" or "join others". The intent in this is that one needs to acquire a friend for himself so that he will rectify his deeds and matters through him, as they said: "or a friend or death" (Taanit 23a).

If he does not find one, he needs to strive with all his heart, even if he needs to spend money in order to draw his love until he becomes a close friend.

Do not sway from being drawn after his will always until the love strengthens. And as the mussar masters said: "when you love, do not love according to your trait but rather according to the trait of your beloved". (explained below)

When both friends intend on this command, the intent of each of the two will be to find favor with the other (lehafik ratzon chavero), and undoubtedly both will have a unified intent (i.e. there will be peace and harmony).

And how good is the saying of Aristotle:

The beloved is one but the lover is of three types: "love of benefit", "love of tranquility", and "love of virtue".

"love of benefit": such as the love of two (business) partners, or the love of a king and his army.

"love of tranquility (menucha)": this subdivides into two types. One, love of pleasure and two, love of trust (bitachon).

Love of pleasure: such as the love of men to women, or the like.

Love of trust: is when a man has a friend whom his soul trusts. He will not guard from him in deed or speech. He will tell him of all his matters, whether good or bad, without fear of incurring a loss to himself or others. When a person reaches this level of trust in his friend, he will find great tranquility in his matters and abundant love.

"Love of virtue" is when both friends desire and have the same intent, namely, good. Each wants to help the other, so that both reach the good together. (end quote)

This is the type of friend we were commanded to acquire. It is like the love of a Rav to the Talmid (disciple), and the Talmid to the Rav.

Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - It is proper to ask here: Why did he say "make for yourself a Rabbi" and not "take for yourself a Rabbi?". Another question: why the change of terms to say "make for yourself" regarding a Rav and "acquire [for yourself]" regarding a friend. Another question: how are these three things connected? Another question: why did he not also say "make for yourself a student". For our sages said: "I learned the most from my students" (Taanit 7a).

The explanation of this is as follows. The previous pair rectified a man's conduct in his home, which is close to him. We also clarified (last mishna) that man's conduct in his home is similar and related to his own conduct (with himself).

This pair, who were their disciples, now come after them to rectify how a man should relate to the public.

The first two (Rabbi and friend) are outside his home. But nevertheless they are also very close to him. The third is regarding other people. For a man is with his Rabbi then afterwards with his friend and afterwards with other people.

"make for yourself a Rabbi" - the intent is not for his main Rabbi (Rav Muvhak). On that he would not have said: "make for yourself". Rather, the explanation is to make for oneself a Rabbi even though the person is not (completely) on the level of being one's Rabbi. This is the meaning of "make for yourself". For it is impossible for you to not learn at least something from him. And for that something it is enough to "make" him a Rabbi [on yourself].

"acquire a friend for yourself" - by a friend it is relevant to say "acquire". For a friend is your acquisition (kinyano). Unlike the Rabbi who is not the acquisition of the student. Thus there he said "make for yourself a Rabbi".

But it is the way of friends to do favors for each other, taking care of each other's needs. Thus they

are like acquisitions (assets) to each other.

Regarding both, even if the Rabbi is not completely on the level to be his Rabbi and likewise the friend is not on the level to be his friend, but nevertheless two are better than one, and acquire him anyways as a friend.

"judge every person to the side of merit" - if he sees something (bad) in someone, he should judge him favorably and not distance him thinking he is a wicked man.

These three things concern man's conduct with people outside his home. Namely, make for yourself a Rabbi even if he is not completely fit to be your Rabbi. Acquire a friend even if he is not completely fit. While for other people who are not on your level, do not distance them at least all the time it is possible to judge them favorably.

He did not say "acquire for yourself a student". For it is not proper for a man to make himself into a Rabbi and take for himself an important title telling others to learn from him..

These three things correspond to three types of people. The first is those who are considered above him like the Rabbi. The second is those who are similar to himself like a friend. The third is the rest of people, even those of lower level than oneself. Thus, "judge every person to the side of merit". Even if he is lower than you do not judge him badly...

Regarding the connection between these three things we can also explain as follows. That which he said "make for yourself a friend", the intent is that the making of the Rabbi be complete and enduring. Likewise for the acquiring of a friend, that the friendship not depart at all for all the days of one's life, as written: "Do not abandon your friend and your father's friend" (Mishlei 27). For since he is your friend and was also your father's friend, do not abandon him. For this is a faithful friend, not one who comes anew. Therefore, he said: "judge every person favorably". For since he is habitually with the Rabbi or the friend, it is impossible for there to not arouse times when you think he wronged you. For you spend much time with him and thus you will come to break off and separate. Therefore he said on this: "judge every person to the side of merit".

When you judge him favorably, there will not be separation between you and the Rabbi or you and the friend. For you will judge him favorably when you suspect he wronged you. This is clear.

Level 3

Alei Shur

Alei Shur II 6:10 - "judge every person to the scale of merit" - every deed of every person can be weighed on scales - meritorious or guilty? This is because there are two driving forces in man: the good inclination and the evil inclination. In every deed it is possible that its source is from this or from that. But since man can only see what appears to his eye, he cannot examine the heart and thoughts [of others], therefore we have been commanded to *"judge every person to the scale of merit"*. Our sages learn this from the verse: *"you shall judge your fellow with righteousness"* (Vayikra 19:15).

Divrei Binah (Admorei Biala)

Divrei Binah (Admor Biala) - this needs understanding. Why did he say: "make yourself a Rav" and not: "accept on yourself a Rav". What relevance (shaychut) is the term "make" on the matter of accepting a Rav?

(Answer:) the primary Shlemut (perfection) of a man is that he strives to sanctify and purify (lekadesh u'letaher) his 248 limbs (evarim) and 365 sinews (gidim) until they are elevated to the level where the limbs and sinews themselves pull him to fulfill Hash-em's commandments, blessed

be He. And from his own self he will be capable to learn and understand the ways of G-d and His will, blessed be He. As we find by our holy forefathers, that on their own they fulfilled the whole torah before it was given.

For through the holiness of their bodies and limbs, on their own, they could understand and sense His will, blessed be He, in all their deeds. Through this, they would fulfill all the 613 commandments which correspond to the 248 limbs and 365 sinews. This is the meaning of "make yourself a Rav". Namely, see to it to make yourself and your body a Rav and mentor, so that through the holiness of your body, you will be able to sense His will, blessed be He, on your own.

Acquire for yourself a friend (chaver) - through this, you will merit to be connected and attached to Hash-em, blessed be He. For the word "mitzva" is from the word "communion" (tzavta) and attachment (chibur). It is an aspect of "acquiring" (kinyan), as our sages said on the verse: "Who acquired Heaven and Earth" (Lech lecha) - Rashi: "through making them, He acquired them and they are His".

This is the meaning of: "acquire for yourself a friend (chaver)", see to it to acquire (make) yourself to be on the aspect of "chaver" to Him, blessed be He.

And then "remove yourself from doubt" (later in Avot 1:16), your deeds will no longer have any suspicion and any doubt of sin, ch'v, and all your deeds will be l'Shem Shamayim in truth, without any doubts...

Level 4

Chida

Chida - Zera Yamin - perhaps the words are referring to the yetzer tov and yetzer hara (good and evil inclination). Thus, "make for yourself a Rabbi" on the yetzer tov. Namely, recognize his wisdom and accept him as a Rav to do all that he commands. While the yetzer hara is the "chaver" (friend), as they said in Chagiga (16) on the verse: "believe not a friend" (Micha 7:5). There it learns out that the Creator called him "evil from youth". All agree that he is an "evil friend".. the main job is to sweeten and change the yetzer hara into good. This is the meaning of "acquire for yourself a friend", i.e. the known "friend" who is your "friend" from the day of your birth. Acquire him to make him good. Acquire him to sweeten his bitterness.

Level 4

Chida

Chida - Marit Haayin - perhaps too, these three correspond to the three Sefirot Chagat (Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferet). "make for yourself a Rabbi" corresponds to Tiferet (Torah). "acquire for yourself a friend" corresponds to Gevurah, to strengthen oneself (lehitgaber) to not be makpid (upset) at all and love him like yourself, "judge every person to the side of merit" corresponds to Chesed, abundant Chesed to judge favorably.

Chapter 1 Mishna 7 - Bad Neighbor

Nitai of Arbeli would say: Distance yourself from a bad neighbor, do not join a wicked person, and do not abandon belief in retribution. נְתַאי הָאַרְבֵּלִי אָמַר, הִרְחַק מִשָּׁכֵן רָע, וְאַל תִּתְחַבֵּר לְרָשָׁע, וְאַל תִּתְיָאֵשׁ מִן הַפְּרָעוֹת

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - a bad neighbor - an angry person, an arrogant person, a jealous person, or the like. Not only should you not join him lest you learn from his deeds and damage your soul, but even distance from him lest he damage even your body.

Q Level 1

Rashi

Rashi - "do not abandon belief in retribution" - if you are rich, do not trust in your wealth. For troubles can come quickly, as written: "Fortunate is the man who is always afraid, [but he who hardens his heart will fall into evil]" (Mishlei 28:14). So too, if troubles befall you, do not give up hope for salvation is near to come, as written: "Behold, the hand of the L-ord is not too short to save" (Isaiah 59:1).

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "Distance yourself from a bad neighbor" - to one who looks to rent or buy a house, just like one inquires whether the house is nice and in a good location, so too, he should inquire on the neighbors. If they are bad, distance. If they are good, approach.

"do not join a wicked person" - it is a great punishment without equal. For if one committed a serious sin, it is one sin. But this person has a portion in all the sins the wicked man committed as a reward for joining his company. Thus he commits many great and severe sins even though he did nothing and did not derive any benefit. "Woe to the wicked, woe to his neighbor". Thus it is explained in Avot D'Rebbi Natan (30:3): "whoever joins the wicked receives punishment like them even though he does not do like them; whoever joins the righteous receives reward like them even if he did not do like them". On this it is written: "When you joined Ahaziah, the L-ord has broken your work" (Divrei Hayamim II 20:37).

"do not abandon belief in retribution" - do not tell yourself: "I will join the wicked now while he is in prosperity and success and when his good situation changes, I will distance from him!" You will not be able to. For you cannot know what today will bring. In an instant his calamity can come and you will be struck with him.. it is a great sin to flatter the wicked in this world... his calamity will come suddenly and you will not be able to save yourself.

Q Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - "do not join a wicked person" - i.e. if he joins you, namely, you are primary (ikar) while he is subordinate (tafel) then it is good. For there is hope he will listen to your words since you are primary. But if he will be primary (ikar) and you will be subordinate. He will certainly not listen to your words. On this "do not join" him, i.e. when you are subordinate to him.

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - like Yehoshua ben Perachya, Nitai HaArbely comes to rectify one's conduct with others outside the home. Only that Nitai HaArbely rectifies this with mussar of Yirat Shamayim (fear of Heaven).

It is proper to ask on his words. Why bring these three things together?

The explanation is that Nitai HaArbeli came to rectify man's conduct with other people outside his home. He said to distance oneself from a bad neighbor so as not to be burned by the hot coal of a bad neighbor, as written: "woe to a wicked person, woe to his neighbor" (Negaim ch.12). Therefore "distance yourself from a bad neighbor", as written: "when you joined Ahaziah, the Lord broke your work" (Divrei HaYamim II 20).

That which he did not use the same term throughout, such as "do not draw close to a bad neighbor, do not join with a wicked man", or "distance from a bad neighbor and from joining a wicked man". (But instead he changed terms "distance from a bad neighbor", "do not join a wicked man").

The reason is that the two are different matters. For even if he does not draw close to a bad neighbor and the bad neighbor comes to him, he needs to distance from him. This is not relevant to say by a friend "distance from a bad friend". For it is enough to not join him. For when he does not join him, he is already distant from him.

"do not abandon belief in retribution" - do not think you are distant from evil and therefore you can come close to potentially evil things and no harm will befall you. On this he said: "do not abandon belief in retribution", thus do not draw near evil.

A deeper look

"distance yourself from a bad neighbor, do not join a wicked person, and do not abandon belief in retribution" - that which he said "do not abandon belief in retribution" is also similar to "distance from a bad neighbor, etc." For evil is also like a neighbor to people. As known of the matter of evil. It dwells and is joined to existing things. Thus he said: "do not abandon belief in retribution". For evil is the neighbor of people. Therefore do not join or go near evil for you will be harmed, and "do not abandon belief in retribution" who is close by and a neighbor of people.

This refers to inexistence (he'eder) which clings to people. It is more of a neighbor than one's (human) neighbor nearby, and nearer than your closest friend. For it sits opposite a man to destroy him. Thus, he said these three things together.

Understand their order "distance yourself from a bad neighbor, do not join a wicked person, and do not abandon belief in retribution", which is opposite man.

The latter is a warning to man to not think it is impossible for him to be struck with retribution. He did not say to worry about sufferings. For worrying about sufferings is a bad trait, as we wrote on the Netiv Habitachon with G-d's help. Rather he said "do not abandon belief in retribution", as happened to Haman.

He trusted in his great wealth and in the blink of an eye all his success flipped on him. This is the meaning of "do not abandon belief in retribution".

Some explain "do not abandon belief in retribution" as a reason for "distance yourself from a bad neighbor, do not join a wicked person". Namely, do not tell yourself: "even if I don't distance from a bad neighbor and from the wicked man, I will still be at peace. For what could possibly happen to me?"

On this he said: "do not abandon belief in retribution". For it is possible for calamity to strike suddenly. Therefore, don't say that, and because of this "Distance yourself from a bad neighbor, do

not join a wicked person".

All this is coming to exhort on fear of Heaven (yirat shamayim) so that he does not come to sin. For without a doubt, a bad neighbor and a wicked friend bring a person to sin.

Thus, Yehoshua ben Perachya (previous mishna) came to rectify man's conduct with those who are outside his home but relevant to him, such as the Rabbi, friend, and other people. This was a rectification and branch from the side of love of G-d.

Here Nitai HaArbeli came to rectify man in fear of G-d in things opposite to this, namely, the wicked. Thus, "distance yourself from a bad neighbor, etc."

Hence, both of their teaching is on one matter...

Level 4

Chida

Chida - Zeroah Yamin - we may say he is exhorting on the yetzer hara, whom the Creator called "evil" (Chagiga 16). He is within you lying in ambush. Thus, "distance yourself from an evil neighbor", i.e. that neighbor who is called "evil".. For if you don't distance, you will become a sanctuary of the Sitra Achra (forces of evil).

If you say: "since he is the angel of death and is appointed over all suffering and damage (tzaar v'nezek), if I join him, he will protect me. Just like a criminal is protected when he joins the rebels against the king". On this he answered: "do not abandon belief in retribution". For it is the way of the Sitra Achra to slaughter those who listen to him, as written in the holy Zohar.

Level 4

Chida

Chida - Roshei Avot - "distance yourself from an evil neighbor" - from the yetzer hara as we explained earlier, and "do not abandon belief in retribution". i.e. even though you greatly distanced from the yetzer hara don't think you already reached perfection (Shelemut). For who knows what you damaged in previous Gilgulim (lives)..

Chapter 1 Mishna 8 - Legal Advisors

Yehuda ben Tabai and Shimon ben Shetach received [the Tradition] from them. Yehuda ben Tabai would say: "Do not make yourself like a 'legal advisor'; and when the litigants stand before you, they should both be as wicked in your eyes; and when they depart from before you, they should both be as meritorious in your eyes, when they have accepted the judgment."

יְהוּדָה בֶּן טַבַּאי וְשִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן שֵׁטַח קִבְּלוּ מֵהֶם. יְהוּדָה בֶּן טַבַּאי אוֹמֵר, אַל תַּעַשׂ עֲצָמָה כְּעוֹרְכֵי הַדִּינִין. וְכַשִּׁי הָיוּ בְּעֵלֵי דִינִין עוֹמְדִים לְפָנָי, יְהִיוּ בְּעֵינַי כְּרָשָׁעִים. וְכַשֵּׁנְפֻטְרִים מִלְּפָנָי, יְהִיוּ בְּעֵינַי כְּזָכָאִין, כְּשֶׁקִּבְּלוּ עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת הַדִּין.

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "they should both be as wicked in your eyes" - suspect that their claims are false and perhaps you will catch them in their words.

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "they should both be as wicked in your eyes" - do not turn your heart towards one of them thinking "he is an important person and would not claim falsely". For if you do this, you cannot see in him fault.

Q Level 2

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - for in examining the witnesses, sometimes one needs to employ strategies and deceptions to trick the witnesses in order to extract the full truth from their mouths. But one must do this with great wisdom so that the witness does not notice this and so he won't tell himself: "the judge is trying to trick me, thus it is permitted and I will do the same". For he does not realize that this is permitted only for the judge but not for him, and he sins.

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "and when they depart from before you, they should both be as meritorious in your eyes" - do not suspect the claimant was a thief or the defendant swore falsely. For how great is the punishment for "suspecting a kosher person" (choshed b'kesharim) (Shab.97a), and how great is the reward for judging your fellow to the side of merit (Shab.127b).

Q Level 1

Rashi

Rashi - "when they have accepted the judgment" - since they accepted the judgment, and one was obligated to swear and he swore and left. Don't suspect him in your heart thinking he swore falsely.

Q Level 1

Sforno

Sforno - even if you found out they both lied or one of them lied, they should not be suspect in your eyes to sin. For sometimes a person claims a lie not in order to steal from his fellow but rather to buy some time, as they said: "he is trying to delay thinking when I have money, I will pay him" (Bava Metzia 2b).

Q Level 2

Rambam

Rambam - "legal advisor" - these teach people the legal claims and laws until a person is proficient (baki) in his court case. They compose questions and answers. "When the judge says this, answer this", "when the claimant says this, answer this". As if they are arranging the court case and the two sides are before them. Thus, they are called "legal advisors" (archei dayananim) as if they arrange the court case before them. The sages exhorted us not to resemble them, i.e. not to teach one of the two litigants a claim which will help him saying: "say thus", or "deny in such and such a way". Even though you know he is wronged and the other person is lying.. Nevertheless, it is not at all permitted to teach him a claim which will save him and help him.

 **Level 2**

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "legal advisor" - this is not referring to a case where one instructs his friend to blatantly lie. Because that would make him a completely wicked person and it is not necessary to say that one should not do this for it is a great sin. Rather, the explanation is that even if one does not teach him to lie, and he merely organizes his claims and arranges the laws before him and explains to him his judgment, nevertheless, it is not proper to do this. For people will suspect him and speak bad of him. This is as the case of Rabbi Yochanan (Ketuvot 52b) who initially thought to help his relative citing the verse: "from your flesh (relative), you shall not hide" (Isaiah 58:7) but then abstained saying "an important person is different" (for it causes a desecration of G-d's Name).

 **Level 3**

Maharal

Maharal - we already said that the mussar of these sages is on things which are necessary and of primary importance. Yehuda ben Tavai saw that it was a great stumbling block for the public that which the judges were doing and even many great sages and tzadikim as brought in the talmud (Ketuvot 52b):

"Rabbi Yochanan said: 'we made ourselves like legal advisors (orchei dayanim)'" , and likewise later there: "Rabbi Nachman said 'we made ourselves like legal advisors (orchei dayanim)'" (Ketuvot 86b).

Thus, Rav Nachman said on himself: "we made ourselves like legal advisors (orchei dayanim)". Due to this, a great exhortation is necessary. For with merely a few words one becomes "a legal advisor". And this is forbidden in mishpat (judgment) and din (justice), for it is a very serious matter to distort mishpat and din. And because this sin very much needs exhorting so that one does not stumble therein, therefore Rabbi Yehuda ben Tabai comes on this...

Thus, this pair of sages came to rectify judgment which is extremely necessary, to not be like the "legal advisors (orchei dayanim)". For this needs exceedingly great guarding. Since it is of great importance in judgment. Therefore, they exhorted to not cause the judgment to come out distorted.

Likewise it is very common for a judge to stumble thinking one of the two litigants to be more righteous than the other (thus he said "when the litigants stand before you, they should both be as wicked in your eyes").

Similarly, for the words of Shimon ben Shatach, to "examine the witnesses extensively". For their testimony can vary in many ways. This matter is a great foundation. For sometimes the witness adds something in his testimony or leaves out one word in which everything depends [thereby changing the whole testimony].

So too, the judge needs to be careful in his words when interrogating the witness. For through the question, the witness can deduce the intent of the questioner and correct his words to strengthen his lie. This matter does not need explanation. Thus, these two sages came to rectify justice with something which is an extremely great and primary matter...

FULFILLING JUSTICE IS LOVE AND FEAR OF G-D

Fulfilling justice is a close branch of love of G-d. For he who loves G-d, loves His judgments. For "Judgment belongs to G-d" (Devarim 1:17).

(Rashi there: "Whatever you unjustly take from someone, you will oblige Me to return to him.

Consequently you have perverted a judgment against Me, San. 8a").

Therefore, due to love of G-d, he does G-d's justice truthfully . For this is very much G-d's will. Likewise G-d hates wrongdoing and falsehood in judgments, and it is an abomination in His eyes. Therefore, the G-d fearing person fears from G-d to distort the word of justice. The mussar of this pair of sages is also a further branch of love and fear of G-d...

ORDER OF THE MISHNAS

We already explained earlier how the flow of mussar from these sages follows one after the other until they are all connected to each other. The words of this pair of sages is likewise connected to that of the previous pair. For the previous pair rectified a man's relation with the public near to him. Thus he said: "Make for yourself a Rabbi, acquire for yourself a friend and judge every person to the side of merit". All this is relevant (shayich) to a man. Likewise, the previous pair before rectified one's home properly.

For one needs to first rectify himself. This was the tikun of Antignos of Socho. Afterwards, he needs to rectify his home. This was the tikun of the first pair (after Antignos). And afterwards, the rectification with the public outside his home but which is relevant (shayich, i.e. near) to him like the Rav (teacher), the friend, and other people. This was the tikun of the second pair. For the Rav and friend are very important to a man. Afterwards, the third pair rectified how a person's conduct, such as the judge should be towards the public. For the judge judges and establishes judgment on the public.

The earlier ones rectified a man regarding his conduct with the public greater than him, as explained. This pair, and also the next one, comes to rectify how the Gadol (great man) should conduct himself towards the public which is below his level.

A Gadol (great man) is on two ways. One is the judge. This pair rectified him.

Two, the baal serara (person of authority, ex. community Rabbi). The next pair came to rectify him that so that everything relevant to a man is rectified...

Level 4

Chida

Chida - Zeroa Yamin - "do not make yourself like a 'legal advisor'" - besides the plain meaning, there is possibly also a hint of mussar rebuke to a man. Namely, do not seek arguments to diminish your sin and make it smaller with empty and patched up claims, hanging it with cobwebs like the "legal advisors" do. For even though the defendant's obligation is clear, they seek ways to justify him with various claims and fine distinctions. For this is the primary wisdom of the yetzer hara (evil inclination), to diminish man's sin and seek merits for him. And as the early ones explained on the verse: *"And the L-ord saw that the evil of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of his heart was **only** evil all the time"* (Gen.6:5). "only" is a mi-ut (coming to exclude), i.e. to diminish the evil (try to make it smaller than it really is).

This is not the way of a baal nefesh (upright person). On the contrary, if he committed a small sin, it will be very big in his eyes. For he transgressed the word of Hash-em, G-d of the world, and in a hair's breadth, there is already no medicine for his illness. It is a kal v'chomer (logical inference) from flesh and blood kings of the land who strike down, punish, and execute for the slightest transgression of their word.

This is what king David said: "For I relate my iniquity; I worry about my sin" (Tehilim 38:19), the word "agid" (worry) is like "devarim kashim k'gidim" (things hard as sinews). Namely, "my sin agid",

in my eyes it is very severe. Even on a [minor] sin I am very worried. For every day I worry anew in that the sin was to the King of kings. The holy Tanna hinted this in his mussar "do not make *yourself* like a 'legal advisor'" - *yourself* specifically, in something which touches on yourself, "do not be a legal advisor", to seek justifications.

I am teaching you that when the litigants are standing before you, they should be in your eyes as wicked. If so, you yourself are always a baal din (litigant) standing always before G-d, as written: "a man is judged every day". If so, you are like a Rasha (wicked man). And even if you repented and received sufferings, don't trust in this. For "they are *like* meritorious", implying "like" but not really meritorious (zakaim mamash), even though they accepted the judgment. So too, you should always suspect that you are not meritorious (zakai, i.e. always try to improve)...

Chapter 1 Mishna 9 - Check Witnesses

Shimon ben Shatach would say: "interrogate the witnesses extensively, and be cautious with your words, lest through them they learn to lie." שְׂמַעוֹן בֶּן שֹׁטָח אוֹמֵר, הָיִי מְרַבֵּה לְחַקֵּר אֶת הַעֵדִים, וְהָיִי זָהִיר בְּדַבָּרְיִי, שֶׁמֵּא מִתּוֹכָם לִמְדוּ לְשַׁקֵּר!

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "interrogate the witnesses extensively" - perhaps through this they will contradict themselves.

Q Level 1

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - investigate and question them much. Through this, you will uncover the secret. For "When words are many, sin is not absent" (Mishlei 10:19). And from their words you will learn whether or not they are lying.

Q Level 2

Chida

Chida - Roshei Avot - "investigate much" (*marbe lachkor*) - possibly included in his words is that the examination of witnesses he does now should be different from previous examinations of witnesses. This is the meaning of "investigate much". That the examination be different for all witnesses. For if they are all in one standard way, they may learn to lie. Since they know of previous examinations and prepared themselves.

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "and be cautious with your words, lest through them they learn to lie" - the judge should not say: "perhaps it happened in such and such a way", or "if it happened like this, he would not be guilty". For from those words, the plaintiff, defendant, or witnesses may learn to say something that did not happen (lie).

Q Level 1

Rashi

Rashi - be careful when you examine the witnesses, perhaps through your words, they will sense what is in your mind and will understand how to lie saying what did not happen.

Q Level 1

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - when you question them on the matter, you might speak in a way that they will understand from what angle their beloved friend will be found guilty. Thus, from your words, they will learn how to lie to absolve him.

Q Level 3

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot (on Mishna 1: "be deliberate in judgment") - The Tanna (Sage) came to teach the proper way for the judges of Israel on how to conduct themselves properly so that a calamity of corruption of justice will not occur through them, namely, to take out money from one person wrongly, due to frauds. Such as, when one claims a fraudulent claim to steal the money of his fellow.

Even more, one needs to be careful that a false oath is not uttered in his court, whereby a swindler swears falsely and wins his case, thus causing a desecration of the honor of torah.. All these mishaps can occur if the judge does not put to heart to contemplate the claims the litigants place before him. For if he does not examine properly with the eyes of his intellect and to think of tricks to bring out the trickery to light, so that they will not need to swear a torah oath.

In truth, one needs to be a Chacham (wise man) and Navon (understanding). For when he detects one of the litigants is a fraud, he needs to find a way to speak with him.

For example, there was a true story where one person was walking on the street and he saw a gold coin on the ground. The street was very long. He took it and put it in his pocket. Another person was on the other end of the street and saw him from far picking up the gold coin. He approached him and said:

"That gold coin you picked up from the ground is mine. It fell from me a few minutes ago when I was walking here and I had just sensed it and came back to search for it on this street and I saw that you picked it up. Give it to me. It is mine."

The other claimed: "you are lying. The gold coin did not fall from you. This coin fell from someone else and I acquired it as a lost object".

They both came to the Rav for a judgment and spoke their words. The swindler said he was willing to swear with a sefer torah that three minutes before he was walking on that street and the gold coin fell from him and no one else walked there for four minutes. Therefore, without a doubt that gold coin is mine.

In his wisdom, the Rav detected that this claimant is a fraud and that he wants to swear falsely with a sefer torah. The Rav thought how to bring out this fraudery to light so that the sinner will not profit to steal the gold coin from he who rightly acquired it and will not swear a false oath.

What did he do? He told the fraud: "go and stand outside and close the door. I would like to question the defendant privately to clarify the matter." He went out immediately and shut the door. The fraud stood outside next to the door in order to listen to what the Rav speaks to the defendant. The Rav spoke with a slightly louder than normal voice, not whispering, so that the fraud will hear. For he understood that certainly the fraud is lending his ear to listen behind the door.

He told the defendant: "let me see the gold coin". He gave it to him. After the Rav took it, he told the defendant: "look, this gold coin has a siman muvhak (distinguishing sign). It has a small hole on the right side. If so, why should this person take an oath? Let's ask him to give a siman (sign) and if he says this siman of the hole on the right side, certainly it is his. And we can give it to him without an oath. And if he does not give a sign, it is yours and I will give it to you."

He smiled as he said this in order that he understand that he is speaking in order to trick the trickster. For the defendant can see that there is no hole on the coin.

Afterwards, he yelled and called out the swindler standing outside and told him to enter. He told him: "the gold coin is in my hand and it has a siman (distinguishing sign). now, if it is yours, tell me the siman and you can take it without an oath."

The fraud said: "good thing. I will tell you the siman it has. It has a small hole on the right side!"

The Rav asked: "this is the sign and there is none other?". He replied: "yes, it has no sign other than the hole on the right side".

The Rav laughed and opened his hand to reveal the coin. He told the fraud: "see. this gold coin which you claim from this man does not have any hole. If so, it is not yours. For according to your words, your coin has a hole and this one does not. Thus, it must have fallen from someone else and this man acquired it."

The fraud was humiliated and left.

Chapter 1 Mishna 10 - Love Work

Shemayah and Avtalyon received from them. Shemayah says, שְׁמַעְיָה וְאַבְטָלְיוֹן קִבְּלוּ מֵהֵם. שְׁמַעְיָה אוֹמֵר, אָהַב אֶת הַמְּלָאכָה, וּשְׂנָא אֶת הַרְבָּנוּת, וְאֵל תִּתְּוֹדַע לְרִשׁוּת:

"Love work, hate Rabbanut (positions of authority) and do not become known (intimate) with the ruling power (government)."

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - love work - even if one has money to live on, he is obligated to toil in work, for "idleness brings to shiamum (mental instability)" (Ketuvot 59b)

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - if nevertheless you were appointed a Rav, at least hate to be lording over your flock. Lead them with mercy as a father to his sons, not like a master rules over his slaves. For you were not appointed for that, and like Rabban Gamliel said:

"Do you imagine that I am granting you authority? I am granting you servitude, as it is stated: 'And they spoke to him saying: If you will be a servant to this people today' (I Kings 12:7)" (Horayot 10a).

Whoever becomes haughty is as one who worships idols (Sotah 4), and for a leader who becomes haughty over his congregation, his sin is very great before G-d (Rosh Hashana 17a). And all the troubles and anger he causes is guarded for him. This is what our sages said: "Rabbanut buries its possessor" (Yomah 86b), i.e. lording of the Rav will bury him despite his physical health, his honor, his intellect, his righteousness - all of them will melt away with him.

Q Level 1

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "do not become known (intimate) with the ruling power (government)" - for the work of the shiltonut (ruling power) is very hard. And if he accepts on himself the yoke of the shiltonut, eventually he will remove the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven. For he fears the shilton (ruler) and his extensive work. Thus he will cut corners in the work of G-d due to this work. Furthermore, in the end, they will take away all his property for nothing. For they draw him close only for their benefit..

Q Level 2

Rambam

Rambam - "hate Rabbanut" - he will have trials and evils in this world. For since people will be jealous of him and will argue against him, he will lose his emunah (faith) as they said: "one who is appointed as a leader of the public becomes wicked (power corrupts)".

Likewise for knowing the rulers and being close to them in ancient times. It is very difficult to save oneself in this world. It causes one to lose his emuna (faith). For he will be concerned with nothing other than what will draw him close to this. You know the story of Doeg (who lost everything) despite that the ruler he drew near to was the "anointed of G-d", a prophet, and chosen by G-d (king Saul).

Q Level 2

Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer end of Vayikra - "ruling power (reshut)" - "reshut" i.e. ruling power (malchut). He used the term "reshut" (literally "permission") to say that they have the ability to do as they wish and no one can stop them. In truth, it is impossible to join a man who has no ruler or authority over him. For who can know which path he will choose next? In an instant he can transform to trample and kill. Thus if not for the fear of the justice of the king, one could not join anyone. If so, the king himself who has reshut (permission) in his hand, it is proper to distance from him. So too for

people who think themselves hefker (free), and there is no G-d nor human king below watching them (atheists). All is included in "do not become involved with the ruling power".

 **Level 3**

Maharal

Maharal - see next mishna.

 **Level 4**

Rabbi Avraham Azoulay - Ahava b'Taanugim human society is generally divided into three divisions. This is besides the special "solitary ones" (mitbodedim) who toil in wisdom and are above everyone and who have no occupation with other people.

The first division comprises all the various workers and businessmen in the world, whose intent is to work to earn money.

The second division is the leaders and judges of the people, each generation and its leaders, judges, etc.

The third division is those who have power to be in the palace of the king and the officials who are close to the government.

Regarding the first division, he said it is the choicest of the three and it is proper to love this [path] for it is the best one for man to toil in.

Regarding the second division, he said it is proper to hate it. But it is not proper to distance from it totally. For sometimes necessity brings one to become a judge or a leader, namely, when there is no one there more fit than himself. Then it is not proper to distance from it. All [important] positions and leadership (minui v'hanhaga) is included in the term "Rabanut". (as written in Avodah Zara 17b: "rabbi (master) of weavers".

This is the meaning of "hate Rabbanut".

Regarding the third division, he said: "do not become known (intimate) with the ruling power". Avoid it completely. For there is no benefit. Only evil all day.

He said "love work", and not "engage in work", i.e. habituate yourself until the work becomes second nature and it is not a heavy yoke on you.

He did not say "love the earnings of work", but rather "love work", even if you have money and don't need the earnings. For as the talmud says: "idleness brings to shiamum (mental instability) and immorality" (Ketuvot 59b).

Also hate Rabanut for in this, man becomes haughty and haughtiness brings to sin and perhaps he will sin. All the more so "do not become known (intimate) with the ruling power". For with the "ruling power" certainly he will sin. Because the reshut wants only someone who flatters it and brings it benefits and he will sometimes take other people's money wrongly.

Chapter 1 Mishna 11 - Watch Your Words

Avtalyon would say: "Chachamim (scholars), be careful with your words; lest you be liable for (the punishment of) exile, and are exiled to a place of evil waters, from which the disciples who come after may drink and die, and thus the Name of Heaven will be desecrated."

אֲבָטְלִיּוֹן אָמַר, חֲכָמִים, הִזְהָרוּ בְּדַבְרֵיכֶם, שִׁמָּא תִּחְוִבוּ חוֹבַת גְּלוּת וְתִגְלוּ לְמָקוֹם מֵיִם הָרָעִים, וְיִשְׁתּוּ וְיָמוּתוּ, וְיִמְצָא שֵׁם שְׁמַיִם מִתְחַלֵּל

Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "be careful with your word" - do not leave room for the heretics to err.

"lest you be liable for exile" - even though there are no heretics in your place, you should nevertheless be concerned that perhaps it will cause sin and you will incur [the punishment of] exile winding up in a place where people expound torah not in line with halacha (called metaphorically "bad water"), and they will understand improper things from your words, and the students after them will drink from those heretical things and die in sin.

"and thus the Name of Heaven will be desecrated" - those improper views will remain in the world, as happened to Antigonus of Socho with Tzadok and Beitus his disciples. He told them: "Do not be as servants who serve their master in order to receive reward...", and they told themselves: "how could a worker work strenuously all day and receive no wages at the end of the day?". They went out and became heretics along with their students. They are called Tzadukim and Beitusim until today. (translator: last remnants today are the Karaites)

Level 1

Sforno

Sforno - they will think this is your view only that you don't want to publicize it openly. This will cause a desecration of G-d's Name for the masses will think that bad view is yours.

Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "be careful with your words" - he exhorted the rabbis to be careful not to say something which can be interpreted in two ways. For perhaps you will be in a place where heresy strengthens and they will interpret your words in line with their heretical views and the students afterwards will turn to the heretical views and die, and the world will blame you thinking they learned that from you, thereby desecrating the Name of G-d.

Level 2

Vilna Gaon - as the torah was careful in its words, as written: "R. Yohanan said: In all the verses which the heretics have taken [as grounds] for their heresy, their refutation is found near at hand. For example: 'Let us make man in our image' (implying multiple gods), next verse: 'And G-d (singular tense) created man in His image'..." (Sanhedrin 38b).

Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - this pair of sages, Shemaya and Avtalyon are also coming to exhort on something which is a very primary matter. Namely, man's conduct with the public..

It is proper that the Name of Heaven be beloved [to others] through the torah sages, as the Talmud says (Yomah 86a):

" 'And you shall love the L-ord your G-d' (Deuteronomy 6:5), which means that you shall make the Name of Heaven beloved. How should one do so? One should do so in that he should read Torah, and learn Mishna, and serve Torah scholars, and he should be pleasant with people in his

business transactions. What do people say about such a person? Fortunate is his father who taught him Torah, fortunate is his teacher who taught him Torah, woe to the people who have not studied Torah. So-and-so who taught him Torah, see how pleasant are his ways, how proper are his deeds. The verse states about him and others like him: 'You are My servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified' (Isaiah 49:3)" end quote.

That which is honor of torah and honor of G-d causes love of Hash-em, blessed be He. Namely, when the torah scholar does not need others.. For this causes annulment of the honor of torah.. When they need others, every Rav acquires a master over himself. Therefore Shmaya said: "hate Rabbanut", for it distances work.

Do not think that work is not honorable. On the contrary it brings honor to a man.. and he will not receive disgrace until he needs the [charity] of others.. Therefore he said: "love work". For if one says work is a dishonor, it is not so. Above all, it saves one from many sins and also grants one honor...

Understand the sages' emphasis on love of work, namely, to love to do work, i.e. the main virtue [here] is when one loves work. Thus, he did not say: "choose work for yourself", but rather "love work".

And in Berachot 8a:

"One who enjoys (nehene) from the work of his hands is greater than a G-d-fearing person. As with regard to a G-d-fearing person, it is merely written: "fortunate is the man who fears the L-ord" (Psalms 112:1), while with regard to one who benefits from the work of his hands, it is written (double expression): 'by the labor of your hands you shall live; fortunate are you and it is good for you' (Psalms 128:2)" end quote.

The explanation is that one who enjoys from the work of his hands is satisfied with what G-d provided for him, and what he has is sufficient for him.

For otherwise, he would not be "enjoying [the work of his hand]". But when he is "enjoying", he is certainly satisfied with what he has and he is not lacking.. Thus it says on him: "fortunate are you..". For such a man, in being a whole creature, in having the trait of histapkut (content with what one has), he is without lacking. Then it is proper for him to have complete Olam Haba and also this world for since he is satisfied with himself and content with his portion, Hash-em helps him to become completely whole, without lacking.

It is known that "existence" is this world and the next. Thus, one who is considered an "existence" (not lacking) is thus worthy of this world and the next which are both existences and which are not lacking. But one who is lacking is close to inexistence, since lacking is the beginning of inexistence. Hence, he who is content with himself is not lacking. For the definition of being satisfied is not lacking. Thus, he is considered an existence and it is proper for him to inherit the existence, namely, this world and the next...

The general principle: when a person is whole with himself, i.e., satisfied with himself, then he has a complete existence without lacking, and it is proper for him to completely have this world and the next, which are [whole] existences...

You should also know that for he who "enjoys from the work of his hand..", it is impossible for him to not also have the trait of love through this. For after he is content and loves the work of his hands, it is also impossible for him to not also love He who bestowed to him all this. For one who

receives a gift and the gift is accepted and beloved to him, how could he not love greatly he who gave him the gift?

As we mentioned, each of the pairs came to exhort in some great mussar. According to the greatness of the sage is the greatness of his mussar. Therefore, he came here to exhort one to love work. For it is a great matter and he hangs on this topic a great primary matter (the trait of histapkut-contentment).

But besides the Shlemut (wholeness) one gets from work, more than this, there is also the honor of G-d's Name and it is proper for His Name to be beloved in the world especially through the torah scholars..

For it causes love of G-d when people see the torah scholars conducting themselves properly, when they love work and don't want to benefit from others..

He should hate Rabbanut which distances work to instead have authority over others.

Furthermore every sin and transgression of the public is upon the persons of authority. For they have the ability to admonish them (the sinners).

Avtalyon comes to exhort on the opposite. To not do things which may cause a chilul Hash-em. Thus he said:

"Chachamim (scholars), be careful with your words; lest you be liable for (the punishment of) exile, and are exiled to a place of evil waters, from which the disciples who come after may drink and die, and thus the Name of Heaven will be desecrated"

Thus, Shmaya and Avtalon both taught mussar that G-d's Name be sanctified through the torah scholars..

Chapter 1 Mishna 12 - Love Peace

Hillel and Shammai received from them. Hillel would say: Be **הִלֵּל וְשַׁמַּי קִבְּלוּ מֵהֵם. הִלֵּל אָמַר, הוֹי מִתְלַמְּדוֹ שֶׁל אַהֲרֹן, אוֹהֵב שְׁלוֹם וְרוֹדֵף שְׁלוֹם, אוֹהֵב אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת וּמִקְרָבָן לַתּוֹרָה.** of the disciples of Aharon, loving peace, pursuing peace, loving the public and drawing them closer to Torah.

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "be of the disciples of Aharon.." - this is explained in Avot d'Rebbi Natan:

"How would Aharon 'pursue peace'? When he saw two people in dispute, he would go to each one separately without the other's knowledge and say to him: "see how your fellow regrets and hits himself for having wronged you. He asked me to come to you so you would forgive him". Through this, next time they met, they would kiss each other.

How would Aharon "draw them closer to torah"? When he knew about a certain person who had committed a sin, he would befriend him and smile to him. That man would then be embarrassed and tell himself: 'if this Tzadik (righteous man) knew my evil deeds, he would keep far away from me'. Due to this, he would repent and return to the good. This is what the prophet testified on him: "he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and turned many away from iniquity" (Malachi 2:6)

Q Level 2

Rambam

Rambam - our sages said that when Aharon sensed in a man that his interior is evil or when he was told that the man has sin in his hands, he would befriend him and increase speech with him. That man would become embarrassed of himself and tell himself: "woe to me. If Aharon knew what is hidden in my heart and my evil deeds, he would not permit himself to look at me, all the more so, would he not speak to me. He considers me a kosher person. Therefore, I will make true his words and thoughts by returning to the good.."

Q Level 2

Machzor Vitri - in Avot d'Rebbi natan (ch.12):

If two people were in a quarrel with each other, Aharon would go to each one and sit with him and say: "my son, look at what your fellow is saying to himself. He is wrenching his heart and choking himself and plucking his hair and saying: 'oy to me! how could I lift my eyes and see my friend! I am ashamed of myself for having wronged him!'"

Aharon would sit with him until he extracted all the jealousy (kinna) from his heart. Afterwards, he would go to the other person and say the same thing until both would be embarrassed of each other and kiss each other. Likewise, between a man and his wife...

We find in the Midrash (Ber.Rabba) that since the men of the Tower of Bavel loved each other, the Holy One, blessed be He, did not want to eliminate them, so He confounded them instead. But for the men of Sodom who hated each other, He annihilated them from the world, as written: "And the people of Sodom were very evil and sinful against the L-ord" (Gen.13:13), "evil" towards each other and "sinning" with immorality. Furthermore, our sages said "even if the Jewish people worship idols, but there is shalom between them, no nation can rule over them.. and how difficult is dispute (machloket), for even if the Jewish people fulfill the whole torah, but there is dispute among them - they are made hefker (free for all) and vulnerable to damagers (chulin l'mazikin).

Q Level 4

Chida

Chida - *Zeroa Yamin* - "love peace, pursue peace, love the public" - (literal translation: a lover of peace, a pursuer of peace, loving the public..) - he did not say: "love peace and pursue peace"

but rather "a lover of peace, a pursuer of peace". This is to teach that one should become so habituated in this that it becomes his name that he is called by, that everyone calls him "lover of peace", "pursuer of peace", and as it is written: "seek peace and pursue it" (Tehilim 34:15).

Q Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "love peace" - first, one must himself love Shalom, namely, that Shalom be beloved and good in his eyes, and he loves it for himself. This will lead to making Shalom between others..

"love the public" - i.e. be one who loves the public. This second trait follows from the first. After one's nature loves shalom, this will lead to love of the public in one's nature. Thus, he did not say "be one who loves the public". For it is as if both are one trait since one leads to the other.

"love the public" - (literally: "love the created beings (habriot)") i.e. in their being G-d's creations, blessed be He, one needs to love them. Whether they are Tzadikim (righteous) or otherwise. Through this, you will draw them closer to the torah, even though they are far from it.

Q Level 2

Tosfot Yom Tov

Tosfot Yom Tov - "love the created beings" - since they are the creations of the Holy One, blessed be He. Therefore it is proper for you to love them and also that the love be due to this aspect, not from a different one, such as from a benefit you may receive from them. The Midrash Shmuel explains along these lines.

Q Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "drawing them closer to Torah" - we may also infer from "draw them closer to Torah", i.e. that you are primary (ikar) and he is secondary (tafel) and he approaches you. For then he is necessarily secondary (tafel) to you and will learn from you. (translator: "draw them closer to torah" implies he is approaching you, not the opposite, since you are closer to torah than him instead of drawing him closer to torah.)

But not that he is the primary (ikar) and you approach him and are secondary (tafel) (translator: whereby you would be drawing the torah closer to him).

For then, on the contrary, your words will not avail and there is concern that perhaps you will learn from him, as we mentioned earlier regarding "do not join a wicked man, etc" (Avor 1:7). i.e. when he is primary and you are secondary. Here he exhorted on the opposite case, "drawing them closer to Torah", as we explained. This is a correct inference (dikduk).

Q Level 2

Vilna Gaon - "love the public" - as written: "love your fellow as yourself" (Vayikra 19:18) - this is a great general principle of the torah" (Torat Kohanim parsha Kedoshim).

Q Level 2

Mili D'Avot - "love peace" - He would very much love that there be Shalom with every person. Therefore, he was very forebearing (savlan meod), and he would not put to heart anything that was said against him. This is the general principle (klal gadol) of the torah. For one who loves Shalom will not steal nor commit adultery nor any other sin between man and his fellow. Love of Shalom also includes love of being in Shalom with Hash-em. Therefore, he will be careful of all sins between himself and Hash-em.. thus in order to love torah, Shalom must be precious in one's eyes, and then there will not be a stumbling of sin. For due to that stumbling block, there will not be Shalom with one's Creator and one's fellow human beings.

Q Level 3

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - due to his extreme humility, he taught three consecutive Mishnas on humility, the

first in speech, the second in deed, and the third in thought..

In this mishna, he exhorts on humility in speech. This includes three matters: speech towards one greater than oneself, one equal, and one less.

Thus regarding one's duty towards one's Rabbi who is greater than oneself, he said a man should learn from Aharon. See how he rejoiced when Moshe Rabeinu was chosen to be the Rav of Israel, how he went out to greet him and called him "my master", despite that Moshe was his younger brother and that he was equal to him (as Rashi on Shmot 26:28). So too, honor your local Rav, even if he is smaller than you.

Regarding one's duty to his equals, he said: "love peace". Not to cause disputes between him and you. And also to "pursue peace", when your peer acts crookedly and causes a dispute between you and him. Nevertheless, pursue and verbally exert yourself after shalom, which ran away from you. Return it to its proper place..

Regarding one's duty towards his students and his flock, he said to "love the created beings" even those who are not even worthy of being called "Adam" (human), due to their weakness of intellect. Rather, they are considered only like other created beings (animals). Nevertheless, benefit them physically and spiritually. When you rebuke them, be concerned for their honor. Not by anger and fury. Rather, by appeasement, favor and kindness. Like a father who has pity on his sons. For only through this way will you bring them closer to torah. For a man does not listen to the advice of one who hates him but rather only to one who loves him. We likewise find Hillel conducted himself thus towards the convert who came to anger him as brought in the Talmud (Shab.31)...

Level 3

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "be of the disciples.." - as written: "seek peace and pursue it" (Tehilim 34:15). The matter of the double language of "seek" and "pursue" is as follows. When there is a dispute and quarrel between two people and a third person wants to make peace between them, he must appease and go along the spirit of each of the two and say to each one: "yes, true, even though you are right and the other person is wrong, but nevertheless, be a 'pursuer of peace' (rodef shalom)". Because if you tell him that he wronged the other fellow and he is the one that needs to make amends, he will not accept it and won't listen.

It is likely that he will also make a new dispute with the third person who tried to make peace due to this. For "each person's ways are just in his eyes", and he imagines that only his fellow is wrong and must apologize and make amends. This is the meaning of "seek shalom" - i.e. that your will be for peace. Even though you think he wronged you, nevertheless, "pursue it". You chase peace and do not hope/wait until your fellow appeases you.

Another explanation, even though by drawing close to torah, sometimes one can cause a dispute. For example, between a man and his wife. For she imagines that through this (drawing closer to torah), there will be less money (parnassa) and "strife is prevalent in a house on account of food" (Bava Metzia 59a). Nevertheless, draw close to torah. This is "love the public". For this is the true love, and "when a man's ways pleases Hash-em, even his enemies will make peace with him" (Mishlei 16:7), which our sages expounded refers to one's wife, and eventually there will be even greater peace between them.

Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - "Hillel and Shamai received from them.." - they are the fifth pair. They came to teach mussar on a great primary matter. For this world is more prone to dispute (machloket) than anything else in the world. Because this is the matter of this world, it is a world of separation and

division (olam hachiluk v'haperud). Therefore, dispute (machloket) is common in the world. You can understand this from that which dispute came to the world on the day the world was created, namely, from Kain and Hevel. From this you will see that this world is prone to dispute due to its being a world of separation and division.

Therefore, he said it is proper for one to support (machzik) the world with the trait of "pursuing peace" between man and his fellow. So that when there is in this world separation and division, his trait will be to join the divisions as will be explained.

There is much to ask on the saying of Hillel who said to be among the disciples of Aharon. Even though it was undoubtedly so that Aharon would love peace and pursue peace, but nevertheless, this was not mentioned explicitly anywhere in the torah.

Only the verse in Malachi hinted at this: "he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and turned many away from iniquity" (Malachi 2:6).

Hillel did not rely (solely) on this verse when saying: "be of the disciples of Aharon - a lover of peace, a pursuer of peace..", for the verse was [not] well known by everyone.

Furthermore, "loving the public" - it is not mentioned anywhere that he was "loving the public".

Another question: he said to be of the disciples of Aharon. But even if one has these traits, nevertheless, how can we say he is among the disciples of Aharon, for Aharon was the Kohen Gadol (high priest), a holy man of G-d.

Another question: why does he need to say "be of the disciples of Aharon". He should have just said: "be pursuing peace".

Another question, he followed this teaching with: "one who seeks a name, loses his name" (next mishna). What does that have to do with "be of the disciples of Aharon"? Likewise the next teaching: "One who does not increase, ceases". What do these things have to do with each other? They don't seem to have any connection. Likewise for the words of Shammai: "make your torah study fixed.." All these things don't seem to be connected.

The explanation of what he said: "be of the disciples of Aharon.." is as follows. Aharon was the Kohen Gadol (high priest) and the Kohen Gadol is singular in that he unites together (mekasher) the Jewish people until they are one people, with one temple and one altar.

This is the opposite of the nations, as brought in the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba ch.18): "when Korach disputed the kehuna (priesthood) of Aharon, Moshe Rabeinu said to them: 'it is the way of the nations to have many priests coming to one house, but we have only one G-d, one Torah, one law, one Kohen Gadol, etc.'".

From this you can see, that through the Kohen Gadol, who is one, the Jewish people become as one people. For Aharon would join and unite the Jewish people until they are one people. Therefore, Aharon would pursue peace between man and his fellow, so that they would not be divided by disputes, but would instead be one people.

So too, Aharon would draw near the Jewish people to "the Place" (haMakom, i.e. G-d) through the temple offerings they served to G-d, blessed be He. Through this, he would draw them nearer to G-d. Thus, Aharon was specially fit (mesugal) to bring the people closer to torah.

If he saw a sinner who sinned, he would draw him to torah. For this is proper for his trait. And just like Aharon would perform the Avodah (temple service) of Israel, bringing good (blessings, etc.) to them through the offerings, and good (blessings) can only come to someone through one who loves him and seeks his good. Therefore, certainly Aharon loved Yisrael.

Furthermore, how could he possibly join and unite the people if he himself was not connected with them and was not "loving the public"?

Therefore, Hillel said: "be of the disciples of Aharon", i.e. since Aharon was singularly and specially fit (meyuchad u'mesugal) for this, more than any other human being, then, if you do thus, you will enter through this to be of the disciples of Aharon. For this thing was the primary essence of the level of Aharon in his being the Kohen Gadol, namely, to bring complete peace to the world.

Thus, there needs to be peace between man and his fellow, and likewise between Yisrael and their Father in Heaven. Through this, all will be at peace. This was through Aharon specifically, more than any other human being who came to the world. Therefore, if a man enters in these traits, he is considered among the disciples of Aharon. For this matter pertained to Aharon in his being Kohen Gadol and it was the primary level of Aharon.

"a lover of peace, a pursuer of peace" - the explanation is that he "loved" that there not arise dispute (machloket) between people and he "pursued peace". Namely, if dispute came, he pursued to make peace. Since when dispute arises, one needs to pursue until he brings them back to peace. For it is the way of people that when they enter into a dispute, each side distances from the other to the furthest extreme (tachlit harichuk), and that which is distant needs pursuing after.

This that the term "pursuing" is used everywhere regarding "Shalom" will be explained further.

It is also a remarkable (muflag) matter that Hash-em is called "Shalom" and it is forbidden to say "Shalom" in a bathhouse. From this, you will see that the name "Shalom" is a matter of holiness above everything (kadosh al hakol). It is something not of this world (eino mitzad olam haze). And according to this level, it needs to be done with "pursuing" (redifa), not with waiting and delay of time (shehiya v'ikuv zman).

This is so for all [great] things. Due to the loftiness of their level, it is not proper to do them in [physical] time, as they expounded on the verse:

"you shall guard the matzot" (Shemot 12:17) - "do not read 'matzot' but rather 'mitzvot' - [to teach that] if a mitzva comes to your hand do not sour (delay) it" (Mechilta parsha Bo).

For the mitzvot are divine things (devarim Elokiim). Therefore, they are not performed in waiting and delay of time.

Thus the prohibition to allow the dough to become chametz and the prohibition to delay (le'hachmitz) the mitzva is all one reason. For Yisrael came out of Egypt from the power of the lofty divine level which has no passing of time (ein ba shehiya zman klal), as we explained in its place.

This is the reason it is forbidden to delay (le'hachmitz) the mitzva. For then there is a souring (chimutz) of the mitzva just like for the matza. Since the mitzva is divine, time is not proper to it (ein roy la hazman). For time pertains (zman shayich) to things of this world, the physical world under

time.

Thus the matter of "Shalom" whose level is divine such that it is forbidden to utter this name in the bathhouse, until they said: "His (G-d's) Name, blessed be He, is Shalom" (Shab.10b).

This is what they said: "pursue Shalom", completely without any time delay. One should understand this. For it depends (tolei) on the secret (Sod) of Shalom. There is another reason for this which we will clarify in a different place.

"loving the public" - this trait is appropriate for one who is a "pursuer of peace" (rodef shalom), namely, one who joins the public so that the people are one (united). All the more so, that he [himself] loves the public and is united with it, as we said regarding Aharon.

"and drawing them closer to Torah" - for just like he makes Shalom between man and his fellow, so too he should make Shalom and connection between people who distanced from the torah and the mitzvot of Hash-em, blessed be He, thus making Shalom between Yisrael and their Father in Heaven.

Thus, all these traits Hillel exhorted on is so that man will join everything until all will be united. You will understand through this that all these things mentioned by Hillel, who was the Nassi (Chief Rabbi), are branches of love of G-d. For it is because he loves G-d, blessed be He, that he loves the public, as before. And he said explicitly: "and drawing them closer to Torah", and kiruv (drawing close) to torah and to Hash-em is all because of love of Hash-em, blessed be He. This is clear.

And because one who possesses this trait of "love of Shalom and pursuing Shalom" (ohev shalom v'rodef shalom), his trait is [also] lowliness and humility. For one who pursues peace between man and his fellow must himself go to the person disputing, since the persons disputing will not go after him. And if one is not of humble spirit, he will say: "it is not befitting my honor to lower myself and pursue Shalom between people".

All the more so for "love of the public", where he is mixed (daato keshura) with the public until there will be peace between all of them.

This trait is the opposite of the baal sherara (authority/power seeker). Love of the public does not apply to them, namely, such that they are joined to the public. For on the contrary, they are separated from the public, because the public is not important in their eyes. This is the way of all the baalei sherara (authority seekers). They are out for themselves and are not mixed with the public.

Without a doubt, Hillel exhorted on these things out of his great humility. We find he possessed humility as brought in the talmud (Shab.31a). Therefore, he exhorted on these traits, which are the traits of humility, the opposite of the baalei sherara (authority/power seekers). Therefore, he followed this with "one who seeks a name, loses his name"... (continued next mishna)

Level 3

Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer Ki Teitzeh - it is known that man was created only to benefit others. On this, it is written: "you shall cling to Him (G-d)" (Devarim 13:5). For the primary purpose of the creation of the world was in order that the Holy One, blessed be He, benefit another.

Thus, it is written: "you who cling to the L-ord your G-d are all alive today" (Devarim 4:4). Namely, one who wants to be clinging to the Holy One, blessed be He, must see to it that "you are all alive". Namely, "to return many from iniquity" (Malachi 2:6, regarding Aharon), and bring them back to the

path of life. But one who labors only to rectify himself and does not benefit others, is not called "clinging to G-d". On this, Hillel said (next mishna): "and when I am for myself, what am I?", that I am not considered as anything when I am only to myself.

Q Level 3

Meorei Ohr - even though Aharon would say to the arguers what the other party did not say, nevertheless, our sages taught: "One may modify a statement for the sake of peace" (Yevamot 65b)

Q Level 3

Chasdei David

Chasdei David - in Avot d'Rebbi Natan (12:3) on the verse: "The torah of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and turned many away from iniquity" (Malachi 2:6) - "when Aharon was walking on the way and he encountered a wicked man, he greeted him 'Shalom'. The next day, when the wicked man wanted to sin, he told himself: 'oy to me, how could I raise my eyes afterwards and see Aharon. I am ashamed that he granted me shalom'. Thus, the wicked man refrained from sin."

This needs explanation according to Rashi, who explains that when he saw two people in dispute he would go to each one and tell him the other person sent him, etc. How is it permitted to lie for Shalom?

I saw in the Binyan Yehoshua commentary on Avot d'Rebbi Natan the following. In the Midrash (Ber.Rabba ch.8):

When the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to create man, the ministering angels were divided into groups. Some said not to create man and others said to create man. This is the meaning of: "*Kindness and truth have met; righteousness and peace have kissed; Truth will sprout from the earth, and righteousness will look down from heaven*" (Tehilim 85:11-12).

Chesed said: "create him for he bestows kindnesses". Truth said: "do not create him for he is all falsehoods". Righteousness said: "create him for he does acts of righteousness". Shalom said: "do not create him for he is all quarrels". What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He took Truth and threw it on the ground, as written: "and truth was cast to the earth" (Daniel 8:12) (end of midrash)

He asks there: "why didn't He also throw the trait of Shalom, who also advised not to create man?" He answers: since He cast Truth, it will be permitted to lie for Shalom purposes and the power of Shalom was increased. Thus, Aharon who had the trait of Shalom was granted the powers of Shalom to change words due to disputes (machloket). Therefore, he was a pursuer of Shalom and he would change certain things between man and his fellow as his trait permitted. see also Divrei Yoel (Nasso pg.193) who gave an answer why specifically the trait of Truth was cast on the ground and not the trait of Shalom...

Q Level 3

Chatam Sofer

Ketav Sofer haChadash alHatorah, Avot - "*pursue (rodef) shalom*" - the *Tosfot Yom Tov* already sensed that "rodef shalom", implies he is a rodef to the shalom. (translator: the term "rodef" by itself refers to one who pursues someone to murder him).

This is a contradiction to "love Shalom". He should have said instead: "pursue after the Shalom" (rodef achar hashalom).

It seems to me to explain according to what our sages said:

"For the death of the wicked benefits themselves and the world, while the death of the righteous, injures themselves and the world. Wine and sleep of the wicked benefits themselves and the world, while the death of the righteous, injures themselves and the world. The scattering of the wicked benefits themselves and the world, while the death of the righteous, injures themselves and the world. The assembling of the wicked injures themselves and the world, while the death of the righteous, injures themselves and the world..." (Sanhedrin 71b)

For in the case of whole and G-d fearing tzadikim, their assembly is l'shem Shamayim (for the sake of Heaven), sharing secrets together to strengthen Judaism. But the joining of the wicked is to turn the pot over on itself, to demolish and uproot Judaism.

By nature, Aharon loved Shalom more than Moshe Rabeinu, peace be unto him, as our sages said. For instance, they said that when two people became enemies, Aharon would go to each one of them and tell each person that the other wants his friendship and is distressed for having wronged him (Avot d'Rebbi Natan 12:3).

It is proper to say that Aharon did thus only between those who love Hash-em and His torah, whereby "their assembly is good for them..". But for the wicked whereby their assembly is evil (*translator: i.e. incorrigibly wicked*), he did the opposite. He went to each wicked man and told him: "the person who you think is your friend speaks only evil of you all day and curses you behind your back". Likewise for the other until they hated each other. For "scattering is good for the wicked".

Although by nature Aharon was unable to see people's hearts distancing from each other and he tried to unite them together by all means. But for the good of Judaism, he used all means to do the opposite. Despite that this was against his wish and nature, he strengthened and mustered courage in his heart.

This is what they said "pursue (rodef) shalom". Sometimes he would rodef (drive away) Shalom to distance and separate those clinging together and to break the bond of the wicked (keshar reshaim).

He ends off "loving the public", i.e., by nature he loved the public, "and drawing them closer to Torah". For, as before, sometimes he deemed it good to separate people, and that this too would draw them closer to the torah.

Level 4

Chida

Chida - Zeroa Yamin - In the talmud in Gitin (52a):

"There were two men who, being enticed by the Satan, quarreled with one another every Friday afternoon. R. Meir once came to that place and stopped them from quarreling there Friday afternoons. When he had finally made peace between them, he heard the Satan say: "Alas for this man (the Satan) whom R. Meir has driven from his house!".

This is the explanation of "seek Shalom and pursue it" (radfehu implies chase it away, i.e. chase away the evil to make peace).

We may hint that for this, Shalom has gematria of Eisav. For when there is Shalom, there is not Eisav, namely, the Sitra Achra. And if ch"v there is not Shalom, Eisav is invited.

We may also explain our mishna, as our sages brought (Ber.Rabba 8:5) on the verse "Kindness and truth have met; righteousness and peace have kissed" (Tehilim 85:11):

"Rabbi Shimon says: when the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to create man, the Malachim

(angels) were [divided] into groups. Some said to create man while others said not to create. Chesed (kindness) said: 'create man, for he does acts of kindness'. Truth said: 'do not create man, for he is all falsehoods'. Righteousness said: 'create man, for he is all full of righteousnesses'. Shalom said: 'do not create him, for he is all quarrel'. What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He took Truth and cast it to the ground, as written: "and truth was cast to the earth" (Daniel 8:12), etc." see there.

Thus, Shalom does not want the creation of man, for man is all quarrels. Hence, one should not hold on (le-echoz) to the trait of Shalom directly, but rather only to "love the public (briot)" even though they are quarrelsome.

This is what he said: "love Shalom", that you love Shalom and all your dealings with Shalom. Included in this, see, I have appointed you to be a pursuer (rodef) of Shalom, i.e. a pursuer like an enemy to Shalom.

But how can both love and pursue (rodef) be fulfilled together? To this he explained: that which I told you to pursue (rodef) Shalom, this is because Shalom does not want the continuance of humanity. For Shalom said: "do not create man, for he is all quarrels".

Thus, you must pursue it and become one who "loves the public". Not like the trait of Shalom who hates the public. Towards others you should love Shalom, and draw them to make Shalom between them. Also for torah, to make Shalom between Yisrael and their Father in Heaven. Through this, you will fulfill both "love Shalom and pursue Shalom".

Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - "Hillel.. rodef shalom" - this is difficult. For a "rodef" is the opposite of one who loves (as before, a "rodef" is one pursuing another to murder him). In truth, the mishna used the language of the verse: "seek peace and pursue it" (bakesh shalom v'radfehu) (Tehilim 34:14). But on the verse also it is a wonder. For "redifa" (chasing) implies the opposite of "bakasha" (seek). It seems to me to explain, with G-d's help as follows.

Let us introduce what is written in the Shi"u (Parsha Beshalach) in the name of Rav Galanti in "Kol Bochim". It is written in the Zohar that there are two groups (kitot) in the Sitra Achra (forces of evil). These are the two harlot women (nashim zonot) Machl-at and Li-lit.

Machl-at has 478 warriors (chayalot) as the gematria of Machl-at (Mem-Chet-Lamed-Taf=40+8+30+400=478). Likewise, Li-lit has 480 as the gematria of her name. These (forces of evil) fill the space of the world.

Without a doubt, at the time of the destruction of the temple, there were there great Chachamim (sages) and Tzadikim (righteous men) who were praying exalted prayers to block the decree. But these two women "oppressed Tzion" (anu l'tzion) as written: "*women in Tzion oppressed*" (*nashim b'tzion anu*) (Eichah 5:11). For their "prosecuting overpowered" (gavar kitrugam), and nothing helped to ascend up the prayers. In our many sins, the verse "my prayer was shut out" (Eichah 3:5) was fulfilled.

These two groups are constantly fighting each other. For they are two opposites. "Machl-at" is from the term "mecholot" and rejoicing. From her is drawn all those letzim (jesters, entertainment seekers, etc.) and party-makers (baalei mishtaot), "slayers of cattle and slaughterers of sheep", joy of futility and foolishness (simcha shel hollelut v'sichlut). All that comes from her.

But Li-lit is the opposite. "Li-lit" is from the word "yelila" (wailing). From her is drawn the

"sad/depressed/unhappy people" (baalei mara shechora v'yagon v'anacha), G-d forbid.

Therefore, they are always fighting each other. And due to this, there is great benefit for the prayers of Yisrael. For because they are busy with each other, they are not so involved (einam mashgichim) on the prosecution (kitrug) of Yisrael. And then, it is possible for the prayers to ascend on high. But at the time of the Churban (temple destruction), these enemies made shalom (peace) with each other. This is the meaning of the verse: "her enemies are at ease" (Eichah 1:5), therefore: "prayer was shut out" (Eichah 3:5).

The tikun (rectification) to submit these klipot (evil forces) is from doing the good in those areas.

Namely, submitting "Li-lit" is through afflictions, fasts, broken-heartedness, and tears in prayer (ex. tikun chatzot, the midnight prayer on the temple destruction, or general tears in prayer). Then Li-lit will be submitted.

Submitting "Machl-at" is through joy (simcha) of mitzva, to have joy in doing the mitzvot and to have joy on the Sabbaths and Yom Tovs (and not the opposite), and to bring joy to the poor and the Chatan v'Kalla (groom and bride), and to have joy in knowledge of the Creator, in grasping a bit of His Secrets and knowledge of His Names, blessed be He.

But when Yisrael is not on its land and the temple is destroyed, then all joy has passed in our many sins and no joy is complete. Then it is very difficult to submit the klipa of Machl-at.. But for the Klipa of Li-lit whose submitting is through the gates of tears, she can become submitted through tears. Therefore "all the gates (of prayer) are closed except for the gate of tears" (Berachot 32a). On these two matters, the verse hints "serve G-d with fear" (Tehilim 2:11), to annul Li-lit and "serve G-d with joy" (Tehilim 100:2), to annul Machl-at. End quote of Shl"A. see there.

According to this, now also when all of Israel wakes up at midnight to recite the Tikun Chatzot, to mourn and cry on the destruction of the temple and the murder of the Tzadikim, and the pain of Moshiach, Machl-at will be roused to fight with Li-lit. For she thinks this crying and lamentations comes from her. And when they sit to learn with joy until the morning and afterwards say songs until the time of prayer, Li-lit will be roused to fight with Machl-at. For she thinks this joy came to Yisrael through her to us. In the meantime, a mighty war will be waged between them, and then automatically the prayers of Yisrael will ascend above. For these will be too busy fighting and not prosecuting....

And likewise on shabbat and Yom Tov, when there is no crying and tears, but rather only joy and machol of mitzva, then Li-lit will think this joy came to Yisrael through Machl-at and she will come to wage war with her. Thus, when distracted with battle, then the prayers of Yisrael will escape and ascend on high without prosecuting (kitrug).

An analogy is to a man who was walking in the forest and he heard the sounds of a lion who was walking towards him nearby. But the lion did not yet see him nor reach him. This man turned around in order to run and escape from the lion. But behold, he saw between the branches of the forest a bear who was coming in his direction. He was caught in the middle. Where should he go? Certainly both will encounter him and rip him to shreds. What did he do? He cunningly climbed a tree of the forest and took a rock in his hands.

When the bear was close to the lion, and its eyes were downwards to eat, he threw the rock on the forehead of the bear. The bear lifted up his head and looked all around to see who struck him. He found no one nearby except the lion who was standing and eating. He thought certainly it was the

lion who hit him. He ran to the lion in his rage to fight. The lion also prepared to fight him.

While the two were battling each other, the man descended from the tree and ran away saving himself from them.

So too here, on the Sabbath and Yom Tov when all Yisrael are joyous in the evening meal and sing the Zmirot (songs) through which Li-lit receives submission, she thinks this came from Machl-at who taught them this, and this comes to fight with Machl-at and the war will intensify with them all day. Then the prayers and mitzvot of the day ascend without prosecution and will have a grand escape above...

According to this mentioned earlier, that these two women made Shalom between each other, and there was no longer a free path for the prayers, and they were not spared from the kitrugim (prosecuting) of these klipot, therefore the prayers did not help. The reason was measure for measure (mida keneged mida). For there were some people whose heart was evil. They falsely pretended to be at peace with others and devised stumbling blocks for them, as explained in the words of the prophet Yirmiyahu. Therefore due to that stumbling block that they did while pretending to be with Shalom, these two women made Shalom to harm the Jewish people.

Likewise also (measure for measure) on their leaving the torah, as written regarding the torah: "all its ways are Shalom" (Mishlei 3:17). Therefore, these two women made Shalom to harm them.

For if Yisrael had not left the torah, they would not have had a stumbling (michshol) from the Shalom of them. And as written: "Great shalom have they who love your torah, nothing shall cause them to stumble" (Tehilim 119:165).

From this it is understood the hint in Isaiah (3:12): "As for My people.. women rule over them". For he was prophesying on the temple destruction. And he saw that at the time of the churban these women will make shalom between each other and through this, they will rule over Yisrael with their prosecuting.

This is the meaning of "women rule (mashlu) over them". Mashlu is letters "Shalom", i.e. through these women making Shalom between each other, through this, they ruled with their prosecuting over my people. Therefore, in his Ruach Hakodesh (holy spirit) Isaiah cursed them to submit them, saying "there is no Shalom for the wicked" (Isaiah 48:22). His intent was on these women.

Likewise, Chizkiyahu saw this with Ruach Hakodesh (holy spirit), and he said: "Behold for Shalom, it is bitter for me, oh it is bitter" (Isaiah 38:17). He was referring to the Shalom of these [women] who did the Churban. Therefore, he toiled to spread torah (l'harbitz torah) which is called "Shalom" to Yisrael in order to destroy the Shalom from these women in the merit of the torah.

Therefore, Yisrael needs to strengthen themselves to be "ohavei shalom" (loving peace), so that the Shalom between these two evil women will be removed, and he should "rodef" (chase it to separate it) between them. Through this, we will understand what our sages said in the Yerushalmi (Peah ch.1): on the verse "seek peace and pursue it" (bakesh shalom v'radfehu) (Tehilim 34:14) - "seek it (bakshehu) in your place, and pursue it (radfehu) in another place."

It appears very difficult to understand. But through our introduction, the words of our sages are clear - "seek it (bakshehu) in your place" - in the sitra d'kedusha (side of holiness, within Yisrael, between each Jew. But "rodfehu" (chase it away) to remove it and drive it away in another place. This is the place of the Sitra Achara, namely, between these evil women, so that there is no

Shalom between them.

From this we will understand Hillel's teaching here. "Love Shalom" refers to the Shalom of Yisrael, to strengthen the Shalom between Jews, as written "shalom al yisrael". But for the Sitra Achra - be a "rodef shalom", chase it away and fight to remove it from there, so that there is no shalom for the wicked. How can you do this? Through being careful in this, that you are "loving the public" (ohev et habrios) that you "do not hate your brother in your heart", and that you also "draw them closer to the torah". For "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are shalom" (Mishlei 3:17). Through this you will succeed and be able to "rodef" (drive away) the shalom made in the Sitra Achra to remove it from there, and all the forces of the Sitra Achara will hate each other and battle each other, and there will be Shalom only on Yisrael.

 **Level 4**

Chida

Chida - Zerao Yamin - the humility of Hillel is well known. It is also known that the humble person becomes a chariot (merkava) to the Shechina. Likewise, Hillel is gematria Ado-nai. Another remez (hint): in the talmud: "a talmid chacham may have an eighth of an eighth of pride" (Sotah 5a). This is one part in 64. The gematria of Hillel is 65, hinting that he did not have even one part in 65, and all the more so not one part in 64.

 **Level 4**

Chida

Chida - Zerao Yamin - "be of the disciples of Aharon" - Hillel was in the semblance (bechina) of Moshe Rabeinu (the paradigm of humility). He exhorted to learn from Aharon. When Hillel died they eulogized him saying: "such a chasid, such a humble person, among the disciples of Ezra" (see Sanhedrin 11b, Sotah 48b). Ezra was a gilgul (reincarnation) of Aharon, and in the book Gilgulei Neshamot (ot 80): "Aharon, Eli, Ezra, Hillel are all from one Nitzutz (soul branch). With this it is clearer why Hillel said: "be of the disciples of Aharon", and also why the sages eulogized him as "among the disciples of Ezra" (instead of Aharon)...

Chapter 1 Mishna 13 - Uses The Crown

He would also say: one who seeks a name, loses his name. One who does not increase, ceases. One who does not study incurs death. And one who makes [personal] use of the crown (of Torah) perishes.

הוא הִיה אומר, נגד שְׂמָא, אֶבֶד שְׂמִיה. וְדָלָא מוֹסִיף, יִסָּף. וְדָלָא יְלִיף, קִטְלָא חַיִּב. וְדָא שְׂתַמֵּשׁ בְּתַגָּא, חָלֵף.

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "one who seeks a name, loses his name" - one whose name extends out far due to dominion and rulership over others (Sherara and Rabbanut) - his name will be lost swiftly, since "Woe to rulership (rabbanut), for it buries its possessor" (Pesachim 87b).

Q Level 1

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "one who seeks a name, loses his name" - i.e. a man who prides himself (adam hamitgaei) and his name becomes famous and goes out to the world through his arrogance and aggrandization and he makes a great name for himself, "like the name of the great ones that are in the earth" (Divrei HaYamim I 17:8), then proportionally to his great name which spread out through his arrogance, so too, his name will be lost a great loss and will not be remembered nor mentioned.

Q Level 1

Sforno

Sforno - "one who seeks a name, loses his name" - one who strives to make his name famous in the world to obtain honor, "loses his name". Honor runs away from him.

Q Level 1

Rashi

Rashi - "one who seeks a name, loses his name" - every person whose name goes out and he ascends to a high position, his death is near, as they said earlier by Yosef (who died before his brothers)...

Q Level 2

Translator

Translator - from the commentaries, it seems the reason is because of arrogance and "power corrupts". But Rashi says "every person", and brings the example of Yosef who stayed righteous even after becoming viceroy of Egypt (see Rashi on Shemot 1:5). Thus, it is not just because of arrogance, etc. "Woe to rulership (rabbanut), for it buries its possessor" applies even to those who stay righteous.

The Chasdei David explains that one in a position of authority receives "ayin hara" (evil eye) from people and as the Talmud says in Bava Metzia 107b:

"Rav went to the graveyard, did what he did and reported that 99 percent of the dead there died from ayin harah (before his time) while only 1 percent died from natural means (at his time)."

Thus, one who attains a position of authority receives lots of ayin hara and dies quickly. see Maharal for another explanation.

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "one who does not increase, ceases" - he who does not add on to his [torah] study will cease (yasuf) from his mouth even what he already learned and he will forget his (torah) learning. Some have the text "ye'asef", i.e. he will be gathered to his people and will die before his time.

"he who does not study incurs death" - this is worse than one who does not increase. Therefore he incurs death, i.e. he deserves to be killed, as they said: "it is permitted to rip apart an 'am haaretz' like a fish" (Pesachim 49b).

"uses the crown (of Torah) perishes (chalaf)" - one who uses the crown of torah like a man who uses his tools, passes (chalaf) over the world.. some render: he who uses the Shem Hameforash (kabalistic Name of G-d) passes over and loses his portion in Olam Haba.

Q Level 1

Rashi

Rashi - "one who does not study (yalef).. - (yalef also means teach), he who does not teach every asker (melamed lekol shoel) - incurs death.

"uses the crown (of Torah) perishes" - he who uses torah scholars.. dies in half his days because he annulled them from delving in love of torah.

Q Level 2

Rambam

Rambam - he who does not study much (marbei b'kria), Hash-em will kill him. But for one who does not learn [torah] at all, it is proper to kill him. He who "uses the crown perishes", i.e. he who receives a livelihood from torah or some benefit.. it is not permitted for a talmid chacham to receive service (shimush) from any human being besides his students.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "one who does not increase, ceases" - he who is a chacham (wise man) and does not want to increase wisdom on his wisdom and says to himself: "I have already learned the whole torah and saw its ways and paths. Why should I trouble myself to toil further during my vain days? What should I contemplate further that I do not already know?"

May it be G-d's will that this man die and be gathered to his people. Why should he live further after he has halted from learning further? (translator: since the more he lives, the more he incurs sin for wasting his time).

"One who does not study deserves death" - but he who did not learn altogether is compared to an animal. For why was he created in the world if not to understand and teach torah, "whose ways are ways of pleasantness" (Mishlei 3:17). This person who did not toil in torah all of his days and still holds on to his wickedness, it is not proper for him to live even one day and even one hour. (translator: as before, the more he lives, the more he incurs sin for wasting his time)

Q Level 2

Translator

Translator - note that this mishna was written in Aramaic. I read once that this is because it is harsh words and curses.

The Tosfot Yom Tov in chapter 5 brings the Midrash Shmuel in the name of Rabbenu Ephraim saying "that because Torah is something that people greatly need, Ben Bag Bag said his dictum in Aramaic, which everyone knew upon their return from Babylon. Hillel did so as well, in the mishna of 'and he who does not learn' (1:13)"

Q Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - "one who does not increase, ceases" - for when one does not strive to increase knowledge (daat), it is not proper for him to have "temporary life" (chayei shaah) of this world. For its matters is only for [obtaining] eternal life, as our sages said: "this world is like a corridor before the World to Come" (Avot 4:16).

"one who does not study (yalef).." - (yalef also means teach) one who does not teach knowledge to the people and withholds grain, "deserves death", as written: "He who keeps back grain (torah) - the nation will curse him" (Mishlei 11:26).

"And one who makes [personal] use of the crown of Torah perishes (chalaf)" - one whose purpose

in torah is to obtain honor and benefits in "temporary life" [of this world], "chalaf", deserves to die as one who profanes the holy and uses it for the mundane (kimechalel et hakodeh umishtamesh bo bedivrei chol), as written:

"They shall keep My charge and not bear a sin by [eating] it [while unclean] and thereby die through it since they will have profaned it" (Vayikra 22:9).

Rather, the benefit in "temporary life" (chayei shaah) which comes from torah should be aligned towards allowing oneself to strive to obtain eternal life (chayei olam). Similar to: "[And he commanded the inhabitants of Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites] in order that they be strengthened in the Torah of the L-ord" (Divrei Hayamim II 31:4)

Q Level 1

Tosfot Yom Tov

Tosfot Yom Tov - "uses the crown (taga) [of Torah] perishes" - taga refers to the crown of torah. the reason he said "crown" without specifying "of torah", is because a stam (plain) crown refers to the crown of torah. For all crowns besides it are as nothing.

Q Level 2

Mili D'Avot - "crown" (taga) - b'taga , i.e. crown. For just like a flesh and blood king places on his head a gold crown full of sapphires, rubies, emeralds, diamonds, and other precious stones for honor and glory, so too the Holy One, blessed be He, His crown is the torah. For "it is more precious than pearls, and all your desirable things cannot be compared to it" (Mishlei 3:15).

And just like anyone who uses the crown of a king is immediately sentenced to death, so too one who uses the crown of torah and makes it into a tool for himself incurs death and deserves to be cut off from the world. This is the meaning of "passes (chalaf)", as in "If He passes (yachalif) and confines and assembles, who can hinder Him?" (Iyov 11:10).

Q Level 2

Toldot Yehoshua - *incurs death (katla chayiv)* - the term "katla chayiv" implies death by sword. For "katla" is the targum (translation) of "hereg" (death), and stam hereg is death by sword, and we learned: "a sword comes to the world through perversion of justice, and perversion of torah interpretation..", since he did not learn.

Q Level 2

Chasid Yaavetz "chalaf" - (another hint) from the term chalipin (exchange), namely, he exchanges what he took in this world with what he should have taken in Olam Haba.

Q Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - *Birkat Avot* - "one who uses the crown (taga) perishes (chalaf)", i.e. with arrogance, as a tag (crown) which is on the head. Namely, he uses and conducts himself with pride and arrogance. This is "chalaf". As the term "chalipin". For you already know what our teacher, Rav Chaim Vital zt'l said, that arrogance is the "root that bears bitterness and wormwood" (Devarim 29:18), the root for all sins of the torah.

Once a person clings to arrogance, he will go out from one evil to another, as explained at length in Shaarei Kedusha. Without a doubt, such a person will eventually stumble in many sins. Then, every mitzvah he has will be exchanged (chalipin) for the sins of his fellow, as our sages said: "if he merits, he will take his portion and his fellow's portion in Gan Eden. But if he is not meritorious, he will take his portion and his fellow's portion in Gehinom.." (Chagigah 15a). This is the meaning of "chalaf", he will exchange his portion of Gan Eden for his fellow's portion in Gehinom.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yitzchak - one who uses the crown of torah to pride himself or to use it as a tool for work -

chalaf (passes) and is lost from the world. We find Belshatzar incurred death [by Heaven] for using the vessels of the temple of G-d. All the more so for one who uses the crown of torah (Nedarim 62a).. Another interpretation, one who uses torah scholars, who are the crown of torah, as written there: "why was Avraham punished that his descendants were slaves in Egypt? Because he made an angaria (armed soldiers) of torah scholars who are the crown of torah (Nedarim 62a). Alternatively, one who uses holy Names..

Q Level 3

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - he who wants to expand out and aggrandize his name in the world, that his reputation go out and that he rule in his city over everyone, then this is his punishment: "loses his name". For since he wanted honor that was not befitting him, he will lose even the little honor that he had previously, as our sages said: "whoever chases after honor, honor flees away from him" (Eirubin 13a)..

The general principle: whoever prides himself becomes disappointed. For he thinks that if he runs after honor, people will honor him and if he conducts himself with humility people will debase him.

But it is really the opposite. One who seeks humility will find honor, while one who seeks honor will find shame. For even at his time of power, those before him will pretend [to flatter him] with their tongues but will scorn him in their hearts. Everyone will laugh at him behind his back and call him a fool and an arrogant imbecile. They will fight him and not let him raise his head. Likewise, "From heaven they fought him; the stars from their courses fought.." (Judges 5:20) to lower and debase him. For the Holy One, blessed be He, and the public hate the arrogant person and see him as an abomination. Even if he possesses all beautiful traits, they will only be as extinguished candles when they don't shine with the light of humility from above. For without humility, they will be viewed by everyone as "a gold ring in a pig's snout" (Mishlei 11:22).

The second characteristic of the arrogant person is that he does not want to learn and increase wisdom. Either because he thinks he knows enough. Or because his teachers are lowly in his eyes or because he fears the teacher will see through his deceptive foolishness. On this he said: "he who does not increase" in his learning, his punishment will be that he is gathered in before his time. For the purpose of life is to increase Shelemut (virtue/perfection). And this person who imagines that he already perfected himself sufficiently, why should he have life?

The third characteristic of the arrogant person is that he refuses to teach others what he knows more than them. For he thinks that if he teaches others his knowledge, with what will he have an upper hand over them? Sometimes it is because the student is too lowly in his eyes to bother dealing with him. On this he said: "one who does not study/teach deserves death". As our sages said on the verse: "many has she slayed" (Proverbs 7:26) - this refers to one who reached the level of teaching (torah) but does not. He is like one who removes the nipple from the babies, causing their death. Therefore, his punishment is death.

This is not just for torah. But rather whoever knows something that is beneficial to the world must publicize it unless he needs this (secret) for his livelihood. This is as Rabbi Yochanan who expended much effort to learn refuah tzafidna (special healing), and when he knew it, he immediately taught it to the public (Yomah 84a). Likewise for Ben Kamtzar and his friends who did not want to make their knowledge known, it was said on them: "but the name of the wicked shall rot" (Yomah 38b).

The fourth characteristic of the arrogant person is that all deeds and acts of righteousness and kindness he does are in order to pride himself (lehitgaot) in the eyes of the public. His intent is not to serve Hash-em. But rather to serve himself like idolatry.

Therefore his punishment is "chalaf" (pass over), i.e. one who uses the holy crown to support the bucket of his foul arrogance, will also have his honor profaned. It will chalaf and pass like the shadow of a bird flying overhead and he will not reach the paths to life.

Level 3

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - even though at first one is forced to learn even for ulterior motives (shelo lishma). For a man cannot possibly climb up to the highest rungs in the ladder unless he first places his foot on the lowest rung.

Thus, the servant who was commanded by his master to climb the ladder does not transgress by stepping on the lowest rung. But afterwards, if he does not budge from his place and does not strive to climb further up and he just goes up and down, up and down, from the ground to the lowest rung continuously - he is rebelling against his master. This is the meaning of "one who does not increase", to ascend up, "ceases".

Perhaps a man will say: "since it is impossible for the beginning of my learning to be lishma (with proper intent), and learning shelo lishma incurs great punishment, therefore, I will sit idle and won't learn at all".

On this he said: "One who does not study deserves death". One must learn even though it will sometimes be not l'Shem Shamayim (not for the sake of Heaven). Only that he should see that from this he will come afterwards to lishma (properly), as our sages said: "a person should always toil in torah.. even not lishma. For from not lishma, he will come to lishma" (Pesachim 50b), i.e. that one learns even not lishma. However, in the manner and intent (ofen v'kaana) that through this he will come to the level of lishma.

He said "one who does not increase, ceases", i.e. if he does not add on to his learning, he will forget even what he learned already.

We will explain further according to the verse: "to the intelligent person, the path of life is above, in order that he turn away from the Sheol (grave) below" (Mishlei 15:24). For a man tells himself sometimes: "I will not strive for great levels. It is enough for me if I stand guard at my place, holding on to my innocence and fear of G-d. I will not try to increase further".

But in truth it is not so. For it is impossible for a man to stand in one place. If he does not go up, perforce he will fall down. Therefore, it is written: "To the intelligent person, the path of life is above". For if he does not ascend perforce he descends to the Sheol (grave, Gehinom). This is the meaning of "one who does not increase, ceases".

Level 3

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - after he said last mishna: "and draws them closer torah", he came to clarify how one's learning should be and one's intent in torah study.

There are many types of torah students.

One type learns torah properly and increases to understand (deduce) one thing from another (umosif l'havin davar mitoch davar), but his intent in his learning is in order to make a name for himself in the world.

Corresponding to this, he said: "one who seeks a name, loses his name", i.e. the man who draws out his name, namely, his aspiration (megamato) and goal is for the good name itself, then, not

only will he not find the name he seeks to draw out, but even whatever good name he had previously will be lost. This is the meaning of "loses his name", and he will be left bald from here and here (yishaer kerach mikan u'mikan).

Rather, the just way is to only seek to attain wholeness in and of its own good because it is the good (shelemut mitzad atzmo bema shehu tov), and the good name and honor will come on its own, as written: "a good name is better than good oil" (Kohelet 7:1).

A second type of learner is the opposite of this. He does not at all want to add on what he learned with his Rav and does not want to understand (deduce) one thing from another. This is the meaning of "One who does not increase, ceases".

For one who does not try to increase on what he learned from his Rav "ceases", i.e. he will be cut off quickly from that shelemut (perfection) and learning. For this shows that his goal is not the shelemut itself. Only that the public should think he is a wise man. In hearing that from others, he is satisfied.

A third type does not want to learn at all - "incurs death", he will not succeed.

Another type learns in order to derive benefit from his learning. He makes his learning secondary (tafel) to the [material] benefit he receives to his body, but not to make a name for himself.

This person will be cut off from the world. For the purpose of all [material] good things is to attain the ultimate good, namely, torah study. This person who did the opposite will be cut off from the world, for it would have been better for him had he not been created... (see there for other explanations).

Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - "one who seeks a name (na'ged shema), loses his name (avad shemei)" - "sherara" (rulership) is called "na'ged" as in "ruler (nagid) over His people" (Shmuel I 13). Thus, he said "na'ged shema" (seeks a name) on "sherara" (rulership), which is a term connoting continuance and permanence. But this name is not befitting to "Sherara". Rather, it should be called by the name "avad" (lost/destruction), as we explained earlier. For it causes destruction to its possessor, as they said: "woe to Rabbanut (dominion) for it buries its possessor" (Pesachim 87b).

Thus he did not use the same term "neged shema aved shema" (shin-mem-aleph both times) or neged shemeih aved shemeih (shin-mem-yud-heh both times, rather he switched terms. First one, then the other).

That is to say: "the name of sherara is "na'ged" (ruler). But this is not the appropriate name that is befitting it completely. Rather it should be called 'aved' (lost/destruction), since the baal sherara is lost through it".

We can also explain this as going on the baal sherara (person of authority) himself: "it is not proper for sherara to be called "na'ged", which connotes permanence. For, the name of the baal sherara (person of authority) is 'aved' (lost/destruction), and since the name of the baal sherara is 'aved' (lost), it is not proper for sherera to be called "na'ged" which connotes permanence...

You should know further, that which Rabanut (dominion) buries its possessor is because man receives life and existence (chiyut v'kiyum) from Hash-em, blessed be He, who is the living G-d and who bestows life and existence to all creations.

Thus, whoever lowers himself and makes himself into a receiver, such a person is fit to receive life from Hash-em, blessed be He. But the baal sherera who rules over others and does not make himself into a "receiver", but instead acts and rules (poel u'moshel) over others, he does not receive the continuance and the life (kiyum v'chaim).

For to receive life one needs to be a receiver of the life which Hash-em bestows constantly to man. For man exists only through Him, blessed be He, and the essence of the life itself is the receiving, that one receives the life. Thus, Hash-em is called the "source of life" (mekor haChaim). For a source always bestows. So too, Hash-em bestows life continuously to human beings like this source. Thus, whoever lowers himself receives continuance (kiyum) from Hash-em on Whom everything depends upon. But the Rabanut and Sherera (dominion) does not make itself into a receiver. It only makes itself into a ruler over others. Therefore, it is not fit for the Chiyut (life) as we explained. We will explain further soon.

On what he said "One who does not increase, ceases" - for torah is the opposite of Sherera. Through the torah, man clings to Him, blessed be He, as we explained elsewhere at length. Therefore, on the torah, it is written: "for it is your life and the length of your days" (Devarim 30:20). Due to this, torah is the complete opposite of Sherera. For torah is the essence of life (etzem hachaim). Thus, "one who does not increase, ceases. One who does not study incurs death".

The explanation is that if one does not increase to be toiling in torah, he will "cease", i.e. he will die before his time.

This is as we explained elsewhere that man is called "Adam" due to his being from the ground (adama), which is of physicality (baalat chomer). Therefore man needs to increase in the intellectual torah (torah sichlit) which is the opposite of physicality (chomer) and which is the life (chiyut) of man.

And also though torah, man has clinging (deveikut) with Him, blessed be He, as we explained in several places. For if not for the torah, man who is of physicality (baal chomer) would not have any clinging (deveikut) to Him, blessed be He. Therefore, in the torah is the life. This is the meaning of "he who does not increase, ceases".

The explanation of: "one who does not increase" is that he is not exerting and toiling (yaga v'amel) in torah. Even though he learns torah, only that he does not toil in the matter (amal b'davar) and does not strengthen the intellect over the physical on which clings inexistence (eino magbir hasechel al hachomer shedavek bo hahe'eder), therefore, he ceases.

"but one who does not study" - i.e. he does not learn at all, by justice he incurs death (chayiv b'din katla).

For he distances himself from the torah. Such a man is against (mitnaged) to the torah and brings death on himself, since he distances himself from it.

Likewise they said "why are the words of the Torah compared to a ruler (Nagid)? To tell you: just as a Nagid has power of life and death, so have the words of the Torah [powers] of life and death; [On this Raba said; To those who go to the right hand thereof it is an elixir of life; to those who go to the left hand thereof it is a deadly poison]." (Shab.88b).

The nagid executes through the judicial power. Therefore, he said "incurs death (katla chayiv)", i.e. by justice, because he distanced from the torah... through the torah, man clings to G-d, blessed be

He. It is as an intermediary between the Holy One, blessed be He, and man, until through the torah man receives the life (hachaim). And when man distances from the torah through which is the clinging to G-d, blessed be He, he shortens his days and years...

"one who makes use of the crown (of Torah) chalaf (passes)" - the explanation is that he passes from the world because the torah has divine holiness (kedusha Elokit), just like everything holy whereby the Name of Heaven is upon it (Shem Shamayim chal alav). And one who derives benefit from something which the Name of Heaven is upon it, his judgment is as one who takes benefit from Kodashim (temple offerings), namely, he incurs death.

The reason he incurs death is as follows. A man is a possessor of a body and of physicality (adam hu baal guf v'chomer). And [thus] it is not proper for him to join to something which is holy and separated (nivdal) from man, and which is a portion of Heaven (chelek Shamayim).

As you will find, when man joins with the upper things (elyonim) which do not have a [physical] body, death will come to him. For example: "We shall surely die, because we have seen G-d" (Shoftim 13).

For physical man does not have existence (metziut) with the transcendental (nivdalim). Thus when man joins to derive benefit from that which is a portion of Heaven, he incurs death.

Thus he said: "he who uses the crown (of Torah) passes". For the torah is transcendental intellect and separate (sichlit v'nivdelet) from man, who is of physicality, and who thus has no existence (metziut) with the torah.

Thus he said: "crown (of Torah) passes" for through the crown of majesty (malchut) which is on the king's head, he is separated from the people, as is known regarding a [human] king..

So too for the torah. It is the transcendent intellect (sechel) in man's head. It is the separated intellect (sechel nivdal).

Therefore, torah scholars are called "kings", as written: "Whence do you learn that the Rabbis are called kings? He replied; Because it is written (Mishlei 8:15): 'by me [the torah], kings reign'" (Gitin 62b).

This matter (mentioned above) causes that one who derives benefit from the torah which is the transcendent intellect (sechel nivdal) incurs death.

In tractate Nedarim (60a):

Rebbi Tarfon was found by a man eating [of the figs] when most of the knives had been folded, [whereupon] the man threw him into a sack and carried him, to cast him in the river. 'Woe to Tarfon,' he cried out, 'whom this man is about to murder!' When the man heard this, he abandoned him and fled.

Rebbi Abbahu said in the name of Rebbi Hananiah ben Gamliel: "All his lifetime that pious man grieved over this, saying. 'Woe is me that I made [profane] use of the crown of the Torah!' For Rabbah b. Bar Hanah said in R. Yohanan's name: "Whoever puts the crown of the Torah to [profane] use, is uprooted from the world".

This follows by logical inference (kal v'chomer): If Belshazzar, who used the holy vessels which had become profaned, as it is written: *"For the robbers shall enter into it, and profane it"*

(Yechezkel 7:22) [teaching], since they had broken in, they were profaned; yet he was uprooted from the world, as it is written: *"in that night was Belshazzar slain"* (Daniel 5:30). How much more so he who makes [profane] use of the crown of the Torah, which endures forever!". end quote.

Thus, one who uses for himself that which is transcendent and holy is pushed off (nidche) and uprooted (ne'ekar) from the world. For when two things with no connection come together, the lesser one is pushed off since it has no existence (metziut) with the transcendent (nivdal) one...

He said this here because he said earlier: "one who seeks a name, loses his name". The opposite of this is the torah "One who does not increase, ceases".

He further comes to say that the primary Sherrara (rulership) is not one who conducts himself in Rabbanut. Rather, the primary rulership is the crown of torah. This thing (of increasing torah) is called rulership and not any other rulership [is true rulership]. For one who uses for himself the crown of torah "chalaf" (passes) from the world...

After Hillel said these things, he said that a man should not consider himself a possessor of high levels and a possessor of torah (baal maala u'baal torah). Thus, he should strive to acquire torah. For through torah he will be considered a possessor of high levels (baal maala). This is what he continues "If I am not for myself, who will be for me", i.e. if a man does not perfect (mashlim) himself with torah and mitzvot, "who will be for me". For the torah and mitzvot others do are not going to help and perfect him... (continued next mishna)

Q Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Birkat Avot - (kabalistic) "one who seeks (neged) a name (Shema), loses his name" - this hints to the shin-mem (340) nitzutzot (sparks) that need to be separated out (levarer), and when all of them are separated out, the name of the Sitra Achra will be annulled and only the letters of the holy Name - E-I (Aleph-Lamed) will remain. Thus, "neged shema", hinting to the Shin-Mem nitzutzot which are gematria Shema (with kolel). And "neged" means to draw out, as in: "A river of fire was flowing and emerging (neged) from before Him" Daniel 7:10. The intent is when the shin-Mem nitzutzot will be drawn out completely, then Aved Shemei (the name will be lost) of the Sitra Achra.

Another interpretation, neged also means separation, as in "cut down the tree" (gudo ilana)" (Daniel 4:11). The intent is he who blemishes and separates Yud-Heh from Vav-Heh, this is "neged shema", measure for measure, his name will be lost. For it is known that the letters of a man's name are his life channels (tzinurot hahiyut), as the Rav Arvei Nachal writes on the verse "each living thing, that was its name" (Gen.2:19), see there.

"one who does not increase, ceases" - i.e. a man needs to join and combine (leshalev) the Shem Havaya with the Shem Adnut. This is "one who does not increase (udlo mosif)", namely, if he does not add (holiness), then "yosif" (adds, the word "yosif" can also be rendered as "adds"), i.e. he will at least "add" to the Sitra Achra. Alternatively, if he does not add on the holiness by separating out the nitzutzot of holiness, yasif (he will die).

And if you ask: "but what can he do? He did not learn properly and does not know on the Sod Hash-em, to combine and join (leshalev u'lechaber) the Shem Ha'vaya with the Shem A-donai, and he also does not know how to separate out (levarer) the sparks of holiness properly and raise them to the holiness?"

On this he said: "one who does not study incurs death". Who told him not to learn? Is not the torah open to all? Let him come and learn. And even one who did not learn in his youth, nevertheless,

he can learn afterwards. He should at least learn the seder avodah, as we were taught by the righteous teacher.

Chapter 1 Mishna 14 - What Am I

He would say: If I am not for me, who will be for me? And if הוא הִיָּה אֹמֵר, אִם אֵין אָנִי לִי, מִי לִי. וְכִשְׁאָנִי
I am for myself, what am I? And if not now, when? לְעֵצְמִי, מָה אָנִי. וְאִם לֹא עַכְשָׁיו, אֵימָתַי.

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "if I am not for me, who will be for me?" - if I don't merit [torah and mitzvot] for myself, who will merit for me?

"And if I am only for myself, what am I?" - even if I merited for myself, what merit is this and what importance does it have relative to [all] that I am obligated to do?

And if not now, when? - if not in this world, when? For after death it is impossible to merit anything more. Alternatively, if not now during my youth, when? Perhaps in my old age I will not succeed.

Q Level 1

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "if I am not for me" - if I don't rebuke and motivate myself in the mitzvot "who will be for me?", to rebuke me and motivate me. For the rousing of others only helps temporarily. But when one rouses himself every day, every hour, he will increasingly think thoughts on doing the work of Hash-em, and will not hide [from his duties] as his heart wishes. This is the just path.

Q Level 1

Chida

Chida - *Zeroa Yamin* - "If I am not for me, who will be for me?" - even if I have a wise and capable son (ben chacham v'yo'il), this may only help to save me from Gehinom, but to complete my tikun (rectification), it will not help much.

Q Level 1

Sforno

Sforno - "And if I am only for myself, what am I?" - if I strive only to perfect myself and do not try to teach others to fulfill Hash-em's intent with many (b'rov am), what importance am I that through me alone the will of my Master be fulfilled. This fits well with my explanation (previous mishna) of "one who does not teach (yalef) incurs death" (delo yalef katala chayiv) - he who does not teach (yalef) incurs death, since he did not care to elevate the honor of his Maker with what he was able to do, as happened to Moshe with the rock...

Q Level 1

Rambam

Rambam - and if not now, when? - for the acquired (habits) and character traits strengthen and settle in..

Q Level 1

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - Included also in this phrase is if not now in the days of youth, when? If he leaves it for the days of old age, he will not be able to do it. On this David said: "for our sons are like saplings, grown up in their youth" (Tehilim 144:12). For when a tree is a small sapling, a man can adjust it to grow straight instead of crooked. But after it grows, it is extremely difficult to straighten it. So too for man. When he is young it is easy for him to grow in the good path and turn from evil. But after he grew old in wickedness, will it be easy for him to leave it?!.. Furthermore, teshuva (repentance) in old age is not full teshuva. For then, the yetzer is not strong and lusts increasingly weaken and are not pleasing to the nefesh (soul), and he has no desire or pleasure in sins...

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yosef ben Sasson: "if not now when?", i.e. if I will not toil in torah now, namely, this second that I stand inside, when will another second come in the future which will be more proper to toil than this one, or equal to it? For if I abandon this second, it will require more effort to toil in a

future second, for habit rules over everything.

Another explanation, if I don't toil now in this second I stand in, and I waste it and lose it, when will I find this lost object? For there is no second of my time that I am free to waste. This reason causes the intelligent man to not waste his time for even a second and to not be lax in this time to rely on a future time.

Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "And if I am only for myself, what am I?" - even if others rebuke me and I rebuke myself, I still can't accomplish even a thousandth of what I am obligated. The sages gave an analogy: "a king gave a field to his servants and fixed with them to produce 30 measures per year. They worked hard but produced only 5 measures. The king said to them: "but you pledged 30 measures". They replied: "the land you gave us is weak (ziborit) we worked hard but were unable to produce more than 5 measures from it."

So too we tell the Holy One, blessed be He: "the yetzer hara You placed in us is evil from youth, as written: 'for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth' (Ber.8:21) For even if a man works hard to do what is just in Hash-em's eyes, nevertheless, he will attain only a little bit of what was proper to do..

For without the yetzer hara which rules much over people, one would perform the mitzvot even without toiling and without going after them, like a fertile field (idit), which produces even without much work. But now that one knows that even if he works a lot, he will only attain a little due to the yetzer in the heart of man who corrupts his body, all the more so if he does not toil at all will his soul be empty of mitzvot, like a non-fertile field...

Thus "if I am for me, what am I?", if I don't rouse myself to go after the mitzvot, I will remain empty of them, and even if I am for myself and toil in the mitzvot, I will only attain a small fraction of my portion. Thus, what will I attain if I don't toil at all?

"And if not now, when?" - if one says: "today I will do my work and tomorrow I will be free to rectify myself". Perhaps you will not be free and even if you will be free, all of your life, you will never be able to pay back that day which has passed by idly without the work of Heaven. For one is obligated to rectify his body and toil in mitzvot all the days of his life on the earth, and he does not have permission to be idle from his work for even one hour.

Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - "If I am not to me, who will be for me?" - the intent is that a man should not become proud because of his money or sons. It is a kal v'chomer (logical inference): "if I, namely, my body, does not belong to me, for every moment and every second, I am destined to die, if so, what can I call mine? My money is not mine, my sons are not mine. For if my body and self is not mine, all the more so for things external to me. If so, how could I pride myself in them?"

And if I am for myself, what am I? - If I think: I am still a young man and according to nature, my time [to die] has not come, for I am still for myself since I am young. But what am I really worth? As in "what are we?" (Shemot 16:7). For young men are destined to die just like old men. If so, when I am young, I am futility and emptiness (hevel v'rik).

And if not now, when? - if so, if I don't serve my Maker now, when will I serve Him? For if we say: "tomorrow I will pay back what I owe", but tomorrow I need to serve what I am obligated in for tomorrow and Halevai (would that it were) that I will pay what I owe for tomorrow...

 **Level 2**

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Zechut Avot - this hints on the trait of humility. It is known that one who holds onto the trait of humility gains that he will have no enemies nor accusers. Rather, he will be beloved above and cherished below. Thus, "if I am not for me", i.e. I think myself as nothing, "who will be for me?", who will fight me and be jealous of me? "And if I am only for myself", but when I make myself appear full of wisdom and wealth, "what am I" (people will question what is he really?).

 **Level 3**

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - here Hillel is speaking about humility in thought. There are three reasons in thought for the arrogant person to feel arrogance.

One, he thinks he possesses some quality (maala), such as wealth, beauty, wisdom, or the like. On this he answers: "if I am not for me", i.e. if I and my arrogant thoughts do not belong to me to conquer [them], who and with what can I pride myself in that does belong to me? (translator: i.e. the only quality that truly belongs to me is the quality of conquering my arrogant thoughts). Or, on who can I rule over if I am unable to rule over myself?

Two, that he thinks and prides himself on every little thing he does as if he did grand things and wonders in the world. He tells himself in his heart: "indeed, by my own efforts, I have accomplished all these things. How could my heart not become proud?"

On this he answers:

"And if I am only for myself, what am I?", i.e. I know that I did not do the good because it is good, nor did I do it because this is the will of the Creator. Rather, I did it for myself, to pride myself, and all my deeds are tainted with arrogance. What importance can such a deed have?

Alternatively, when I sit in solitude with myself and examine myself well, I find many personal flaws. Although they are concealed from all other people, it is enough for me that they are known to He who knows hidden things and to myself. How could my heart not be broken inside?..

Three, he thinks humility is only befitting and noble to someone who has reached great levels and honor. Then, when such a person stoops down from his high throne to speak and deal with the small people, a "thread of kindness will be drawn from him", and humility will be befitting him.

But as long as one's honor has not taken root, he thinks humility and submission will damage him. For people will consider him a simpleton and will scorn him. On this he answered *"And if not now, when?"*, if you don't employ the trait of humility now while you are still truly small and lowly, and while it befits your standing, "when" will you employ it? For when your feathers (honor) grow a bit, you will consider yourself like an eagle in the sky and say "I am, and there is none else besides me (ani vafsi od)" (Isaiah 47:8).

 **Level 3**

Maharal

Maharal - in the Midrash (Vayikra Rabba ch.4): "all a man's labor is for his mouth [and also the nefesh (soul) will not be satiated]" (Kohelet 6:7), R. Shmuel bar Yitchak says: "all that a man labors in mitzvot and good deeds is only for his mouth and not for the mouth of his son or daughter".

The Midrash continues:

R. Levi says: "and also the soul will not be satiated". Since the soul knows that all that it toils in is for itself, therefore it is not satiated with mitzvot and good deeds.

R. Levi says: this is analogous to a peasant farmer who married a princess. Even if he brings her his choicest goods.. he does not fulfill his duty (lo yotzei yedei chovato). Why? Because she is a

princess. So too, for all that a man labors on his soul, he does not discharge his duty. Why? Because the soul is from on high (milemaala, i.e. higher worlds). end quote.

Through this Midrash, they clarified that however much a man perfects (mashlim) himself, this perfection is only for himself and does not go to anyone else, not even his son or daughter; only to him.

R. Levi said on this verse: "also the nefesh (soul) will not be satiated", this adds so that one does not say: "it is possible for one's soul to be satiated with mitzvot and good deeds, just like when a man eats and drinks much he will certainly fill his stomach [and be satiated]". On this he answered: "also the nefesh (soul) will not be satiated". For the soul always wants to perfect (mashlim) itself more and more.

R. Levi then brings an analogy to a peasant farmer who married a princess whereby he cannot possibly fulfill his duty towards the princess.

So too for the neshama who is from on high; she is married to a man possessing a physical body, and even if the man does mitzvot and good deeds and they are perfection to the soul, but nevertheless, the soul will not be filled, namely that it be whole with complete perfection (sheleimut gamur). For it itself is from Hash-em, blessed be He, according to what is proper to it.

Due to this, it is not satiated from the torah, mitzvot, and good deeds man does with his body. For according to the exaltedness of the soul, who is from above, while man possessing a physical body, is from below. Thus the soul is not satisfied from this completely as is befitting the soul who is from Heaven.

On these things, Hillel said: "If I am not for me, who will be for me?". For man needs to perfect (mashlim) himself, and the perfection (sheleimut) will not come to him from someone else.

"And if I am for myself, what am I?" - i.e. [even if] man does mitzvot with his body and as we explained in the introduction on the verse: "a mitzvah is a candle, and the Torah is light" (Mishlei 6:23), this does not bring complete hashlama (perfection) to the soul. Thus, he said "what am I?", for I am but a man. (translator: i.e. even if I do my best, nevertheless, I cannot perfect my soul completely)

He added a third statement: "if not now, when?" For man's days are few. Thus it is incumbent on man to wake up from his sleep and do mitzvot and good deeds. Since he cannot rely on others and even if he does all that is incumbent on him, he should not think that he can complete and satiate his soul. For even if he is for himself, what is he? He is unable to satiate his soul with mitzvot and good deeds. All the more so, if not now, when? For his days are few and he will be taken away suddenly and be no more (in this world).

All of Hillel's words are of humility as was his trait. Thus he said them together. Shammai likewise gave mussar according to his trait.. (continued next mishna).

Level 3

Translator

Translator - "And if I am for myself, what am I?" - the arrogant Haman said: "all this is worth nothing to me" (kol ze eineno shavei li). Although the whole world bowed down to him and he was the richest man, he felt totally empty because he didn't have everything and everyone bowing to him.

Both the righteous and the wicked are never satiated. But the righteous feeds his soul real food

while the wicked feeds himself imaginary food. The righteous man feels real joy and his soul thirsts for more joy, while the wicked man feels emptiness and sadness. But instead of giving up his toys, he tries to fill himself with more toys which only increase his emptiness and sadness. And as the Vilna Gaon wrote: "The world is like one who drinks salty water: he thinks it quenches his thirst, but it only makes him thirstier" (Iggeret HaGra).

Q Level 3

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - if I am not for me.. - for the yetzer hara (evil inclination) blinds a man's eyes by telling him always: "how can you possibly learn torah? You are forced to toil in your livelihood to provide for your wife and small children. And how much more so in our times when the yoke of earning a livelihood has grown heavy.

But in truth it is only the counsel of the blinding yetzer. For our sages taught: "before the formation of the fetus, it was decreed on the drop whether he will be rich or poor" (Nidah 16b). This is in a general way for all of one's lifetime. And in particular, each and every year it is said: "a person's sustenance is fixed for him from Rosh Hashana".

Thus, despite all his toil, he will not attain even a tiny bit more than what was fixed for him, and he could have attained this same amount even with little toil. But for torah, everything is according to the toil. The more he exerts himself, the more he will increase knowledge (daat). This is what Hillel said regarding toil in torah: "*if I am not for me who will be for me?*" For everything depends on me. But regarding matters of this world: "*And if I am only for myself, what am I?*", for this depends on Hash-em (what He fixed on Rosh Hashana).

Furthermore, in three ways toil in torah and yirah is different from toil in one's livelihood.

One, toil in torah and yira is incumbent on man and Hash-em asks this from him, unlike one's livelihood. For there, although we were commanded to "benefit from the work of our hands", but salvation comes from Hash-em and extra toil will not avail nor succeed. So why would a man toil much for that which Hash-em can provide without any toil (livelihood) while leaving aside that which is in his ability and incumbent on him (torah).

Two, for matters of this world, he will not add anything to what was fixed for him by toiling more. But in torah, "he who comes to purify himself is helped", and even so, he will be paid full reward, as written in Sukkah...

Three, for matters of this world, if one skips a day, he can make it up the next day. But for service of Hash-em, one cannot fulfill today the obligations of another day. Would that it were (halevai) that one could fulfill each day's obligations. If one discharged his obligations for today, fortunate is he.

another explanation:

"If I am not for me, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?"

(1) "*if I am not for me*", for matters of Heaven, "*who will be for me?*", for it is in my hands only, not in the hands of Heaven.

(2) "*And if I am only for myself*", i.e. without help from my Creator, "*what am I?*" For "every day the yetzer of a man strengthens itself seeking to slay him, without Hash-m's help, man could not prevail" (Kiddushin 30b).

One should not say: "if so, I will wait until I am granted help from Heaven".

For the beginning needs to come from man himself, and according to the magnitude of the preparation and strengthening, will be the corresponding increase in divine help from Heaven, as our sages said: "one who comes to purify himself is helped", i.e. only if he comes first, as before. This is what he said: "if I am not for me", if I am not the one who begins, "who will be for me?", "And if I am only for myself", without help from Hash-em, "what am I", "and if not now, when?", for tomorrow cannot pay the debt of now.

Furthermore later in chapter 2: "repent one day before your death". But here he says even at all times, every second, one needs to repent. For a man is not assured of what will be for even one second. This is the meaning of "if not now, when?"...

For the yetzer hara comes to entice a man on three fronts.

One, a man imagines to himself that he is a tzadik (righteous).

Two, or he tells him: "repent in your old age".

Three, wait until you repent out of love.. corresponding to these David said: *"I am poor, and close to sudden death; I have borne Your fear.."* (Tehilim 89:16). Corresponding to the first: "I am poor", i.e. I am poor in good deeds.

Corresponding to the second "close to sudden death", I don't know the day of my death and every day I think maybe it is today and I need to repent before death.

Corresponding to the third: "I have borne Your fear..", and halevai that I repent out of fear.

Level 1

Chida

Chida - Roshei Avot - in their wisdom, the language of the Tannaim (sages of the mishna) includes many different things simultaneously. For the Ruach Hash-em (Spirit of G-d) spoke through them...

Translator - we will now see many more amazing facets of this mishna...

Level 3

Chasdei David

In the Talmud (Yomah 35b):

"It was reported about Hillel the Elder that every day he used to chop wood and earn one tropaik, half of which he would give to the guard at the Beit Midrash (House of Learning), the other half he spent for his food and for that of his family. One day he found nothing to earn and the guard at the Beit Midrash would not permit him to enter. He climbed up the roof and sat upon the window, to hear the words of the living G-d from the mouths of Shemayah and Avtalion - That day was the eve of Sabbath in the winter solstice and snow fell down upon him from the sky.

When the dawn rose, Shemayah said to Avtalion: Avtalion, my brother, on every day there is light in this house and today it is dark, is it perhaps a cloudy day? They looked up and saw the figure of a man in the window. They went up and found him covered by three cubits of snow. They removed him, bathed and anointed him and placed him opposite the fire and they said: This man deserves that the Sabbath be profaned on his behalf..." end quote.

Chasdei David - *"If I am not for me, who will be for me?"* - if I did not go up on the roof [who will be for me?], for they did not allow me to enter the Beit Midrash.

If you say: "you should have learned torah at home", "And if I am for myself, what am I?". I needed

to hear the words of the living G-d from the mouths of Shemaya and Avtalyon..

And if you say: "you should have waited until you earned enough money to be able to enter". On this, he answered: "And if not now, when?", if I don't hear now the words of torah from the mouths of Shemaya and Avtalyon, when will I hear?

And as taught later: "do not say: 'When I am free, I will study'; perhaps you will never be free"... and in the talmud: "Rav said: 'a man should not absent himself from the Beit Midrash even one hour" (Beitzah 24b).

Q Level 2

Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer end of Vayikra - "If I am not for me, who will be for me?" - one can be a good speaker, but if he does not practice what he preaches, if the Rav does not "appear like an angel of G-d" (Chagigah 15b), then also his students won't succeed.

"And if I am for myself" - if I am completely righteous (tzadik gamur) but don't raise up students "what am I?" And if one says: "while I am young, I will work on myself, and later on when I am old, I will raise up some students. This, way I will succeed in both areas". On this he answered: "if not now, when?"

Q Level 2

Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer Drashot vol.3 24:1 - it is known to every intelligent person that our intent in these days (high holidays) is not to pray for the livelihood and sustenance of this dark physical body, whose good will not benefit us, who obstructs the intellect (sechel) and brings up powerful fumes and fogs to darken one's eye, to extinguish its light, the candle of G-d, the soul of man.

Rather, our intent and purpose is to rectify our souls, to raise the eternal lamp towards the path which ascends to the House of G-d. But since this is impossible without the assistance of the body, for a man cannot serve G-d while he is hungry, thirsty and tired, worn out and without desire. Therefore, we put our heart to pray on this hotel-keeper, to provide his sustenance and benefit from his folly.

Perhaps on this Hillel had intent when telling himself:

"If I am not for me, who will be for me?" - for in this body there is no help and no avail. Perhaps you will say: "if so, for what purpose were we placed in physical bodies?"

"And if I am for myself", without a body, "what am I? For I would be on a spiritual plane (without free will) and without reward and punishment.

"And if not now", before I separate from the body, "when?" For death is waiting.

Q Level 3

Chasdei David

Chasdei David - in the book Magen Avot (Maharshak) the words of Hillel are explained as going on tefila (prayer). Here is a summary of his words.

Prayer is a positive mitzvah (commandment) from the torah, to pray before Hash-em, blessed be He. Even though one should trust in G-d, but nevertheless, one is obligated to pray for his needs. And if he does not pray, it will not be given to him from Heaven.

The manner of prayer needs to be according to our sages: "whoever associates (meshatef) the Name of Heaven with his suffering, will have his livelihood doubled" (Berachot 63a).

According to this, here is the explanation of the Mishna:

"If I am not for me" - if I don't pray for myself, to ask for my needs, "who will be for me?". No creature will care at all for me. Rather, I need to beseech Him, blessed be He, for my livelihood.

Nevertheless, "if I am for myself", if I don't associate (meshatef) the Name of Heaven in my suffering (tzaari), that I have intent only for myself, "what am I?", that I be worthy of having my prayer accepted and what will I attain for myself alone?

But if I have intent to associate (leshatef) Him, blessed be He, then I will receive much. For then "his livelihood is doubled". And he said: "and if not now, when?". For our sages said: "one should always pray before troubles come" (Sanhedrin 44b). Namely, during troubles, it is a time of wrath (charon af) and it is difficult for one's prayer to be accepted. But if one prays not during troubles, then it is a favorable time (eit ratzon). Therefore, it will be easier for the prayer to be accepted.

Q Level 2

Chatam Sofer

Ketav Sofer, Derashot, Derash Shabbat HaGadol - Hillel was the Nassi of Israel (leader of the generation). Although he was extremely humble, nevertheless, he would conduct his position in an elevated manner, not associating excessively with everyone. He said: "if am not for me", to conduct myself in an elevated manner, "who will be for me?".

No one will listen to my words. Therefore, he adorned himself (hithader) before the people. But he did not become proud in his heart due to this. Because when he was by himself, he would consider in his heart that he has nothing to be proud of. Thus, "when I am for myself?", when I am by myself in solitude and separated from the people, I know that "what am I?", there is nothing in me, as before.

Q Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Zechut Avot - "if I am not for me.." (kabalistic) - it is known that Moshe Rabeinu is of the "Mi", which is the Sod of Bina.. it is known that Hillel was extremely humble. And in order to not attribute good to himself, he said: "if I am not for me who is for me (Mi li)", i.e. if you see that it appears that I don't consider myself as anything, this is not due to me. Rather, it is from the power of "Mi Li", "Mi" to me, i.e., a hint to Moshe Rabeinu who merited Binah which is called "Mi". For I was a nitzutz (spark) of him. Due to this I merited humility.

Q Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - "if I (ani) am not (ain) to me (li), who (mi) is for me?" (kabalistic) - it is known that the Keter is called "ain" (aleph-yud-nun), and the Malchut which is the tenth (sefira) is called "ani". It is also known that Bina, which is the Sod (secret) of Olam Haba (the world to come), is called "mi", and the tzadik who is called a "ben olam haba" elevates the mayim nukvim to Bina above from the Malchut who is called "ani", for the small lower ones (people), elevate only in Malchut specifically.

This is the meaning of "if I am not for me (im ain ani li mi li)", i.e. I miyached all the ten sefirot from the Keter which is called "ain" until the Malchut which is called "ani", that through this I draw down shefa from the Keter to the Malchut, then "mi li", I will merit to be called a "ben Olam Haba", and I will have the power to elevate the mayim nukvim to Binah who is called "mi". But when I am for myself, i.e. the malchut which is called "I am only for myself" (ani hi levada l'atzmi), for all that I elevate above only goes to the Malchut and not higher, then "what am I?", i.e. what can such a small man be considered compared to other great tzadikim who are Benei Olam Haba?

Q Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Birkat Avot - (kabalistic) - it is known that during the Galut (exile), we need to scream (in prayer) before the Holy One, blessed be He, to bring the Geulah (redemption). This needs to be for the honor of the Shechinah, so to speak, who is with us in exile and not for our

own honor. For what are we worth? Where is our torah and our mitzvot to protect us? On this, he said:

"if I (ani) am not for me", i.e. if the Shechinah who is called "Ani" is not for me, to help me when I scream to the Holy One, blessed be He, "who is for me?", i.e. who will help me? For where is our torah and our mitzvot to protect us.

"And if I am for myself", i.e. if I ask for the Geulah for myself only, *"what am I"*, that I be worthy of screaming for myself?...

Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Birkat Avot - (kabalistic) - "And if I am for myself, what am I?" - Rabeinu Chaim Vital wrote in his commentary on pirkei avot as follows:

"Know that G-d and His torah are one, and likewise on Yisrael, His people, it is written: 'who is like Your people Israel, one people..' (Shmuel II 7:23). And He said: 'all that is called by My Name, and whom I created for My glory, I formed him and I made him' (Isaiah 43:7)".

The matter (inyan) is as follows. You already know that the soul has five names: Nefesh, Ruach, Neshama, Chaya, Yechida. These correspond to the five worlds. For Nefesh is from the world of Asiyah, Ruach from the world of Yetzira, Neshama from Beriah, and Neshama of Neshama is from Atzilut. In this way too is man's body. The skin corresponds to the world of Asiyah, the flesh corresponds to Yetzira, the Gidim (sinews) to Briah, and the bones to Atzilut...". end quote. see there his holy words.

Thus, we learned that the bones correspond to Atzilut. And behold all of our aspirations in our good deeds are in order to elevate the fruit of our deeds to the world of Atzilut, which is called the "world of machshava (thought)", for there is the absolute rectification (tachlit hatikun).

For "through wisdom all is purified" (b'chachma itbarir kula). Behold man is called by several names: "Enosh", "Gever", "Ish", and "Adam". But the choicest of them is the title (to'ar) "Adam". For thus our sages, of blessed memory, said: "you are called Adam but the nations are not called Adam".

For Adam is gematria 45. This equals the Name Havaya with Milui Alephin as brought in the petichat Eliyahu.. see there. With this we understand:

"if I am for myself (l'atzmi)", i.e. I strive to ascend the tikun l'atzmi (to my bones), a hint to Atzilut, which is on the level of bones, in this, I will merit to be called Adam. This is *"what am I"* (ma ani), I am "ma", which is gematria 45, as the Name Havaya with Milui Alephin, which corresponds to Atzilut.. (see there for more)

Level 4

Chida

Chida - Zeroa Yamin - "And when I am for myself", namely, I did all my righteous acts, I must still know *"what am I?"*, what did I become obligated in from past Gilgulim (lives).. and if you say: since I know that I am a tzadik (righteous man) now, what do I care about the past? On this he answered: *"if not now, when"* will I rectify? For I will need to come back in a different Gilgul, and who knows if I will be ready to rectify like this day.

Level 4

Chida

Chida - Chasdei Avot - (kabalistic) if a man sinned a great sin whereby there is no teshuva (repentance) for him due to the enormity of his sin, this is only if he did a medium (beinonit) teshuva. But if he does a great teshuva in the level (bechina) of Binah, then his teshuva is accepted.

They also said that a man needs to [always] increase his deeds and to ascend higher levels.

At first, he will merit to the Nefesh which is the level (Bechina) of Malchut.

Afterwards, if he merits further, he will merit the Ruach, the level (Bechina) of Ze'er Anpin (Yesod) and so on.

"If I am not for me, who will be for me? And if I am for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?"

We may say this is a hint here:

"if I (ani) am not for me", i.e. if I sinned to the extent that the Malchut does not accept me with Teshuva beinonit, for "ani" hints to Malchut. Thus, *"if I (ani) am not"*, of the bechina of Malchut, since my sins were great, nevertheless, there is still hope, "who is for me? (mi li?)". *"Mi"* hints to Binah which has 50 gates, as the gematria of "Mi" (mem-yud). If I strengthen in teshuva to the level of Binah, "mi li" (Binah is to me)..

"And if I am for myself", i.e. one who merited to the level of Nefesh, the level of Malchut, which is *"Ani"*, he must nevertheless strive to acquire the Ruach, Ze'er Anpin, "what am I? (ma ani)", the level of the "Ma" (Mem- Heh), which is Ze'er Anpin. This is the meaning of "ma ani?" - "mem-heh ani", that I merit to the level of "mem-heh ani". "And if not now, when", for "there is neither deed nor reckoning, neither knowledge nor wisdom in the grave, where you are going" (Kohelet 9:10).

Chapter 1 Mishna 15 - Torah Fixed

Shammai would say: Make your Torah fixed, say little and do much, and receive every person with a pleasant countenance. שַׁמַּי אָמַר, עֲשֵׂה תוֹרָתְךָ קִבֵּעַ. אָמַר מְעַט וַעֲשֵׂה הַרְבֵּה, וְהוֹי מְקַבֵּל אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם בְּסִבָּר פְּנִים יְפוֹת

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "make your Torah fixed" - let your primary occupation day and night be in torah. And when you are tired from torah study, do work.

But not that your primary occupation is in work and when you are free from work, you toil in torah.

Q Level 1

Rambam

Rambam - "make your Torah fixed" - the root and primary [occupation], and all your other occupations follow after it. If there comes (nizdamen) [work], there comes. If not, not. No damage when lacking.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "make your Torah fixed" - as written in Avot d'Rebbi Natan (28:10) "whoever makes his torah primary and his work secondary is made primary in Olam Haba (the World to Come). But he who makes his work primary and his torah secondary is made secondary in Olam Haba" - that is to say, if he did not commit any sins but nevertheless did not make torah primary, then even if he merits to be in Gan Eden, he will be secondary there.

"receive every person with a pleasant countenance" - show others a joyous, pleasant face in order that the public benefit from you, i.e. distance from the trait of anger. For it is a very evil trait, and conduct yourself with the trait of contentment (ratzon), in such a way that people will be pleased with you..

On this the mussar masters said: "do you wish to want (that others like you)? - want what you don't want". For a man cannot attain that others want (like) him, without overriding his own wishes for their wishes, i.e. to annul one's own wish for theirs. Through this, he will have many friends and guard himself from their damages. For one who shows others a sullen face (panim zoafot), they will hate him and distance from him and seek to harm him.

Q Level 2

Chida

Chida - *Chasdei Avot* - in the Sefer Chareidim page 68: "make your torah fixed" - such number of chapters every day, such number of halachot per day, like the fixed workload (chok) of a servant.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "Shammai..." - he also said three things corresponding to the three thing said by Shimon HaTzadik.

Corresponding to torah, he said "make your Torah fixed". Corresponding to Avodah, he said: "say little and do much", i.e. in your service of G-d promise little..

Corresponding to acts of kindness, he said "receive every person with a pleasant countenance". This is the first act of kindness to do to the guest and also to other people. Through this, love between others will increase. One will also gain that he will have many friends..

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "receive every person with a pleasant countenance" - when you bring guests in your

house, don't give to them while your face is facing the ground. For whoever gives while his face is facing the ground, even if he gives all the gifts of the world, it is as if he gave nothing...

 **Level 3**

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Zechut Avot - even though I told you to exert yourself greatly in torah, do not think that if a guest comes to you, push him away and don't "receive him with a pleasant countenance", lest he disturb you from your learning for some time. Rather remember what they said: "derech erez (common decency) preceded torah".

 **Level 3**

Chatam Sofer

Ketav Sofer, Derashot, Peticha l'Bnei Yeshivot - "make your Torah fixed" - that your toil in torah be fixed, i.e. fixed day and night without letup (b'keviut yomam v'layla m'ein hafugot).

"say little and do much" - i.e. that one learns a lot of torah. But in one's own eyes, he should diminish himself (yaktin atzmo) and say that it is only little. Through this, he will add on always and not be quiet day and night, abandoning his nefesh (i.e. lust for bodily comfort).

But in order to increase and amass torah and mitzot, he will be disgusted by worldly matters and may abandon honor of the public (kavod habriot). This is what the Tanna exhorts and warns greatly to the one who says little and does much - even so, "receive every person with a pleasant countenance".

In truth, this is among the difficulties and tests, may Hash-em teach us and help us...

 **Level 3**

Alei Shur

Alei Shur II 6:3 - "receive every person with a pleasant countenance" - when G-d created man in His image, not only did He bestow of His glory granting man the crown of intellect and virtuous traits, but also in this He created man in His image - that He granted man the power of heerat panim (shining [spiritual] light through his facial countenance)...

The holy Rav Avraham Grodzinsky toiled two years on this. All those who met him tell stories just how much this trait was [deeply] acquired in his soul. Even during the most difficult years in the ghetto, his sorrow was concealed in his heart but the illumination did not leave his face (Toras Avraham pg.11).

If such a great man toiled two years in this, we can toil in this at least two months!

Another point in this, one should not be choosy to who he shines countenance of the face to. Certainly, it is easier and more pleasant to do this to friends and acquaintances. One may not even consider that it is possible to do this to the shopkeeper, the bank teller or the driver - but they also have an image of G-d.

However, specifically through this will the Shem Shamayim (Name of Heaven) become beloved through us - when we show a pleasant countenance to the simple people!

A certain baal teshuva (non observant Jew who became observant) was asked who roused him to return to Judaism? He answered:

"I was born in a secular city. I lived in a neighborhood where there was only one religious Jew there. The Jews in the area were not used to saying "shalom" to each other. Only this religious Jew did.

Every morning when I went to school, I saw him and he greeted me with a warm shalom. I began

to think to myself: 'how could it be that of all the neighbors, only this religious Jew gives me Shalom, and with such warmth - it seems the torah is true! Then I drew closer to being observant'.

This story should be enough to strengthen us in this area!

Q Level 3

Chatam Sofer

Shevet Sofer - Chelek Aleph, Lech Lecha - "say little and do much" - in truth, one who thinks he has already fulfilled his duty will step back and fall from level to level. For he becomes lazy in the service of Hash-em, and through this, his hands slack off.. but if one tell himself always: "what I did is only a little bit", and on the contrary he is still on the same level and is always afraid for his soul, and "fortunate is the man who is always afraid" (Mishlei 28:14), in fear of G-d. Through this, he will go forth and grow, with G-d's help..

Q Level 3

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Zechut Avot - "say little and do much" - this hints to what our sages said: "a person should look at the whole world as if equally balanced between merit and sin. If a single person performs one sin, or one good deed, he tips his own scales, and that of the entire world.." This is: "say little and do much". For sometimes a few words of torah are considered that you did much. For you tipped the scales of the whole world to the side of merit.

Q Level 3

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "your torah fixed" - for all wealth that a man attains is for the needs of others, and as written: "*they will leave their wealth to others*" (Tehilim 49:11) and as Moonbaz said: "my fathers amassed for others..." (Bava Batra 11a). But that which one attains in torah is only for himself. Thus he said: "make **your** torah primary", since it is yours (i.e. only it is yours, not material possessions). Thus it is proper to make it primary... "and in his torah he contemplates.." (Tehilim 1:2) For the torah itself is the reward, as known..

Q Level 3

Chasdei David

Chasdei David - "make your torah fixed" - I saw fit to explain according to an analogy I read in the name of the holy Rav Nachman of Breslov:

There was a city with two wealthy leaders. One was a great miser while the other was very generous and very hospitable. A poor man came to the city and behold "poverty follows the poor" (Bava Kama 92a) - by accident, he arrived at the home of the miser. He begged to the miser for some food, for he ate nothing since morning. The miser told him: "we will need to heat the stove. If you go run and chop some wood, we will have enough to heat it till the morning".

The poor man toiled to chop wood and when morning came, he asked the miser if there is what to eat.

"certainly there is", replied the miser, "just enter the house next door and there you will be given".

The poor man went to the other house (which belonged to the second leader), and the rich man opened the door "with a pleasant countenance", greeted him Shalom and gave him food to eat. He sat next to him to honor him and in the middle of the meal, the poor man sighed.

The rich man asked him why he sighed. He replied: "the meal is truly good and nice, but I worked extremely hard for it".

The rich man asked him to explain. He answered that he chopped wood since midnight.

The rich man understood what the other man did to him and told the poor man: "you worked for

free and ate for free"!

The understanding person will understand. (that money comes from G-d not the work)

Q Level 3

Chida

Chida - Zerao Yamin - "your torah fixed" - we may explain as the talmud (Kidushin 32b, see Rashi there): "at first the torah is called on the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He, as written '*his desire is in the torah of G-d*' (Tehilim 1:2). Afterwards, it is called on his own name, as written: '*and in his torah he contemplates [day and night]*'" (Kidushin 32b, see Rashi there)

And in Sotah 21b: "When, however, he reaches the cross-roads, he is saved from everything... what is meant by cross-roads? [Answer:] It refers to a talmid chacham (torah scholar) whose words are accepted to be the halachah".

Tosfot writes there: "since he has arrived at Horaah (ability to rule on halacha), he always thinks in the torah".

The commentators explained that which the torah is called on the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He, that refers to the beginning of one's study. But afterwards, when he reaches "Horaah" and becomes an important man (gavra raba), the torah is called on his own name.

One might think that since he reached the level in torah that it is called on his own name, he no longer needs to learn it diligently always. For he is already crowned with the crown of torah everywhere in torah. But this is not true. On the contrary, then it says "*and in his torah he contemplates day and night*" (Tehilim 1:2). For even when he walks on the road, he thinks [in torah], as Tosfot writes. And through this he is saved from sin (as in Sotah: "when he reaches the cross-roads, he is saved from everything").

This is the meaning of "make your torah [fixed]" - even though you merited that it be called "your torah", don't think that now you no longer need to toil in it always. Rather, "make your torah", even though it is called "yours" - fixed.

And since you think in torah always, you are assured that the yetzer hara (evil inclination) will not attack you (yitgare) and you will be meritorious. For "a mitzvah brings another mitzvah" (Avot 4:2).

"say little and do much" - for torah drives away the yetzer harah.

"receive every person with a pleasant countenance" - for "*if a Rabbi pardons his honor, it is not pardoned*" (Kidushin 32a). All the more so then that he needs to show a nice facial expression to everyone.

Q Level 3

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - one who learns torah lishma will have his torah fixed for all generations. For such a person merits to arrive at the truth and according to the Halacha. The Halacha will be like him everywhere. Thus, the torah he will mechadesh (derive) in Halacha will not be forgotten and leave the mouth of the sages for all generations. Since the Halacha is like him.. and even if he says things in Agadah, Hash-em will make it fixed in the mouths of the wise for several generations. On this he said: "make your torah fixed", i.e. learn lishma. For then "your torah", namely, the chidush (novel idea), you derive in torah in halacha or Agadah will be fixed in the mouths of the sages.

Thus, in this you said little. For your words were said in a short time and it became a teaching for

many times, since the Halacha is like you. Thus whenever the topic is studied, your teaching is mentioned and people walk in your light and it is as if you are alive again and saying this teaching again.

How do you merit to learn lishma through which your torah will be fixed? Through "greeting every person with a pleasant countenance", namely, even for a student who has a hard time understanding, like the student of Rav Freida who did not understand a teaching until his Rabbi repeated it to him 400 times.

So too, do not become disgusted (lo takutz) by him when he comes to learn torah from you. Rather, "greet him with a pleasant countenance" to teach him torah. In the merit of this trait, you will merit to learn torah lishma and through this your torah will be fixed.

Level 3

Chasdei David

Chasdei David - "receive every person with a pleasant countenance" - there is to ask here that Shammai speaks nicely here but in the Talmud (Shab.31a) it seems from several stories that he did not act like this...

We may answer that these three were different in that they appeared to be denying the torah. One denied the oral law, one wanted to be the high priest thus denying that Moshe Rabeinu appointed Aharon and his descendants to be priests by G-d's command, while the third who wanted to learn the whole torah on one foot held the torah had much unnecessary material.

Thus Shammai pushed them away and did not receive them with a pleasant countenance. But for other people, yes one should receive them with a pleasant countenance, even a non-jew.

In the talmud (Chulin 5a) on the verse "When a man from [among] you brings a sacrifice.. (adam ki yakriv mikem)" - Vayikra 1:2. "among you" implies some of you but not all of you. This excludes a mumar (apostate Jew). "among the animals" this includes people who are like animals. From here they learn that one may accept an offering from sinners so they repent, but not from a mumar... (hence a mumar is different).

However Hillel the elder had a different trait (and learned differently). In the talmud there, they expound the previous verse "adam ki yakriv mikem" - in you I made a distinction but not in the nations.

i.e. the distinction between kosher Jews and mumerim is only for you, but not for the nations. Rather, every gentile is permitted to offer a sacrifice.. Shamai held that although we accept sacrifices from the [mumar of the] nations, but we don't accept them for conversion.

Hillel the elder saw that it was possible to accept them, and the reason they denied the torah was due to ignorance.. the end result demonstrated his view. For all three became righteous converts.

Level 3

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - make your torah fixed - he included 5 general principles for success in learning and remembering, namely to not learn in a non-fixed way (derech aray).

This includes:

1. In body: learning in a non-fixed or lazy manner such as lying down or sitting prakdon (placing one's hand on his forehead leads to sleep - Pesachim 112a). Or to put one's hand in a plate during winter, "[any Torah scholar who feasts excessively everywhere degrades himself and brings suffering upon himself. He will ultimately destroy his house, widow his wife, orphan his children,

and his studies will be forgotten...] his son is called the son of one who fires up ovens (to eat gluttonously)" (Pesachim 49a).

These things cause one's thoughts to sleep and not understand the matter properly.

All the more so, should one not eat or do work while learning.

2. In thoughts: to think on other things when learning. For there is nothing which rattles and ruins grasping of the intellect and of memory than dispersion of thoughts.

For this, they enacted to learn verbally. Through this, other thoughts will disperse away. Furthermore, learning verbally makes a greater imprint in the soul and is better remembered...

Even more damaging to memory is thoughts of worry as our sages said in Sanhedrin 26a.. Rashi explains there: "worry causes one to forget his learning".

Likewise in Menachot 102b and in Eiruvim 65a..

This is not only for thoughts of worry, but even for thoughts of excessive joy. They also damage the intellect and memory in what he is learning then as in the talmud Beitza 21a

However, joy in the thing itself that he is learning - this strengthens the intellect and memory, as written: "I delight in your Law, I will not forget Your word" (Tehilim 119:16), i.e. when the learning is a delight, then "I will not forget your word".

On all this Shammai said: "make your torah fixed", and not unfixed.

3. The word "fixed (keva)" also connotes the matter of tranquility, i.e. tranquility of spirit (menuchah hanefesh). To not learn in a place of commotion, where many people are talking (non-torah) or there are banging noises or other loud noises. All these ruin one's understanding, grasp, and remembrance. Rather, one should have a quiet solitary (undistracted) place for his studies. This helps much in understanding and remembering, be'H.

Thus, it is good to learn in a nice spacious room with many windows and also using a nice, well printed book. For all these things bring tranquility and joy to the soul, broaden his mind, and relieve him of his sadness. Through this, the things [he learns] will firmly take root in his heart.

4. The word "fixed (keva)" also connotes "continuation (hemshech)". Namely, that his learning not be full of interruptions, to learn a little then interrupt, to learn a little more then interrupt. For such interruptions cause one to forget his learning.

For this reason, one's daily learning schedule should not contain too many different matters. Rather, he should be fixed (kavua) in no more than three subjects, as our sages said in Eiruvim 54. For by skipping around much in different areas, he will not be free for what he is learning and the matter will not firmly take hold in his heart. For each thought pushes away the other and both are ruined.

And even within one matter, one should not change from one print edition to another, or one room to another, or even from one place in the room to another, even if this is just sometimes. Rather, one should be habituated to fix a fixed time for this learning and a different one for another learning. For a firm schedule will strengthen one's memory, while a changing one weakens it.

5. The word fixed (kavua) also connotes strength and clarity. Namely, that you strengthen your learning and not move from the matter until you feel it is fixed firmly in you like a nail, and clear before you without any darkness or confusion. Then review it quickly by heart until it is fluent in your mouth without needing to look in the book..

After one or two weeks test yourself again whether you remember everything or part of it. When you need to, look again a bit in the book and review it by heart. For experience testifies that habit rules over memory also. This habituating oneself helps most in one's youth. Thus, it is good to habituate a child to review what he learned by heart.

All the more so if one wants to expound publicly or the like, he should review the matter in-depth well a few times at night just before he goes to sleep. Then the matter will not be interrupted by other thoughts afterwards. When one rises in the morning, let him immediately review it again a few times and then it will be like written on a new parchment which does not easily become erased. All this and maybe (he will succeed). For *siyata d'shmaya* (divine help) is needed to remember the teachings (Megilah 6b)...

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - like Hillel, Shamaï also gave mussar according to his trait. We have already clarified that the second of the pair always exhorts on fear, on not doing [something].

"make your torah fixed", to not transgress one's fixed [times of] torah (*keviut hatorah*).

"say little and do much", for if you say much, perhaps you will not fulfill [your word] and will transgress.

Likewise, *"receive every person with a pleasant countenance"*. For otherwise, it will be as if you are dishonoring (*mevaze*) your fellow.

All this is a branch of fear of G-d, to not dishonor a man who was created in the divine image.

That which Hillel said: "love peace, pursue peace", certainly one whose trait is thus does not "stand on his trait" (*omed al midotav*, i.e. such a person tends to overlook wrongs done to him). For if he would "stand on his traits" (and not overlook his honor), how could he "pursue peace"?

For the whole matter of one who "pursues peace" is that he tells his fellow to overlook (*mevater*) what the other did to him and to not "stand on his trait".

This was certainly the trait of Hillel who was not a *kapdan* (unforgiving) and whose trait was to overlook.

Thus, Shamaï came and said "true, this trait to not 'stand on one's traits' (overlook) is good and this applies to worldly matters . But to lean completely in this way and run everything in this manner is not good.

For in matters of Heaven, it is proper for one's torah to be fixed. If all a person's trait was to not stand on his matters, his conduct in matters of Heaven would also become like this and his torah would not be fixed.

That would not be proper. But for worldly matters, it would be proper for a man to overlook and not stand on his traits. For in his being a human being, he is a changing being and of physicality. He

changes and does not stand on one matter. Thus, it is proper for man to not 'stand on his traits' (but rather to overlook).

This is proper only for worldly matters. For in worldly matters, man is physical. Therefore, he should conduct himself in like manner.

But for matters of Heaven such as mitzvot and the torah which is intellect (sichlit), and which does not depend on the body who is physical and subject to change, there it is proper for his torah to be fixed and that he not overlook (mevater) at all. He should not transgress his fixing, but rather 'stand on his trait' and not change except when it is proper according to one's intellect...

Likewise on *"say little and do much"*. For if one says (he will learn) but does not do, this is not proper in torah. For there is no changing in things of intellect (sichli), rather only in things of physicality. Thus, just like in torah itself there is no change, so too it is not proper for there to be any change at all in the study of torah...

"receive every person with a pleasant countenance" - here too Shammai follows his trait. For according to Hillel, whose trait is for one not to stand on his trait and to not be upset (kepeda) on anything, there should be no claims for not "receiving a person with a pleasant countenance" (by the recipient).

For it is not proper to be upset (makpid) on this. Nevertheless, from the side of the person doing, it is proper for him to be meticulous (makpid) in this to the utmost extent until he receives "every person with a pleasant countenance".

He should not tell himself: "there is no kepeda (claim) on this and that man will not be makpid (upset) in this if he is not received with a pleasant countenance.

Through this, Shammai compliments (mashlim) his mussar and the mussar of Hillel, such that both together are certainly good. For between man and his fellow, one should not have any claims (kepeda).

But for matters of Heaven, he should have claims (kepeda), even though from the side of the receiver, he will (should) certainly not be upset (makpid) if his fellow does not "receive him with a pleasant countenance". But the person doing should be meticulous (makpid)...

Thus the mussar of Shammai and Hillel was regarding that there not be separation (peirud) between people, rather only friendship.

If you ask: "but Yehoshua ben Perachya of the third pair already said: "judge every person favorably"?

Answer: that is not the same as here. For there he was only saying that the public should not be evil in your eyes, as he said "make yourself a Rav and acquire a friend", and do not say they are not proper for you. Thus, he was not referring to joining people together such that there is no separation (peirud, ill-feeling) between them (like Hillel and Shammai).

Furthermore, there it was not the primary mussar [of his teaching]. It was only mentioned as a side point. In this the mussar of the fifth pair is complete...

Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - (summary of the five pairs) - We have clarified that all five pairs, and also Antigonus who

was first, were always adding on the previous teaching...

Antignos began with man himself, how he should conduct himself..

Afterwards, the first pair rectified man's conduct with the members of his household who are close to him but are not the man himself.

Afterwards, the second pair rectified his Rav, friends and neighbors who are further away but are nevertheless close to him.

Afterwards the third pair rectified the conduct of those who are judges and leaders. This is further still.

Afterwards the fourth pair speaks of the conduct of the Baal Sherara (person of authority) who is even further in his being a Baal Sherara, separate from them. But nevertheless there is some connection in that he is their Baal Sherara.

Afterwards, the fifth pair rectified every person, so that the connection of peace not be severed. There is no further rectification in the order of the world (everything was included).

All of them rectified man in love and fear. From here on, the receivers were not singular (meyuchadim) in that they did not fully receive from their Rav (lo shimshu Rabam kol tzarkam) (i.e. they were unable to receive all the torah of their Rav due to the diminishing of the generations [in wisdom]).

You will see that the number of pairs was five. This number corresponds to the five earlier receivers (Moshe, Yehoshua, Elders, Prophets, Men of the Great Assembly).

For Shimon Hatzadik, who was of the remnants of the "Men of the Great Assembly" is considered by himself, as we explained earlier. Likewise Antignos of Socho was a single individual and is not counted with the pairs.

For the pairs, one was Nassi (chief leader), while the second was Av Beit Din (chief judge). The five pairs correspond to the five earlier receivers and Antignos was only to separate between the early receivers and the later receivers.

He was like the early receivers in that he did not have a pair. For Moshe, Yehoshua, the Elders, the Prophets, and the "Men of the Great Assembly" also did not have a pair, since they all had one name.. (each individual received the whole torah unlike the pairs where the torah was received by both together as before).

Thus Antignos would separate between the two sets of receivers. For it is not proper for the pairs to receive from the Men of the great assembly, who don't have pairs. For the pairs who are two individuals are not worth (great in torah) like the men of the great assembly.

But Antignos was similar to the early ones in that the Tradition did not have division and he was like the later ones in being an individual (without equal), as we explained. In this, way the receivers are connected together.

That which the receivers were always five is not a coincidence.. You will likewise find that when the torah was given to the Jewish people, it was given through five "voices" (kolot). Through these five

voices it spread to the whole world, as they said in a Midrash on the verse: "in the beginning I did not speak in secret, from the time it was" (Isaiah 48:16) That there were five voices, the voice would go out to all 4 directions and the fifth one in the middle. Therefore, the torah was given in five voices (kolot). Through them the torah spread out to the whole world.

Because of this, the receivers through which the torah spread to the whole world were five early ones and five later ones. For it was not proper for the torah to spread to the whole world through a single individual. Rather, through five as it did originally..

From here on, the torah diminishes. But until the five, the torah did not diminish. Each had a pair to help him in the receiving of the torah. But before the pairs, the receiving of the torah was not in pairs. For that which the prophets received from Yehoshua, each individual received [the whole torah] without a helper as was with the pairs.

Therefore at first, before the Second Temple, the torah had the power to spread until five [receivers]. And likewise for the pairs whereby there was a new matter of a helper, the torah also had power to spread until five... you must understand this well.

Now it is clear that the whole matter of the receiving of the torah was very orderly.. The first five before the second temple whereby torah was more in the world and five pairs during the second temple when wisdom began to diminish from people. Thus the receivers were pairs.

Although Shimon Hatzadik was in the beginning of the Second Temple, he was also before the Second Temple. For he was of the "Men of the Great Assembly"...

It is also proper that there be pairs, one Nassi and one Av Beit Din, during the second temple era. This is known to the men of understanding. For it is written on the second Temple: "The glory of this last House shall be greater than the first one" (Chagai 2:9).

The reason is known to the men of understanding. For the Temple was built with two hands.. as brought in the talmud (Ketuvot 5a).

Due to this, it included two aspects, the right hand and the left hand, which are the powers of the Nassi and Av Beit Din.

Thus, there were pairs specifically during the second temple, and there was then more love and fear.

Hence, Antigonus exhorted on the foundation, namely, love and fear. Afterwards, the pairs came. For each pair, one exhorted on love and the other on fear. This is as the level of the second Temple which included love and fear.

You should understand these things very very well, for they are clear.

Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - (kabalistic) - it is known that the torah is called "emuna" (faith). For emuna has gematria "kav" (kuf-beit=102), to hint that the torah has four parts - pshat, remez, drosh, sod. Thus it is called "kav" whose gematria is emuna. For a "kav" has four lugin, corresponding to the four parts of torah - pshat, remez, drosh, sod. It is also known that the torah has 70 facets (panim). Namely, for these four parts hinted in "kav", each part has 70 facets. On this he said: "make your torah fixed (kevah)", ie "kav-ayin", that in each part of "kav" derive chidushim in 70 facets.

"say little (mem-ayin-tet)" - our sages said that Moshe Rabeinu received 49 reasons (taamim) on everything.. our sages said this is independent of the 70 facets (panim). For facets (panim) means ways (ofanim). Namely, each verse in the torah can be explained in 70 ways.

But taamim means that in every Halacha, there are 49 reasons (taamim), whether on it being permitted or forbidden. Thus the words of torah have 49 reasons (taamim) and 70 (facets). The sage hinted to this in the letters "little" (mem-ayin-tet), which are "mem-tet" (49) "ayin" (70).

The intent is: "strive and toil to arrive at the 49 reasons and 70 facets". This is the meaning of "say little (mem-ayin-tet)", and "do much" (aseh harbe), make many students and do not be weary of their great multitude. Rather, "receive every person" who comes to learn from you, "with a pleasant countenance".

Chapter 1 Mishna 16 - Remove Doubt

Rabban Gamliel would say: make for yourself a Rav, and **רַבָּן גַּמְלִיאֵל הִיא אֹמֵר, עֲשֵׂה לָךְ רַב,** remove yourself from doubt, and do not frequently Maaser (tithe) **וְהִסְתַּלֵּק מִן הַסֶּפֶק, וְאַל תִּרְבֶּה לַעֲשׂוֹר** by estimation. **אֲמִדוֹת:**

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "make for yourself a Rav" - he is now speaking on horaah (halachic rulings). If a din (halachic question) comes before you and you are in doubt on it, make for yourself a Rav.

"and remove yourself from doubt" - and do not rule on it by yourself..

"do not frequently Maaser (tithe) by estimation" - for one who separates maaser (tithe) by estimate is not saved from mishap. If he separates less than a tenth, his maaser is rectified, but his fruit are bungled (mixed with tevel). Likewise, if he separates more than a tenth for maaser, his fruit are rectified but his maaser is bungled (mixed with tevel).

Q Level 1

Rashi

Rashi - "Rabban Gamliel would say" - this is Rabban Gamliel the son of Rebbi Shimon the son of Hillel.

"make yourself a Rav" - I explained this earlier in Mishna 6.

"remove yourself from doubt" - if you learn by yourself, you will have many doubts. Alternatively, do not decide *Halacha* for yourself and stand confidently [by your ruling]. Rather, since it (the *Halacha*) is not explicitly stated, one needs to go to his Rav, as explained in Yevamot 109b, see there.

"remove yourself from doubt" - that you not have a doubt in your heart regarding the foundation of the foundations (yesod haesodot) or the knowledge of the secrets (yediat hasodot). Rather, it should be with certainty and confirmed in the eye of the heart. For this is the primary thing.

"do not frequently Maaser (tithe) by estimation" - do not maaser (tithe) by estimating for sometimes it will not be well estimated, like a person who does not learn from the Received Tradition (oral law from a Rav).

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "do not frequently Maaser (tithe) by estimation" - to not maaser by estimate.. for one who maasers by estimate, his fruit are rectified, but his maaser is bungled (mekulka). For example: let's say he separated maaser generously, the extra amount over a tenth which he separated is tevel, not maasered, until he maasers that extra amount. Thus, if he does not notice to do so, his maaser has a bungle (kilkul).

This matter is an analogy for a logical argument (svara). A man should not do it approximately. Rather, the primary way is to plumb to the full depth of the knowledge (yered le sof hadaat). For not all logical arguments are equal. Some have two sides. Even though one wise man's logic (svara) leans to one side, but he understands and recognizes that a different wise man can also say a different argument in this, only that this way appears more right in his eyes. Sometimes a wise man conceives a logical argument of his own and thinks it is irrefutable by sound reason and there is no other way to see it and no other wise man who could possibly argue with him. The

understanding person will understand. This is why he brought this analogy after "make for yourself a Rav and remove yourself from doubt", which are also regarding rational argument (svara).

Q Level 2

Likutim - why did it not say right away: "Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai received from Hillel..." (but instead mentions it later in Avot 2:8)? [answer:] It was for the honor of Hillel and his seed. For after Hillel, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai was the Nassi (head leader) for forty years. After that, the title of Nassi returned to the royal seed. Thus, Rebbi (who wrote the mishna) did not want to interrupt the order of his yichus (ancestry) with Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai. Although he was humble, he was careful (makpid) for the honor of the Nessiot, as we find written: "who are these people? They are people who seek to uproot your honor and the honor of your father's house.." (Horayot 14a)

Q Level 2

Rambam

Rambam - Mishne Torah Sanhedrin 20:8 - any judge who begins comparing a judgment that is brought before him to a judgment that was already rendered with which he was familiar is considered as wicked and haughty when rendering judgment if there is a scholar in his city who is wiser than him and he fails to consult him. Our Sages comment: "May evil upon evil befall him." For these and similar concepts stem from haughtiness which leads to the perversion of justice.

Q Level 2

Chida

Chida - Chasdei Avot - the Rambam (Sanhedrin 20:8) and Tur (Choshen Mishpat s.62) wrote that it is not only one's own Rav. Rather, if there is a talmid chacham in the city, you must ask him. Likewise, the Maharshal writes in the Yam Shel Shlomo there and in teshuva siman 35. Rabeinu Yerucham writes in the Sefer Mesharim (Netiv 1, chelek 2): "if there is a talmid chacham in the city, a judge is not allowed to judge a doubtful matter before asking him. [Namely,] comparing one thing to another, unless it is clear to him as the morning [light]." end quote.

This implies, if it is clear to him, there is no shayla (question).

Perhaps this is the meaning of "make for yourself a Rav and remove yourself from doubt", i.e., this is when you have a doubt - then make for yourself a Rav. But if the matter is clear to you, then you may judge using your own judgment and you don't need to ask a Chacham, as Rabeinu Yerucham.

Q Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - earlier in mishna 6, he exhorted "make for yourself a Rav" regarding learning, namely, that one's [Torah] wisdom be received from those earlier than him. But here, he exhorts on the matter of halachic rulings (hora'ah). Namely, that if one learns from many sages, his rulings are not reliable. This is as our sages said on Rav Yehuda: "one should not rely on his hora'ah because he learned from everyone".

Alternatively, some explain that if a hora'ah comes to you that is not clear from the talmud and you need to decide by logic (svara), make for yourself a Rav, in order to clarify the matter, and "remove yourself from doubt" and do not be embarrassed to ask. And even if you don't find anyone as big as yourself to ask, ask even one smaller than yourself.

Perhaps it will be clear to him through some teaching he heard. And even if it is not clear to anyone and you are forced to rule by svara (reason), "make yourself a rav" so that the entire punishment of the doubt not be on you alone. Rather, join in others and make him a Rav on you even if they are not so, in order that each one receive only a small portion of the punishment. (see Sanhedrin 7b).

"do not frequently Maaser by estimation" - do not habitually rule in that which is not clear from the

talmud using your own estimation and logic (omed v'svara).

Rather, investigate the books of Halachot until you find help and support to your words.

Q Level 3

Chasdei David

Chasdei David - "*make for yourself a Rav*" - it is the way of the world that when there is a doubt on issur v'heter (ex. mixtures of meat and milk), one immediately goes to ask a Rav, even though most of the time it is only a distant concern (chashash rachok) and it does not really even enter into the category of a "question" (Shayla). For example, "noten taam lepagam" or "kli sheni". The concern is at most a Rabbinical doubt (safek d'rabanan).

But for matters between man and his fellow such as "words that hurt" (onaat devarim) which have a biblical prohibition as written: "you shall not wrong, one man his fellow" (Vayikra 25:17), which the talmud expounds: "this refers to 'words that hurt' (onaat devarim)" (Bava Metzia 58b). The talmud explains there:

"What is the case of 'words that hurt' (onaat devarim)? If he were a baal teshuva (penitent), do not tell him: 'remember your previous deeds', or if he were a convert coming to learn Torah, do not tell him: 'the mouth which ate unkosher meat should now learn Torah?'" end quote.

Likewise for onnat mamon (monetary oppression) or embarrassing one's fellow - no one opens their mouth to ask! This is "*make for yourself a Rav*", that you ask a Rav for matters people are lax in, namely, matters between man and his fellow, and "remove yourself from doubt", i.e. refrain from things which have a trace of doubt.

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - it is proper to ask: what do these three things have to do with each other?

Another question: "make for yourself a Rav" was already said earlier by Yehoshua ben Perachya (Mishna 6).

Know that Rabban Gamliel came to give mussar to a man that all his matters be clear till there is no doubt in them. For when one's actions contain doubt, he is not called a baal sechel (possessor of intellect). For regarding the sechel (intellect), all its matters are clear, without doubt.

On the fool it is written: "the fool walks in darkness" (Kohelet 2:14). But for a man who wants to be a baal sechel, his matters will be clear. And if a man goes out of this trait, it is as if he goes out of the boundary of a human, who is a baal sechel (possessor of intellect).

Doubt can occur to man in three areas.

One, in his sechel (intellect), when the matter is not clear, and he has sides (panim) to here and to here.

Two, for all matters where one is in doubt due to lack of knowledge and which do not depend at all on intellect.

Three, doubts a man has regarding the performance of mitzvot, [namely] when the performance of the mitzah is not clear.

We will further explain these three later on.

Corresponding to the first, he said "make for yourself a Rav", so that what one acquires of wisdom is something clear, without doubt.

"remove yourself from doubt" - i.e. from every thing which one is in doubt.

Regarding forbidden things (issur), it is certainly superfluous to say. For "safek issur l'chumra" (a doubtful prohibition is treated stringently).

Rather the intent is that for everything which may possibly lead to damage (hezek), one should not at all enter in the doubt. For this is not proper for a baal sechel (possessor of intellect) to enter in a doubt.

Corresponding to the third, he said to not frequently "Maaser (tithe) by estimation", i.e. to not rely on estimates in the performance of mitzvot.

And even though the Torah permitted this, as brought in Bechorot (58b): "just as Terumah Gedolah may be set apart by estimating so too Terumah Maaser..."

Thus, even though Terumat Maaser has a fixed amount of a tenth, one may separate it by estimate, and all the more so for Maaser. But nevertheless, do not frequently Maaser by estimate, in a habitual manner. Only when it is necessary and one does not have time, then it is permitted.

And even if the estimate is close to exact, nevertheless, remove yourself even from this. For it is only proper for a man that all his deeds be clear, removed from doubt.

Because thus is proper for a possessor of intellect (baal sechel) to not walk in darkness.

And certainly when he conducts himself in this trait, it is a great perfection (shlemut) for him. For many, many lackings follow when a man's deeds are not clear.

Furthermore, this trait is proper for a possessor of intellect (baal sechel), that his deeds stem from a clear intellect..

Level 3

Maharal

Some explanations on the order of the Mishna in this chapter

Maharal - Why did the mishna not say "Rabban Gamliel received..." (but instead just "Rabban Gamliel would say")?

He did not say here [Rabban Gamliel] "received". For the Tradition (kabala) continued (intact) only until Hillel and Shammai, as written in the Talmud "when the disciples of Shammai and Hillel, who had insufficiently studied, increased [in number], disputes multiplied in Israel, and the Torah became as two Torahs" (Sanhedrin 88b). Therefore, he did not say "received" (kabala) after Hillel and Shammai.

(Translator: Some important background info. According to Rambam's introduction to Mishneh Torah, here is the order of transmission after Hillel and Shammai:

1. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai and Rabban Shimon the son of Hillel received from Hillel and Shammai.
2. Afterwards, Rabban Gamliel HaZaken ben Rabban Shimon
3. Afterwards, Rabban Shimon (son of 2.)
4. Afterwards, Rabban Gamliel II (son of 3.)
5. Afterwards, Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel (son of 4.)

6. Afterwards, Rabbi Yehuda HaNassi (son of 5., this is Rabeinu HaKadosh compiler of the mishna)
7. Afterwards, Rabban Gamliel III (son of 6., brought next chapter) back to Maharal...

The mishna here also did not mention Rabban Shimon, the son of Hillel, and instead skipped to Rabban Shimon's son - Rabban Gamliel (grandson of Hillel).

Likewise, later it does not mention Rabban Gamliel (#4, the grandson of Rabban Gamliel HaZaken #2) who was the father of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel (#5) in the last mishna who said "on three things the world stands..".

All of them were Nesiim (chief leaders), as brought in the talmud "Hillel, Shimon, Gamliel, and Shimon assumed their Nassi position for 100 years during the temple" (Shab.15a).

It seems the reason the Mishna did not mention Rabban Shimon (#1), the son of Hillel, is because during his time, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai was also a leader and as great as him. For everywhere it says: "when the temple was destroyed Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai decreed.."

Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai was a disciple of Hillel. Thus he was also a leader and Nassi, and it is not possible to mention both of them. For they were not of the pairs whereby one was Nassi and the other was Av Beit Din. Therefore, he mentioned neither. For which one should he mention?

Likewise in the time of Rabban Gamliel (#4) father of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel (#5), there was Elazar ben Azarya who was also Nassi, as brought in Berachot (28a) (therefore he was also not mentioned in this chapter)...

(Translator: the Maharal will give another reason for this in Mishna 18. see there)

Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - "make for yourself a Rav" - it is known why the sages (Chachamim) are called "Talmidei Chachamim" (disciples of sages) everywhere, and as they said: "Talmidei Chachamim bring Shalom to the world", and likewise in hundreds of places, whether when referring to single individuals or many [sages].

The reason for this is in order to teach that even if a man toiled in Torah for 80+ years, nevertheless, it is proper for him to conduct himself as a disciple. Namely, that he learns from his colleagues and even from his students. And even if he learned from many Rabbis, he should not be satisfied with this. Rather, whenever he can find a wise man (chacham) to learn from, he should do so. He should not have the trait of Histapkut (being satisfied with little) in this.

Thus, *"make for yourself a Rav"*, always, all your days, seek a Rav to teach you. For it is not possible that you will not find a new Chidush (insight) that you did not know and you will learn it from him. And as Ben Zoma said: "who is wise? he who learns from every person" (Avot 4:1).

In this matter of study which I commanded you to learn from every person and make a new Rav always - "remove yourself from doubt (Safek)" - from the word "Histapkut" (contentment), i.e. do not have Histapkut (contentment) in this matter saying: "I already learned from several Rabbis and received from them many kabalot (teachings). It is enough for me these sages I learned and received from. Rather consider yourself that all you learned is not enough for you and you are still in the category of "disciple" (talmid) who needs to learn from others.

Chapter 1 Mishna 17 - Silence

Shimon his son said: All my days I have grown up among the Sages and I have not found anything as good for the body as silence. And not study but practice is the primary thing. And whoever multiplies words brings sin.

שְׁמַעוֹן בְּנוֹ אָמַר, כָּל יְמֵי גְדֻלְתִּי בֵּין הַחֲכָמִים, וְלֹא מְצָאתִי לְגוֹף טוֹב אֶלָּא שְׁתִּיקָה. וְלֹא הַמְדַרְשׁ הוּא הָעֵקֶר, אֶלָּא הַמַּעֲשֶׂה. וְכָל הַמְרַבֵּה דְבָרִים, מְבִיא חַטָּא:

Level 1

Rashi

Rashi - "silence" - for even a silent fool will be considered a wise man. So too for the opposite. If one speaks much with people, and for everything he pushes himself in to answer (makdim atzmo lehashiv), then even if he is a wise man, people will consider him a fool. Therefore, there is nothing as good as silence until one can see.

"not study but practice is the primary thing" - for one who does the mitzva is greater than one who learns but does not do.

Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "silence" - he who hears insults and remains quiet.

"not study but practice is the primary thing" - know that silence is good, for even learning studying and expounding Torah of which nothing is greater, nevertheless, the primary reward therein is only for deed (fulfilling what one learns). And one who preaches but does not fulfill (doresh v'eino mekayem), it would have been better for him had he remained silent and not preached.

"whoever multiplies words brings sin" - as we find by Chava. She increased speech and said: "but G-d said, 'you shall not eat of it, and you shall not touch it, lest you die.'" (Gen.3:3)

She added "touching", which was not forbidden to her. The serpent pushed her till she touched it and then said: "just like there is no death in touching it, so too there is no death in eating from it". Due to this, she came to sin, eating from the tree. This is what Shlomo said: "Do not add to His words, lest he prove to you, and you be found a liar" (Mishlei 30).

Level 2

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - i.e. regarding matters of the body, silence is a good trait. But in Torah, one needs to specifically speak fully (davka b'peh maleh), as our sages said on the verse "for they are life for those who find (motzheim) them" (Mishlei 4:22) - "for those who utter them (motziem b'pe)" (Eiruvim 64a).

But even so, do not think that "study is the primary thing".

"whoever multiplies words brings sin" - in Avot d'Rebbi Natan (1:5), they brought a proof to this from Adam HaRishon. In order to fence (protect) the matter, he added words on his own and told Chava (Eve) that even touching the tree is forbidden. This made things worse (for Chava touched the tree and nothing happened, thus leading her to eat from it). And that which was said earlier: "make a fence for the Torah" (Avot 1:1), this refers to when one informs the people what is the main law (ikar hadin) and what is the fence.

For then, even if ch'v they transgress the fence, at least they will not transgress the main law. But Adam HaRishon told Chava that G-d commanded even on touching. Thus he came to make things worse.

 Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - "*Shimon his son said*" - some say this is Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel mentioned next mishna. But this was said in his youth before he received smicha (as Nassi).

"All my days I have grown up among the Sages" - i.e. it is proper for you to rely on me in this. For I checked it and tested it much and found it to be true... this comes to exhort the students who grow among the sages, as he in his youth was silent before his Rabbis. But this exhortation is not for the sages when they teach the students. The Rav does not need to be silent. But rather, to teach the student in concise manner. Perhaps this is what he said afterwards *"whoever multiplies words brings sin"*.

Some explain: I did not find mussar which avails more than silence (mussar yoter mo'il min hashtika). If you ask: "but one needs to speak with people so they will like him and draw him close and benefit him?" On this he said: *"And not study but practice is the primary thing"*, for the drawing close or distancing of him will be according to his deeds.

 Level 2

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - "*all my days I have grown up among the Sages and I have not found anything as good for the body as silence*" - the sages' occupation is in speech, as written: "it is life for those who utter them (motziem b'pe)" (Eirubin 64a), and "a certain student (of her husband) was learning Torah quietly, she kicked him...", as brought in Eirubin.

Thus, I am used to speaking much. But nevertheless, "I have not found anything as good for the body as silence", i.e., in matters of the body. Despite that I am a talker in divrei Torah and am used to speaking and not keeping quiet.

 Level 2

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Birkat Avot - "*whoever multiplies words brings sin*" - it is known that one who speaks evil speech (lashon hara) on his fellow, through this, he takes all his fellow's sins. It is also known that one who increases to talk useless speech (marbe l'daber devarim beteilim) will perforce come to speak lashon hara also.

For this is the way of excessive speech. It goes from one evil to another until he stumbles in the sin of lashon hara or the like. Through this it is understood: "whoever multiplies words brings sin", in the end, he will bring sin to himself from others.

Namely, he will stumble in the sin of lashon hara, and through this he takes sins from other people which he spoke lashon hara against and brings them to himself. This is the meaning of "brings sin". He brings them from others.

It is known that just like it is a mitzva to say something that will be listened to, so too, it is a mitzva to not say something that will not be listened to. On this he said: "And not study but practice is the primary thing".

Thus one who expounds to the public needs to expound on something that will be listened to in order that action will result from this. For "the drash (sermon) is not primary rather "practise", which the people will do through the power of the drash".

Thus, "whoever multiplies words brings sin", i.e., that he says something that will not be listened to and nothing but words without action will come out from this - in this he brings sin. For on the contrary, better to not say it.

 **Level 2**
Chida

Chida - Chasdei Avot - i.e. those who expound to the public (doresh b'rabim), they try to expound wondrous matters and complex expositions in sugyot of tosfot and poskim.

But they don't expound to rebuke the people, to inform them of the large or small sins they stumble in.

For this is the whole fruit of the exposition (drosh) - to bring the people to repentance (teshuva).

This is: "And not study but practice is the primary thing" - to not make primary to expound and present sayings and teachings to demonstrate wisdom. Rather "practice is the primary thing" - to rebuke the people..

 **Level 3**
Rambam

Rambam - the wise man already said: "in the multitude of words there lacks not sin" (Mishlei 10:19)..

The reason for this is increasing of words is considered "superfluous of permitted" and sin. (explained shortly)

For when one increases speech he will inevitably come to transgression, since it is impossible that in his words there will not be [at least] one word which is not proper to say.

Among the signs of the wise is few words while among the signs of the fool is many words, as written: "and the voice of the fool with many words" (Kohelet 5:2). And our sages said that speaking few words is a mark of the [inherited] virtue of the forefathers and indicates one's genealogy from them. Thus they said: "silence in Babylon is the mark of genealogy" (Kidushin 71b).

It is written in the book of Middot (see Orchot Tzadikim shaar hashtika) that one of the sages appeared to be very silent. He would not utter a word that was not proper to say and only spoke a little bit. He was asked on this and he replied:

I examined all words and found that they fall into four categories.

The first: these are entirely harmful, without any benefit, such as cursing people, obscene words, or the like, where speaking them is a complete foolishness.

The second category: these are harmful from one side and beneficial from another. For example, praising a person in order to receive some benefit whereby this praise will anger his enemy and harm the person praised. Due to this reason (of harm), one needs to refrain from this category also.

The third category: these are neither beneficial nor harmful such as most words of the masses. "How was that wall built?", "How was that palace built", talking over about "how beautiful is such and such's house", "the many towers in such and such a country", or the like of permitted things. These things are also superfluous. There is no benefit in them.

The fourth category: these are entirely beneficial, such as words of wisdom and virtue (chochmot u'maalot). Likewise for speaking in things which his life depends on and which will prolong his existence (his livelihood). For these one needs to speak.

Thus, whenever I hear things, I examine them. If I find they belong to this fourth category, I speak in them. But if I find they belong to the other categories, I keep silent from them. end quote.

The men of virtue (baalei middot) said (regarding this silent man): "examine this man and his wisdom. For he lacks three fourths of the words (of most people). This is a wisdom which one needs to study".

(Rambam continues:) I say that according to the obligations of the Torah, speech falls into five categories:

One, speech which is a mitzva.

Two, speech which is forbidden and we are warned against.

Three, speech which is repulsive (nimas).

Four, speech which is beloved (ne'ehav).

Five, speech which is permitted (mutar).

One, speech which is a mitzva: this refers to reading and study of the Torah and reading its talmud (explanations). This is a positive obligatory mitzvah, as written: "you shall speak in them" (Devarim 6:7). And this mitzvah weighs like all the other mitzvot [combined]. We have already elaborated more on this elsewhere.

Two, speech which is forbidden: such as false testimony, lies, slander, obscene talk, and curses. The Torah teaches on this division.

Three, repulsive speech: this kind has no benefit. But it is not sin nor rebelling, such as most speech of the masses on what happened and what was, what are the conducts of king so and so in his palace, what caused the death of so and so, how so and so became rich, etc.

The sages called these "idle speech" (Sicha beteila). The Chasidim strove to abstain from this category of speech. It was said on Rav, the disciple of Rebbi Chiya that he never spoke idle talk all of his life.

Included in this category is to scorn a virtue or praise an evil, whether in traits or in intellect (wisdom).

Four, speech which is beloved: this refers to speech in praising virtues of intellect or good traits, and likewise in scorning the disgraceful of both types (intellect or bad traits).

For example, to rouse the soul to the virtues through stories and songs, and to praise the virtuous people and commend their virtues in order to esteem them in the eyes of people and inspire them to walk in their ways.

This category also includes scorning the disgracefulness of the evil people in order to belittle their ways and remembrance in the eyes of people so that they will distance from them and their evil ways and will not act like them.

This category, namely, study of the virtuous traits and distancing from the reprehensible ones is called "derech erez" (lit. the way of the land).

The fifth category is permitted speech. This refers to speech regarding people's business trade, livelihood, food, drink, clothing, and other needs. It is "permitted", not having of the "beloved" nor

of the "repulsive" [content]. But [it is optional], if he wants, he may speak in this, and if he does not want, he may refrain from speaking.

In this category, a man is praiseworthy when he minimizes speaking therein. The men of mussar exhorted to not increase speech in this.

But the "forbidden" and "repulsive" do not need exhorting nor command (to minimize in them). For it is proper to be completely silent from these.

But for the type which is "mitzva" or "beloved", if a man could speak in them all his days, it would be good. But one needs to be careful of two things:

One, that one's words are consistent with one's deeds, as they said: "the words are pleasing when uttered by those who practice them" (Tosefta Yevamot ch.8).

This is the intent of *"And not study but practice is the primary thing"*.

The sages told the tzadik to learn the virtues, as they said: "expound! it is becoming of you to expound (derosh ulecha na'eh lidrosh)" (Bava Batra 75a), and the prophet said: "sing praises to the L-ord, O you righteous: for praise is befitting for the upright" (Tehilim 33:1).

The second matter is conciseness (kitzur), to strive to include much in few words, and not the opposite.

This is what they said: "one should always teach his student in concise terms" (Pesachim 3b)...

Since we mentioned slander (lashon hara) in the category of forbidden speech, I saw proper to discuss a bit on this. For people are greatly blind to this, and it is always the greatest sin of people. All the more so in light of what our sages said that a man is not saved from the "dust of slander" every day (Bava Batra 164b). And would that it were (halevai), that we were saved from slander itself... (see there for more)

Level 3

Sforno

Sforno - "I have not found anything as good for the body as silence" - many think the power of speech in man is his most noble power. Some even say that this is what distinguishes man from the other living creatures and a man is greater than his fellow in proportion to his greater wisdom of speech (chachmat hadibur).

But this sage states that despite all its qualities, speech does not avail the body at all. As we find that other living things (animals) live long and attain their sustenance painlessly without employing any speech at all.

Rather the benefit obtained from speech is in its use by the practical intellect (sechel hamaasi) for secular matters and in the in-depth intellect (sechel iyuni) for teaching others.

But even with all this benefit, "not study" and speech "is primary", and the intended purpose. Rather, the intended purpose is "practice is the primary thing" that follows from it, whether in secular matters or in the study of intellectual matters. And even in these, minimal speech is good as is learning in a concise manner.

"whoever multiplies words brings sin" - for more doubts, errors, and forgetting will befall the (many) words.

From all this, it follows that speech itself is not sheleimut (perfection). Without a doubt, it is merely a tool to attain the intended purpose in secular matters and in wisdom. Namely, to communicate the thoughts of one's heart to another. This should be done in as few words as possible. This is unlike all things which are in and of themselves perfection (shelemut), whereby the more the better.

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - This sage came to exhort on rectifying man's body. After seeing his father (Rabban Gamliel) giving mussar that man's deeds should be proper in his being a possessor of intellect (baal sechel), namely, that he not walk in darkness (doubt), as explained, this sage now came to give mussar on rectifying a man in his being a possessor of body (baal guf).

It is proper to ask:

1. Why does he need to say: "all my days I have grown up among the Sages, etc".
2. What does this have to do with "And not study but practice is the primary thing".
3. Likewise, he starts with "silence" and afterwards moves to "And not study but practice is the primary thing" and then returns back to the original matter "whoever multiplies words brings sin"?
4. The choice of language "I have not found anything as good for the body as silence", he should have said "I have not found anything as good for a man as silence".
5. He said "whoever multiplies words brings sin" - this is already stated explicitly in scripture - "in the multitude of words there lacks not sin" (Mishlei 10:19).

Rashi explains that even by the sages (Chachamim), I found that silence is good (yafeh) for them. For thus they would conduct themselves in silence. And all the more so for people who are not sages (Chachamim), silence is good (yafeh) for them.

The explanation of "I have not found anything as good for the body as silence" is that in man being possessor of a body (baal guf), silence is good for him (yafe lo). This is because speech is from the "nefesh hamedaberet" (speaking soul), which is a power of the body (koach gufani) and not entirely intellect (eino sichli l'gamrei).

Therefore, silence is proper for him, so he does not come to error and confusion (ta'ut v'shibush).

Because when he activates (poel) the power of speech, he annuls (bitel) the power of intellect, as we will explain shortly.

Therefore, he should keep silent and activate the power of intellect which is not bodily like the power of speech. For the latter inevitably comes to err.

It is proper to know that the intellect and the body are opposites to each other. Therefore, he said: "I have not found anything as good for the body as silence", instead of "it is not good (yafeh) for the body to speak". For the lacking is not from the side of speech itself. Only that silence is good for a person so that he can activate the power of the intellect.

This comes to teach that when a man is silent, then the intellect can activate its work. For it is impossible for two opposites to operate simultaneously in man - the intellect and the body. Therefore, if the power of the body operates, namely, the intellect of speech (sechel hadavri), then

the intellect of in-depth thought (sechel iyuni) cannot operate and he will come to error.

Thus, it is proper for him to be silent and not activate the power of speech and then the intellect can activate its working (az hasechel yifal peulato).

This is the meaning of "the only good for the body is silence (ein tov laguf rak shetika)". For certainly it is good and proper for the body to keep quiet and give room for the intellect to activate its working.

Thus the body will be annulled (subordinate) to the intellect and become a "tail to a lion". But if he increases speech, then the intellect is annulled to the body and becomes a "tail to a fox", and then there is no intellect at all.

Therefore, he said "I have not found anything as good for the body as silence" due to the reason we mentioned.

Thus every fool increases speech. For the intellect and the body are two opposites. But the Chacham (wise man) will operate always with his intellect and not with the bodily speech...

"not study but action is the primary thing" - so that you should not say: "since silence, which is absence of acting, is best for man because he needs to operate with the intellect, if so, the midrash (study) is primary, not the action. For action is of the body, while midrash (study) is of the intellect".

Even though midrash is very great indeed, but nevertheless, the primary thing is action. Only that the midrash which is the intellect is a lofty quality. But nevertheless action is the foundation (yesod), and one needs to have a prepared foundation first before he can acquire the virtues of intellect (maalot hasechel). After the foundation is ready, he can build up and up. This is clear to anyone whose (good) deeds are many..

"whoever multiplies words brings sin" - i.e. certainly silence is good for the body as we explained, since it allows the intellect to operate its work and this is a virtue (maala).

But it is not proper to say that he sins if he increases speech. For the power of speech is a power by itself. If he wishes to operate this power and not grant all his power to the intellect, it is not relevant to call this sin.

However, when one increases speech, he nevertheless brings sin. For according to what we explained, silence is proper so that the intellect be primary and the power of speech be annulled to it.

Granted, if he does not choose to be silent, there is no sin here also. But nevertheless to increase speech and make the power of speech primary [he will thus] annul the power of the intellect. For as before, all the time the power of speech operates, it is impossible for the intellect to activate its work properly. For they are two opposites. And certainly, this is a lacking for a man - to be drawn after the power of speech completely, a power which is not completely intellect (eino sichli legamrei).

Therefore, it is considered a lacking when he is drawn after it. And a lacking draws another lacking after it. For every lacking pulls in another lacking.

This is the meaning of "brings sin". For sin is lacking. Because the term "sin" (chet) means everywhere "lacking". For example: "I and my son Shlomo will be found lacking (chataim)" (Melachim I 1:1), or "I [bore] the loss (echatena)" (Bereishit 31).

Therefore, one who increases speech will come to sin and lacking. This is especially so when the lacking is from something stemming from the powers of the body. Such a lacking will draw more lackings after it.

Furthermore, there is another very deep matter in this. The power of speech is unlike the power of intellect. The power of intellect has no limit.

The power of speech is like a tzura (form), For the tzura (form/definition) of man is a "speaking creature" (chai medaber). And as known regarding the tzura, it has no superfluousness at all (ein bo tosefet klal). Therefore, whoever increases speech comes out of the proper and coming out of the proper in something like this brings sin. Understand this.

If you ask: but this teaching was already explicitly stated in scripture: "in the multitude of words there lacks not sin" (Mishlei 10)?

[answer]: that verse is not referring to "coming to sin" (like here). Rather, it is only saying that due to speaking many words, it is impossible to not sin and utter words of foolishness and vanity. But here he says "brings sin", i.e. draws sin after himself. This is a different matter.

This is the explanation of the mishna when you understand..

Level 4

Birkat Shmuel - "for the body (guf) as silence" - a hint to the Geula, as written "[Moshiach] Ben David won't arrive until all the souls are depleted from the body (Guf)" (Yevamot 63b). (Translator: i.e. best to keep quiet and not make predictions as the Rambam wrote: "man will not know how they will occur until they occur.." - Hilchot Melachim 12:2)

Ben Ish Chai - *Chasdei Avot* - since Moshiach will come with *Hesech Daat* (momentarily forgetting). Thus, it is best to keep quiet to hasten the Redemption.

Level 4

Chasdei David

Chasdei David - "not study but practice is the primary thing" - in the talmud when Rabbi Yochanan implies Torah study is greater than action, the talmud asks (Bava Kamma 17a): "but did not the master say that Torah study is great in that it brings to action?" (Rashi-which implies action is greater than Torah study). The talmud answers:

"it is not difficult. One refers to study of Torah, and the other refers to teaching of Torah".

Rashi there explains: "to learn for yourself, action is greater. But teaching others is greater than action"..

According to Rashi's explanation, there are three levels. The lowest is to learn for oneself. Middle level is to fulfill, for this is the purpose of learning. The highest of all is teaching others. For "the merit of the masses depends on him" (Avot 5:21)..

Tosfot says there that learning is greater than action.. as the talmud says: "learning is greater since it brings to action" (Kidushin 40b)..

Thus that which we say learning is greater, this refers to one who did not learn yet and comes to ask what he should do. Should he learn first or toil in action? We tell him to learn first. For "an ignorant man cannot be pious" (Avot 2:6). But for one who is already a Chacham (scholar), action is better than learning.

Thus here he says: "All my days I have grown up among the Sages". For specifically for a Chacham who already learned "action is better than learning".

In the Talmud: "three people I hate, a sar hanargan..." (Niddah 16b).

Rashi explains "sar hanargan" refers to a Torah scholar who speaks much. According to this, on the contrary, a Torah scholar is worse than other people.

Level 4

Chida

Chida - Chasdei Avot - "And not study but practice is the primary thing" - perhaps because action (maase) is to rectify [the world] of Asiyah while speech in Torah is to rectify [the world] of Yetzira, and how is it possible to rectify Yetzira before Asiyah? Therefore "action is primary" for it rectifies Asiyah. And after he rectifies Asiyah, his torah study avails to rectify Yetzira.

Level 4

Chida

Chida - Chasdei Avot - "whoever multiplies words brings sin" - perhaps this is as brought in the Reishit Chachma that our sages said that one who increases evil speech (marbe lashon hara) causes the Samech-Mem to enter among the holy Tzadikim elyonim above, etc. and this is an extremely severe sin (avon plili). He is a cause of damage (shehu garma b'nezikin). For he caused to grant the Samech-Mem permission to enter in a holy place... (see there at length). This is the hint: "whoever increases speech (kol hamarbe devarim)" - he will nevertheless come to say forbidden words. This causes that he "brings sin" (mevi chet), a hint to the Samech-Mem who is himself a sin (chet), and he brings him to the holy place..

Level 4

Chida

Chida - Roshei Avot - "all my days I have grown up among the Sages and I have not found anything as good for the body as silence" - we may explain according to what our sages said in the Midrash Shocher Tov: "when a man speaks devarim betalim (useless chatter), correspondingly words of Torah come out. This is analogous to a barrel full of honey.. [when one adds things a corresponding volume of honey comes out of the barrel].."

Likewise the kabbalists wrote that due to sin, some or all of one's holiness departs, and then, immediately, the Sitra Achra comes.

When a man fulfills a positive commandment, he rectifies the nefesh (lower soul), and when he learns Torah, he rectifies the ruach (higher soul). If so, the body has nothing. But we find that the body does have a quality, namely, it is a temple (mishkan) to the Torah. Thus holiness rests in his innards and the body is a temple (mishkan) of holiness (kedusha).

However, if he speaks useless speech (devarim betalim), words of Torah come out and the sitra achra enters. This is the meaning of: "All my days I have grown up among the Sages", already in my youth I received Torah (gamirna girsa) from one Rav and afterwards I contemplated it (lemisbar) among many sages. For to contemplate it, many Rabbis is better, as written in Avodah Zara 19a.

"and I have not found anything as good for the body as silence" - for then, the Torah is guarded inside and the body becomes a mishkan for Torah and kedusha, and this is good for it. For "one saves the cover of a sefer Torah with the sefer Torah".

"whoever multiplies words brings sin" - besides that he takes out Torah and holiness from inside himself, furthermore, he stumbles in bringing the Sitra Achra in place of the holiness, may Hashem save us.

Chapter 1 Mishna 18 - World Stands

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said: "on three things the world stands (endures), on judgment, on truth, and on peace, as written: 'judge truth and the justice of peace in your gates' (Zachariah 8:16)"

רַבֵּן שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל אוֹמֵר, עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד, עַל הַדִּין וְעַל הָאֱמֶת וְעַל הַשְּׁלוֹם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (זְכַרְיָה ח) אֲמַת וּמִשְׁפָּט שְׁלוֹם שִׁפְטוּ בְּשַׁעְרֵיכֶם

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "the world stands" - human society endures.
 "on judgment" - to merit the meritorious and obligate the guilty.
 "on truth" - to not lie to your fellow
 "on shalom" - between nations and between people.

Q Level 1

Rambam

Rambam - "on judgment" - governing the country justly
 "on truth" - virtues of intellect
 "on shalom" - virtues of middot (character traits).

When these three are found, the existence will undoubtedly be as whole as possible. (yiheyu hametziut b'shelemut sh'efshar lo blo safek).

Q Level 1

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "on truth" - that one goes in the way of G-d, who is Truth, whose Torah is Truth, and who walks in the ways of truth. So too a man should walk in this path, as written: "you shall walk in His ways" (Devarim 28:9)...

"on shalom" - this includes all good in the world. There is no limit to its benefit.

Q Level 2

Beit Yosef (beginning of Tur Choshen Mishpat): if you ask: "if the three things the world was created for [as brought by Shimon HaTzadik in mishna 2) were enough to create it, all the more so they should be enough to maintain its existence?" Answer: Shimon HaTzadik spoke according to his time when the Temple stood. While Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel lived at the time of the destruction. Thus he came to say that even though the temple is not standing and we don't have Avodah and also we cannot toil in Torah and acts of kindness properly due to the yoke of the exile, but nevertheless, the world is maintained by three other similar things...

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - this mishna needs explanation. Why did he say on these three things the world stands. Furthermore, in the beginning of this chapter it already says "on three things the world stands.." - and they are not the same three things brought here.

It is proper to explain as follows.

G-d created man as a being containing different parts.

One, the Intellect (Sechel) which is an acquisition (kinyan) of man, as our sages said: "an elder is only one who has acquired wisdom" (Kidushin 32b).

Two, the second acquisition is the man himself. Namely, the "speaking creature" (chai medaber).

Three, his money, which is considered his acquisition.

These three things belong (shayich) to man. One of them is man himself (speaking creature) and the other two are his acquisitions.

Thus, sometimes one finds a man who lacks the acquisition of intellect or who lacks the acquisition of money (possessions).

The [mishna is] teaching on these things as will be explained. Thus, he said: "on three things the world stands.." These pillars are needed to support the three parts of man to prevent their collapse.

"on truth" - for when falsehood intensifies in the world, it annuls the intellect completely till it no longer exists.

For G-d granted intellect to the world (humanity), and it is one of the three parts of the world. When a man chases after truth, the intellect emerges into the world properly.

"on judgment (din)" - the second part which is an acquisition of man is his money. G-d granted every person an acquisition suitable to him. And it is not proper for man to touch what is designated for his fellow. Rather, each creature according to what G-d granted it only.

Thus, if there is no din (judgment), there will come an annulment in this area. The acquisition of what belongs to one man will go to another, and this is not proper.. But when there is din in the world, each person merits properly and according to how G-d created the world and granted each person an acquisition suited to him. Through din, each person stands on what is his.

The sages said: "every judge who judges truthfully even for one hour, it is as if he becomes a partner with G-d, blessed be He, in the creation of the world" (Shab.10a).

For G-d created the world and granted to each person what is proper to him then. And if the judge judges truthfully then each person keeps what is proper to him, as G-d created the world and granted an acquisition of money (possessions) suitable to each person...

"on peace (shalom)" - this is regarding man himself. For in creating human beings in this world, they entered into dispute (machloket). For each person wants to be everything.

Thus, human beings are in conflict when together. For each one annuls the other.

On this, they said the world stands on shalom, namely, that disputes not come between a man and his fellow. This is not referring to monetary [disputes], but rather to those from the aspect of human beings themselves.

To summarize, these three things are the pillars of the world corresponding to the three parts of the world.

Namely, (1) the intellect. It is not the man himself. For the intellect comes to a man when he grows up and he acquires the intellect. (2) the man himself and (3) man's material possessions which are his money.

These three things depend on Din, truth, and Shalom, so the world does not collapse.

According to all this, it is not difficult that Shimon Hatzadik counted three different things.

For those were the reasons why G-d, who is the reason and Cause of the world, upholds (maamid) the world, as we explained there at length.

While the three things here are so that loss and annulment not befall the world from its own aspect.

Thus, Shimon Hatzadik began with those three things, for through them G-d upholds the world. If they cease to exist, the beginning (root) of the world is annulled. While Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, who was later, says the three things which are the causes for the world standing on its proper standing and not changing due its own aspect.

These three things maintain the world so it does not incur annulment from its own aspect.

THREE WORLDS

There is more one should know regarding these three things mentioned by Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel.

It is known that the sages said there are three worlds: this lower world (olam hashafel) which is until the olam hagalgim (world of spheres). This world is one of being and loss (change. ex. conception, growth, and death). This phenomena (of changing) applies only to this lower world.

Every coming into being is through something else (a cause) which brings it into being. For a coming into being does not occur by itself. Rather something else acts to bring it into being.

Next, there is the middle world. It has no (new) being after its creation. For this (middle) world has no lacking which would cause it to need (new) being. Rather everything is perfect (b'shlemut).

Due to this, this middle world is called "the world of Shalom". For due to the perfection (shlemut) there, they have Shalom... (skipping forward)

In this middle world, everything is in Shalom. For there they are not susceptible to being and change after their creation from nothing.

And since they are not susceptible to change, this is the Shalom found there. For one who changes has no Shalom.

Thus, since they remain in their (perfect) state without changing. Therefore, they have Shalom.

But if they did not have the bond of Shalom between them, they would not be considered themselves whole (shleimim b'atzman).

For since each is itself a separate (independent) part, then if this middle world did not have Shalom, namely, connection and joining together each one with the other till all are connected together, then there would not be wholeness (shelemut) there. Each (part) would be by itself, and a part is already not whole (shalem)...

Furthermore, the middle world is the world of Shalom because Shalom is when each one stands without entering in the domain of the other, as it is in this middle world, whereby each one stands on his place (mishmarto). This is Shalom. Thus, the middle world is singular in [the quality of]

Shalom and there is complete Shalom. Thus, the sages said: "He who makes Shalom on high..." (ose shalom bimeromav.. in the amidah prayer) From this you can see that it is singular in Shalom.

Next, is the upper world, the world of intellect (Sechel), which is attainment of truth. It is called the world of pure intellects (sechalim nifradim).. It is a world which has no falsehood, only truth.. it is called - the world of truth.

Thus, in these three worlds, each one is singular in one area. The upper world is singular in truth. The middle is singular in perfection of Shalom. While, the lower world, is the world of being, and this being does not occur by itself. Rather, it receives this being from agents (which cause it to come to being).

It is known that there are agents (poalim) in this lower world. This is as written: "the great luminary [to rule the day]" (Gen.1:16). These agents decree laws on those below..

(translator: perhaps he means the energy of the sun's rays drives things to happen down here such as plants to grow.)

This is complete Din. Due to this the Name "Elokim" is used throughout the account of creation. The term "Elokim" means "judge". For G-d decreed being on the world, like a judge which decrees on its subject through the power of din.

From this, you will see that (coming into) "being" is Din itself, when being is decreed according to the law that is befitting it. Thus, they said: "every judge who judges a case to its ultimate truth, even for a short time, the Torah considers him G-d's partner in creation" (Shab.10a)... (skipping forward. see there...)

This is the meaning of: "on three things the world stands". For man was created to include all the three worlds... until he ties together all three worlds.

Thus if he lacks truth, he annuls (batel) the world. For it is proper for him to have truth, since truth is from the upper world and he needs to join together all three worlds. And when this connection is lacking, it is an annulment of the world. Therefore, the world stands on din, truth and shalom.... (see there for a deeper kabalistic explanation)

ORDER OF TEACHINGS

Regarding the order of the mussar of Rabban Gamliel, Rabban Shimon, and Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel. All the mussar of the early sages (rishonim) was in order to perfect (mashlim) a man in love and fear. But these mussars of the later sages (acharonim) was only to perfect (mashlim) a man with himself.

Therefore, when he completed the mussar of the pairs which completed a man in proper love and fear of G-d, the Tanna turned to man himself, to give him mussar through which he will be whole with himself.

This is what he wrote (Mishna 16): "[Rabban Gamliel would say:] 'make for yourself a Rav and remove yourself from doubt'". We already explained that the primary mussar there was that man be on the level of intellect (madrega hasichlit). This is proper for a man in his being a "possessor of intellect" (baal sechel).

Thus, it is proper that his deeds be of intellect (sichliim), namely, clear (not in doubt). For the

intellect is clear, as we wrote earlier. On this he brought that general mussar.

Afterwards, his son Rabban Shimon gave mussar to a man in his being a possessor of body (baal guf). Namely, that he conduct himself properly. Therefore, he said: "all my days I have grown up among the Sages and I have not found anything as good for the body as silence". This matter is a virtue (maala) for man...

Afterwards, Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said : "on three things the world stands.."

The world precedes man from the aspect of it being first (Rosh) as we explained. Therefore, Shimon Hatzadik mentioned the world first and afterwards the receivers brought mussar on the perfection of man (in love and fear of G-d).

For when man is perfected, he is before the world in level, and the world is lower than him. For man is higher than world (since the world was created for man). Therefore, he brought the words of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel last saying: "on three things the world endures..."

(see there for more deep teachings. he ends there:) These things are exceedingly deep and we cannot explain further. Only that you must understand very much the words of the sages.

According to all this, it seems the reason he skipped Rabban Shimon ben Hillel is because he came to separate between the mussar of the early sages (rishonim) and that of the later sages (acharonim). For all the mussar of the rishonim is one matter (love and fear of G-d) while these latter three are other things..

Likewise, he skipped between Rabban Shimon the son of Rabban Gamliel (senior) and Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel (junior), since the mussar of the latter is on the world.

Thus to separate them it is proper to make a separation, and therefore he skipped Rabban Gamliel (junior).

All the words of the sages are ordered with very very great wisdom to he who understands words of wisdom.

Know and understand that from the words of Shimon Hatzadik who began to speak on the world until the end of the chapter, there are ten subjects of mussar. This number corresponds to the ten sayings through which the world was created. And in the end there was rest of Shalom and tranquility (Sabbath). Thus, he ended his words here too with Shalom..

Due to this reason also he needed to skip from the generations. For he only came to bring ten teachings corresponding to the ten sayings of creation, and he wanted to make the words of Rabbi head of chapter two, since Rabbi was head of all Yisrael. For by him there was Torah and Gedulah (majesty) in one place...

Likewise for the words of Rabbi which start next chapter. It was not for nothing that he did not put them with the words of his fathers (in chapter 1). For the mussar of Rabbi applies to [all] man's actions generally.

This is not like the words of Rabban Gamliel and Rabban Shimon which are on perfecting man himself from his own aspect.

Rather, Rebbi's words encompass [all of] man's actions generally..

Man's deeds are called his offsprings (toldot). As our sages said that the deeds of the righteous are called "fruits", as written: "praise the righteous man for he is good, for the fruit of their deeds they shall eat" (Isaiah 3:10).

They are his fruit and offsprings. This matter is expressed by the sages, as Rashi explains on Gen.6:1 - "the main offsprings of the righteous are good deeds".

Therefore, Rebbi's words are: "Which is the right path for man to choose for himself" (Avot 2:1), and likewise afterwards: "Be as careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major one" (Avot 2:1) - all things which encompass all of man's deeds which are his offsprings.

It is known that after the account of creation, it is written: "these are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created" (Gen.2:4)

Corresponding to this, the mussar of Rebbi came that man's offsprings (acts) be good and just and not evil and strange (zar).

Therefore, he placed Rebbi's words at the head of the next chapter. For they correspond not to the ten sayings (of creation), but to "these are the generations of heaven and earth" (Gen.2:4). Namely, man's acts. For it is proper for man to produce whole deeds (maasim shelemim) and this is a separate matter.. Thus, it is proper for his words to be at the head of the chapter.

Afterwards the words of Rabban Gamliel his son who said: "beautiful is the study of Torah with the way of the world (Derech Eretz, i.e. work)". For work is also man's acts. Only that it is below Torah and mitzvot. For it is only man's acts regarding his conduct in this world.

This teaching corresponds to what occurred after Adam sinned and was expelled from Gan Eden. Then he acquired a new matter which he did not at all have previously, namely, derech eretz. For he did not need it before. Thus it says: "And the L-ord G-d sent him out of the Garden of Eden, to till the soil, whence he had been taken" (Gen.3:23)...

This explanation is very clear when you reflect and understand words of wisdom and realize how the words of the sages contain such deep wisdom. This is sufficient. We have explained these things in truth if you delve deeply in them.

The correct wording of the text of the mishna is: "on three things the world endures".

Earlier Shimon Hatzadik said: "on three things the world stands".

But here the explanation is so that the world stand and endure and not be destroyed (translator - from within itself). Thus, the three things here are from the aspect of the completion of the world and its maintenance (gemar haolam v'kiyumo).

Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - "on three things the world stands (endures), on judgment...

"on judgment (din)" - let us first introduce with a (true) story (maase). A thief was caught and the king sentenced him to death by being hanged on a tree. For death by hanging was the standard punishment in previous times.

On the appointed day, the king's officers marched the thief to the place prepared for the hanging,

i.e. on a platform in the king's courtyard. The thief's mother came and sat under the tree weeping bitterly. A big crowd formed to watch the execution, as is their way.

The thief requested from the executioner permission to approach his mother to tell her some final words. The executioner granted permission and the thief approached his mother who sat weeping heavily under the tree. He brought his lips to her ear to whisper to her. But he did not say a word. Instead he bit her ear and ripped it off completely!

His mother screamed bitterly and fainted. The king's courtyard had been full of men and women who came to watch the execution, as is the way of the masses to crowd together at executions, and especially public hangings of thieves. All those standing there were astonished at the great evil this thief just did to his mother. She was crying for him and now, before his hanging, he bit her ear off!

They all said to themselves that this must be the most wicked man on the earth. In his final moments of life in this world, he adds on sin and commits such a horrible act to bite off his mother's ear, and while she is weeping on his coming to be hanged! If we could only kill him twice! Certainly he deserves to be hanged just for that alone!

When the thief heard the commotion and outrage of all those standing there, he called out in a loud voice: "please allow me to speak and do not be angry with me on this. For I did not do this out of wickedness but rather for the rectification of my soul. Perhaps through this I will receive atonement for the sin of theft I committed."

They asked him: how will your sin be rectified by an even greater sin?!

He answered: know that this mother was the cause of my evil way of stealing which is now the cause of my death. For when I was young, I lusted greatly to eat sweets. And since the sweets cost money which I did not have, I was forced to steal a few childrens' books from school. I would then bring them to my mother so she could sell them and give me money to buy sweets to eat.

I was also forced to go stealthily in shops to steal from them whatever I could, and bring the goods to mother so she could sell them and give me some money.

Not only did she not rebuke me on my deeds and did not teach me mussar (ethics) on my evil way, but on the contrary, she rejoiced in my deeds and said "smart boy! my son is smart".

Due to my mother's reaction, I would strengthen more in my evil ways of stealing until I habituated in this.

Even after I grew up and was successful in business, my hands were still habituated in this. Although I did not need the money and was intelligent and knew that the end of a thief is the gallows, but nevertheless, I was unable to rule over my hands and prevent them from stealing. I had become unable to change my nature and habit in this area. And as people say: "many wise men toiled to try to straighten the natural crookedness in the tail of the dog but they all failed". so too, I tried to change my nature and failed. For this habit had become second nature..

I saw many people standing here now. Therefore I did this astonishing thing before everyone here so that afterwards I can tell you all the reason and all who hear my words will recognize and know how much evil a father and mother cause to their children when they don't rebuke them and discipline them in their youth while their children are still under their hands, eating under their

shadow, and listening to their words. And how much good comes to a father, mother, and child through rebuking mussar and teaching of derech eretz. Then, certainly, every person who hears this will strive to be careful in this and through this the evil of the wicked will diminish and there will be less wicked people in the world. Thus, I thought this thing I did will avail for the rectification of my soul.

The people standing there said to him:

"What you say is good. For certainly all of us here received big mussar from your words and they have roused our hearts greatly that each man and woman must put their eyes and hearts on their children to discipline them and guide them in the proper path from their youth, to benefit them in their final end.

But please tell us why you cut off her ear and not her nose or some other flesh on her face?"

He answered: "this too I did with thought and wisdom, to make known that in my youth, I was not wild and rebellious. I lent my ear to listen to mussar and rebuke. On the contrary, I listened to my mother's words and lent ear to what she uttered to fulfill her words and commands. Thus, she did not need to punish me and force me with a rod. Rather, with her words only it would have sufficed to refrain me from all abominations.

But she did not do so, and since she kept her mouth shut from me and did not utter any words into my ears, therefore, now I opened my mouth against her and bit off her ear".

All those standing there who heard his words found favor in his words. The mother also heard even though she had fainted when he ripped off her ear. She opened her mouth and said: "he is right in his words and did not testify any falsehood on me".

When the king who was sitting in his palace was told what happened. It pleased him and he immediately hit his bell and announced to the executioner to exempt him from being hanged.

For the king saw that his words bore fruit of rebuke and mussar in the hearts of all the listeners.

Therefore, king Shlomo, peace be unto him, said: "He who holds back his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him early" (Mishlei 13:24), and "educate a child according to his way; even when he grows old, he will not turn away from it" (Mishlei 22:6), and "Foolishness is bound in a child's heart; the rod of discipline will drive it far from him" (Mishlei 22:15), and likewise he wrote: "Do not withhold discipline from a child; when you strike him with a rod, he will not die; You shall strike him with a rod, and you will save his soul from the grave" (Mishlei 23:13-14).

All these verses Shlomo said tell that the primary guarding and good of a person is through the judgment and accounting his father and mother did on him in the days of his youth. And this was the strong foundation building for his body and soul all the days he lives on the face of the earth.

Know please, that the courthouses (batei dinim) and judges sit only on Mondays and Thursdays to judge. And even in places where they are open daily, nevertheless, they don't sit all day. Rather, they sit only fixed hours of the day.

But the Beit Din of the child, namely, his father and mother, this Beit Din needs to sit each and every hour of the day, and not only the day but also at night. It needs to sit in judgment on him and rebuke him, and investigate and interrogate, asking him: what did you do? where did you go? from

which place did you come and with who did you speak? What did they speak to you about? what do you do with child such and such and what did you speak to each other? Where did you two sit and where did you go? What did you do with the money you took? what did you buy? and other similar questions of chakira and drisha (examination), on his whereabouts, words and times, day and night. Those who conduct thus are assured that afterwards the child will grow up with good and just middot which will benefit him in this world and the next.

Furthermore, after a man grows up and is independent from his father and mother, he needs to bring himself to judgment on himself. To be on himself both judge and defendant.

Namely, if he stumbled in some sin whatever it is, he should not tell himself: "who knows what I did? who will judge and prosecute me? what's done is done!"

Rather, he needs to be a judge over himself to make a judgment and accounting on himself and he knows what he committed.

Let him go to a Chacham and ask him a way to rectify the sin through afflictions, fasts and tzedaka (charity) as proper for each and every sin by itself. The Chacham will inform him of the severity of each sin and just how far its destruction goes.

Then even if the Chacham does not instruct him and inform him on the number of fasts for each sin and where its destruction reaches above and the Chacham instead makes for him a compromise according to his capacity to bear, whether in torah study or tzedaka.

Then, in Heaven, the Heavenly Beit Din (court) will exempt him through the partial obligation he has been obligated in (by the Chacham). For since Din was done below, there is no Din above. This is as brought in a Midrash regarding the zealotness of Pinchas who saved all of the Jewish people through the little Din he did below. And as written there an analogy:

"A king was traveling on the road with his servants behind him. A group of young men came against the king and began to mock and laugh at him. The king's servant saw that the king became full of anger. He feared lest his wrath boil over and he decrees their death and then there will be no way to save them. What did he do? Before the king spoke, he took his staff, ran after them, and struck them on the head a mighty blow.

According to the king's honor, certainly these strikes are not enough of a punishment. But they helped to cool down the king's wrath in seeing his servant run to exact justice on his own to them. Then the king did not decree anything on them.

So too here. If a man initiates din on himself below, then the attribute of Din will be sweetened and will not exact the din above that he deserves.

Thus, according to all that we said, it is understood that through the Din that a father and mother do to their sons every day at all times, until they leave their domain, and also through the Din a man makes on himself after he grew up and separated from his parents - through this Din there will be a continuance and standing of man, who is a miniature universe in this world.

On this it is written: "on three things the world stands...", one of which is Din, namely, the Din done to a person, who is a miniature world, by his father and mother and afterwards by himself when he grows up.

"on truth" - since if one is a liar, people will catch on and eventually his words will not be believed by anyone, even when he is telling the truth.. sometimes this will cause him great damage or worse, as the story of the boy who cried thieves (wolf)...

The third matter is Shalom. One who holds on to the trait of Shalom, all his days are calm, tranquil, peaceful, and secure. He eats and drinks calmly and sleeps peacefully and securely. He leaves home peacefully and enters peacefully. Everyone loves him. He is happy to see them and they are happy to see him. He is surrounded with tranquility. There is no Satan and no evil mishap. Thus, the letters of Shalom are "Shelo-Mem", i.e. "to him is Menucha" (tranquility).

But for the person of disputes and arguments, all his days are pains. When he goes out to the marketplace, he finds dispute. When he enters his home, he finds dispute. When he eats and drinks, the whole meal is arguments and bickerings. When he sleeps on his bed, all his dreams are of arguments and bickerings, such that he has no tranquility.

Thus, the three things which uphold the body who is the miniature world is Din, Truth, and Shalom...



Pirkei Avot
Ethics of the Fathers
Chapter 2

with a select treasury of commentaries
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Chapter 2 Mishna 1 - Proper Path

Rebbi says: what is the proper (straight) path that a person should choose? Whatever is harmonious for the one who does it, and harmonious to other people.

רַבִּי אֹמֵר, אֵיזוֹהִי דֶרֶךְ יְשָׁרָה שְׂיִבֵּר לֹא הָאָדָם, כֹּל שֶׁהִיא תִּפְאָרֶת לְעוֹשֶׂיהָ וְתִפְאָרֶת לֹא מִן הָאָדָם.

Be as careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major one, for you do not know the reward given for the mitzvot. Consider the loss of a mitzvah against its reward, and the reward of a sin against its loss.

וְהָיָה זֶהִיר בְּמִצְוָה קְלָה כְּבַחֲמוּרָה, שְׂאִין אַתָּה יוֹדֵעַ מַתָּן שְׂכָרְךָ שֶׁל מִצְוֹת. וְהָיָה מִחֲשָׁב הַפֶּסֶד מִצְוָה כְּנֶגֶד שְׂכָרָה, וְשִׂכָר עֲבֵרָה כְּנֶגֶד הַפֶּסֶד.

Look at three things, and you will not come to the hands of sin: Know what is above you: a seeing eye, a hearing ear, and all your deeds are inscribed in a book.

וְהִסְתַּכַּל בְּשִׁלְשָׁה דְבָרִים וְאִי אַתָּה בֹּא לְיַד עֲבֵרָה, דַּע מָה לְמַעַלָּה מִמֶּךָ, עֵין רוֹאֶה וְאִזְן, שְׁמוּמַעַת, וְכֹל מַעֲשֵׂיךָ בְּסֵפֶר נִכְתָּבִין.

Level 3

Machzor Vitri

Machzor Vitri he was called Rebbi because he was spreading torah (marbitz torah) in the Jewish people more than all the nesiiim (leaders) before him. Therefore, it was not needed to mention him by name, since he was the "Rebbi" of that generation..

Level 3

Meorei Ohr

Meorei Ohr - "Rebbi says" - he was called by three names, "Rebbi", "Rebbi Yehuda HaNassi", and "Rabeinu haKadosh". This is because he had three crowns. One, the crown of wisdom. Thus, from the side of his wisdom, he was called "Rebbi". Two, the crown of leadership and royalty. Thus, "Rebbi Yehuda HaNassi" (Rabbi Yehuda the Prince) . For he was a descendant of king David and extremely wealthy.. Three, the crown of holiness. Thus, "Rabeinu HaKadosh" (our holy Rabbi).. Before his death, he raised his hands above and declared that despite all his wealth, he did not take any needless benefit from the world whatsoever, not even for his little finger.

Level 4

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - in chapter 1, he brought the order of the Tradition (from Sinai) and the mussar of every sage. When you examine their words, you will see each sage said only 3 mussars and no more. And he who said more than this (ex. Hillel) split his mussar into groups of three teachings and no more. Perhaps the reason is that since the early sages, namely, the "men of the great assembly" and Shimon Hatzadik, said three things, therefore the later sages were forced to say no more than three things (at a time). For it would not have seemed proper to say more than three things due to the honor of the early sages who said no more than three things.

Level 2

Bartenura

Bartenura - "harmonious for the doer, and harmonious for other people" - that it be pleasing to oneself and to other people. This will happen when one goes in the middle way for each trait and does not veer to one of the two extremes.

For example, if one is very stingy, it may be pleasing to himself since he amasses wealth, but other people do not praise him on this trait. On the other hand, if he donates more than is proper, people who receive charity from him may praise him, but it is not pleasing to himself since he comes to poverty due to this.

But, the trait of generosity, which is the middle path between stinginess and scattering one's

money - it is pleasing to oneself. For he guards his money and does not scatter away more than is proper. And it is pleasing to other people. For they praise him for having given what is proper for him to give. So too, for all the other traits.

 **Level 2**

Rashi

Rashi - "harmonious for the doer" - it is pleasing to oneself and to others.

"harmonious to other people" - that it is right to the whole world. For there is no sin that a man commits which he does not regret afterwards and tell himself: "[oy] what did I do?" and he is ashamed of it from other people. But if an opportunity to do a mitzvah or a just way (derech yashar) comes to his hand, he should fulfill it and then he will rejoice greatly over it and also people will praise him and be pleased with him.

 **Level 2**

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "Whatever is harmonious for the doer (before G-d)" - when one does the mitzvot, the Holy One, blessed be He, prides (mitpaer) in them and thus they are a pride to he who did them. For G-d's pride is the true pride of people. Therefore, one should choose for himself this path.

"for you do not know the reward given for the mitzvot" - how enormous it is. For even a minor mitzva, its reward is high above. Thus be careful not to lose such a great profit..

 **Level 2**

Meiri

Meiri - "whatever is harmonious for the doer (l'oseha), and harmonious for other people." - some explain "l'oseha" (doer) to refer to the Holy One, blessed be He, since He is the Doer and Maker of everything.. the intent is that in one's deeds, a person should choose that which is pleasing to Heaven and to the public. For sometimes, a person's deeds are evil to Heaven but good to the public, while other times it is the opposite. The main thing is for one to choose the middle way.. For if he veers too far to one side, even if the deed itself is good (to Heaven), people will consider him a "foolish pious" (chasisd shoteh)...

 **Level 1**

☆ **Chida**

Chida - *Mussar u'Pshat, Kisei Rachamim, Mesechet Sofrim 1:9* - *Rebbi says* - the straight way one should choose is: "Whatever is harmonious for the doer, and harmonious for other people". It is not enough that it is good in one's eyes (the doer). Rather, it needs to also be good in the eyes of others. And even if it is good in one's eyes and in the eyes of others, it is still not enough until it is according to the Torah. Thus he continues: "Be as careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major one". For the mitzvot and laws of the Torah are not according to human intellect. Every tiny detail therein contains tremendous mountains (tilei tilim) of lofty secrets.

 **Level 1**



Vilna Gaon - as written: "and find favor and good understanding in the eyes of G-d and man" (Mishlei 3:4).

 **Level 1**



Orech Apaim sec.3 - The holy Rabbi Moshe Leib from Sasiv wrote this explicitly in his book *Likutei HaRamal*, here is a quote: "Contemplate in solitude at least 2 hours 'what is the proper path that a person should choose?' (Avot 2:1). This is the guide for the ways of service, and without this you will always be far from it."

 **Level 3**

Path of the Just, ch.3 - "The summary of all the matter is that a man must contemplate with his intellect always, at all times, and also during the fixed appointed time of solitude, what is the true path according to the Torah that man must walk upon? And afterwards, to come to reflect on his

own deeds to ascertain if they are traveling in this path or not. For through this certainly it will be easy for him to purify himself of all evil, and to correct all of his ways..."

And in Derech Etz Chaim the Ramchal writes: "Behold a man, most of his years are spent in thinking thoughts on his businesses, occupations of this temporary world. Why does he not put to heart even one hour also on thinking these other things - what is he? Why did he come to this world? Or what does the King of kings seek from him? What will be the end of his matter? This is the biggest and most powerful medicine that one can find against the yetzer. It is easy and its effects are great. Its fruit are many, in that a man should pause each day for at least an hour, free from all other thoughts, and to think only on this matter that I've said... (see there)"

Level 2

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - a man does not recognize himself. He does not see straight even his own face. Every man is biased on himself and bribed by his own interests. He has a positive view of himself. Even if he is full of sin, he sees himself as a tzadik (righteous man). When a miser gives a small coin, he considers himself to be a generous hearted person. Likewise for other similar cases.

When a man is confused whether or not to do something. Is this act good or evil? How can he know the truth?

Therefore our holy Rabbi said: *"what is the proper (straight) path that a person should choose?"*

The matter can be tested by two things. One that the act is harmonious to the doer himself and also that the Holy One, blessed be He, and the holy torah praises and prides on this act, and also human beings praise the doer and his deed.

Through this it will be clarified that the act is indeed good.

Level 3

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - *"Which is the proper way (derech)..."* - there are three things in this world which one should perfect himself in (mashlim atzmo bahen).

One, the way (derech) of obligations to G-d and man. Namely, the explicit mitzvot in the Torah.

Two, the way (derech) of middot (character traits). These are not explicitly mentioned in the Torah. But it is implied between the words which character traits are proper for man to adopt and which ones he should refrain from. For example, arrogance versus humility, anger versus forbearance, miserliness versus squandering or the like. The character traits are like intermediaries between man and his obligations towards other people.

Three, (derech erez). These are not like the character traits which harm others. But people will look down on him. For example, if his body or clothing is not clean (end of Sotah), or he is not modest in doing his needs (Berachot 62a), or he is a voracious eater (Pesachim 49a), or drunkard (Nazir 23a), or excessive after marital relations (Berachot 22a), or lazy (Pesachim 50b), or impulsive (Berachot 43b), or eats publicly in the marketplace (Kidushin 40b), or habitually silent (Avot 3:13), or habitually sad (Shab.30b), or acts differently from the custom of the place he is at (Pesachim 50b). So too for many other similar things.

On all of them Rebbi says that a man should "choose" to do all three ways in a manner that the act itself is pleasing and also pleasing in the eyes of others when they observe this in him, i.e. that it also be suitable to the level of the person doing it.

Alternatively, that one's thought be good. Through this it will be *"harmonious to the doer"*. Namely, to the person doing the mitzva. *and harmonious to others*, namely, that the act itself appear good to others...

Q Level 4

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - in tractate Shekalim (3:2):

"The one who made the appropriation [in the temple] did not enter the chamber wearing a bordered cloak, or shoes, or sandals, or tefillin, or an amulet, lest he become poor and [people] say that he became poor because of a sin committed in the chamber (theft), or lest he become rich and [people] say that he became rich from the appropriation in the chamber. For one must be free of blame before human beings just as he must be free of blame before G-d, as it is said: 'And you shall be guiltless before the L-ord and before Israel' (Numbers 32:22), and it says: 'And you will find favor and good understanding in the eyes of G-d and man' (Proverbs 3:4)"

This Halacha was said on everyone, even Aharon and his sons. But in truth, is there any grounds to suspect them on this? Likewise, the Rambam rules as Halacha: "it is forbidden to lend anyone money without witnesses, not even a torah sage" (Hilchot Milve 2:7). His source is from the talmud:

"Rav Ashi sent word to Ravina on the eve of the Sabbath: 'Please, let me have [a loan of] ten zuz, as I just have the opportunity of buying a small parcel of land.' He replied, 'Bring witnesses and we will draw up a contract..' (Bava Metzia 75b).

But in truth did Ravina suspect Rav Ashi? We learn from here a great foundation in: *"you shall be guiltless before G-d and before Israel"*, namely, all a man's deeds need to be absolutely clean and pure, completely clear, open to the eyes of everyone, such that they do not have the slightest room for suspicion or remote [negative] thought whatsoever from anyone, not even one who is not so intelligent. For if one's deeds have any complaint even from one who is not so intelligent, this is not good. This is the foundation of the law of: *"you shall be guiltless before G-d and before Israel"*

Q Level 4

Misgeret Zahav

Misgeret Zahav - *"what is the straight path.."* - it seems to me to explain this deep teaching with an analogy. This analogy is adorned and decorated with precious stones and pearls of the words of our holy Rebbe, honorable prince and holy man of Israel.

He who wants to make a straight road or path to some city, he must first prepare the work of building the road. This constitutes three conditions.

One, that two people hold the ends of the measuring rope, one person on one end and the other person on the other end.

Two, that the two people holding the rope stand aligned, opposite each other, without deviating or twisting.

That the rope itself does not have any knots or deviations. Rather it needs to be pulled out very great precisely. For the slightest deviation will result in the road being crooked. This is what the holy Rabeinu said:

If you wish to stand on the secret of G-d and to know the path of truth of the divine service, ask yourself in the way of analogy: "what is the straight path and desirable measuring rope, the 'threefold rope which is not easily broken' (Kohelet 4:12), of the threefold Torah given to a threefold people, namely, the Torah and mitzvot?"

Then, according to this analogy, imagine and picture to yourself as if the Holy One, blessed be He,

Himself, in His honor and glory, were holding one end of the rope. And you, human being, are opposite Him holding the other end, Him above and you below, both opposite each other.

This is what he said: *"whatever is praiseworthy for the doer (before G-d), and praiseworthy from other people"*. For in our analogy, it is also necessary for both to stand aligned opposite each other, and as the great psalmist wrote: "I have placed G-d before me always; because [He is] at my right hand, I will not falter" (Tehilim 16:8).

And the rope itself needs to be pulled very straightly, without any crookedness. This is the intent of: *"be as careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major one"*, i.e. just like by the measuring rope, that through the slightest crookedness or deviation, immediately the measurement is ruined and the final result will not come out properly.

So too, the "total" which is called by the name: *"the reward given for the mitzvot"* (matan scharan shel mitzvot) is ruined immediately even through the tiniest lacking. Understand this.

(Translator: see also ch.1 of the Path of the Just "any slight deviation found in the employed means will be very noticeable in the end result derived from their combined contributions...")

Level 4

Chachma u'Mussar

Chachma U'Mussar 1:10 - "what is the proper path?" - the reason he said "proper path" (derech yeshara) is as follows. How can one truly know whether the path he chooses for himself is "harmonious to other people"? It is explained by Rabeinu Yonah that he should imagine to himself what people would tell him if he were to ask them for advice on this. This is the path one should choose for himself.

In Mishlei 12:15 it says: "[the lifestyle of the fool is right in his own opinion] but wise is the man who listens to advice". For one who listens to advice, this is a sign that he is an intelligent and thinking person.

For the mark (geder) of intellect is to ask advice of one greater than himself in order to become wiser and more proper in every thing. For seeking advice is to align oneself more to the point of rightness (nekudat hayashrut) and not veering from it right or left.

Therefore, he submits himself to the words of the wise man and follows them and eventually he recognizes the ways of the wise and becomes wise.

But the mark (geder) of "will" is to do what his heart wishes. Therefore, he will not ask advice, not only from others, but also not even from himself. For "that's what I want". What use does such a person have for advice which teaches on duties and just points which are contrary to his will?

Thus, one who does not submit himself and all his matters to do according to the advice of a wise man who knows and seeks his success, this is a sign that he is a "person of will" (baal ratzon), the opposite of a man of intellect, and his matters are all generally along the path of "self love", leading to destruction...

Level 4

Binyan Ariel - R.Yaakov Hillel ch.1 - (kabalistic) "harmonious (Tiferet)" - the sefirah of Chesed (kindness) is the conduct of actual beneficence to below (our world) (hanhagat hahatava b'poel hoyotzet el hatachtonim). Namely, the (divine) attribute of Chesed-kindness bestows good without limit or distinction between the good and the bad. For "love blinds fairness" (Gen.Rabba 58:8), i.e. the fairness of justice. On the other hand, the sefirah of Gevurah is the attribute of strict justice

without any mercy, as our sages taught: "let justice drill through the mountain" (Sanhedrin 6b), i.e. the straightness and power of Justice which reaches to exactly what is deserved below. But the conduct of the sefirah of Tiferet is the attribute of mercy which bestows below. It is the trait balanced between chesed and din and decides (machraat) between them, in the secret of Mishpat (justice). It is called the attribute of Truth. It is the golden middle way which conducts the world rightly, in the manner of "the left pushes away while the right draws close" (Sanhedrin 107b)...

Q Level 4

Chida

Chida - Zeroa Yamin - (kabalistic) "which is the straight path that a man should choose?" - roshei teivot (first letters) of Derech Yeshara Sheyavor is Shin-Dalet-Yud (Name of G-d), which hints to Yesod. On this he said: "kol shehi tiferet".

"kol" refers to Yesod.

"shehi" refers to Malchut.

"tiferet l'oseha" - to Malchut, bechinat nefesh asiya.

"v'tiferet lo min haAdam" - this refers to the woman (one's wife). The hint is that she comes from him, "etzem matzav"... (see there)

The Gurei HaArizal wrote that Rebbi was a nitzutz (soul spark) of Yaakov avinu, and Yaakov was attached to (the Sefira) of Tiferet. Therefore he said: "kol shehi Tiferet". end quote.

We may also hint that Yaakov avinu, peace be unto him, was a gilgul of Adam HaRishon as written in the Zohar and the writings of the Arizal. This is what Rebbi said: "kol shehi" - "bechinat nefesh", "tiferet". "v'tiferet lo min haAdam", a hint to Adam HaRishon. "vehevi zahir b'mitzva kala..", not to add on to it as did Adam HaRishon. He forbade on Chava to touch (the tree of knowledge) without telling her that it is just a Geder. "kebachamura", as the ikar mitzva. (He told her touching it is also forbidden as the ikar mitzva). Through this she stumbled as our sages said.

Q Level 3

Chida

Chida - Marit HaAyin - "what is the straight path (derech)" - as our sages said on the verse: "and David and his men were walking on the derech", in the derech (path) of humility. We may say they expounded the word "derech" to refer to humility. For one who is humble puts to heart always that he is walking in the "derech kol haaretz" (the way of all the land), and in all of man's days he is walking on the way and closer to death. With this thought which is true, he will be humble. For what profit does a man gain in a world which is not his? With what can he pride himself when he is on the way towards death?.. This is what Rebbi said. For he was exceedingly humble and would flee from honor...

And even though the Holy One, blessed be He, desires humility, nevertheless, one should not refrain from doing the mitzvot because of humility. Namely, so people won't say you are someone who runs after mitzvot or who is zealous to fulfill mitzvot properly. Do not refrain from fulfilling the mitzvot or their fences because of this reason. For humility which annul a mitzva or zeal in a mitzva will not endure. Thus, "be careful of a minor mitzva as with a major one, etc".

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "be as careful with a light mitzvah as with a weighty one" - to be zealous and quick in a light mitzva just like one is zealous and quick in a weighty mitzva.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "be as careful with a light mitzvah as with a weighty one" - the difference in reward and punishment between mitzvot is not only in quantity but also in quality. For every mitzva grants a different perfection to the soul. The needs of the soul are like the needs of the body. For example, wine and gold are more valuable than bread and iron. But the latter are more needed. So too, there are mitzvot whose reward is high and lofty. Others may be not as much, but they are

more needed for the lower levels of the soul. Thus, the Holy One, blessed be He, concealed knowledge of their reward so that one will pursue all of them. For one needs all of them.

"the loss of a mitzvah against its reward" - the loss you will incur in the temporary world through doing the mitzva versus the reward in the eternal world.

"the reward of a sin against its loss" - the gain in profit or pleasure you will get in committing the sin versus the loss in the eternal world.

Q Level 3

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - consider what you lose when you don't do a mitzva and what you gain when you don't do a sin.

This matter of mitzvah and sin is different from other matters. When a merchant sits idle and does not engage in business, he does not profit. But he does not lose also.

However, for matters of mitzvah and sin, it is not like this. For when he does not do a mitzva, not only does he lack the mitzva. But, he also transgresses a sin when he loses the mitzva.

Likewise for "reward of sin versus its loss". If a man commits a sin, not only does he incur a debt and will be punished. But he also loses the reward for refraining from doing the sin.

This is what the sage exhorts us: go and consider what is before you, whether in doing a mitzva versus not doing it or whether in doing a sin versus not doing it...

The commentaries ask what is the explanation of "reward of mitzvah"? What reward is there on sin? Perhaps we can explain the mishna in this manner:

Consider the loss you will incur when you don't fulfill the mitzvah versus the great reward if you had fulfilled it. And the reward of sin you will receive if you do not transgress the sin, versus the terrible punishment waiting for you if you transgress it.

Q Level 3

☆ Daas Chachma u'Mussar

Daat Chachma u'Mussar 2:70,59 - *"be as careful with a light mitzvah as with a weighty one"* - it does not say here be careful of a small mitzvah as with a big mitzvah. But rather "a light mitzvah as with a weighty one". For the measure of "big" and "small" is different altogether.

A big mitzvah is a clean mitzvah. It has no leaning to the physicality (chomer), pure from any impurities and mixtures of any self will, even the slightest - this is a big mitzvah - even if it is a "light mitzvah".

And so too if the mitzvah has a leaning to the physicality (chomer), etc, even the slightest, then even if it is the weightiest of the weightiest - it is called a small mitzvah.

Q Level 3

Etz Hadaat Tov v'Rah

Etz Hadaat Tov v'Rah - siman 284 - *"be as careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major one, for you do not know the reward given for the mitzvot"* - this is difficult. For it is evident that the reward for a major mitzva is greater than that for a minor mitzvah. How then can he say: "for you do not know the reward.." The answer is from what was said earlier: *"do not be as servants who serve their master in order to receive reward"* (Avot 1:3). Thus if one runs after the big ones, it is apparent that he seeks great reward. But if he runs [even] after the minor ones, then this is only to fulfill the command of the Creator, blessed be He.

 **Level 1**

☆ **Zerah Yitzchak**

Zerah Yitzchak - "the reward given for the mitzvot" - that which he said "giving of reward" (matan scharam) and not "payment of reward" (tashlum schara), this is because the Holy One, blessed be He, is not obligated to pay anything. The reward He gives is solely a gift. As the Midrash says on the verse: "Who has preceded me, that I should repay him? [All that is under the whole heaven is mine]" (Iyov 41:11)

 **Level 4**

Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer end of Vayikra - "for you do not know the reward given for the mitzvot" - this is difficult. For certainly there are minor and major mitzvot as our sages said: "if for a light mitzva the Torah said: 'in order to benefit you and prolong your days, how much more so for a major mitzvah'" (Chulin 142a).

Hence, there are minor and major mitzvot and the reward for minor ones is not as great as for major ones.

Let us see.. When the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Avraham our forefather: "your reward is very great" (Gen.15:2), Avraham answered Him: "what can you give me since I am going childless".

Thus, even though Avraham was 75 years old, it seemed to him that he has no reward for all his toil. And even so, he served Hash-em and even offered up his life (in Ur Kasdim as the Midrash says), and stood up to many trials since the age of 48. And all this for what? He did not hope for any reward but nevertheless served Hash-em out of love.

So too we his descendants are under duty to follow in his footsteps. Even though we already know that the "reward is very great", but nevertheless, we need to serve Hash-em out of love, as if we know nothing about reward. Thus, automatically we should: "be careful of a minor mitzvah like a major one".

Even though the major one's reward is greater than the minor one's, but nevertheless "we do not know the reward for mitzvot" at all. This is the meaning of: "be as careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major one, for you do not know the reward given for the mitzvot", like Avraham our forefather, peace be unto him, and there is no distinction between minor and major mitzvot. Rather, I wish only to do the will of my G-d.

 **Level 3**

Sfas Emes

Sfas Emes on Avot - "be as careful (zehir) with a minor mitzvah as with a major one" - i.e. regarding the zehirut (carefulness) in the mitzva. For the receiving of the reward (for zehirut) depends primarily on this. Thus, there is no difference between a light and weighty mitzva. As for the mitzva itself, he is not referring to that. For on that it is said: "according to the difficulty is the reward" (Avot 5:22).

"for you do not know the reward given for the mitzvot" - i.e. you do not need to know. For your toil in this is not in order to receive reward. Nor is it to know rewards, but rather to do the command of G-d, whether for a light or weighty mitzvah. The plain meaning is difficult. For it implies that if one knew the reward given for mitzvot, he would choose the weighty mitzva (with more reward) and that would be like "on condition to receive reward" (Avot 1:3).

We may also answer that "reward given" refers to the lofty power of the mitzvot, how enormously powerful it is.

"for you do not know the reward.. - since the reward is infinite and for that which is infinite, parts do not apply. For it is impossible to count it and weigh it.

Another explanation, all the reward depends only on the effort. Therefore, when you are careful of a light mitzva, its reward is greater than a weighty one without effort.

Alternatively, the explanation is that there is no difference of reward between the mitzvot. For everything depends on the quality of the doing [of the mitzvah] (shelemut ha'asiya). And sometimes this depends on a successful or favorable time (shaah mutzlachat v'et ratzon) and then the reward is very great.

Level 3

Chida

Chida - Zeraa Yamin - "for you do not know the reward given for the mitzvot" - in the book Manot HaLevi, it was told that a poor man asked the emperor Alexander Mokdon for tzedaka (charity). The emperor gave him a large city as a donation.

His amazed servants asked him: "you are a great king and no one can tell you what to do, but please explain to us why you did this? For even if you gave this poor man ten dinars (coins), he would have considered it a great gift since he never had so much money in his hands."

The emperor answered them: "he asked me, and I donated to him something which for me is small and little". end quote.

From here we can learn a little bit of the immensity of the reward for those who fulfill the mitzvot. For the little which the Eternal G-d of the world gives is incomprehensibly immense from our perspective. This is what he said: *"be as careful with a minor mitzvah.. for you"*, i.e. from your relatively small perspective, you are unable to fathom *"the reward given for the mitzvot"*, which the King of kings gives. For it is beyond the ability of human intellect to grasp (due to its immensity).

After some time, I saw a small mussar book called: "Tzemach Tzadik" which had on page 16 the story of Alexander Mokdon in the following version:

A poor man went before the emperor Alexander Mokdon and asked him for a small coin as charity. The emperor then gave him a large city as a donation.

The poor man said: "my master, the emperor, it is not befitting to me such a great gift".

Alexander answered: "ah my brother, but it is not befitting me to donate such a small gift like you asked. Thus, it is not up to me to understand what is befitting for you to receive but rather what is befitting for me to give".

Level 3

Daas Chachma u'Mussar

Daas Chachma u'Mussar 2:45 - "for you do not know the reward given for the mitzvot" - for the mitzvah itself is as nothing, completely annulled relative to the very many consequences. The most primary thing is the many outgrowths that come afterwards. Thus it is evident that you cannot know the "reward given for the mitzvot".

For even though for the mitzvot themselves, it is known which are weighty and which are light.

But since the primary thing is the offsprings (consequences) and the level of purity which follow the beginning and start of the mitzvah, then just like by plant seeds, you cannot know which will grow better and produce more fruit, since there are many factors.

This is what the Rambam wrote: "The weighing [of sins and merits] is carried out only according to the wisdom of the Knowing G-d. For only He knows how to measure merits against sins" (Teshuva 3:2).

Only He can weigh all the endless future consequences. Therefore, certainly "you do not know the reward given for the mitzvot".

Q Level 3

Chachma u'Mussar

Chachma u'Mussar 1:102 - it is proper to know that besides the reward for doing the mitzvot themselves, there is also a special matan schar (reward) for having brought nachat ruach (contentment) to the Holy One, blessed be He. For it is a great simcha before Him when His sons guard His mitzvot, and all the more so for torah study which weighs like all the mitzvot.

For He wants the good of the whole world, and especially the good of His treasured people, the children of Israel, on whom it is written: "you are sons to the L-ord your G-d" (Devarim 14:1). How great is His joy when He can benefit them by giving them reward for mitzvot, an infinite good. Thus, besides the reward of mitzvot themselves which is too great for us to receive, on this that he brought nachat ruach and caused joy to the Holy One, blessed be He, how much more so can we not receive it. For its reward is enormously great.

Q Level 3

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "be as careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major one, for you do not know the reward given for the mitzvot" - i.e. the reward is not fathomable even to the prophets, for "no eye has ever seen" (as brought in Berachot 34b). And for something so precious as this, how could one say: "I will not toil in a small mitzva. For its reward is little"?

The reward of a mitzva is not finite. It is eternal, such that even the reward of a small mitzva is unknowable to you and is not knowable even to the prophets.

Alternatively, "be as careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major one". For sometimes one can receive more reward for the small mitzva than for the major one. Since for the major mitzvah, it is possible that one refrains from transgressing it due to great fear of its punishment. But for the light mitzva, he abstains only out of fear of the Creator who commands on it (thus his merit is greater).

Alternatively, when you do a light mitzvah, let it be with great carefulness and meticulousness like a severe mitzva. But if you encounter a light mitzvah and a severe mitzva, such as to save a man drowning in a river, or the like, then do that and skip the light mitzva.

As known, Torah (study) is called severe relative to other mitzvot. For a man is exhorted to toil in it and fulfill it day and night. And likewise "talmud Torah is as all of them" (Kidushin 40b). But nevertheless, they said that if a mitzva cannot be done by others, one is obligated to pause his Torah study to do it. On this also he said: "be as careful with a minor mitzvah.."

Q Level 4

Alei Shur

Alei Shur II 2:4 - our sages taught us clearly the value of small deeds:

"be as careful with a light mitzvah as with a weighty one" (Avot 2:1)

In the beginning of Parsha 'Eikev': "*it will be on account (lit.on the heel) of your listening that the L-ord, your G-d, will keep for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your forefathers*" (Devarim 7:12) - Rashi explains there [why the word "heel" was used]: "if you listen to the light mitzvot which people trample with their heels, then *the L-ord your G-d will keep for you*

the covenant.."

And in the Midrash there: "*it will be on the heel of your hearkening..* (Devarim 7:12). This is as written in Tehilim: '*Why should I fear on the days of evil? The sins of my heels surround me*' (Tehilim 49:5) - David said: 'Master of the World, I do not fear the major sins in the Torah because they are severe. But I do fear the small sins. Perhaps I sinned in them because they are light and You said '*be as careful with a light mitzvah as with a weighty one*'. Thus, '*it will be on the heels of your hearkening*'...

'*How great is Your goodness that You have laid away for those who fear You...*' (Tehilim 31:20) - this refers to the reward for the light mitzvot." (Midrash Tanchuma Eikev 1)

In the talmud (Avodah Zarah 18a): "Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish: What is the meaning of the verse: '*the sins of my heels surround me*'? (Tehilim 49:5) - Sins which one treads under his heel in this world surround him about on the Day of Judgment".

In this small world (of little things) we find all that relates to reward and punishment. It is a wonder! For we are so used to thinking of big things in Torah and mitzvot (i.e. great feats), but really when we reach the world of action, everything depends on small deeds specifically!

This is the wisdom of man's makeup. It is also so in the larger physical world. Matter is not made up of enormous chunks but rather of tiny atoms so minuscule that the eye is unable to see them. Likewise, the human body is built up from tiny cells which can only be seen with a powerful microscope.

It is also so for man's spiritual makeup - it is made up of deeds which one tramples with his heels, whether for good or for bad.

This knowledge should cause a transformation in our thinking. Usually when a person wants to change the world, he thinks of some grand theory or on some worldwide organization for peace or righteousness. So too, one who wants to rectify himself thinks of great deeds of chesed (kindness) or holiness.

But for the small deeds which are not at all difficult on a person, what perfection could one possibly get from those?? But the truth is that a man is built up specifically through small deeds.. just like a person's body is healed specifically through tiny medicine pills which have only one milligram or so active ingredient...

Furthermore, small acts do not rouse one's internal rebelliousness! One who takes on a big heavy resolution will feel very well in just a few days a powerful internal rebellion which strengthens more and more against him.

But for a small act which does not burden a person at all, it does not have enough to rouse this [rebellion] and flies in "under the radar"...

This is the first foundation in the work of mussar - never under any circumstances should one work on deeds which weigh heavily on himself. Everything we will bring in later chapters involve only small acts... it is proper to work on one area preferably for 6 months but no less than 3 months.. (see there for more)

Level 3

Chachma u'Mussar

Chachma U'Mussar 1:43 - the wicked also seek mitzvot. But specifically those that are big and lofty such as saving lives or the like. But this is not the way of the Tzadikim (righteous).

As known, three angels came to Avraham, our forefather. They appeared to him as arabs. But nevertheless, he prepared for them a big feast. He ran before them, him and his wife, as if it was a meal for thousands of people.. a whole parsha is written there.

Thus, this is the way of the Tzadikim - even for the smallest of the smallest mitzvot, they labor greatly in it like the weightiest of the weightiest, as our sages said: "Be as careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major one". Why? Because for the wise man it is understood that there is no "light (commandment)" before G-d, blessed be He. This is for one who realizes the great light hidden (ohr hagadol haganuz) in his deeds. Therefore, the deeds of the wicked are specifically in the big things. For they don't have eyes to see.

Level 4

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (Daat chochma umussar 1:72) - "be as careful" - for there is no difference between them whatsoever. They are all equal. For they are decrees of the King and there is nothing light before Him.

This is what our sages said (Sanhedrin 8a):

" 'You shall hear the small and the great alike' (Devarim 1:17) - Resh Lakish says: This verse teaches that a law-suit involving a mere perutah (small coin) must be regarded as of the same importance as one involving a hundred manah. For what practical purpose is this laid down? If it is to urge the need of equal consideration and investigation, is it not self-evident! Rather, it is to give the case priority, if it should be first in order."

Rashi explains: "if a judgment of a peruta came and afterwards a judgment of a hundred manah, rule on the first one".

Regarding that one must judge truthfully, whether it is a pruta or a hundred manah, that is certainly obvious. For the judgment of the torah is not like that of the nations. In the courts of the nations, they will certainly not at all accept to judge and deliberate on a courtcase for a mere peruta. Rather, they will mock him and throw him out. But in the judgment of torah, a case of a hundred mana and one of a single pruta are both equal in all respects. For they are both considered equal in the judgment of theft.

But why in truth must one precede if a case of a peruta came before one of a hundred mana and it is forbidden to judge the case of a hundred mana since it came afterwards?

Rather, certainly the foundation of the matter is that in torah and mitzvot, there is no difference whatsoever between a small thing and a big thing, and one must not make any distinction between them. This is also what our sages said: "the Holy One, blessed be He, does not grant greatness to a person until he first checks him with something small.." (Shmot Rabba 2:3).

Likewise regarding sins, without a doubt there is no difference between a big one and small one, between a light and weighty one. Behold, we find sometimes one person opens a door and those sitting and learning interrupt their learning to look who entered. And we don't put to heart that there is no difference regarding bitul torah, between bitul torah of one second versus bitul torah of a whole day, and on one unnecessary looking applies all the punishments mentioned on bitul torah which is greater than all other sins (Sifri Eikev).

This is none other than enticements of the yetzer so that one would ignore small things such as bitul torah of one second or stealing one pruta or embarrassing a person with one word. This is what our sages said:

"What is the meaning of the verse: 'the iniquity of my heel encompasses me about'? - sins which one treads under heel in this world compass him about on the Day of Judgment." (Avodah Zara 18a).

I was educated in Kelm. There they were very meticulous on this. My outlook is that I cannot bear to see small sins, for they are equal in my eyes to big ones. Thus it is my way in the yeshiva to be meticulous on things and small sins. For example, I cannot bear to see when the students push each other. For this is equal to me like murder, since it truly demonstrates on bad middot. In my opinion, one who does not admit to this has no portion in the torah of Moshe. This is what our sages said: " 'for G-d will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil' (Kohelet 12:14) - what is 'including every hidden thing'? - For example one who kills a bug or spits before his fellow and his fellow is disgusted.." (Kohelet Raba 12).

🔍 Level 3

☆ Divrei Binah (Admorei Biala)

Divrei Binah (Admorei Biala) - it is written: "*the soul of man is the candle of G-d, searching all his innermost being*" (Mishlei 20:27), i.e. just like for one who goes to a dark place and takes out a candle to illuminate it, so too is the candle of G-d. For a mitzva is a candle. In truth, a mitzva is like a candle which illuminates a man. Only that it depends on the soul of man. According to how much a man has purified his soul will be the corresponding illumination of his mitzvah. Namely, that it rouses others to desire the mitzvah. Not only that but "*searching all his innermost being*" - it rouses oneself to repentance, whereby he "searches all his innermost being".

This is the meaning of: "*Whatever is harmonious (Tiferet) for the one who does it*", that the mitzvah becomes harmonious and beautiful through its doer. And through this - "*and harmonious to other people*", that he rouses others also to do the mitzvah and inspires inside them a desire for torah and mitzvot..

Alternatively, the primary trait of Tiferet hints that a man needs to pride himself (lehitpaer) that he merited to be among the servants of G-d, as one who prides himself that the king himself personally commanded him to do some service. Then, indirectly this trait will correspondingly be roused above. Namely, that G-d prides Himself on us, that He has such a holy people. Thus, "tiferet lo min haadam" - i.e. pride to Him, i.e. to G-d - that this trait is correspondingly roused and G-d prides Himself on him.

"*be as careful (heve zahir)..*" - from the term zohar (shining light) as written: "the wise will shine as the shining of the sky.." (Daniel 12:3). Namely, since all the torah purifies man's soul and illuminates it like the shining of the sky (zohar harakia), as known. For the 248 positive commandments and 365 negative commandments correspond to the limbs and sinews of man's body and through the mitzvah, he illuminates and shines his body.. and this matter applies equally to all mitzvot. Thus, in this it is not relevant to make a distinction between a light and weighty mitzvah.

🔍 Level 1

☆ Chida

Chida - Zerao Yamin - "*look at three things and you will not come to sin...*" - which are known and true to you, and which you admit to. Only that it needs constant looking and contemplation. Through this, you will not come to sin nor even to the "hands of sin (yedei aveira)", which are bad thoughts or forbidden words..

🔍 Level 2

Meiri

Meiri - "*know what is above you*" - i.e. that you believe in His existence.

"*look at three things, and you will not come to the hands of sin*" - that one's thought always turn to these things and he will not come to sin at all..

"a seeing eye, a hearing ear" - i.e. that one believes in His providence (hashgachato) and right justice (yosher mishpatav), to know and understand that although Hash-em is above the highest of the high, but nevertheless, He sees the lowly ones, i.e. He watches over those below to feed each man the fruit of his deeds, and that He will pay back to each person according to his ways.

"all your deeds are inscribed in a book.." - you will inevitably be punished for the sins unless you repent from them..

🔍 Level 2

☆ Chida

Chida - Ahavat David derush 13 - "look at three things" - by this constant looking one annuls all the sins. For the Kli Yakar wrote that all the claims of the yetzer hara are that the pleasures of this world are visible to the eye, as written: "for it is desirous (taava) to the eye" (Gen.3:6). From this is drawn most sins, and our sages said: "the yetzer hara rules only on that which the eyes see" (Sotah 3b).

Through looking at these three things, the looking of the yetzer hara becomes annulled (mitbatel). Thus: "look..and you will not come to sin", i.e. the [constant] looking at the vanities and pleasures of this world. For this looking [at three things] annuls the other one (of the evil inclination).. (Translator: hence as long as one keeps his eye on these three things, the "looking of the yetzer hara" is annulled. As soon as he stops, the "looking of the yetzer hara" is reactivated and gravitates him slowly towards sin).

🔍 Level 1

☆ Tosfot Yom Tov

Tosfot Yom Tov - "know what is above you" - since this "looking" is not with one's physical sense of sight, but rather with one's intellectual sense of sight (reiat hasechel) Thus, he said "know".

🔍 Level 2

Tosfot Yom Tov

"what is above from you" - if a weak man is above a mighty man, nevertheless the mighty man fears the weak man. All the more so if the mighty man is above.

"from you" - he did not say only "above" but "above from you", i.e. not far above but rather just above you mamash (actually). This is as the verse: "I have placed G-d always before me" (Tehilim 16).

🔍 Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "know what is above you, etc." - i.e. the Holy One, blessed be He, sees and knows all human deeds and remembers them as if they are written in a book before Him, and He will pay back evil deeds with punishments.

It is a wonder why he specified three things which are all saying the same matter, namely, that He knows everything and will in the future pay a person back according to his deeds.

Thus it seems the explanation is that it is an analogy. Just like when one stands before a king or minister or sage or important person, one is embarrassed to do or say anything improper, so too he should consider at all times as if he is standing before the Holy One, blessed be He, in the same way he would be standing before his fellow human being. Through this he will guard his words and ways from sin.

🔍 Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - "know what is above you..." - know the greatness of the King which you would transgress His word by committing a sin. Know also that despite all His greatness, He does not refrain at all from watching over the lowly ones. Rather, "a seeing eye..". Know also that the punishment for sin

does not come immediately so that the delay does not deceive you. Rather *"all your deeds are inscribed in a book"* - to receive reward and punishment for them [later].

Q Level 3

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - *"know what is above you"* - see how everything is above you. Even the tiniest creature is beyond your ability to fully understand. All the scientists with all their advanced technology are unable to fully grasp even a mosquito. For G-d is infinite and His wisdom is likewise infinite above the ability of man to ever fully grasp. If a man could understand the wisdom in the formation of even the wing of a mosquito, he would be filled with wonder and be full of praise and song to He who spoke and created the universe. All this is included in the words *"know what is above you"*. By seeing how it is above your limited human intellect, you will understand that everything is from Him and there is a *"seeing eye and a hearing ear.."*

(Translator: actually even the "simplest" bacteria is far beyond our ability to fully understand. The more the scientists study it the more they open new doors with greater complexity and bigger questions. Likewise for even an atom.)

Q Level 4

Chida

Chida - *Ahavat David derush 13* - *"know what is above you"* - the Shechina rests on your head above you and you need to anoint it with mitzvot and good deeds (this is for the positive commandments). Corresponding to [refraining from] the negative commandments, he said: *"a seeing eye..."*

Q Level 3

☆ Meorei Ohr

Meorei Ohr - *"look (histakel) on these three things"* - in the Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim siman 229: *"one who sees a rainbow says... but it is forbidden to look (lehistakel) on it much"*. In the Biur HaGra commentary there: *"the term 'histaklut' (look) refers to iyun harbe (much in depth)"*.

Thus, here too that which the Tanna says *"histakel on three things.."*, this histaklut (looking) certainly refers to great depth (iyun) and delving of the mind and great contemplation in these three things. Likewise, without a doubt this looking (histaklut) is not through one or two times, that in a day or two it will have an effect on the soul of a man, to fear G-d and not come to sin, and especially so for one whose heart is of stone and hard as a flint. Thus, every day look at these three things, each person according to his makeup, occupations, and temperament.

Q Level 4

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - to understand well this matter of *"cheshbon"* (consideration), let us illustrate. We see that to turn a small canoe in a river, it is enough for one to use a little paddle. But when one wishes to turn around a huge boat in the sea loaded with ten thousand tons of cargo, it is evident that one cannot move it from its place with a paddle.

But lo and behold, we see how the sailor stands next to the steering wheel of the boat and turns the boat to whatever direction he wants.. From this we understand that the steering wheel of the boat is a very powerful mechanism. Likewise, we understand that if there is any malfunction in the boat's motor, certainly, this will cause severe problems in driving the boat.

When we consider the wills and powers in man, we will find that there is no comparison whatsoever between man and even the most powerful boat [motor].

For come and see how through one will, Shechem ben Chamor made such a great revolution in his city until all the men became circumcized. It is awesome to contemplate from this, the enormous power of human will.

Likewise for what is happening in the whole world. From where did all these revolutions come from? Is it not from the will of a few individuals?

This is what our sages said: "there is nothing that can stand before will" There is no metal that human "will" cannot drill through.

In light of this, it is certain that without the steering wheel apparatus, a man is unable to steer and veer his will to the direction he wants.

Thus, we must investigate and find out what is the "steering wheel" of man through which he can guide and command his will?

This is what we learned in the mishna and were taught by the "rulers over their inclinations" - "come let us consider the accounting of the world, loss of a mitzvah versus its reward and reward of sin versus its loss".

For the "consideration" (cheshbon) is the steering wheel of man. Through it he can steer his will so that it will be under his power and command and direct it to whatever direction he wishes.

All of a man's success depends on this. When he thinks in all of his deeds the reward of mitzvah and the loss of sin. If he does this, he will be built up in this world and established in the world to come.

But if this consideration (cheshbon) is lost from him, as our sages explained there "avad cheshbon - avad cheshbono shel olam" (he lost the accounting of the world), it is analogous to losing the steering wheel of the boat. And then what hope is there for him?...

Q Level 3

☆ Michtav M'Eliyahu

Michtav m'Eliyahu Vol.5 pg.146 - the single way (haderech hameyuchad) to drill feelings of fear of sin into the inner heart is through the way of mental imagery and imagination.. Our sages said regarding the yetzer hara: "the eye sees, the heart desires, and the body does the sin". Rashi explains: "when the eye sees, then the heart desires and automatically (memeila) the body does the sins" (Bamidbar 15:39).

The primary work of the yetzer is to picture images of lusts in a man's imagination. Once he succeeds in this, his work is already done. For the "spirit of folly" already comes on a man (Sotah 3a) and all considerations of Fear of Heaven (yirat shamayim) are annulled. Therefore, the advice is to pre-empt and toil in pictures of yirat shamayim before the situation of trial comes and to deepen in the pictures of fear and the pictures of the sweetness of the spiritual before the pictures of lusts come. For the first picture wins. Furthermore, if one waits till the time of trial, then the pictures of holiness lack the necessary power. For "when the Evil Urge gains dominion, none remember the Good Urge" (Nedarim 32b). Likewise for wars of this world, each army needs to train and prepare at peacetime. If the army waits until war has already broken out - it will fall.

(Translator: this is hard work as Rabbi Dessler himself writes later on there (pg.170): "breaking the yetzer (shevirat hayetzer) is the greatest of sufferings".)

Q Level 4

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot quoting Rav Yitzchak Blazer, Shaarei Ohr 41-42, 44 - "consider the loss of a mitzvah against its reward, and the reward of a sin against its loss" - and our sages said:

|"What is the meaning of the verse: 'therefore the rulers said, let us enter into an accounting'

(Numbers 21:27)? Therefore the rulers - i.e the rulers of their [evil] inclinations said come and consider the accounting of the world - the loss incurred by doing a mitzva against the gain earned through it, and the gain obtained by doing a sin against the loss incurred..." (Bava Batra 78b)

It appears from here that only those who rule over their inclination, who already conquered the war with their evil inclination and rule over it - they can give proper advice to consider the calculation of the world. Thus writes the "Path of the Just" in chapter 3:

"This true counsel could not have been given nor could its truth be recognized except by those who had already gone out of the hands of their evil inclination and ruled over it. [For one who is still held captive in the prison of his evil inclination - his eyes do not see this truth, and he is incapable of recognizing it. For the evil inclination literally blinds his eyes. He is like one walking in darkness, where there are stumbling blocks before him but his eyes do not see them]".

This seems very strange. What wisdom and genius is there in this advice? It is a simple matter and evident to every man that the calculation of loss of mitzva against its reward and reward of sin versus its loss is a good advice and remedy against the yetzer hara (evil inclination), to turn from evil and do good.

The answer to this enigma is that fear of G-d and His punishment is not a natural fear implanted in man's nature like other fears of physical harm. Even if a man knows and believes that Hash-em looks and watches all actions of human beings and nothing is concealed from His eyes and that every act will be brought to judgment to pay back a man according to his ways and according to the fruits of his deeds.. reward of mitzva and punishment of sin, but nevertheless, he is unable to feel this fear unless he toils to attain it.

The root of the matter is that if the path to fear of G-d were like those of fears of worldly dangers which are felt instinctively and which enter man's heart automatically perforce, then the instinctive fear of G-d would force man to do what is good and right lest he be struck by the wrath of G-d and His awesome judgments. This would be a detriment to the principle of free will, the central pillar of torah and mitzvot, and correspondingly one's reward would also be reduced. This is stated clearly by the Rambam in Hilchot Teshuva (ch.5):

"Free will is granted to all men. If one desires to turn himself to the path of good and be righteous, the choice is his. Should he desire to turn to the path of evil and be wicked, the choice is his... man can, on his own initiative, with his knowledge and thought, know good and evil, and do what he desires. There is none who can prevent him from doing good or bad..."

Thus in order for free will to be in man's hands, G-d's divine wisdom deemed proper to constrict the power of fear in man and block man's nature from fear and fright of divine punishment, whether to body or to soul. For these would cause him to be forced in the service of G-d and annul his free will.

Thus, the fear of G-d will not enter in man unless he seeks it and toils and works to attain it...

Thus, when the mishna says: "*consider the loss of a mitzvah against its reward..*", there is no doubt that the intent is to think and contemplate greatly in this, with intellectual depth, a sound heart, and vivid mental imagery.

This is what the rulers of their inclinations are teaching us. A man should not tell himself: "what for? This knowledge of reward for mitzvah and loss of sin is not hidden from me and nevertheless the fear of G-d is far from my innards. What benefit will I then obtain by these considerations?"

On this came the rulers of their inclinations, who already trained their hands in battle to draw near

and wage the war of the evil inclination. They advised us that even though faith (emuna) and knowledge alone will not make any fruit whatsoever. But when a man will want to seek wisdom and mussar, cheshbon (spiritual accounting) and knowledge, with great contemplation in every detail of the "accounting of the world" - reward of mitzva and loss of sin, then through its power the man will prevail to conquer the war and be a ruler over his yetzer.

What is the way of this contemplation? To read and contemplate the holy books, to review and repeat verbally the many sayings of our sages in the talmud, midrashim and holy zohar which speak at length on all these matters. Then, his heart will warm up and he will be moved and his soul will feel, to fear the awesome and glorious G-d. This is what our sages said: "whoever did not taste agadah did not taste fear of sin" (Avot d'Rebbi Natan 29:7).

Q Level 4

Ohr Yisrael

Ohr Yisrael hameforash, B'lkvot Igrot R. Yisrael Salanter - in Genesis 3:1 - "now the serpent was cunning, more than all the beasts of the field that the L-ord G-d had made, and it said to the woman, "Did G-d indeed say, 'You shall not eat of any of the trees of the garden?'" (Ber.3:1).

On this verse, the Sforno comments:

"the serpent" - he is the Satan who is the Yetzer Hara. Greatly damaging yet almost imperceptible. Our sages already said: "the Samech-Mem (Satan) rode on him (on the serpent who had the form of a camel)" (Pirkei d'Rebbi Eliezer ch.13).

This means that the power of lust (koach hamitave) which brings to sin (hamachti), does so through the intermediary of the power of imagination (koach hamedamei). The latter sends to him imaginations of physical pleasures which sway him away from the proper path set by G-d.

For when the power of lust joins together with the imaginations of physical pleasures, they command the physical powers to act and sin against G-d. Then when the power of intellect does not rise up and protest, the person goes and commits the sin. This is as our sages said: "the heart and the eyes are the two solicitors of sin" (Yerushalmi Berachot 1:8). On this the torah warns: "you shall not go after your hearts and after your eyes.." (Bamidbar 15:39). (end quote of Sforno)

Thus, the power of lust (koach hamitaave) is unable to achieve it's wish without the power of imagination. The power of lust rides on the power of imagination and commands it to send mental pictures of physical pleasures. Then they both join together to one will and this will sends a command to the physical powers, i.e. to the physical limbs, to act according to its command.

The eyes and heart are solicitors (sirsurim), i.e. mixing together imagery of pleasures to the power of lust and on this the torah warns: "you shall not go after your hearts and after your eyes.." (Bamidbar 15:39). Namely, do not be pulled after the imagery of the heart and eyes because when that imagery joins up with the power of lust, the two join to command the limbs to act against the will of G-d. (translator: for the power of lust gets ignited and intensified by the imagery brought by the eyes and imaginations)

Thus, according to the Sforno, the yetzer hara is the power of imagination which produces mental imagery of physical pleasures to the power of lust. The power of lust is not the yetzer hara. It is merely a power the Creator implanted in man like hunger and thirst. By itself, the power of lust has no evil whatsoever. It is the power of imagination which produces imagery of physical pleasures to the power of lust. This power is called the "serpent" who was "more cunning than all the beasts of the field". The Sforno explains this to mean: "the power of imagination which brings imagery of pleasures to the power of lust was stronger in them (Adam and Chava) than in all the other living

creatures, similar to: "the greater the person the greater the evil inclination" (Sukkah 52a).

The Sforno is teaching us that which our sages said: "the greater the person the greater the evil inclination" - this is not referring to the power of lust but rather to the power of imagination. This is the opposite of what we think. We are used to thinking that the yetzer hara is lust and that is what ruins our lives and what we wage a fierce war against..

But the Sforno comes and teaches us that the point of battle is in a different area altogether. Not against the power of lust but against the power of imagination!

This is what "brings a person to the hands of sin". And when does the power of imagination succeed in bringing a man to sin? The Sforno says: "When the power of intellect does not stand up and protest"..

The Sforno says that if the power of intellect rises up against those images and protests against them - one will defeat them.

But the difficulty is enormous. For Rav Yisrael Salanter wrote: "the imagination (dimyon) is as a torrential river and the intellect drowns" (Igeret Hamussar). The imaginations flow mamash (really) like a torrential river, requiring enormous power to go against the current. Thus, the intellect is liable to drown if we do not: "bring it on a boat - the feelings of the soul and stirring of the spirit" (ibid). The boat which can guard the intellect and prevent it from drowning in the powerful river of imaginations is "the feelings of the soul and stirring of the spirit". What is this?

The Saba of Kelm wrote (Chachma u'Mussar part 1, maamar 28) that the world thinks the difference between a righteous man and a wicked man is that the tzadik believes in the existence of G-d and reward and punishment while the wicked man does not believe. But we see from the words of our sages that this view is not correct. The talmud in Shabbat (31):

"What is meant by, 'this their way is their confidence [kesel], and they approve their end with their own mouths selah' (Tehilim 49:13)? The wicked know that their way is to death, but they have 'fat on their loins' [kislam]. But lest you think that it is their forgetfulness, therefore it is stated, 'and they approve their end with their own mouths'..

The wicked does believe in G-d and the afterlife and knows his end is bitter but even so he does not repent.. Why? The Saba of Kelm says the difference between the wicked and the righteous is only in the power of imagery (koach hatziur). For who does not want permanent, eternal good? But the power of imagery is lacking in the wicked, not his faith. He does not lack knowledge. Only that his knowledge is totally dry, without life. The knowledge did not become tangible living pictures and thus they don't affect him in the least.

What power forms this mental imagery? The power of imagination. Only that for worldly matters, a person does not need to toil to activate the power of imagination. Namely, to picture to himself worldly pleasures. Because these pleasures are tangible to the senses. Thus they activate the imaginations on their own. But for matters of the world to come, the existence of G-d, reward and punishment - these are all (abstract) intellectual matters, not tangible. Thus if a man does not toil to activate the power of imagination, to picture to himself vivid pictures (tziyurim muchashim) of reward and punishment, etc, then the power of imagination will be inactive on the side of holiness and then the pictures one has of the world to come and reward and punishment will be null and void relative to the overwhelming pictures of the sweetness of this world..

The Saba ends: "therefore the command in the Shema comes: 'and you shall not wander after your hearts and after your eyes after which you are going astray. So that you shall remember and perform all My mitzvot..'." (Bamidbar 15:39).

Hidden in his words is a wondrous explanation. The verse states: "they shall be for you as tzitzit and you shall see them and remember all the commandments of G-d and do them". The plain meaning is that "they shall be to you" - these blue strings "as tzitzit", to see, (lehatzatzta), as the verse "peers (metzitz) through the cracks" (Shir 2:9). "you shall see it", that blue string, "and remember..".

Our sages expounded on that verse: "seeing brings to remembrance and remembrance brings to action.. R.Meir says: 'Why is blue different from all other colors? Because blue resembles the sea, and the sea resembles sky, and the sky resembles G-d's Throne of Glory..' (Sotah 17b).

Seeing this blue string will activate the power of imagination in the direction of holiness. Namely, that he imagines the sea and the appearance of the sea will remind him of the sky and the sky will arouse a picture of the kise hakavod - this will bring him to do the mitzvot.. but this requires work as before..

If we ask ourselves: "why does seeing tzitzit not arouse in us feelings of yirat shamayim, while for the Chazon Ish he felt: 'great joy and holy feelings to bind oneself strongly to torah and mitzvot'?"

Why does seeing the mezuzah not knock on our hearts, to take us out of our low spiritual state, while for the Rambam, every seeing roused in him a powerful feeling to elevate his spiritual state?

The answer is that when a person has no dominion on the power of imagination, this power becomes massively destructive. For it succeeds in sending imagery of worldly pleasures to the power of lust and to command the limbs to act according to his will.

Then his power of imagination towards the sweetness of spiritual matters becomes dull and weak, and then automatically all matters of holiness remain dry and without any life. He can see the strings of the tzitzit but they don't tell him anything. He can kiss the mezuzah but remain in the mud like he was!

On the verse: "and you shall not wander after your hearts and after your eyes", the Sifri (Bamidbar 15): "this teaches that the eyes go after the heart".

But the Sifri asks: "or perhaps the heart goes after the eyes?" The Sifri answers: "but aren't there blind people who commit all the abominations of the world?! What then is the verse teaching us: 'you shall not wander after your hearts and after your eyes'? - it is teaching that the eyes go after the heart".

The Malbim asks: "but our sages said: 'we have a tradition (from Sinai) that the yetzer rules only on what his eyes saw' (Sotah 8a). Furthermore, Rashi writes on this verse: 'the eye sees, then the heart desires, and the body commits the sin'. Hence, it seems the heart goes after the eyes!

The Malbim answers that if the imagery of lust had not conquered his heart beforehand, the seeing of the eye would not have roused his heart. Only because the imagery of the pleasures of this world became chiseled in his heart, therefore, the seeing of the eyes rouses his heart to desire. And since the imagery of the sweetness of this world acquired a dwelling place in his heart, one look is enough to arouse the power of imagination in the direction of Tumah (impurity). And then, the power of imagination and the power of lust merge and the limbs submit to their command.

But if the imagery of the sweetness of spiritual matters were chiseled in his heart, one look at the

blue string would rouse the power of imagination, to compare the blue to the sea, and the sea to the sky, and the sky to the "Throne of Glory" and be reminded of the Creator of all - and this remembrance would bring to action. And likewise seeing the mezuzah would rouse the power of imagination and give him a knock to rouse him from his slumber and return him to the service of G-d... (see there for more)

(Translator: next time the yetzer pictures to you the delicious taste of that cake, counter back and picture all sorts of mental imagery of health problems, toothaches, weight gain, etc. don't let up until you are free)

Q Level 1

☆ **Etz Hadaat Tov v'Rah**

Etz Hadaat Tov v'Rah - siman 128 - "all your deeds are inscribed in a book" - even though there is no forgetfulness by the Holy One, blessed be He, but nevertheless they are written in a book in order to instill great awe (eima yetera) on a man in knowing that all his deeds are written down. Thus he will worry and fear and will not sin.

Q Level 3

Chasdei David

Chasdei David - "all your deeds are inscribed in a book" - (why the need to write them down if Hashem does not forget?) we may explain as written in the book "Magen Avot" (Maharshak, beginning of ch.3):

It is known that no bad things come from the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself and that He does not accuse (mekatreg) any person of any evil, not even for the most wicked person in the world.

From the side of the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself, no one would ever get punished. Just that from the aspect of the Satan who accuses and claims justice before the Holy One, blessed be He.

Then "the king establishes justice in the land" (Mishlei 29:4) and it is necessary to rule with the attribute of justice.

Thus, if the deeds were not written down, granted that the Holy One, blessed be He, would still remember them forever, but nevertheless the Satan would forget them. For by him there is forgetting. And since the Satan would not accuse, the Holy One, blessed be He, would certainly not recall them. For this is not of the ways of the Holy One, blessed be He.

But nevertheless, the Holy One, blessed be He, desires that the wicked be punished so that they not be corrupted forever (lo yitpakru l'olam). Therefore, the Holy One, blessed be He, made it so that all the deeds of man be written and thus when the book of remembrances is opened, the Satan remembers the sins and then he accuses (mekatreg). end quote.

The Chida wrote similar to this in his book "Midbar Kadmut" (maarechet 40 of 11). There he brings the talmud in Kidushin: "for a bad thought, the Holy One, blessed be He, does not consider it as deed" (Kidushin 40a). He writes the reason, namely, that no one knows the thoughts except the Holy One, blessed be He.

Thus, since the Heavenly Beit Din does not know the thoughts, it is unable to punish for them and the Holy One, blessed be He, does not testify on this. For "is there a father who testifies against his son?" (Avodah Zara 3a), (see there and Midrash Sechel Tov, parsha 18:13).

This is what Rebbi exhorts: know that all your deeds are written in a book, and the Satan is able to accuse and claim justice before the Holy One, blessed be He, despite that no bad things come from Him, blessed be He, as before.

Q Level 2

☆ **Pirkei Moshe**

Pirkei Moshe - why does it say in passive tense "all your deeds become inscribed (nichtavim) in a book", instead of "all your sins are inscribed (kotvim) in a book" (active tense). The latter would imply that in Heaven all man's deeds are inscribed.

The answer is that it is man himself who inscribes his own deeds, as the talmud says: "man's limbs testify on him" (Taanit 11a)... (for G-d does not want to write or testify on man's sins. Thus, it all happens automatically by the effects "inscribed" on man's soul and on the mystical worlds - *Magen Avot*).

Q Level 2

☆ Yavetz

Yavetz - the "book" upon which man's deeds are inscribed upon is man's own soul, as they said: "man's soul testifies on him" (Taanit 11a). For on the nefesh (soul) is chiseled all the mitzvot and sins.

It is analogous to a man whose body is covered with leprosy but he conceals it with his garment. When his garment is removed, his disgrace (cherpat) is revealed and apparent. So too, the body is the garment to the soul. While it is alive, the blemishes of sins are concealed. But when the body is removed from the soul, the disgrace of the soul is revealed. This is what the verse says: "by the hand of every man he seals so that every man should know his deed" (Iyov 37:7).

Q Level 3

Sfas Emes

Sfas Emes on Avot - "a seeing eye.." - for the "watching over" (Hashgacha) of the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself is on the children of Israel. But it is written: "He does not look at evil in Jacob.." (Bamidbar 23:21), "for evil will not dwell with you" (Tehilim 5:5). Thus, when a man sins, there is a "seeing eye" from the Sitra Achra (other side), thereby, through his sin, he grants dominion (shlita) and "watching over" (Hashgacha) to those eyes who look and watch over sins. But when a man does good, then the Holy One, blessed be He Himself watches over him.

This was the praise of Bilam: "He does not look at evil, etc.", i.e. the Holy One, blessed be He, who rules (sholet) on the children of Israel, does not watch over their bad, except at times of evil, when they have left this [high] level. But nevertheless, the primary hashgacha on the children of Israel never has any accusations (kitrug). Understand this. Due to this, one needs to not sin so as not to cause the seeing of that eye mentioned earlier (of the Sitra Achra). There is also a deep Sod (secret) here.

seeing eye.. - the plain meaning is on man's deeds. But this is difficult for that would be the same as "all your deeds are written in a book". Rather, one can say that "seeing eye" is on the thoughts of the heart (mind). These three correspond to the three areas of service - thought, word, and deed. For "hearing ear" on the words and "all your deeds.." on deeds. One needs to guard all three..

Q Level 3

Chida

Chida - Ahavat David derush 13 - "all your deeds are inscribed in a book" - it seems from the plain meaning that only the deeds are written.. But I saw in the holy Zohar parsha Nasso 126b: "all that happens in this world is written and (likewise) everything a person utters from his mouth, and he will give a judgment on everything". end quote.

Although there it refers to the time of a person's death. Nevertheless, we learn from there that the words are also written down just like the deeds. it seems to me the explanation is as my grandfather, the Chesed l'Avraham, of blessed memory, wrote:

"From a word of mitzva is created a good Malach (angel). From a tamei (impure) word is created an evil Malach, and from one of batala (useless word) is created a Malach of batala. Thus, one makes a deed through his speech.. Hence, according to this, the explanation of our mishna is

"seeing eye" - the deeds. "hearing ear" - the words. "and all your deeds" - whether actual deeds or those done above through your words - "are written in a book".

According to what we said, this is the explanation of the mishna later: "if you were batel (idle) from the Torah, there are many batelim against you" (Avot 4:5). For when one is idle from Torah, usually he is then involved in devarim batelim (idle talk) and Malachei batela are created from all his words, and he will give a judgment on them in the future. This is the meaning of: "there are many betalim against you", i.e. the malachim (angels) who were created and prosecute against you.

And in the Midrash Rabba (Shmot 13) on the verse: *"the weight of a stone and the burden of sand - the anger of a fool is heavier than both"* (Mishlei 27:3), G-d is not weary from the mountains, hills, and banks of sand, as written: "He neither tires nor wearies" (Isaiah 40:28). But says the Holy One, blessed be He: "what makes Me tired? one who angers Me by speaking devarim betalim (idle words)", as written: *"you have wearied the L-ord with your words"* (Malachi 2:17).

Q Level 3

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "a seeing eye" - one needs to picture in his thoughts always that if a man were to stand above him and meticulously observe all the details of his deeds and hear all his words and record everything, certainly he would tremble and fear wondering "what is this?!"

How much more so when he pictures that the Holy One, blessed be He, "whose glory fills the earth" (Isaiah 6:3), sees and watches over every slight movement of his and hears every slight word of his.

In truth, the Holy One, blessed be He, is the source of sight and hearing itself. And even though a man sees and hears, he still does not know his fellow's true thoughts. Unlike the Holy One, blessed be He, who examines his heart, and as written: *"G-d sees into the heart"* (Shmuel I 16:7), and everything is written and inscribed above in the book of remembrances. For the actions themselves in their form are chiseled above. "every deed G-d will bring to judgment" (Kohelet 12:14). It did not write: "on every deed G-d will bring to judgment". For the deed itself in its form G-d will bring in judgment".

This is the meaning of *"all your deeds are inscribed in a book"*. The deeds themselves are written. When a man contemplates this certainly fear and trembling will seize him and he will see to it with an open eye that his deeds be as good as possible and he won't come to any sin at all.

These three levels correspond to thought, speech and deed.

"Eye" corresponds to thought, as written: "G-d sees the heart" (Shmuel I 16:7).

"Ear" corresponds to speech, that one hears speech.

While "all your deeds" refers to the [actual] "deeds".

G-d bound all the highest powers to man. Man has the ability to rule over the hosts of Heaven and likewise the mystical worlds are affected by his deeds, whether for good or the opposite..

With one single "looking", man can rectify or destroy several worlds. And as our sages expounded: "do not read 'banecha' (your sons), but rather 'bonecha' (your builders)", i.e. builders of worlds, or the opposite, ch.v. For in man is included all the [divine] powers.. On this it is written: "in the image of G-d", i.e. man is also like G-d, Master of all powers. For man also builds and destroys worlds. His soul is lofty above all the worlds and all of them receive life-force from him. For man is an intermediary and cause so to speak for them to receive life-force from the Al-mighty..

Thus, "*know what is above from you*". i.e. above everything is from you, either tikun (rectification) or kilkul (destruction). All your deeds are inscribed there in the inscription of pegam (damage) or tikun (building).

Although the body is but flesh, dust of the earth, vanity of vanities, but for every good matter, a corresponding spiritual power is roused from the holy soul of he who does the mitzva, and the opposite for sin, ch'v.

After doing the mitzva or sin, this power leaves and returns to its root during a man's life.. But the parts of the soul attached during performance of a mitzva go to Eden and enjoy there while those attached during sin go to Gehinom. All this during man's life. After his death, this itself is the reward. For all the good parts (of the soul) join together as one and enclothe him as the "chaluka d'rabanan" (good spiritual garment), while for the opposite, they become a beged tzoim (spiritual garment of filth).

It is necessary for the two to not stick together, and thus this is the kaf hakela (slingshot of the soul) - one soul here and one soul there (slung back and forth from one end of the world to the other). This should be enough for the understanding person. This is the meaning of: "*all your deeds are inscribed in a book*", i.e. through the imprint made above whether of tikun (building) or pegam (destruction).

Level 3

Chasdei David

Chasdei David - from the language "Rebbi says", it implies there is a machloket (argument) in the matter. This needs explanation. Who is the Tanna that argues on Rebbi?

We will answer as follows. In the beginning of chapter 3:

"Akavia the son of Mahalalel would say: Reflect upon three things and you will not come to the hands of sin. Know from where you came, where you are going, and before whom you are destined to give a judgment and accounting. From where you came - from a putrid drop; where you are going? - to a place of dust, maggots and worms; and before whom you are destined to give a judgment and accounting.."

It seems Akavia said three things that are completely different from those of Rebbi and that he argues on Rebbi.

However, I found in the book Magen Avot that he explains Akavia does not argue with Rebbi and that Akavia is coming to expand the words of Rebbi. For according to all the commentaries, Rebbi is giving an advice how a person can distance himself from sin.

Rebbi did not need to say anything new. For the Torah is full of punishments and sufferings which will befall a sinner. Who then is so foolish as to commit a sin and inflict injury on himself?

Rather Rebbi's intent is that we the Bnei Yisrael (Jews) are commanded: "sanctify yourself from what is permitted to you kadesh atzmecha b'mutar lach)" (Yevamot 20a). Namely, that a person not run after needless food, drink, and other bodily pleasures, and that one benefit minimally from this world, and subsist only on the necessary.

This is because although the worldly pleasures are permitted, but nevertheless, they are "yadayim" (handles) to sin. If one does not distance from the permitted to him, he may easily come to sin.

This was Rebbi's intent. He came to give an advice how a person can "sanctify himself from what is permitted to him". Namely, that he know that there is a "seeing eye and hearing ear", i.e. the

Holy One, blessed be He, is always right before his eyes. Surely, one would not act thus before a flesh and blood king. How much more so then, before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.

So too, Akavia ben Mahalalel is also coming to exhort a person to separate from the superfluous permitted things. Only that Rebbi comes from the aspect of the greatness of the Creator, "know what is above you", while Akavia comes from the aspect of the lowliness of oneself, "know from where you came.."

We need the words of both of them. For if we had only the words of Akavia regarding recognizing one's own lowliness and we did not also have Rebbi's words regarding recognizing the greatness of the Creator, and knowing that He sees all our deeds, then one would do the permitted things and may even stoop to doing the worst lowest acts since he is not standing before the King. Rather, he is [alone] in his home, and he may come to the hands of sin. Therefore, we need the words of Rebbi, to recognize the greatness of the Creator.

Likewise, if we had only Rebbi's words, then even if one recognizes the greatness of the Creator but he does not recognize his own lowliness, then he will imagine to himself that he is also important, and an important person is not so embarrassed, and even if he stands before a king, he is not so careful and does his lusts (for food, etc). But a peasant standing before a king is very careful. Therefore, we also need the words of Akavia, to recognize one's lowliness. end quote.

According to his words, we may say that in this Rebbi and Akavia argue. Namely, with what should one begin to not come to the hands of sin - with the greatness of the Creator or one's own lowliness?

According to Rebbi, one should precede to recognize the greatness of the Creator and look at what is above oneself and know there is a "seeing eye and hearing ear". Through this, he will also see his own lowliness, as the Rama wrote:

"All the more so when one takes to heart that the Great King, the Holy One, blessed be He, Whose glory fills the earth, is standing over him and watching his actions, as it is stated: 'Will a man hide in concealment and I will not see him?' (Jeremiah 23:24), he immediately acquires fear and submission in dread of G-d, blessed be He, and is ashamed of Him constantly" (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 1:1).

While according to Akavia ben Mahalalel, one should precede to recognize his own lowliness and afterwards recognize the greatness of the Creator.

We find that the holy Rebbi Elimelech and Rebbi Zusha also argued on this. Rabbi Elimelech held one must open with the greatness of the Creator and afterwards contemplate one's own lowliness, while Reb Zusha held first one's lowliness and afterwards recognize the greatness of the Creator. (Translator: perhaps Rebbi and Akavia are not arguing. It all depends on the person. For example, a sad person could be broken by Akavia's approach and should instead go with Rebbi's approach.)

Level 3

Translator

Translator: - below are some more commentaries on the whole mishna which are difficult to split up.

Level 4

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - in tractate Tamid (ch.1, 28a): "Which is the straight path that a man should choose? Let him love reproof, since as long as there is reproof in the world peace of mind comes

to the world, good and blessing come the world, and evil departs from the world, as it says, *"But to them that are reprov'd shall come delight; and a good blessing shall come upon them"* (Mishlei 24:25).

Rebbi used the same exact expression here: *"Which is the straight path that a man should choose? Whatever is harmonious.."*, i.e. this path is like the mitzva of rebuke for it also bears fruit (good consequences) for the public. Namely, it refrains the public from sin (removes hatred, etc.) and thus brings good and blessings to the world. Understand this.

The masses think that only the Rabbis and Darshanim (teachers) are commanded in the mitzva of rebuke. But in truth this is a mistake. It is a mitzvah on every Jew, even a simple person (am ha'aretz) who sees in his friend something reprehensible is obligated to rebuke him.

And the main thing is that the rebuker needs to include himself also [in the sin]. For he cannot possibly claim to be clean, and who can say: "I purified my heart.."

A further explanation: by nature, man is prone to sin. This is due either to his physical nature or to the enticements of the evil inclinations which he succumbs after.

On this Rabeinu hakadosh (our holy teacher) establishes that there are three types of sins.

One, intentional sins (mezid).

Two, "saying (the sin is) permitted" (omer mutar).

Three, "unintentional (sins)" (bli kavana).

For many, the unintentional sins are a great stumbling block.

But the intentional sins are less so. For every man of Israel will certainly not accept to listen to the voice of the yetzer, who entices him to sin intentionally. Though sometimes this does happen such as when the Yetzer catches a man suddenly (ex. at a difficult time).. But this occurs only on rare occasions.

However, the unintentionals (shogeg) are very severe, as written: *"it is also not good that a soul be without knowledge, and he who hastens with his feet sins"* (Mishlei 19:2). The verse includes two types of unintentional sins (Shogegs) - *"saying permitted"* is included in *"without knowledge"*, while *"unintentional"* (bli kavana) is included in *"hastens his feet"*.

Namely, he does not look (mistakel) at his ways. Through this, he stumbles and it is considered a sin because he did not look.

All the "unintentionals" (shogegs) come through this, as written: *"the iniquity of my heels surrounds me"* (Tehilim 49:6), which our sages expounded: "I am not afraid of my big sins, but rather on the (little) sins which I trample with my heels" (Yalkut Shimoni Tehilim 247).

That is to say, the sins committed due to either habit or not contemplating..

On the second category of sins, namely, "saying (the sin is) permitted", i.e. where the yetzer hara rationalizes to him ways it is permitted. For this category it is good to listen and take counsel with others, and as before "love rebukes". On this Rebbi said: *"whatever is praiseworthy for the doer (before G-d), and praiseworthy from other people"*.

On unintentional sins without intent (shogeg bli kavana), he said: *"be as careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major one.."*

Namely, that one looks and contemplates his ways so they don't occur.

On the intentional sins (mezid), he said: *"consider the loss of a mitzvah against its reward.."* For to guard oneself from intentional sins (zedonot) at a time when the yetzer of his lust seizes him and when the sin is near at hand - it is difficult to separate. People then already consent, regardless of the consequences (V'harugei beit din bizman habayit hayu matirin atzman lemita).

The only advice given here is to preempt and think in fear of G-d beforehand, before the sin comes to his hand.

Thus, let him look always at the three things and then he will be saved and will not come at all to any sin...

Level 3

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - *"whatever is harmonious for the doer"* - i.e. the good trait is not that which is good in one's own eyes only. For *"every man's way is right in his eyes"* (Mishlei 21:2). Rather, the good trait is that one's own deeds are good in the eyes of others, or the opposite, that others' deeds are good in one's own eyes.

And all the more so, [it is a good trait] if one's own deeds are good in one's own eyes and also in the eyes of others.

This is the meaning of *"and harmonious (Tiferet) from other people (Adam)"*, i.e. that possessors of intellect (baalei sechel) who are called by the name "Adam" all agree that it is praiseworthy and proper.

Some explain that one should choose the traits and deeds which are praiseworthy in a man (Adam), namely, those traits which stem from man in his being a possessor of intellect (baal sechel). Not those stemming from his flesh and blood aspect like the animals, such as eating, drinking, and copulation. For those are an embarrassment to us not a praiseworthiness (Tiferet). And since this mussar is not reserved for Jews only but rather for all intelligent men, even the non-religious, he used a third person tense.

"Be as careful with a light mitzvah as with a weighty one" - since now he is speaking to Jews specifically, he changed to second person. He said that for the commandments of G-d, it is not necessary to choose (a way) like the societal traits (midot medini). For the Giver of the Torah already chose them. This is the meaning of: *"be as careful with a light mitzvah as with a weighty one"*.

"light" and "weighty" is not referring to the aspect of reward. For *"you do not know the reward given for the mitzvot"*. Rather, he called them "light" and "weighty" from the aspect of doing them. For some mitzvot are easy to do at all times, every second. Whenever one wants, he can do them.

On the other hand, some mitzvot are "weighty" to do and there are many impediments. The opportunity may only come once in fifty years. It is also possible that for a mitzva chamura (weighty), one may be zealous in doing it by nature. For he fears that perhaps he will not have the opportunity again. But for a mitzva which is readily available at all times, he may be lazy in doing it and may tell himself: "I'll do it whenever I want".

Therefore, he exhorted not to be lazy. Rather, be zealous in doing the light mitzvah just like he is not lazy in the mitzva chamura.

He gave a reason for this. Namely, *"for you do not know the reward given for the mitzvot"*. For *"no eye has ever seen"* (Isaiah 64:3) and if you are lazy in the light mitzva, perhaps you will never fulfill it and perhaps its reward is much greater than those which are chamura in your eyes...

"reward given (matan schar)" - the reward is a complete gift. For according to truth (justice), one who sits and does nothing should not deserve any reward. Therefore, he called it *"reward given (matan schar)"*. For it is given as a gift. Thus the Sage is teaching us not to use our logic regarding the reward.

For example, in refraining from a major sin (ex.adultery), perhaps the reward is great just like its punishment is great (death). Or perhaps we may argue the opposite - perhaps the reward for refraining from a severe sin which carries a severe punishment is smaller since one abstained only out of fear of its great punishment. But for a minor sin whose punishment is light, the reward is greater since one refrained only out of love of G-d. Thus, there is room to argue both ways (perhaps the light mitzvah has more reward than the major mitzvah or the opposite). Hence, *"for you do not know the reward given for the mitzvot"*.

"the reward of a sin against its loss" - consider it like honey mixed with lethal poison.

"Look at three things, and you will not come to the hands of sin" - some explain this like the hand (handle) of a cup. For a sin also has a hand (yad), namely the light things which people "trample with their heels", which seem to a person to be almost permitted. And after he does these things, he is led to "take in" the severe sin itself.

Some explain "hands of sin", according to what our sages said: "one who commits a sin acquires a prosecutor" (Avot 4:11), and it itself comes to pay the sinner back with its own hands. For the reward of sin is the sin itself which comes to exact revenge on him. This is the meaning of: *"and you will not come to the hands of sin"*, i.e. that it comes to take revenge on you with its hands.

"Know what is above from you: a seeing eye, a hearing ear, and all your deeds are inscribed in a book"

Q Level 3

☆ Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim (continued)* - *"Know what is above from you"* - some explain that if you look at these three things [in yourself], you can know and recognize that there is a seeing eye above. For from the fact that you yourself have a seeing eye you can infer and know that: *"Will He Who implants the ear not hear or will He Who forms the eye not see?"* (Tehilim 94:9). Thus he said *"know what is above from you"* (from yourself).

Some explain, *"Know what is above from you"*, that even though G-d is in Heaven and you are on the land in your innermost chambers, do not say: "who can see me? who can know me?".

For everywhere "the eyes of G-d watch", on the bad and the good, and He stands "above you", right over your head.

"a seeing eye" - for your eye does not really see (intrinsically). It is merely an instrument prepared to receive sight. Thus you are unable to see in darkness, rather you can see only where there is light. The reason is because the eye itself does not really see (intrinsically), nor does the ear really hear by itself (intrinsically). Thus, if the voice is far away, you cannot hear it. But the eye of G-d

sees intrinsically and the ear hears intrinsically. For it itself is the hearing and "[He knows what is in the dark] and light dwells with Him" (Daniel 2:22). Therefore He knows what is in darkness and does not need any other light..

Q Level 3

Chida

Chida - Kikar la'Eden - before everything, a man needs to straighten out his character traits (middot). This is before fulfilling the mitzvot as Rabeinu Chaim Vital z"l explained in his powerful book "Shaarei Kedusha" (2:8). And if he did not first rectify his character traits, then he did nothing (v'im b'tchila lo yitaken hamidot, lo assa klum). And our sages hinted on this saying: *"the punishments for middot (false weights) is worse than that of illicit relations"* (Bava Batra 88b).

Therefore, Rabeinu HaKadosh made an opening for rectifying the middot and said: *"Which is the straight path that a man should choose (for rectifying the middot)?" - "Whatever is harmonious for the doer and harmonious to other people..",* i.e. the middle way as the Rambam and Bartenura explained. And after rectifying the middot, *"Be as careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major one"*.

And since the bad middot stem from the darkness of the physical and the four [meta]physical foundations, as explained in Shaarei Kedusha.

For arrogance stems from the yesod of fire while all lust from the yesod of water and forbidden speech from the yesod of ruach.

Therefore he said: *"look at 3 things and you will not come to sin".* i.e. bad middot which are the yedei (hands) of sin.

"know what is above you, a seeing eye", who examines the heart.. He can see the pride of your heart in which dwells arrogance from the foundation of fire, as written: *"all proud of heart are an abomination to G-d"* (Mishlei 16:5).

"hearing ear" - forbidden words from the yesod haruach.

"all your deeds" - of your lusts in food and relations from the yesod of water, *"are written in a book"*.

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - the Tanna started the chapter with Rebbi's words and placed them head of the chapter. He did not place them with the words of the Rishonim (earlier sages in previous chapter) despite that he mentioned there Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, the father of Rebbi, and it would seem proper to place the son (Rebbi) with the father.

But nevertheless, he began the chapter with Rebbi's words for by Rebbi there was Torah and Gedula (greatness/wealth/honor) in one place and he was the head of all Israel. Thus, it was proper to make his words head of the chapter.

Furthermore, due to the greatness of the mussar in his words - *"which is the straight path that a man should choose? Whatever is harmonious (tiferet) for the doer, and harmonious (tiferet) to other people"* - this matter encompasses all the deeds a man will do. As he says *"which is the straight path that a man should choose",* i.e. in all his words and deeds that he will do, he should choose this path which is harmonious to him, etc.

And since this mussar encompasses all of man's deeds, it was placed as head and beginning. Likewise for the words of Akavia ben Mahalel. They were placed at the head of chapter 3 for this same reason. And likewise for the words of Ben Zoma (ch.4). For whenever the sage's mussar

was all encompassing, it began a chapter. But you should also see our explanation at the end of last chapter. For that which Rebbi's words began the chapter also follows according to wisdom, as we explained there.

"Which is the straight path that a man should choose? Whatever is harmonious for the doer (before G-d), and harmonious to other people" - it is proper to ask:

* After saying: *"whatever is harmonious for the doer"*, why the need to say further: *"and harmonious to other people"*?

* Why did Rebbi say: *"Which is the straight path"*, while Rabban Yochanan ben Zakaai said (later): *"Which is the good path"*?

3. He began with a third person tense: *"which is the straight path that a man should choose?"*, and afterwards he uses the second person tense: *"be as careful with a minor mitzvah.."*

We will explain as follows. Some ways are themselves good for the person doing them, i.e they are "harmonious (tiferet) for the doer". But they are not "harmonious to other people", i.e. another person who sees it thinks bad of him on this.

Although the way itself may be truly "harmonious" for the person (i.e. it is truly good). Just that it has a bad appearance (chashad) to an outside observer.

Nevertheless, do not choose this way. Because one needs to exempt himself from Heaven and from human beings (tzarich l'tzet yedei Shamayim u'yedei briot).

And all the more so for a Torah scholar. For it is a chilul Hash-em (desecration of G-d's Name) if it seems to people that his deed is not proper and right.

Therefore, he said that the deed must be "harmonious to other people", that this deed be "praiseworthy" also to all people who observe it, and not just that it is praiseworthy to the doer only.

Likewise, he did not say only: *"whatever is harmonious to other people"*. It was necessary to also add: *"whatever is harmonious for the doer"*. For sometimes people praise a person on a deed he did, but his intent was not l'Shem Shamayim (for G-d). For the person merely intends to deceive people, i.e. to appear righteous in the eyes of the public..

Therefore, he added: *"whatever is harmonious for the doer"*, that the way be truly "harmonious for the doer". For if he intends not l'Shem Shamayim, only to show off or the like, one cannot call this: *"Whatever is harmonious for the doer"*, despite that people praise him on this.

The main thing Rebbi is coming to teach is that a person should not say: "since this act is truly proper and good who cares what the public thinks?"

It is not so. For it is proper for a person's deed to be praiseworthy to other people. As you will find everywhere in the words of our sages, it is forbidden to do a deed which appears improper to an observer. And all the more so, if it is itself improper according to the truth and also to an observer.

That which he did not say: *"whatever is harmonious to the public"* (the literal translation is "harmonious to the man"). This is because not all the public is able to know the praiseworthy way. For sometimes a way appears praiseworthy to one person who is unable to understand (true

virtue), but according to the truth, it is not praiseworthy. Therefore, he said: "and harmonious to the man", namely, he who is called Adam (man), who is able to know and understand, not he who is compared to a donkey, who is unable to understand.

Furthermore, *"every man's way is right in his eyes"* (Mishlei 21:2). Thus, if he had just said: *"whatever is harmonious for the doer"* it would imply that the path need only be harmonious to himself, and *"every man's way is right in his eyes"*.

Thus he added that it needs to be *"harmonious to other people"*.

And that which he did not just say: *"whatever is harmonious to other people"*, this is because it would imply any path which other people praise him on is good. Thus, he added: *"whatever is harmonious for the doer"* (that it be truly good)...

WHY "STRAIGHT" PATH WAS USED INSTEAD OF "GOOD" PATH

That which he used the expression: "what is the straight path", while Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai said (later): "what is the good path that a person should cling to".

This is because he came to say that he should choose for himself the path which is "harmonious to other people", i.e. it appears straight (yashar) to the public. The term "straight" (Yashar) is fitting when referring to the public, as Rashi explained: "good in the eyes of Heaven and straight (Yashar) in the eyes of man" (Devarim 12:28)..

The reason "straight" (Yashar) applies to the eyes of the public is because "Yashar" is said on something which goes straight while the crooked (hameukam) is something which goes crookedly (holech b'ivut). This is something which appears only to the external appearance of human eyes. For straight and crooked is only to the (appearance of the) eye not to the heart.

Therefore, the Yashar applies to the public which see only the appearance of the eye. For man judges only by what his eye sees.

But "good" applies only on a matter which is itself good. Therefore, the explanation of "good" is to Heaven, while "Yashar" is to human beings. For they are capable of perceiving on something and saying it is Yashar. But "good" is beyond the grasp of human beings. For sometimes a person perceives something as good but it is not good. But "Yashar" is knowable to human beings (since it refers to external appearance of the eye)...

Thus, he needed to use here the term "Yashar" and it was not enough to say: "which is the path which one should choose" (instead of "straight path"). For he is asking which is the path which appears straight (yashar) in the eyes of the public. On this he is speaking, and on this he said: *"Whatever is harmonious for the doer, and harmonious to other people"*. This is the Yashar (straight) in the eyes of man.

But for the derech tov (good way) that a person should choose. This matter will be explained by Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai later. Here he is only speaking on the derech yashar (straight path) which appears to the eyes of the public.

He also said "that a person should choose" instead of the term "that a person should cling to" which Raban Yochanan ben Zakai used. This is because it is the way of man to choose a "straight path" among crooked paths to go on...

Rebbi says: Which is the straight path that a man should choose? Whatever is harmonious for the doer (before G-d), and harmonious to other people.

Be as careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major one, for you do not know the reward given for the mitzvot. Consider the loss of a mitzvah against its reward, and the reward of a sin against its loss.

Look at three things, and you will not come to the hands of sin: Know what is above you: a seeing eye, a hearing ear, and all your deeds are inscribed in a book.

STRUCTURE OF MISHNA - CHARACTER TRAITS THEN Torah

He (first) spoke in third person: "Which is the straight path that a man should choose...", and afterwards changed to second person: "Be as careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major one". This is so one would not err to think "Be as careful..." is also connected to the previous statement: "Which is the straight path that a man should choose...", i.e. this also is a path to choose - "to be careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major one".

That is not at all so. For previously he spoke only on mussar. It is relevant to use the term "choose". For the middot (character traits) are not in the positive and negative commandments. Thus it is relevant *"for a man to choose"* this trait (middah). But that which he said: *"be as careful..."* - this is a din Torah (halacha) to be careful of both minor and major mitzvot. Therefore, he changed to second person here so as not to be connected to the previous statement.

That which Rebbi brought these things together is because Rebbi came to teach a person general principles (derachim), whether in middot (traits) or mitzvot.

He began with middot first for "derech erez kadma le Torah" (human decency precedes Torah), as we explained previously. Thus, the first statement "what is the proper path...", encompasses middot.

Afterwards he said words which encompasses Torah and its mitzvot, namely, "be as careful with a minor mitzvah as a major one"...

REWARD FOR MITZVOT

"for you do not know the reward given for the mitzvot" - the reason for this is because the reward of mitzvot is that through the mitzvot one attains dvekut (clinging) to G-d, and according to the clinging a person has with G-d (is the reward/pleasure). Thus, it is possible that (sometimes) the dvekut (clinging) to Him one attains through a small mitzvah is greater than through a big mitzvah...

"reward given for the mitzvot (matan scharan)" - he did not say merely "the reward of mitzvot", but instead said "reward given for the mitzvot (matan scharan)". For he came to give a reason why *"you do not know the reward given for the mitzvot"*. Namely, the mitzva has a "reward given". For all "giving" is from the Giver, which is Hash-em, blessed be He. And it is impossible to know what is by Hash-em, blessed be He.

On the other hand, punishment is from the aspect of the sin itself, not from the Giver. Thus it is possible to know the punishment. But the reward is unknowable (since Hash-em is unknowable).

"consider the loss of a mitzvah against its reward.." - the explanation is that if an opportunity for a positive mitzva comes and his evil inclination strengthens over him to not do the mitzva. For it

requires great cost or exertion to do the mitzva [then he should make this accounting].

Likewise if a negative mitzva comes and his evil inclination strengthens over him to transgress the sin in order to obtain the sin's benefit [he should also make this accounting].

On this he said to: "*consider the loss incurred for a mitzvah [against its reward]*". For a positive commandment, the "loss" refers to the expense, pain, or exertion for fulfilling the positive mitzva. For a negative commandment, it refers to the loss of pleasure he would have had if he had not transgressed the negative commandment.

[To summarize], he said to consider the loss one incurs in not fulfilling a mitzva of the Torah versus the reward he will receive if he fulfills it.

For indeed fulfilling a positive mitzva carries great reward. Likewise for refraining from transgressing a negative mitzva. Since, when a sin opportunity comes to one's hand and he forces his inclination and refrains from transgressing it, he will receive great reward for this.

He should also consider the gain and pleasure obtained from committing the sin versus the loss of reward he would have obtained from Hash-em, blessed be He, if he had fulfilled the commandment of his Creator. This is the meaning of "*and the reward of a sin against its loss*".

Some ask on this: this implies one should do the commandments for the reward, and this contradicts Antigonus of Socho who said: "*do not be as servants who serve their master in order to receive reward*" (Avot 1:3).

This is not difficult. Because here he only spoke against the evil inclination. For sometimes a man says: "the mitzva is difficult for me due to the cost, exertion, or pain in forcing my evil inclination. On this he said: if your evil inclination entices to this, "*consider the loss of a mitzva, etc*". But certainly, one should not have intent for this (reward). Rather, he should do out of love (like Antigonus said, i.e. *I'sameach Elokim* - to bring joy to G-d, so to speak).

Some ask on this: since he said previously: "*for you do not know the reward given for the mitzvot*", if so, how can he then say: "*consider the loss of a mitzvah against its reward*"? For the reward of mitzvot is not known!

But certainly, this is not at all a difficulty. For the loss of a mitzva is only a monetary loss, exertion, or pain in forcing one's inclination - all things of this world. But the loss of its reward is in Olam Haba (World to Come), and they already said: "*better one hour of pleasure in Olam Haba than all the life of this world*" (Avot 4:22).

Hence without a doubt, there is no comparison nor equivalence between the loss incurred in doing a mitzva which is of this [fleeting] world to the [eternal] reward of Olam Haba. It is due to this that we certainly cannot know the reward of mitzvot.

With these three things Rebbi said (one, "be as careful with a minor mitzvah..", two, "consider the loss..", three, "look at three things.."), he included all the things needed in the mitzvot of the Torah.

For sometimes a person thinks this mitzva is small, without reward, and due to this he annuls (mevatel) the mitzva. On this he said: "*be as careful with a minor mitzvah..*"

Sometimes, a person comes to refrain from a mitzva because the positive mitzva requires toil or

monetary expense to do it, or for a negative mitzva, when a temptation to sin comes, it may require forcing one's inclination (and this is painful). Therefore, he said consider the loss in fulfilling the mitzva and also consider the reward from Hash-em, blessed be He, in fulfilling the mitzvah.

Likewise for the opposite, he should consider the reward and pleasure he has when he transgresses and refrains from doing the mitzvah and correspondingly to consider the loss he incurs from the sin, namely, the [future] punishment.

Then, certainly, he will choose to do the mitzva.

Sometimes, a person is tempted to commit a sin because (consideration of) its punishment does not enter in his heart since it is in the future. Likewise he does not care about the loss of future reward, and tells himself: "I will have some enjoyment now even though I will not receive future reward".

On this he said: *"look at three things, and you will not come to sin..."*

"look at three things and you will not come to sin..." - he did not say "look at three things and you will do the mitzva..". For that would imply that it is because he does not look [at these three things] that he does not do the mitzva. That is not so. For a man does not refrain from doing a mitzva when told that no one sees him doing the mitzva.

Thus, he said: "and you will not come to sin", since everything here was said against the evil inclination of man. For thus one's inclination tends to think as if: "no one is watching and G-d has left the land". Corresponding to this he said: *"look at three things and you will not come to sin..."*

It was also necessary to say: *"consider the loss..."* since there are many mitzvot such as acts of kindness which carry reward for doing them but which do not carry punishment for not doing them. Thus, on this he said: *"consider..the reward for a mitzva"*

"a seeing eye" - a man needs to reflect that Hash-em sees everything, to not think ch'v that He does not know the deeds of those below (i.e. in this lowest physical world), as the verse brings on the wicked who say: *"He will not see, nor will the G-d of Jacob understand"* (Tehilim 94:7). Rather, one needs to know that Hash-em, blessed be He, knows the affairs (inyanim) of those below. He "sees" them fully as the eye of an external observer, not partially as one who merely knows things through being part of them (see there for a deep explanation)..

This is the meaning of *"a seeing eye"*. He used the singular term instead of plural "seeing eyes" because Hash-em does not have physical eyes, nor two eyes like man, ch'v.

"a hearing ear" - for some people believe: "certainly Hash-em knows all of man's deeds.. but not that He supervises and lends ear to watch over (mashgiach) what happens down below. That is inconceivable. For G-d is analogous to a very great human king, whereby due to the king's greatness, if one of the lowly peasants or very simple people were to transgress his word or command, it would not enter in his ear due to its pettiness."

So too, a man thinks that due to the lowliness of man who is on the earth, even though Hash-em knows man's deeds below, but He does not watch over them due to their pettiness and they don't enter in his ear (so to speak).

Likewise a man also sometimes sees something but does not put it to heart because it is

insignificant to him. And just like it is proper to say that Hash-em knows everything for otherwise it would be a lacking by Him, ch'v, so too He does not watch over (mashgiach) gross physical human beings of this lowly physical world, as that too would also be a lacking by Him.

Therefore, he said that the matter is not as they think. Rather, there is a *"hearing ear"*. For Hash-em receives the deeds of human beings and they enter in the ear of the "Place" (G-d). The term "hearing" connotes "receiving" (kabbala), i.e. He does not reject the deed, but rather accepts it. Therefore, he said: *"a hearing ear"*.

And since one may still claim that even though Hash-em watches over (mashgiach) the deeds, but why must we say that the watching over (hashgacha) of Hash-em is for the purpose of bringing a person to justice on it in the future? Perhaps the watching over (hashgacha) of Hash-em is only for the purpose of rectifying the evil in the world, not for bringing everything into a future accounting.

On this, he wrote: *"and all your deeds are written in a book"*. i.e. all your deeds are written in a book just like a shopkeeper writes in his book and in the end brings everything into an accounting.

When a person has before him these three things, namely, the knowledge hinted in *"a seeing eye"*, and the watching over (hashgacha) hinted in *"a hearing ear"*, and the accounting, i.e. the reward and punishment hinted in *"all your deeds are written in a book"* - he will not come to sin. These three things, namely, the knowledge (He exists and sees), the Hashgacha (providence), and reward and punishment - they are the foundation of everything. Thus, when these three things are before a man, he will not come to sin...

"to the hands of sin" - one may ask: either way, if a person does not guard himself to do the mitzva and to not transgress sin, if so, he will also not guard this to look always at these three things.

On the other hand, if a person does guard himself to do what is proper, then just command him to refrain from sin and fulfill all the mitzvot. [Thus, why the need to look at these three things always?]

Certainly we can answer this.

For these three things are easy to do. But the mitzvot are strenuous on him and the evil inclination (yetzer hara) entices him to transgress. Therefore, he said to look on these three things and the yetzer hara will not come. For if he looks on these three things, which is easy to do, he will not come to the hands of the yetzer hara.

This is the meaning of: *"you will not come to the hands of sin"* (lidei chet). He did not say: *"you will not come to sin"*. For when one's yetzer strengthens over him, it is called the "hands of sin" (yedei chet), i.e. he is near the sin, such as *"yad hayarden"* (Bamidbar 13:30)...

"inscribed in a book" - this matter is deep.. Do not think man's deeds do not leave an imprint and [create] a form. It is not so. Rather man's deeds leave an imprint which endures.. This is what Moshe said: *"And now, if You forgive their sin But if not, erase me now from Your book, which You have written"* (Shemot 32:32)... There is another deep matter here but we cannot elaborate further.

Another question: why did he say "look at three things" and not "know what is above you.." (Avot 3:1)?

Answer: that which he said look at three things was to clarify to you a matter of tremendous wisdom. For man's form was created unlike all other creatures - man alone walks completely

upright. Hash-em did this for man in this world because man does not have Hash-em before him. Therefore, he comes near to sin. This (blindness) is to the extent that the sages said: *"would that it were that the fear of Heaven be upon you as the fear of flesh and blood"* (Berachot 28b).

For man is on the land and he sees a flesh and blood king, and thus has fear of flesh and blood. But man does not see Hash-em. Therefore, Hash-em created man in an upright stance so that he will gaze above and know the Holy One, blessed be He, who "sits in Heaven" (yoshev shamayim) and he will not come to sin.

This is the meaning of the verse: *"G-d made it so that they fear before Him"* (Kohelet 3:14), i.e. the Holy One, blessed be He, made man in a manner that he fear before G-d. For He created man to gaze above to obtain fear of Hash-em, who sits in Heaven. Therefore, he wrote "look at three things...", as the Holy One, blessed be He, created man to gaze above and not come to sin. We will explain further in the chapter of Akavia (ch.3).

Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - Netiv Hatorah ch.17 - "Be as careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major one, for you do not know the reward given for the mitzvot" - the reward of mitzvah which depends on the difficulty of a mitzva on which they said: "according to the difficulty is the reward" (Avot 5:22), this is a separate reward by itself and it is not called "reward of mitzvah". Thus if one did a mitzva with little toil and then another time the same mitzvah with much toil, he will have more reward for the time he did it with great toil than for the time he did it with little toil. But nevertheless, this is not called reward for the mitzva itself. For on reward of the mitzva itself, they said: "be..mitzvot".. Rather the reward of the mitzvah is from the aspect of the essence of the mitzvah. And the reward which is on the essence of the mitzvah, man is unable to know. For it is possible and it could be that the reward for a light mitzvah is as much as a weighty mitzvah.

Chapter 2 Mishna 2 - Torah And Work

Rabban Gamliel the son of Rebbi Yehudah HaNassi says: רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל בְּנוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי יְהוּדָה הַנָּסִי הַנְּשִׂיא אֹמֵר, יָפֵה תְּלִמּוּד תּוֹרָה עִם דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ, שְׂיִגִיעַת שְׁנֵיהֶם מְשַׁכַּחַת. And beautiful is the study of torah with the way of the world (Derech Eretz, i.e. work), for exertion in both causes sin to be forgotten. And all torah [study] that is not accompanied by work will in the end be nullified and drag [in] sin. And all who toil for the community, let them do so for the sake of Heaven (I'Shem Shamayim), for the merit of their forefathers assists them and their righteousness endures forever. And as for you, I [the Almighty] will credit you with great reward as if you had done it (alone). עוֹן. וְכָל תּוֹרָה שֶׁאֵין עִמָּה מְלָאכָה, סוֹפָה בְּטֻלָּה וְגוֹרָרַת עוֹן. וְכָל הָעֹמְלִים עִם הַצְּבוּר, יִהְיוּ עֹמְלִים עִמָּהֶם לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם, שְׂזָכוֹת אֲבוֹתָם מְסִיעֶתָן וְצִדְקָתָם עוֹמֶדֶת לְעַד. וְאַתָּם, מִעֲלֵה אֲנִי עֲלֵיכֶם שְׂכָר הַרְבֵּה כְּאִלּוּ עָשִׂיתֶם

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "torah with Derech Eretz" - derech erez - work or business dealings.

"for exertion in both causes sin to be forgotten" - for torah weakens a man's strength and work crushes and breaks the body. Through this, the evil inclination (yetzer hara) will be annulled from him.

Q Level 2

Bartenura

Bartenura - If you ask: if so, let one toil in torah always and its toil will "cause sin to be forgotten". Thus why the need for work also? Therefore, he needed to add:

"And all torah [study] that is not accompanied by work will in the end be nullified and drag [in] sin" - since he cannot live without food and he will come to steal from others and forget his learning.

"And all who toil for the community, let them do so for the sake of Heaven" - and not to take a crown for oneself and say: "I did such and such for the public".

"for the merit of their forefathers assists them" - the merit and righteousness of the forefathers of the public stands forever and helps those who toil for the public.. The success is not due to good exertion on the part of the communal workers.

And even though the matter is successful due to the merit of the forefathers of the public and not due to your own efforts, but nevertheless, I will grant reward as if you yourself brought this salvation since you are doing it I'Shem Shamayim... (see there for various other explanations).

Q Level 1

Rashi

Rashi - *"for exertion in both causes sin to be forgotten"* - since he learns and toils in torah and a livelihood, he does not covet or steal the money of others.

"with great reward as if you had done it" - even if you did not complete the deed, I will consider it for you as if you had completed it.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - *"for exertion in both causes sin to be forgotten"* - i.e. it removes the yetzer hara, as written: "behold, with iniquity I was formed" (Iyov 51:7). Through exerting oneself in torah and work, the yetzer hara will not gain dominion over him. For all the time he is not full and fat, it will not be sweet for him to do sins. Therefore, he should toil in torah, which weakens man's strength, and also work for his basic needs. And he should never stand idly, lest he indulge himself and his

heart grows arrogant and he forgets Hash-em his G-d, similar to: "and Jeshurun grew fat and rebelled" (Devarim 32:15).

"all torah without work will in the end be nullified" - as we learned: "if there is no flour, there is no torah" (Avot 3:21).

"and drag [in] sin" - for idleness brings him to poverty and this drags in many sins and great evils. For due to it he will love gifts and will not live (Mishlei 15:27). He will flatter people, even the wicked so that they give him gifts. When he has no money from the gifts he will steal or the like and bring stolen money of the poor to his home lest he perish from starvation. And when a man reaches these traits, there is no holding back of his spirit. He will not rest nor be at ease until he transgresses all the sins of the torah. For one sin drags another.

On this our sages said: "whoever benefits from the work of his hands, on him scripture says: 'If you eat the toil of your hands, fortunate are you and it is good for you' (Tehilim 128:2) - fortunate are you in this world and good for you in the world to come. Therefore, a wise man needs to know a trade..

🔍 Level 2

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel on Avot - "And all torah [study] that is not accompanied by work will in the end be nullified" - he will become lacking and poor and go after the doors of donors. And he will not toil in torah.

🔍 Level 3

☆ Sfas Emes

Sfat Emet on Avot - "for exertion in both causes sin to be forgotten" - this refers to after sin. Thus "causes sin to be forgotten". But if one does not sin at all, he would take upon himself the yoke of torah. And on this it says later: "the yoke of derech erez is removed from him".. For without sin, one does not need this instruction.

🔍 Level 1

☆ Rambam

Rambam - "and all who toil for the community.." - this is the word of G-d directed towards those who toil for the public. For sometimes they are prevented from doing a mitzva while toiling for the needs of the public. He said that Hash-em will consider it for them as if they did the mitzva, even though they did not do it, since they are toiling l'Shem Shamayim (for the sake of Heaven).

🔍 Level 2

☆ Meiri

Meiri - "let them do so for the sake of Heaven (l'Shem Shamayim)" - i.e. those appointed over the tzibur (community), they must toil l'Shem Shamayim - not to pride themselves, aggrandize themselves, nor to put unnecessary fear over the tzibur for their own honor. For whoever acts like this is not concerned about the honor of the tzibur and what is beneficial for them. But rather, for his own gain, to conquer the tzibur and inflate himself over them. But when he is l'Shem Shamayim, he leads them justly and bequeaths to them right laws and true torah..

🔍 Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "for the sake of Heaven" - not to receive honor nor to rule (lehistarer) over them. Rather, only to guide them in the right path, and everything l'Shem Shamayim.

Even though the merit of their forefathers helps them and their needs are done in their merit and not through your hands, you who toil in their deeds, nevertheless, I will consider it as if you did it and as if everything was done in your merit.

We may explain further: do not say: "what do I need this hassle of toiling for the public and that they should do good deeds through me? They alone will receive reward for it is their money (that

they donated, etc.)!"

It is not so. It is good for you to toil for their needs since the merit of their forefathers assists them and you will succeed more in their deeds than in yours. For the merit of the forefathers is great, and I will credit reward for you as if you did it all and as if you yourself gave the money that they donated through you. You will profit more in your toil for them, than you would have in toiling for yourself. For their deeds are more numerous than yours, and all that you do, G-d will cause to succeed, since the merit of their forefathers helps them. Therefore, it is good for a man to toil very much for the needs of the public, provided his intent is *I'Shem Shamayim*.

Q Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - even though the needs of the public are many and it is difficult for anyone to deal with them, as our sages said: "lay upon them public affairs, and they will cease by themselves" (Sanhedrin 17a). But nevertheless, when you toil for them *I'Shem Shamayim*, the merit of their forefathers helps those who toil for them...

Q Level 2

Tosfot Yom Tov

Tosfot Yom Tov - there will be very great reward for you since you toil for the needs of the public who are many, and since they are many, the reward is also very much, as if you yourself did much.

Q Level 2

☆ Translator

Translator: some interpret "derech erez" to mean not work but "good character traits" as we will see. Perhaps the two are related. For work trains a person to deal with all kinds of people thereby forcing him to improve his character traits.

Q Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "beautiful is the study of torah with *Derech Eretz*" - i.e. torah study is beautiful only if it has mussar and humility with it.

"be nullified and drag [in] sin" - for the poverty will cause him to sin.

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan on Avot - when one studies torah, he should fulfill what he learns. His torah should be beautiful in the eyes of others, mingling with them and acting in a pleasing manner, visiting the sick, accompanying the dead (to their grave), consoling the mourners, comforting the weary, honoring even those lower than himself. I did not explain *derech erez* to mean toil in a livelihood as those bigger and better than me explained. For my heart is not at ease on why he did not say afterwards: "all torah [study] that is not accompanied by *derech erez*", but rather: "all torah [study] that is not accompanied by work (*melacha*)". Thus, the previous teaching: "beautiful is torah with *derech erez*" does not refer to work, but to human decency (*derech erez*).

Q Level 3

☆ Divrei Binah (Admorei Biala)

Divrei Binah (Admor Biala) - i.e. it is proper and beautiful talmud torah with *derech erez*. Namely, even when a Jew is involved in matters of *derech erez*, business dealings, and all matters of this world, there should be recognizable in him the torah and torah is within him. This is the beauty of torah - that it be with *derech erez*, similar to what I explained on the verse: "you shall speak in them". Namely, that the words of torah be recognizable in all your movements. Even "when you sit in your house and go on the road and lay down and rise up" - the torah should be recognizable in him, in all his deeds and movements.. this is the sign of a true *tzadik* - that all his words and movements be torah.

Q Level 2

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "torah with *derech erez*" - i.e. also when you toil in *derech erez* think in torah. For "toil in both", i.e. when the body who turns to the working of the land and the mind to its thoughts

on the work of G-d (torah), "*causes sin to be forgotten*"

Q Level 2

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "*all who toil for the public should do so l'Shem Shamayim*" - for a leader of the public who becomes arrogant over them not l'Shem Shamayim will receive severe punishment (Rosh Hashana 17a). Perhaps due to this, you will refrain from toiling for their needs. On this he said: "consider this in your heart and you will certainly not become arrogant. Namely, picture to yourself that it is not you who is doing. You are just secondary (tafel) to the tzibur. Thus he said "with the tzibur.. for the merit of their forefathers helps them". Then certainly you will not become arrogant and will receive all the reward as if you did it yourself without help.

Q Level 3

☆ **Chachma u'Mussar**

Chachma u'Mussar 1:242 - this is difficult. Why did our mishna bring this matter of "l'Shem Shamayim" specifically here regarding those who toil for the public? The answer is because in something which affects the masses, one must be extremely careful of corruption (kilkul). Therefore, our sages warned especially of this matter, namely, that all who toil for the public should do so specifically "l'Shem Shamayim". For if it is not "l'Shem Shamayim", it is liable to spoil easily.

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - "*beautiful is the study of torah with Derech Eretz..*" - it is proper to ask: "Torah with derech eretz" - it seems he should have said instead: "beautiful is torah when there is derech eretz with it (which would imply torah is primary and derech eretz is secondary, not the opposite).

Another question: "*for exertion in both causes sin to be forgotten*". If the reason depends on working hard, if so, let him work hard in talmud torah alone and not go out to work. Thus it will "cause sin to be forgotten" due to the exertion, if all exertion causes sin to be forgotten.

Another question: "*And all torah [study] that is not accompanied by work will in the end be nullified..*" - but many torah sages did not have a trade...

Another question: "*all who toil for the community..*" - what is the connection between these things? It seems to be an independent matter and thus he should have made a separation before this such as: "he would say"...

[Answer:] since the words of Rebbi concerned man's deeds, namely, those deeds relating to divine commandments and also middot (good character traits) which bring a person to Olam Haba, therefore, his son came after him to give mussar in "derech eretz". Namely, worldly conduct which is a preparation to success (hachana el hahatzlacha).

It is know that derech eretz which is needed for worldly conduct (hanhagat haolam) takes precedence over the mitzvot in some aspect. Namely, a man needs first derech eretz (work) and afterwards torah, as we will explain shortly.

But nevertheless, the level of derech eretz is below that of the deeds of mitzvot. For the latter are divine deeds above the level of derech eretz which is needed for worldly matters. Therefore, it is proper for the words of Rabban Gamliel which speak on derech eretz to be after the words of Rebbi.

The explanation of this teaching is that Rabban Gamliel came to say that even for things which are of Heaven, such as torah, a man should not say: "it is enough for me to do those only, and 'whoever guards a mitzvah shall know no evil thing' (Kohelet 8:5)".

Therefore, he may think that he will not involve himself in worldly conduct and work.

Rather, a man needs to make the things of Heaven in proper order, namely, that there be first *derech erez* and afterwards *torah*. Thus, "beautiful is the study of *torah* with *Derech Eretz*", to not change the proper order, rather *derech erez* should come before.

This is as we explained in the introduction, that "*derech erez* preceded *torah*" (*derech erez kadma l'torah*). This follows like the creation of man. For wisdom and intellect always come after things which are not so completely of intellect. So too, it is proper for a man to conduct himself also, to first learn *derech erez* which is not a matter of intellect and afterwards to draw close to the *torah* which is (divine) intellect. This is: "beautiful is the study of *torah* with *Derech Eretz*".

Regarding that which he said: "*for exertion in both causes sin to be forgotten*", we already explained this matter at the end of the previous chapter. Namely, when a man is whole (*shalem*), without lacking, he is removed from sin. For sin is "lacking" in man. Therefore, it is not proper for sin to be found in man when he is whole. And when a man is whole with both *derech erez* and also *torah*, he lacks nothing and is removed from sin which is "lacking".

But if he is not with *derech erez* or not with *torah*, he is lacking and lacking drags more lacking. This is unlike when he is whole in all, for then he does not go out of his wholeness (*shlemut*).

But that which he said "*for exertion in both*", which implies the reason depends on "exertion", that which he toiled and exerted himself, it seems the intent is as follows.

It is proper for a man to toil in these two areas. For man has body and soul. And *torah* is *shlemut* (wholeness) of the soul, while *derech erez*, namely, what a man needs for his body, livelihood, and other things, makes whole (*mashlim*) his body. Thus, when he toils in both, sin will be not be found. For toil in both is to make himself whole while to sin is to make himself lacking. Hence, specifically toil in both. For when man toils in that which makes himself completely whole - this "*causes sin to be forgotten*" which is lacking of himself.

One should not explain the *mishna* plainly, namely, that because he toils in these two things "sin is forgotten". For according to that explanation, even if he toiled only in *derech erez* or only in *torah*, it should also remove sin.

Furthermore, it is impossible for a man to be toiling always. It is impossible for him to never rest from toiling in these two things and thus come to sin.

But according to our explanation, all is right. For it is not called that he is toiling to make himself whole unless he is doing so in both *derech erez* and *torah*. Because these two things are the *hashlamat* (making whole) of man. And when he toils in both, [it is considered that he is] toiling and exerting to make himself whole and removed from sin [at all times], even when he is not actually toiling in these two things. For, he is the man who toils to make himself whole and will not come to sin and transgression. For these are loss of oneself (*hefsed atzmo*).

But if he toils only in *torah*, then since he does not toil to also make himself whole in that which is also needed for his body, perhaps he will come to sin and transgression. For one needs to toil in making oneself whole and man is comprised of both body and soul. Thus, although he who toils only in *torah* makes himself whole in *torah*, but nevertheless he is a lacking man since he lacks what is needed to make his body whole, and lacking drags in more lacking.

All the more so if he does not toil in torah, which is the making whole of his soul - this man is certainly called a lacking man (adam chaser). But if he toils with that which makes him completely whole until he is whole in both of his parts, then he is removed from sin and transgression which are lackings in man.

But if he does not toil in making himself whole, then even if he has much money and does not lack, it does not cause sin to be forgotten from him. This is why the matter [of "forgetting of sin"] was made dependent on both of them (in the mishna, namely, torah and derech erez).

You should also know regarding *"for exertion in both causes sin to be forgotten"*, that he attributed the matter to toil and exertion.

Sin and transgression is found when there is sitting (idly) and not toiling. Our sages hinted on this matter (Sanhedrin 106a):

Rabbi Yochanan says: "wherever it says 'vayeshuv (he sat down)', it connotes woes (tzar)":
"Yisrael settled (vayeshuv) in Shittim" (Bamidbar 25:1) - what is written afterwards? *"and the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of the Moabites"* (Bamidbar 25:1).
"and Yaakov settled (vayeshuv)" (Gen.35:1) - what happened afterwards? Yosef was sold into slavery.
"Yisrael settled in the land of Egypt.." (Gen.47:27), what is written afterwards? - *"And the time of his death drew near"...*

And in the Midrash (Ber.Rabbah 38): *" 'Yisrael settled (vayeshuv) in Shittim' - whenever it says 'vayeshuv' it connotes corrupting, as written (by the golden calf): 'the people sat to eat and drink, and they rose up to merriment'"*.

In this Midrash they explained the matter that 'sitting' causes the corruption of man. This is because for a man who is toiling, then from the aspect of his toiling, it is as if the shelemut (wholeness) he has does not exist in actuality (b'poel). And he who is not in a state of actual shelemut - he is moving towards wholeness and thus will not draw lacking.

But when one sits and rests as if he already reached the shelemut - lacking and loss will follow this. For in this world, there is no whole thing which loss does not cling to (everything tends to disintegrate). Therefore, loss and inexistence (he'eder, disintegration) follow after this.

But this is not the case for one who toils and lacks hashlama and is heading towards it. For since he is heading towards hashlama, loss does not cling to him.

Our sages hinted to this (Gen.Rabba Noach piske 10): "when is the yetzer hara (evil inclination) placed in a person? When he comes out of his mother's womb, as written: 'for the inclination of man's heart is evil from his youth' (Gen.8:21)', 'from his youth' (minurav) is written missing a 'vav', read it mishninar (when he moves) to exit his mother's belly, the evil inclination is placed in him".

Now you will ask - why specifically then?

Know that the reason is as we explained. For "the yetzer hara is the satan who is the angel of death" (Bava Batra 16a). And the yetzer hara placed in man is itself the satan and angel of death which brings man to inexistence and death. For it is all one matter.

Therefore, all the time a person has not come out to the world, i.e. he has not become whole and

he moves towards becoming whole, inexistence (he'eder) which is the opposite of existence, does not cling to him and two opposites cannot co-exist together simultaneously.

But immediately when he exits out of his mother's belly and he exists whole in actuality and no longer moves towards (whole) existence, then inexistence which is the yetzer hara who is the satan and the angel of death clings to him as it clings to all things found (in this world).

The general principle of the matter: the yetzer hara and the satan do not have power on something which goes towards existence. This is the meaning of what our sages said: "wherever it says 'vayeshav (he sat down)', it connotes woes (tzar)".

For whoever toils demonstrates that he is not in [his state of] actual shelemut (wholeness). And he who is not in [his state of] shelemut is prepared and progressing towards existence and wholeness. Thus inexistence, which is the satan, does not cling to this.

But when a man sits and demonstrates thereby as if he is in his [state of] actual shelemut, that he is stationary and does not move towards wholeness, then the inexistence (inexistence/disintegration) which clings to created beings follows after this.

Therefore, "wherever it says he sat, it connotes woes" (Sanhedrin 106a). And likewise what they said in a Midrash: "every 'sitting' refers to corrupting" (Ber.Rabbah 38).

For after a 'sitting' is drawn the yetzer hara who is the satan and who is drawn over the created beings when they are in a state of wholeness (b'hashlama). This occurs when one sits and is stationary...

We have clarified that which they said: *"for exertion in both causes sin to be forgotten"*.

For when a man toils in his two parts, sin is removed. For the yetzer hara in man is not found when none of his parts (body or soul) are in actual shelemut. Thus he is removed from sin for the yetzer hara does not clash with him (mitgare bo)...

You should understand further some wisdom. Namely, that these two things mentioned, i.e. toil in derech eretz and toil in torah, they correspond to two evil inclinations that the Holy One, blessed be He, created - the evil inclination of erava (lust) and the evil inclination of idolatry.

Through toiling in derech eretz with his body, a man removes the yetzer of erava (lust), while through toiling in torah with his soul (mind), he removes the yetzer of idolatry.

These things are exceedingly deep and this is not the place to elaborate further. We hinted at them a bit here for it all points to the same matter.

And all torah [study] that is not accompanied by work will in the end be nullified.." - ie since he is a lacking man. For he has no work which makes man whole. And, if there is no work with the torah, this is a lacking in man of what is proper for him, and whatever is lacking in itself has no lasting (kiyum).

"and drag [in] sin" - for that which lacks what is proper for it draws more lacking, namely, sin, the greatest of all lacking... although there were many sages who did not have work, but they did do business trade which is like work. Alternatively, their soul so much desired torah that their torah had lasting (kiyum).

"and all who toil for the community.." - he joined together these two things, namely, torah study and toiling for the public since they are similar and related. Because torah is not like a mitzvah. When one does a mitzvah, he is not toiling in something which is "comprehensive" (hakol).

But when one toils in torah, he acquires a "general" (comprehensive) matter. For any matter which is sichli (transcendent intellect) is "general" (klali) and not specific (prati).

This is what our sages said: "one thing in the torah is worth as much as the whole world, as written: 'all your desirable things cannot be compared to it' (Mishlei 3:15)"

Hence, every thing of torah is considered "general/all-encompassing" (klali). This is also the explanation of: "for a mitzva is a candle and torah is light" (Mishlei 6:23). For a mitzvah that a person does is like a candle, which is a single specific candle. But torah is light and it is not relevant to refer to light as a specific "part" (like a candle). For it is not a part.. Thus, he joined to this [previous] teaching on torah to: "all who toil for the community", ie those who toil for the general (klal). For it is not like one who toils just for a specific thing, since this person toils for something general (klali).

Therefore, he said that one's intent should be l'Shem Shamayim. For when one's intent is l'Shem Shamayim, then certainly it can be said that he toils for something klali (all-encompassing). But if his intent is not l'Shem Shamayim.. to inflate himself or pride himself, he is not doing for the tzibur (public) who are the klal (general). And even if his intent is for these [specific] people who are the tzibur, nevertheless, what he does for them is not considered doing for the "klal". Rather, only if he does l'shem shamayim, ie because one should benefit the tzibur because they are a klal and it is proper to benefit the tzibur which is a klal.

This is considered "l'shem shamayim". For Hash-em, blessed be He, is with the tzibur. Therefore, our sages said: "one may attend to communal affairs on the Sabbath" (Shab.150a).

This is because the matters of the tzibur are considered matters of shamayim. Thus, they are in the category of "matters of Shamayim" (cheftzei shamayim) which are permitted (on Shabbat). This is what he said: "let them do so for the sake of Heaven", for the good of the tzibur which is a matter of Heaven (mili d'shamayim).

"for the merit of their forefathers assists them and their righteousness endures forever" - the explanation is that the fathers, namely, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, their merit helps when one toils for the needs of the tzibur. For the "fathers" are fathers of the klal (general). They are not called fathers of the individual (prat). For each individual (prat) has his own specific father. But the fathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, are fathers of the klal. Their merit stands and helps the needs of all those that they are fathers to.

Therefore, "their righteousness endures forever". Just like the klalim stand forever, and the klal ie the tzibur is not considered like the individual (prat). For the individuals pass and change, but the klal stands forever.

Even if this tzibur which he toiled for also passes and changes, nevertheless, the name "tzibur" which is the klal, was on them and stands in being a klal. Therefore, "their righteousness endures forever", ie he has great merit in doing good to the tzibur which is the klal and the klal stands forever.

This merit starts from the fathers who were the fathers from the beginning of the world and stands forever. This is what he said: "their righteousness stands forever", ie how great of a merit they are doing for the merit of the fathers helps them and it is as if they are doing a merit which started from the fathers who lived at the beginning of the world and this merit stands forever.

This is what he said: "their righteousness endures forever", ie how great is their merit! For the merit of the fathers helps them and it is as if they do a merit which starts from the fathers, who were in the beginning of the world, and the merit stands forever. Thus is a matter klali. It stands forever and therefore those who toil for the public, their merit starts from the fathers and spans until the end of generations, till they did a merit from the beginning of the world till its end.

If the leaders of the Jewish people would understand these things, they would toil with all their strength for the public l'shem shamayim and not for their own benefit.

"And as for you, I [the Almighty] credit you with great reward as if you had done it" - even though the merit of their fathers helps those who toil for the needs of the public, but nevertheless, I will count it as if you yourself did this, not the merit of the fathers. Thus, he did not say "and as for them.." but rather "and as for you..". For the former would imply that it goes back on the forefathers and I would count it as if the forefathers did this, since their merit caused all this. But when he said: "and as for you..", he is speaking to those who toil for the public. This great merit is counted on them, despite that the merit of the fathers caused it..

"for the merit of their forefathers assists them" - as if the forefathers are called their own specific fathers, just like the forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov are called the fathers of all Israel. For since one toils for the needs of the tzibur, it is considered as if he is many (Rabim).

You will find this [idea] when the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed Himself to Moshe in the burning bush. He said: "I am the G-d of your father, the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak, and the G-d of Yaakov..." (Shemot 3:6)., as if they were the fathers of Moshe specifically.

Moshe initially thought: "I am the G-d of your father" was referring to Amram. Thus, G-d added: "the G-d of Avraham.."

If so, why the need to say: "the G-d of your father?" Because G-d knew Moshe would refuse to go as His emissary and say: "who am I to go to Pharaoh?"

Thus, G-d told him: "behold you are toiling in the needs of the tzibur, and the forefathers are fathers to one who toils for the needs of the many, just like they are fathers to the many, and their merit will assist you, as it says: *"all who toil for the community, let them do so l'Shem Shamayim, for the merit of their forefathers assists them"*. Thus He said: "I am the G-d of your father".

This assistance to one who toils for the needs of the tzibur is that Avraham supports his right hand and assists him whether in speech or deed. Yitzchak pushes away and destroys the accusers (mekatregim) on the left side and the opponents of this deed. Yaakov shows him the proper path and the proper deeds to do, as written: "If G-d will be with me, and He will guard me on this way, upon which I am going, etc." (Ber.28). Understand this well...

Thus, a man should strive for the good of the tzibur with all of his strength and efforts, as much as he is capable of doing...



Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - "torah WITH derech erez" - this needs examination. For he should

have said "torah AND derech eretz", each one by itself, and then praise each one individually as deemed fit. For certainly we cannot say that both are equal and should be praised equally. Why did he bind and join them together so closely?

It seems to me to explain, with G-d's help, that he came to teach us the following. Sometimes, one may find himself in a situation where he is obligated by torah to do something, but according to derech eretz (common decency) it appears strange and improper to do. But one who is wise will do this in a proper manner. Then, by doing it in this proper manner he fulfills his torah law duty and also his duty of derech eretz.

I will illustrate with a story of a very rich man whose wife gave birth to a son. He prepared a big feast for the eighth day and invited all the big people of the city in honor of the brit mila (circumcision).

In that city there were three great and famous torah sages. He invited all three to the party of that night, sending each one an invitation letter as was the custom.

When the invitation letter reached the hands of one of the three sages, he thought to himself: "how could I go to this party? I know that this rich man's party will continue into the entire night. Furthermore, it is not the way of these people to sing praises and songs to Hash-em, but rather only secular songs with all sorts of musical instruments like the custom of the gentiles. Moreover, I will be forced to miss my fixed torah studies on that night and also from reciting *Tikun Chatzot* (midnight prayer)."

Therefore, he devised an excuse plan for himself to write a letter that he is unable to come due to being a bit sick and not feeling in such good health. Therefore, he is unable to come to the king's table.

The second wise man found out that the first one wrote an apology letter. He thought to himself that if he also writes an apology letter, the rich man will think that their words are not true and are just an excuse to not eat and drink from his food and that they don't trust him in the laws of forbidden food, and this will lead to strong animosity, hatred, and disputes.

Therefore, he agreed to come and decided to do so. The third wise man also was very pained by the invitation. But he thought like the second wise man, that if he does like the first wise man, the rich man will say that this excuse is false and that they are disgusted by his food and drink. Therefore, he also came to the party like the second wise man.

When they arrived, each one sat on a different side of the hall, and they were far from each other. When the musicians began to play the music, the second wise man thought to himself: "what benefit do I have from this sound of music? Better that I ponder in my mind by myself on a difficult sugya (subject) in the talmud that I learned today".

It was a very deep sugya (topic), and that day I had 3 difficult, very strong questions. Two of them were in the commentators and they left them as "tzarich iyun" (needs further investigation), i.e. they were unable to answer them. The third one, he himself found and did not find an answer.

Thus, he contemplated and investigated in his mind on these difficult questions and did not put to heart to hear the sounds of music. He was like a deaf man who does not hear.

His heart was occupied on that sugya to answer those three powerful questions in it. He received

great assistance from Heaven and found three good and important answers to these questions and he rejoiced very greatly on this.

Around this time, the time for *Tikun Chatzot* (midnight prayer) arrived, namely, tikun Rachel and Tikun Leah. He leaned his head on the wall next to his table, put a garment over his head as if he wanted to rest a bit due to fatigue overcoming him and to rest his head a bit while sitting among the guests. This was as the custom of guests when many hours in the night passed, they sleep a bit while sitting.

But he did not sleep. Rather, he recited the *Tikun Chatzot* silently so that no one would hear his voice, not even those sitting next to him, and he cried during tikun Rachel as his custom. No one noticed anything at all. For he did everything in a total whisper.

Within half an hour, he finished everything and removed the garment from his face and sat up straight as he sat before the *Tikun Chatzot*.

While the guests were sitting to hear the music, he returned to investigate in his mind in the depths of the sugya and to deduce chidushim (novel insights) of torah until the party was finished.

The guests all got up and left for their homes and none of them sensed anything at all of what happened by him. For they saw him sitting with his face towards the musicians.

But as for the third wise man mentioned earlier who also came to the party, after the musicians began to play music for half an hour, he felt increasingly pained on the waste of time at this party and the loss of torah study night. He was not comfortable in his seat and kept moving back and forth, sometimes to his right, sometimes to his left.

All the guests near him felt how he was very pained on being at this party. For they could see him turning to the right and to the left, sometimes leaning his head on the wall, sometimes putting his head downward, sometimes eyes closed, sometimes eyes open, in such a way that it was evident to all the eyes of the guests that he was very agitated and did not enjoy this party.

After the time of Chatzot (midnight) passed, he saw on his watch that two hours passed since midnight. He became terribly rattled and could no longer hold himself and continue sitting in his place. He got up suddenly and entered the porch in the outer courtyard behind the place of the party.

He sat there on the ground and covered himself with his garment to recite the Tikun Rachel. He screamed out in a loud voice and great crying: "on the rivers of Bavel, there we sat and cried.." as was his normal custom every night, that he reads *Tikun Chatzot* in his home with great wailing.

The rich man and all the guests became scared of the sound of crying and the words "on the rivers of Bavel..", and he yelled out: "what is that?! Is it Tisha b'Av today?! What is he reading!?"

For the rich man never recited *Tikun Chatzot* in his life and he also never heard it from others. Only he would go on the eve of Tisha b'Av to the synagogue and hear the chazan before the evening prayer say: "on the rivers of Bavel..", with great crying.

Therefore, he was surprised on the reading of that wise man and he become very furious. Some of the guests who hate the torah sages told him: "this is the way of all the torah scholars, to change the times and periods as they wish". They began to mock and scorn the torah scholars.

But the rich man scorned them back and silenced them, telling them: "if this fool did a foolish thing, why should you mock and slander all the torah scholars? Isn't there here in our party a torah scholar who sits and rejoices in our party, and he is sitting among the guests from the beginning of the night until now, and does not show any change in his sitting. Only this crazy man did a foolish thing, and broke the line of derech erez. You are not permitted to speak badly against the torah scholars just for that".

The mouths of the scorers was stopped in silence due to these words of the rich man.

Thus, the first wise man who fled from the party and did not come due to bitul torah, did not avail in annulling this mocking which the strong men tried to mock the torah scholars.

On the contrary, the strong men would tell the rich man: "also that first torah scholar who wrote you a letter, he too is disgusted by your food and drink and gave you a false excuse not to come".

But the second wise man who came to fulfill proper derech erez after the rich man invited him to participate in the party in honor of the mitzvah of Brit Mila - he fulfilled his duty also from the side of torah. For he sat at the party and pondered words of torah without being noticed. Rather, everyone thought he sat and rejoiced on the sounds of music like all the other guests.

Thus, he fulfilled his duty from the side of torah and also from the side of derech erez.

Great benefit resulted in his conduct to annul and drive off the mockings of the strong men against the torah scholars, who brazenly opened their mouths to mock all the torah scholars.

Due to his conduct, the rich man silenced them and scorned them, and the torah scholars became honorable in his eyes.

But the third wise man broke out of the boundary of derech erez in fulfilling the torah in reciting *Tikun Chatzot*, and he did not know how to hold on to both and fulfill both like the second wise man. He brought shame to himself, his torah, and to the torah scholars and their torah. For the strong men found an opportunity to scorn everything.

On this and similar, the tanna came to teach wise mussar so that if a time comes when fulfilling torah conflicts with fulfilling derech erez, one needs to be wise to find a way to fulfill both...

Level 3

☆ **Daas Chachma u'Mussar**

Daat Chachma u'Mussar 2:105 - Those who toil for the congregation stand before a difficult riddle. For it is impossible for them in any way to pave a path to the heart of the congregation.

They are in great confusion. How and with what intent should one conduct himself with the congregation? They consider it a problem which can be solved by human powers. But this is a mistake. For one does not know the inner soul of a person. Thus not only is it impossible in any way to find the path to the heart of the congregation, but so too the path to one's own self he will not find in any way.

For this is beyond the powers of man. Thus, all of a man's service is only the "I'Shem Shamayim". This is what needs to be from man's side. And then, he will be led and established on the true foundation and not fall - "[Know Him in all your ways] and He will direct your paths" (Mishlei 3:6). And our sages said: "And all who toil for the community, let them do so for the sake of Heaven (I'Shem Shamayim)".

Only in this way is the service of man. Whether he works on himself or whether he works on the tzibur.

 **Level 3**

☆ **Chida**

Chida - Zeroah Yamin - "and all who toil, etc. And as for you, etc." - he started in third person and ended second person "and you". Perhaps this is to hint that one should toil l'Shem Hamayim in a hidden manner. For since he is l'Shem Shamayim, he works truthfully secretly, without showing or telling his work and labor to others, because he toils (solely) for His blessed Name. If he does thus, Hash-em who knows and is a witness, will reveal his righteousness and publicize his matter. On this he said: "and you", second person tense..

 **Level 4**

☆ **Chida**

Chida - Kikar l'Eden - "And all who toil for the tzibur, let them do so l'Shem Shamayim" (Kabalistic) - we may say, if the tzibur is in pain, they should toil for the honor of the Shechina. For we learned: "When a person suffers, what does the Shechina say? As if, "Oy My head is light; My arm is light" (Mishna Sanhedrin 6:5), and all the more when the congregation is in pain that there is pain, so to speak, to the Shechina. Toil with this intent - to alleviate the pain of the Shechina, so to speak.

Chida - Marit Haayin - (kabalistic) - i.e. l'yached Kudsha berich Hu u'Shechintei. "Shem" is Malchut. "Shamayim" is "Kudsha berich Hu", and to remove the pain from the Shechina, so to speak...

Chapter 2 Mishna 3 - The Government

Be cautious with the government, for they only bring a person close to them for their own needs. They appear as friends when it benefits them, but they do not stand by a person in his time of difficulty.

הוּוּ זְהִירִין בְּרִשּׁוֹת, שְׂאִין מְקַרְבִּין לוֹ לְאָדָם אֲלָא לְצַרָּה עֲצֻמָּן. נִרְאִין כְּאוֹהֲבִין בְּשַׁעַת הַנְּאֻתָן, וְאִין עוֹמְדִין לוֹ לְאָדָם בְּשַׁעַת דְּחִיקוֹ

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan on Avot - Raban Gamliel's words follow and are drawn after the words of his father who said: "Whatever is harmonious for the one who does it, and harmonious to other people". He came and said: "beautiful is the study of torah with derech erez". For, to those who do them, these two traits find favor in the eyes of G-d and man. Likewise that one strives to investigate the needs of the congregation and the needs of the whole ruling power (government), and toiling l'Shem Shamayim. All this is like an explanation of Rabbi's words who said (Avot 2:1): "what is the proper path that one should choose?..."

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - you who toil for the needs of the public (as mentioned last mishna), even though you need to be "known to the government" (see Avot 1:10) in order to tend to the needs of the public, but nevertheless, "be cautious.."

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - you who toil for the needs of the public, when you need to be known to the authorities of the land who have the ability and power to benefit the public, nevertheless, be careful not to trust their promises, to squander the public money on excess gifts to them. Likewise, do not trust on their friendship to reveal to them matters of the congregation for it is possible that they will use it to harm them.

"when it benefits them" - when they receive gifts.

Q Level 2

☆ Sforno

Sforno - even though they show favor to you and promise good things, do not trust in this at all. For "they only bring you close" and show you favor "for their own needs", to receive a benefit from you.

Q Level 1

☆ Meorei Ohr

Meorei Ohr - "they appear as friends" - the love they show you is not true. It is only external and fake. "they do not stand by a person" to support him and help him "in his time of difficulty".

Q Level 1

Meiri

Meiri - "but they do not stand by a person in his time of difficulty" - at his time of trouble they will not remember any kindness he did for them.

Q Level 1

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Translator - they are called "Reshut", literally: "permission", for the government/king has "permission" to do anything he wants. There is nobody above the king to restrain him. Thus, what is to stop him from suddenly turning against a person at any time for whatever reason? (I read this somewhere).

Q Level 2

☆ Chasdei David

Chasdei David - one who draws close to the ruling power and kingdom will in the end remove the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven from himself and annul the mitzvot. He will not be able to do the

will of Hash-em. For all his thought is only to find favor in the eyes of his master, the king.

This is what happened to Doeg. He was close to king Saul and in trying to flatter him, he slandered Achimelech and caused the destruction of Nov and the execution of 85 Kohanim wearing the priestly garment (Shmuel I 22).

And even though he was close to "king Saul", who was the "moshiach Hash-em" (ibid 10:1), and a "prophet" (ibid 10:11), and "chosen by G-d" (Shmuel II 21:6). Nevertheless, Doeg was badly harmed by his closeness to the king. How much more so for closeness to other ruling powers.

Q Level 1

☆ Ahava b'Taanugim

Ahava b'Taanugim - for those "who toil for the needs of the congregation (tzibur)" of last mishna, who must stand before the king and his ministers on behalf of the congregation. He said "Be careful with the government", i.e. be careful of the honor and fear (respect) of the ruling power (malchut) and do not trust on their friendship.

The reason is because "for they only bring a person close to them for their own needs". For due to their arrogance (gavhut levavam), they don't have any love of people. They are only interested in fulfilling their own will (lemalot retzonam). And even "when it benefits them", they are not really friends, only "they appear as friends".. Therefore do not rely on their friendship.

And likewise do not be proud of being close to them by acting brazenly with the common people. For "they do not stand by a person in his time of difficulty". If you harm some person and that person informs on you to the king, they will not save you.

Q Level 2

Chida

Chida - Chasdei Avot - since last mishna he greatly praised those who toil for the congregation and the merit of their forefathers helps them, etc., nevertheless, "one cannot rely on a miracle" with the government. Be very careful lest you become trapped by them. For the way of the ruling power is "they only bring a person close to them for their own needs..". Therefore this is the nature and "harm is common" and thus you must be careful and not rely on the merit of the public for a miracle.

Q Level 3

☆ Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - although without a doubt, our mishna is speaking on the government and ruling power, but nevertheless one should know that so too included in this is for one to be careful and guard oneself to not be in friendship or accompaniment of idolaters at all. For this is indeed the makeup and characteristic of the gentiles. Despite all his outward appearance of friendship and nice facial countenance, his thought and intent is only for himself and his benefit. Despite all the good he may bestow you, in the end he will empty you out and you will be left destitute.

Translator - Rabbi Simcha Zissel of Kelm implies this is true to some extent of every person, even Jews. For only G-d is the true Giver. Here is a quote:

Sefer Zikaron Beis Kelm pg.265 - a great principle in joy of the heart and health of the body, and more for the service of G-d is to search for closeness (kirva) to G-d and not closeness to human beings. Besides being a big headache in many ways, there's no greater burden on a person than seeking closeness from other human beings. And what is a man that you want to search for closeness to him? "He seems like a friend when it is to his benefit, or when he wants to, but they don't stand by a person in his time of difficulty" But as for closeness to G-d, although He's not visible, there is no time that He doesn't want.

Know my precious son, that the main wealth of a person is that which is in a person's hand and no one else can touch. All the more so, it should not depend on other people's whims. And one who seeks closeness to human beings, he is in need of gifts from flesh and blood. There's no difference between seeking physical gifts from others and seeking closeness (emotional gifts) from them. It's all the same. And therefore, there is no greater poor man than one who seeks closeness and love from others, and there is no greater wealth than he who has removed from himself the desire to be loved by other human beings.

Level 4

Lapid HaEsh lifestory of the Rebbe of Tzants page 185 In a sicha (discussion) Rabbi Yekusiel Halberstam told over in the year 5743 (1982) to students of the Beis Chana seminary in Williamsburg the following true story from those difficult times:

There in the concentration camp, we would sleep at nights on the floor. Forty of us were packed in to sleep in a small room. Within two weeks time, none of us were still alive except for myself and one other person...the rest of the 40 died from starvation, filth...illness. We slept at night on the ground, covered in darkness, when all around us crawled insects and mice...I tried with all my strength to hold together...next to me lied a man from Budapest...

"Are you a Jew?", I asked him. He answered "of course! How else do you think I would have gotten here?"

I proceeded to ask him: "Who are you and what were you doing?"

He answered: "I was the head of the national bank of Hungary".

This was the central bank of Hungary. His job was the highest one in the financial world in Hungary. His face appeared on the bank notes (bills) of the Hungarian currency.

I asked him further: "Are you a Jew?". This time he answered: "No!"

"But you said before that you are a Jew?", I asked in wonder.

The man took the lead and answered the enigma, "I converted to Christianity!"

He had sought to rise up to greatness and turned his back on the faith of his ancestors. Since I was dealing with an apostate Jew, I felt that I had what to say to him, and I prolonged the conversation.

We lied down next to each other on the ground, either way I was unable to sleep. Who could close his eyes in a situation like this? The man gazed at me, and I looked back with an expression of mercy to him.

I asked him: "Tell me, who is your wife?"

"My wife is a christian woman", he answered.

"She did not join you to come here?", I said in wonder. My conversation partner became angry and upset at the very question. "How could you even consider that she would come here, what, to suffer like me!?"

I kept a simple face and said to him: "I don't understand. I know from before that a good and

faithful wife is one who follows her husband wherever he goes.. even to Gehinom (hell) she will go with him.. to leave her husband in a situation like this?". After a deep breath, I turned to him as a side question in an interested tone: "please tell me, did you live good together?"

He answered: "What a question?! We lived together for some 30 years I bought for her all the good and beautiful things. I adorned her with all the good of the world!"

I asked: "If so, I am really amazed, is it possible that you were so good and nice to her and she is prepared to share with you only the good and the prosperity? But when this disaster came on you, she abandoned you all alone?!"

At this point, our conversation came to a halt. In the meantime, the hours of the night passed. Morning came. We heard bell rings. We were forced to go outside for hard labor. The next day at night, we met again and restarted our conversation. I opened and asked: "Tell me please, did you do anything for the benefit of the Hungarian country?"

He answered: "when I was appointed to head the national bank, its situation was in all types of trouble, the Forint (hungarian currency) had gone down enormously. For even 1000 Forint, one could buy almost nothing. I made it into real money..a strong currency..the pride of international wealth. Hungary became wealthy due to me and started to make business with the entire world. I made wonders in the business world...didn't you ever hear of me?"

I hunched my shoulders like one trying to save himself, "I'm not around much, I'm not a businessman nor a banker". The man was greatly amazed: "You don't know who I am? Where can you find one person in Hungary even today who did not hear of me?"

I continued: "If things are like what you say, why did they send you here? All of the people were silent and quiet, the Hungarian people did not protest...what is this? After you so did so much for them, you enriched the treasury of the kingdom. How is this possible that an important man with such great merits like yourself would be cast out for no good reason to a concentration camp?"

"Why are you provoking me and talking to me like this?", the man fumed, "maybe you can tell me why you are a prisoner here!"

I answered him, "I am a Rabbi, poor and destitute, I have never done any good to a gentile. All of my days, I have never given one of them, even a sip of water...they hate me...but you, who brought them so much good fortune, you they would hate? I would expect them to carry you on their hands, but not to throw you out and into a concentration camp..."

He said: "Yes, as you can see they did not carry me on their hands..."

"I cannot grasp in my mind", I continued, "you abandoned your religion, took on yourself the Christian faith, you transformed into a complete gentile, everything in order to be like them, and to find favor in their eyes - and what, they did not consider all of this in the least?? What of your children?", I asked further in a matter of fact way, "what do they do?"

"My children? One is a doctor, the other is a lawyer, and the third is a big businessman, a real millionaire".

I continued in a questioning tone "and to them also, you did them good?" He answered: "Of course! I worried for their education, I sent them to places where they would be complete and well educated..."

"Why," I did not let up, "did your children not come to accompany you? Even when a man dies and is gone from the world, his children accompany him until his final resting place, to the grave, and you they left to be thrown out in humiliation for nothing...they did not even accompany you until the boundary. None of them came, to even stand outside of here to see from far where their Dad is and what is happening with him?!"

He answered "you are bothering me tremendously with your questions...you want to aggravate me.."

I answered him, "I am not trying to bother you, I am just trying to understand your bitter fate..."

In this way we continued to talk and to exchange outlooks into the late night. The third night, without any exaggeration, the man came on his own and said to me: "you know, Rabbi, I thought alot about your words throughout the day...I reached the conclusion that you are right!"

During the conversation he expressed his full regret, regret for abandoning his religion, regret for marrying a christian woman. He regretted also on having raised and pampered so much his children. Now, he saw clearly that he has nothing from all of this wasted life...

"I made a mistake...", the man sobbed in a choked voice, "I made a mistake in my choice of life..."

By the fourth night, this banker was no longer among the living. I was very content with the merit which came to me. Where he is now, where he will not be, at least for one day before his death he did some form of repentance. He regretted his deeds, he regretted and wanted to change the direction of his life..."

Alas, that it was already too late.

(*Translator*: note that this is not to imply that all non-Jews are ingrates, many are fine people. The point is to strive for closeness to G-d and not human beings, as above. For in the end, "they don't stand by a person in his time of need..")

🔍 Level 2

☆ Sfas Emes

Sfas Emes on Avot - "government/authorities" - (the Hebrew word for "authorities" (reshut) also means "permitted actions") - i.e. a permitted thing. This needs great carefulness and guarding. For the yetzer hara hides in the lusts of man, namely, eating, drinking, etc., making it appear as if it is associated with the holiness. "They appear as friends", i.e. clinging to the holiness. But in truth, they "draw themselves close" to the holiness only for their own benefit, to steal (holiness) and cleave a man to the physical pleasures...

🔍 Level 3

☆ Divrei Binah (Admorei Biala)

Divrei Binah (Admor Biala) - besides the plain meaning, the tana is also exhorting that one should be careful on "permitted things" (divrei hareshut), namely "sanctify yourself from what is permitted to you (kadesh atzmecha b'mutar lach)".

What is the sign of such a "permitted thing"? On this he said that which appears to be "friends when it benefits them", namely, the love of the thing is only during the time of pleasure from that thing and afterwards it is disgusting by him (katz ba). As known, for all lusts of this world, the pleasure is only at the time of enjoyment from it, not after this.

🔍 Level 4

☆ Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - "government (reshut)" - some explain "reshut" to mean the government (malchut), while others explain it on the yetzer hara and its legions. We explained the

reason it is called "reshut", namely, because they have permission (reshut) from the Holy One, blessed be He, to entice people to sin, as written in the Zohar regarding the analogy of the prince and the maidservant.

We also explained that reshut is from the term rishut (destitution) and dalut (poverty). For through them (evil inclination and its legions), a man becomes destitute from his acquisitions of torah and mitzvot. In his wickedness they (his torah and mitzvot) go to the portion of the destroyer (mashchit).

In either case, reshut refers to the evil inclination (yetzer hara) and its legions, the powers of the Sitra Achra.

It seems to me to explain, with help from Heaven, as follows. It is known that there are two types of yetzer hara.

The first type hates the soul a clear, open and evident hatred. This one is openly evil. He advises a man to commit a clear and complete sin which has no side to permit.

But in this way he can trap only the fools. For a true Jew will certainly not accept to defile his soul and destroy it with his own hands. Thus certainly he will not accept to openly transgress the mitzvah of Hash-em.

The second type of Yetzer Hara is deceptive. He pretends to show love of his soul and advises him to do a mitzvah for it pleases the soul and adorns it. This Yetzer Hara pretends to be the Yetzer Tov (good inclination), a friend of the soul. But in truth the advice he gives appears only on the surface to be a mitzvah. But under it is leprosy and will lead to evil consequences, severe sins. This matter has many branches.

I will give one to illustrate.

A certain rich man was lying on his deathbed. A thought came to him to donate all his money to charities and mitzvot and bypass the inheritance from his sons.

On the surface it appears that he did a big mitzvah to give his money to charity, torah study, visiting the sick, etc.

He wrote a legal document and signed it and afterwards he died. After his death, the gabbai took out the legal document to collect his money. Now, is it conceivable that the sons will silently accept this?

Certainly they will take this to Beit Din and copy the will and send it to another Beit Din in a different city to see if it is correct.. this will lead to disputes between Beit Dins, this one obligates, this one does not, leading to disputes, hatred, jealousy, flattery..etc.

You can see this mitzvah that the yetzer advised the rich man was actually the yetzer hara, in order to bring many stumbling blocks and sins of hatred etc. between the sages of several places... You will find our sages sensed this cunning of the yetzer and Shmuel said to Rav Yehuda: "do not be in a house where inheritance is transferred (away from its rightful heir), even (if it is transferred) from a wicked son to a good son" (Bava Batra 133b).

With this we will understand "*be cautious with the reshut*" - he is the Satan who is the yetzer hara and its legions. Be careful to guard yourself from them and do not become ensnared by their traps.

For they are cunning and *"they only bring a person close to them for their own needs"*, ie they do not advise you to do good etc. "except for their own needs". In order that evil things will result. Therefore be careful to contemplate from the beginning of the matter what consequences will be born out, as they said: "who is wise? he who sees the future"...

"they do not stand by a person in his time of difficulty" - when one stands above for an accounting and judgment, they come and testify against him on these sins in order to destroy him and hurt him. Therefore, guard from them and their advice.

Level 4

Binyan Avot

Binyan Avot (by Kabbalist Tzemach haKohen, Jerba) - "be careful with the government (reshut).." - (kabalistic) he is hinting on the Yetzer (evil inclination), who has reshut (permission) from his Creator to entice man to sin..

If you see a Maase Satan mutzlachin (act of Satan succeeding, i.e. bad person with good life), it is only *"for their own needs"*, him and his legions. Or him and his spouse, in the way of: "a time that a man ruled over [another] man for his harm" (Kohelet 8:9).

The Kabbalists said that the *Adam belial* (satan) comes to rule over man in order to rule on his soul, namely, on the divine light that vivifies his soul, to take from that light. For the klipot do not have life except through the intermediary of the holiness. Therefore, they constantly entice man in order to capture him under their hand to benefit from his holiness.

This is: *"they only bring a person close to them"*, i.e. the man to show him success and good things, *"for their own needs"* - so that they will grow stronger (yitatzmu) through him. For they have no life except through the power of the holiness. And even *"when it benefits them"* they only appear as friends, like friends but not actually.

"they appear as friends when it benefits them" - i.e. with slick words of enticement and encouragement at the time of benefit, namely, at the time of sin which is then their benefit.

"but they do not stand by a person in his time of difficulty", we who brought him to sin through slick words of enticement or the like. On the contrary, after enticing below, the Satan ascends and prosecutes him.

Alternatively, come and see the difference between one who clings to the ways of holiness versus one who clings to the ways of the sitra achra (other side). For one who clings to the holiness "the torah guards him, etc.", and it (the torah) will speak on his behalf to save him from the day of judgment and rebuke.

But one who clings to the Sitra Achra abandons his Master and His covenant. For: *"who deserts the lord of her youth and forgets the covenant of her G-d.. her paths [lead] to the dead; none who go to her return, neither do they achieve the ways of life"* (Mishlei 2:17-19).

This is: *"but they do not stand by a person in his time of difficulty"*. Even though he obeyed all they told him and did not anger them and clinged to them, even so "they do not stand by a person".

Chapter 2 Mishna 4 - Make His Will

He would say: Make His (G-d's) will like your will, so that He will make your will like His will. Nullify your will before His will, so that He will nullify the will of others before your will.

הוא ה'ה אומר, עשה רצונו כרצונך, כדי שיעשה רצונך כרצונו. בטל רצונך מפני רצונו, כדי שיבטל רצון אחרים מפני רצונך

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "make His will like your will" - give your money generously for matters of Heaven as if you were giving for your own matters. For if you do thus, He will make your will His will, namely He will generously bestow good to you.

"He will nullify the will of others" - He will foil the plan of all those who rise up against you.

Q Level 1

Rashi

Rashi - "make His will like your will" - even when you do your own wish, do it l'Shem Shamayim (for the sake of Heaven) so that from Heaven you will be bestowed good with a generous eye.

"nullify your will before His will" - think on "loss of a mitzvah against its reward" (Avot 2:1).

"He will nullify the will of others" - those who rise against you for evil.

Q Level 1

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "make His will like your will" - just like you do your will with desire (cheshek) and lust (taava) so too do the will of the Holy One, blessed be He. Do not have any distinction between the two.

"He will make your will like His will" - if you merit to find favor before Him, He will do your will even for matters of your small world and grant you your livelihood (easily).

Q Level 2

☆ Meiri

Meiri - "make His will like your will" - serve G-d out of love until out of great love you will do His will even though it is against your nature. You will do it with love and affection as if it were your own will by nature.

"so that He will make your will like His will" - i.e. He will pay your reward abundantly and overflowing, as His soul desires..

Q Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - "make His will like your will" - not only should you strive l'Shem Shamayim as one indebted to Him and fearing His punishment, but in order to attain His favor you should do His will to strive to save His people. For He wants this and rejoices in this.

"so that He will make your will" - then He will do your will and you will attain what you want and desire to attain.

"like His will" - for He desires kindness and He pays back measure for measure.

"nullify your will.." - in striving for this, nullify your desire for enjoyments and tranquility or the like in order to attain His will of saving His people..

Q Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - when you toil in torah which is the will of Heaven, do so with zeal (b'zerizut) and joy, without having your thoughts scattered on other things, just like you do for matters of your livelihood. Namely, you focus all your thoughts singly in your occupation.

"so that He will make your will His will" - your livelihood will come swiftly and without effort. For "when they do the will of G-d, their work is done by others" (Berachot 35b).

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "make His will like your will, so that He will make your will like His will" - it is incumbent upon you to toil much and strengthen your will to have intent to this - that all its essence be aligned to the will of the Holy One, blessed be He alone, without any deviation or attachment to any other will. Do not let your thoughts fill up. Rather, focus everything around the will of the Holy One, blessed be He.

If after great toil and labor, you reach this lofty level, that no other will exists in you besides to do His will. Then He will help you to remain in that path and you will always have intent for His will. Thus you will always have intent for the will of G-d.

Q Level 2

☆ Yavetz

Yavetz - why does it say: "make His will", and not "make His command"? The answer is that one who guards from forbidden relations or the like but does not "sanctify himself from what is permitted to him", may be doing the command of his Creator, but not His will. For one can fulfill all the mitzvot and yet be "a glutton (naval) with the permission of the torah" (Ramban, kedoshim). But one who breaks his lusts according to his ability, such a person fulfills the will of his Creator. Thus, he wrote do His will instead of do His command.

Q Level 3

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "Nullify your will before His will" - when a will arouses in you to attain something, search carefully if this is indeed the will of the Holy One, blessed be He. If it is not, annul your will since it is against the will of G-d. As reward for this, the Holy One, blessed be He, will annul the wills of "others", namely, the Satan, who seeks to push a man in the pit of destruction.

"so that He will nullify the will of others before your will" - to be saved from him and you will merit that the evil inclination will not rule over you, as our sages said: "[a man's evil inclination rises up to destroy him every day, and were it not for the Holy One's help, no man could withstand him" (Kidushin 30b).

Q Level 2

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - likewise our sages said (Berachot 20b):

The ministering angels said before the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the Universe, in Your Torah it is written, "The great, mighty and awesome G-d who favors no one and takes no bribe" (Devarim 10:17), yet do you not show favor to Israel?, as it is written: "The L-rd shall show favor to you and give you peace" (Bamidbar 6:26) He replied to them: "And how can I not show favor to Israel, seeing that I wrote for them in the Torah: "And you shall eat and be satisfied, and bless the L-rd your G-d" (Devarim 8:10) and they are particular [to say the grace after meals] even if the quantity is but an olive-bulk or an egg-bulk. Since they go beyond the requirements of the law, they are worthy of favor."

This is [the explanation of:] *"so that He will make your will like His will"*.

Two Levels

"Make His will like your will" - the first level is to do His will even though you don't want.

Nevertheless, do it for the will of G-d as if you did want.

On a higher level he said: *"nullify your will before His will"*, that one has no personal will at all in all his matters and occupations. Rather he casts his own will aside and looks only at the will of the Holy One blessed be He. And then he will lack no good, and as David said: "the L-ord is my shepherd, I shall not lack" (Tehilim 23:1).

This is the meaning of *"nullify your will before His will"*, that you have no will besides the will of G-d. Then he will annul the will of others which obstruct and prevent your good.

"so that He will nullify the will of others before your will" - similar to: "When the L-ord is pleased with a person's ways, He will cause even his enemies to make peace with him" (Mishlei 16:7)..

Another explanation, to see to it to have intent l'Shem Shamayim even for physical things such as when eating to have intent to maintain his body [health] for the service of his Creator.

Likewise regarding "be fruitful and multiply" (marital relations) also, to not have intent at all for one's personal pleasure, and if it were possible to not have any pleasure at all he would much prefer. Or at least to have intent for both one's pleasure and also the service of his Creator..

The Tanna began here with the middle level saying: "make your will like His will, etc", i.e. make the two equal, have intent to both G-d and your own benefit.

"so that He will make your will like His will", i.e. this (lower level) too He will accept with love as if you did everything for His will.

Afterwards, you will reach the higher level (of annulling your will completely) whereby you do not have any intent at all to your own pleasure.

Q Level 2

☆ Rosh Avot

Rosh Avot (5777) - on the verse: "G-d is your shadow" (Tehilim 100), the Baal Shem Tov explained that just like a man's shadow follows him along wherever he goes and whatever he does the shadow does with him, so too the Holy One, blessed be He pays a person back according to his deeds and traits. For "as he did will be done to him", and "the attribute of measure for measure was not annulled" (Sotah 8b). Therefore, if one does the will of G-d according to the letter of the law, G-d will do his will also according to the level of nature. But if one completely annuls his will before the will of G-d, ie. that his will is like a broken shard and as nothing tangible and he conducts himself in Chasidut (extra piety), beyond the letter of the law, then G-d will also conduct Himself like this towards him. And He will annul the will of all those who seek to harm or obstruct him even in a supernatural way. For (measure for measure) this is his way...

"in the measure a man measures out he will be measured" (Sotah 8b) - namely if he helps a poor man generously and with a good eye, G-d will bestow upon him from above great shefa (blessings). But if he gives with a bad eye and a stingy hand, so too will he be dealt with. For as he did will be done to him. And our sages already said: "more than the baal bayit does to the poor man, the poor man does to the baal bayit" (Midrash).

Q Level 2

Chida

Chida - Zeroah Yamin - the sages of the Kabala wrote:

"When a man prays to G-d, he is answered immediately in all that he asks and the divine flow (shefa) immediately descends according to what is fitting for his request.

But since the shefa goes through the north, there is there a great Beit Din to examine his case and it passes only that which is proper to give to him. The rest is withheld until he merits." end quote.

Thus G-d's will is to give every asker all that he asked for. And if you "make His (G-d's) will like your will", through this you will merit that He will "make your will like His will", i.e. to fulfill your request. For when the Beit Din sees your deeds, they will draw you close and pass through the divine flow (Shefa) to you.

"Nullify your will before His will, so that He will nullify the will of others (Acherim) before your will" - (Acherim) - these are the Sitra Achra who rouse judgments always. But if you are a Chasid who "sanctifies himself from what is permitted to him", and you annul your will even though it is permitted (for we are not referring to wicked people here), then certainly through your prayer, the mercy will be aroused and will annul the will of the Sitra Achra and prosecutors.

For a tzadik annuls the (bad) decree. In his merit, the Shefa (divine flow) intensifies and automatically the Din (judgment) is annulled as written in the holy Zohar (Bereishit 45b, see there).

Q Level 3

☆ Chida

Chida - Kiseh David Derush 11 - we know that it is His will that we fulfill His commandments wholeheartedly, with zeal and joy. We also know that what He did not command in particular, He commanded generally: "you shall be holy" (Vayikra 19:2), as the Ramban wrote there.

Namely, after commanding us in the forbidden relations and [forbidden] foods, a man may tell himself to go after permitted food and drink and marry many women through chupa and kidushin as the law of Moshe and Yisrael. And every day and every night, he will indulge in various physical pleasures, for they are many. On this He wrote: "you shall be holy" (Vayikra 19:2) in general manner.

This is what our sages said: "sanctify yourself [by abstaining] from what is permitted to you" (Yevamot 20a). That every person should separate from (physical) indulgences, and sanctify himself slowly, slowly. This in essence is the mitzvah of "you shall be holy" (Vayikra 19:2), see the Ramban there at length.

Thus, even though there is no particular commandment, but nevertheless a general commandment came.

Hence, a man knows G-d's will that man sanctify himself, to separate from the physical pleasures, **and to cling [instead]** to the torah, mitzvot, and fear of Him, blessed be He.

This is: "make His will", that which you know is His will - do it with all your strength...

Q Level 1

Ahava b'Taanugim

Ahava b'Taanugim - we may say, "make His will your will", even Shelo Lishma (not for His sake). Do His will as you want, even shelo lishma. The reason is in order to habituate your will and to eventually do the mitzvot as He wants, namely, Lishma (for His sake). This is like what our sages said: "One should always engage in Torah and Mitzvot even Lo Lishmah, for this will lead him to do them Lishmah" (Erchin 16b).

Some explain this mishna in the way of "in all your ways know Him" (Mishlei 3:6). Namely even when you eat and drink for the pleasure, i.e. your will, do them l'Shem Shamayim, [intending] so that you have strength to serve your Creator..

Then *"so that He will make your will like His will"*, i.e. He will make and consider that eating and that pleasure a mitzvah and give you reward of mitzvah for it.

"Nullify your will before His will, so that He will nullify the will of others before your will" - and if you ascend further and you don't have any intent at all for pleasure. Rather your intent is entirely to Shamayim, none for your pleasure and you annul your will completely. Then, He will also annul the will of others, namely His decree. He called it others (Acharim) out of respect for above. The intent is that He will annul His will due to your will, that He decrees and the tzadik annuls it.

Q Level 3

☆ Sfas Emes

Sfas Emes on Avot - "Make His will like your will" - i.e. that you have no will. Rather, only to do His will.

"so that He will nullify the will of others before your will" - Hash-em will submit the evil inclination so that one does not at all lust for things against the will of G-d. This is the meaning of *"the will of others (acherim)"*. For one's evil will is called "others (acherim)", from the side of other gods (sitra d'elohim acherim).

But the primary will of a man of Yisrael is good. For "the portion of G-d is His people". Only that it is concealed in other wills. And through guarding the negative commandments to annul the will of the evil inclination against the will of G-d, it helps to remove other wills from before his true will, which is only to serve G-d...

There are many "loves" in the world, each person according to his nature. But in essence, the true will in every person needs to be to be drawn after his Creator. This is the essence of love.

But the Holy One, blessed be He, concealed the truth through enclothing every thing in "nature". And the various wills which emerge from [human] nature conceal the true will [of a person].

On this he said: "Nullify your will before His will", i.e. so that your true will to G-d should reveal itself to you.. Through annulling the wills which are not to G-d, one then merits to reveal his true will.

Q Level 3

Chachma u'Mussar

Chachma U'Mussar 2:197 - make His will your will - for me the difference between something done with longing (teshuka) and something done without longing is like the difference between an action and a non-action. From here is powerful mussar for a man. For if he did everything with longing (teshuka), who knows what great level he would reach? For longing expands his powers and elevates his mind above his head. Laziness departs from him and he will feel soul emotions to run like a mighty warrior in the path of wisdom and virtue. Therefore, the torah was very strict (makpid) on lack of joy, as written: "because you did not serve the L-ord, your G-d with joy" (Devarim 28:47). For lack of joy is lack of desire. Both are the same thing and the more one increases longing the more he increases success.

Q Level 3

Chachma u'Mussar

Chachma U'Mussar 1:461, 464 - that which a person wants endures and remains.. thus the root of the service of man is to delve into contemplations and mussar with intellect (sechel) and understanding, in order that the natural desire and will enter his heart to know wisdom and mussar. Specifically then will the torah exist (yitkayem) in his heart.

Q Level 3

☆ Daas Chachma u'Mussar

Daat Chachma u'Mussar 1:129 - the foundation and cornerstone of our service is to rectify and elevate to the loftiest level even the body, so that it be able to stand in the palace of the King and

behold the light of the face of G-d.

This is similar to: "I shall walk among you" (Vayikra 26:12). Rashi explains there: "I shall stroll with you in Gan Eden", as was the level of Adam before the sin. For even his body was in Gan Den and his heel shone with such radiance that it would dim the [light of the] sun (Midrash Tanchuma, Acharei Mot).

For the body of Adam was [on the level of] Neshama (soul), all light. This was the highest level and the pinnacle of man's service - to rectify the body in nullifying its physicality completely; for the body itself to become "Neshama" (soul). Namely, that the body itself senses, feels, and recognizes the sweetness and pleasantness of torah and mitzvot, and makes the will of the Holy One, blessed be He, like its own will. That is to say with wholehearted will (b'ratzon shalem). This is the ultimate perfection (tachlit hashlemut).

Level 3

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - "make your will His will.." - man is designated for great and lofty things. We can see this from the great duties the torah placed on him, as written:

"And now, Israel, what does the L-rd your G-d ask of you, but that you fear the L-rd your G-d to walk in all His ways, and to love Him [and serve the L-rd your G-d with all your heart and all your soul, to keep the mitzvot (commandments) of G-d and His statutes]..." (Deut. 10:12)

This is astonishing. How can man be asked to reach the lofty levels of fear and love of G-d? And likewise to "walk in all His ways", as they said: "just like He is merciful and gracious so too you be merciful and gracious" (Shab.133b), i.e. that a man resemble the Holy One, blessed be He and truly go after His attributes, not just some "frumkeit".

Likewise, it is written: "you shall cling to Him" (Devarim 10:20), and "to cling to Him" (Devarim 11:22).

It is a wonder that such requests are placed on man to climb up the mountain! And even though man is appointed (meyuad) for this, but from where is the ability and power for man to demolish and vanquish all the difficulties of this world? These difficulties waiting for him on the path are as hard and heavy as mountains!

The secret of the matter is as follows. When one plants a seed in the ground, it is possible that eventually the seed will sprout and emerge even through a rocky path. Nothing can prevent its growth. How is this possible? The answer is that this is the secret of the power of growth (tzemicha) which has no impediment. Even through rocks and boulders, the growths eventually crack through and emerge.

So too for our matter, for we don't realize what storm and earthquake can occur and what hard and heavy mountains can be demolished when a word of wisdom enters inside the heart of man.

Even for the tiniest word of wisdom, when it enters the heart, already it is impossible to know the vast effects which can come out of this, even to the extent of reaching the loftiest and most exalted levels, and to make the will of the Holy One, blessed be He, as one's own will. No impediment or obstacle in the world can then stand in his way. For this is the power of growth (tzemicha) when wisdom is seeded inside a man!

This is what the torah says (in the Shema): *"these things which I command you today shall be on your heart"* (Devarim 6:6) and likewise "and you shall know this day and lay it to your heart"

(Devarim 4:39).

For knowledge alone is not enough. Rather one must put the knowledge in his heart. And then already it is impossible to imagine or describe the storm and earthquake which wisdom can effect inside a man in the service of his Creator, as written in the Mesilat Yesharim (ch.7):

"You can see that a man whose soul is afire in the service of his Creator certainly will not become lazy in doing the Mitzvot. Rather, his movements will be like the quick movements of fire. For he will not rest nor be still until he has finished completing the deed.."

Likewise this is what our sages said: "the purpose of wisdom is repentance and good deeds" (Berachot 17a). For the purpose is for the wisdom to enter inside the heart of man, and then perforce it will already bring to repentance and good deeds. But if it does not bring to repentance and good deeds, this is a certain sign that the wisdom did not enter inside him.

Now we will understand and grasp what our sages brought several wondrous stories whereby a small rousing resulted in such a great metamorphosis in man, from one extreme to the other.

This is what our sages reported (Midrash Ber.Rabba 65:22):

"Yakum of Tzerurot was the nephew of Rabbi Yossi ben Yoezer of Tzereida. He rode a horse on the Sabbath. as they were about to hang his uncle, Yossi ben Yoezer. Yakum said to Yossi:

'look at the horse my master gave me to ride and the (hangman) plank which your Master gave you (to be hanged upon)!'

Yossi ben Yoezer replied: 'if thus to those who anger Him (that G-d pays good), how much more so to those who do His will'.

Yakum said: 'But did any man do His will more than you? (and He payed you back evil)?'

Yossi ben Yoezer replied: 'if thus to those who do His will (that He punishes them for their few sins), how much more so for those who anger Him (like you)'.

The words entered his heart like the venom of a serpent. Immediately, he went and subjected himself to the four executions of Beit Din, etc.

Yossi ben Yoezer fell asleep and saw Yakum's bed flying in the air. He said: "in a brief moment, he has preceded me in Gan Eden".

Likewise they reported (Avodah 17a):

"They said of Rebbi Eliezer ben Dordaya that he did not leave out any harlot in the world without coming to her. He heard of a harlot in one of the towns by the sea, etc. As he was with her.. she said: 'just like this wind does not return to its place, so too for Eliezer ben Dordaya his repentance will not be accepted'.

He thereupon went, sat between two hills and mountains and exclaimed: O, hills and mountains, plead for mercy for me! etc., Then he placed his head between his knees and wept aloud until he died. A heavenly voice proclaimed: 'Rebbi Eliezer ben Dordaya is destined to life in the World to Come'".

We find other similar stories such as in Shab.56b, see Rashi Sanhedrin 31b on the story of Natan of Tzotzita.

On the surface, these stories appear very wondrous. For these people were on such a low spiritual

level and due to one small remark, they experienced such a metamorphosis to the extent of fulfilling the four executions of Beit Din on themselves and acquiring their world to come in one hour!

Who can contemplate and picture the stone mountains that crumbled there and what truly happened?

But actually this is what our sages revealed to us: "the matter entered in him like the venom of a serpent". For it is impossible to grasp what existence of "venom" is contained in a word of wisdom when it enters the heart of a man. And even for the smallest matter of wisdom, if it enters the heart of a man, he can transform from one extreme to the other. "Fortunate is the man who found wisdom" (Mishlei 3:3), and "How much better is it to acquire wisdom than gold!" (Mishlei 16:16).

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - "make His will like your will.." - what does this have to do with Raban Gamliel's previous words, that he brought them together?

It seems that he is coming to teach that this itself is the will of the Holy One, blessed be He, - when one toils for the needs of the tzibur. For all the matter of the tzibur (congregation) is "His will" (retzono). A proof of this is from what our sages said:

"What is the meaning of the verse: 'But, as for me, may my prayer to You, O L-ord, be in an acceptable time?' (Tehilim 69:13) - when is the time acceptable? When the congregation prays" (Berachot 8a).

Hence, it is clear that the Holy One, blessed be He's will is specifically in the tzibur and His will/favor is at the time of prayer of the needs of the tzibur. Therefore, he said here: "make His will..", i.e. "to toil for the tzibur" (Avot 2:2). For the tzibur is the will of the Holy One, blessed be He.

This matter is deep. For there is no matter of "accuser" (mekatreg) for the tzibur. Since in being a tzibur, it has the power of a "klal" (general entity). And from the aspect of being a "klal", there is no sin. For sin applies only to the individuals. But in the klal, sin and accusation does not apply. Therefore, the accusation (kitrug) on the tzibur is only from the aspect of the individual, namely, what the individuals did. But from the aspect of the "klal", there is no accusation (kitrug).

The prayer of the congregation in the synagogue is from the "klal" aspect. Therefore, it is a time of favor. Thus, the tzibur is connected to the will/favor of G-d, blessed be He, as known.

"*Make His will..*" - with this mussar, he is coming to teach that a man has the ability to rectify all his will (needs) such that man will not say that he lacks something he wants.

All that a man needs is divided into two categories:

One, a man needs to have all the requirements he lacks.

Two, that he does not receive bad from others.

For even if he had all the needs he lacks and something bad happens against him, what good is all this that he has?

Likewise, if no one does harm to him, but he lacks what he needs, this is also considered a lacking person.

On this he said that when one does the will of G-d out of love, his own will is done, namely, all the

needs he lacks.

Likewise, when out of fear of G-d, he [annuls his will], he will be protected so that the will of others against him will not be done.

The explanation is that when one loves G-d and makes G-d's will as his own will, to love Him with all his heart, for a man seeks to obtain what he wants with all his heart. Through this, he makes G-d's will as his own. For G-d's will is that man love Him with all his heart.

Then G-d shall do the will of man as if it were His will, and man's will (needs) shall be done.

For when man does the will of G-d as if it were his own, his will becomes bound (nikshar) to the will of G-d, and through this, the will of G-d also becomes bound to his will and G-d does the will of man. This matter was said corresponding to "love" (of G-d), that man's will be bound with G-d's will to do it with all his heart as if it were his own. This matter is exceedingly deep..

"Annul your will.." - corresponding to fear (of G-d), that man not do his own will. Rather, only the will of G-d. Thus, when a man lusts to do his own will in a sin and out of fear he abstains from the sin due to the will of G-d who does not want the sin, thus it is considered that his will is also the will of G-d and then the will of others against him will not be done.

This corresponds to fear, that he annuls his will, i.e. his wish to do a sin, due to the will of G-d. This is fear.

Thus, through complete love and complete fear, it is possible for a man to rectify all his matters.

Chapter 2 Mishna 5 - Don't Separate

Hillel says: Do not separate yourself from the community. Do not believe in yourself until the day of your death. Do not judge your fellow until you are in his place. Do not say something that cannot be heard, for in the end it will be heard. Do not say, "when I will be free I will learn [Torah]", for perhaps you will not become free.

וְאֵל תִּפְרֹשׁ מִן הַצְּבוּר, וְאֵל תִּאֲמַר, וְאֵל תִּבְרֹךְ עַד יוֹם מוֹתְךָ, וְאֵל תִּדְּוֹן אֶת חֲבֵרְךָ עַד שֶׁתִּגִּיעַ לְמִקְוָמוֹ, וְאֵל תִּאֲמַר דְּבַר שְׂאֵי אֶפְשֶׁר לְשִׁמְעַ, שְׂסוּפוּ לְהִשְׁמַע. וְאֵל תִּאֲמַר לְכַשְׁאֲפֹנָה אֲשֶׁנָּה, שְׂמָא לֹא תִפְנֶה

Q Level 1

☆ Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan on Avot - "do not separate yourself from the community" - that one not be over-confident and think that he can manage on his own and he does not need friends.

This is a great mistake and against the way of the world (yishuv haolam). And since he said previously to be careful of closeness to the king, he returned to caution a man not to separate from his fellow who is equal to him.. For while a man is in this world, he cannot be without the company of others. Likewise, it is written: "it is not good for man to be alone" (Gen.2:18).

Q Level 1

☆ Daas Chachma u'Mussar

Daat Chachma u'Mussar 3:180 - "do not separate yourself from the community" - that one includes himself in the whole (klal), and not exclude himself from being amongst them. For the existence and continuance (metziut v'kiyum) of each and every individual, i.e. of each specific person in the Jewish nation is only when he is attached to the whole (klal).. But a part which separated and went out from the whole has no existence and continuance.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yehoshua

Various explanations on not separating from the Tzibur

Tiferet Yehoshua - 1. this is a warning for every individual: do not separate from the tzibur (congregation)! For the merit of an individual is not comparable to the merit of the whole of Israel (klal Yisrael), and every tzibur (congregation) has the power of the whole of Israel. And he who separates from it, is left a part of tiny worth and near zero merit.

2. The life of an individual is short and he leaves and is annulled from the world, sometimes without leaving any remembrance whatsoever. But it is not so when he is included in the tzibur. For then he remains a part of the tzibur - forever, just like the tzibur is eternal.

3. If you are a part of the tzibur, a link in the great chain and included in it, your flaws and lackings are not so visible in Heaven among the rest of the people in the tzibur. But for one who separates from the tzibur, his flaws and lackings are noticed in Heaven, and automatically, he is dealt with accordingly.

4. Do not separate from the tzibur under any circumstances. Even if you are certain that the tzibur caused you troubles, even if the tzibur does not relate to you properly according to your personal opinion. Nevertheless: do not separate! For the merit of the tzibur is very great from all aspects, as known.

5. The merit of a congregation is like the merit of the whole of Israel (klal yisrael). When a man is included in the tzibur, he is connected to the power of the tzibur and the merit of the tzibur stands by for him. But one who separates from the tzibur is on the level of individual, and his strength wanes and weakens. Perhaps this is the reason the torah forbade counting Jews, as written: "then

there will be no plague among them when they are counted (with the half shekel)" (Shemot 30:12). For all the time one is not singled out in a count, he is included in the tzibur...

 Level 2

☆ **Rabeinu Yonah**

Rabeinu Yonah - "Do not separate yourself from the tzibur (community)" - when the tzibur toils in a mitzvah, it is a crown to the Chai Olamim (G-d) and an honor to all His kingdom. For "the King's glory is in a multitude of people (b'rov am..)" (Mishlei 14:28), and it is not proper to separate from them.. But this is only for a tzibur going in the good path and they join together to do good. However, for a tzibur swaying to the evil path, whose deeds are corrupt, it is not proper to join them. On the contrary, it is praiseworthy to separate from them. On this, the prophet said: "O that I had in the desert a wayfarers' lodging-place, that I might leave my people and go away from them! [For they are all adulterers, a company of traitors!]" (Yirmiyahu 9:1).

 Level 2

☆ **Ben Ish Chai**

Ben Ish Chai - Zechut Avot - "do not separate yourself from the tzibur" - this hints to what the kabbalists say that one should be careful when praying to include one's request and prayer with the tzibur, as the Shunamit said: "I sit amongst my people" (Melachim II 4:13). Through this, G-d will (more readily) do his request.

 Level 2

Sfas Emes

Sfas Emes on Avot - "do not separate yourself from the tzibur" - even though one has a lofty level by himself.

 Level 2

Bartenura

Bartenura - "do not separate yourself from the tzibur" - rather join their troubles. For "whoever separates from the tzibur will not see their consolation" (Taanit 11b).

Tosfot Yom Tov - this is difficult to me. If because of that, he can say I don't want neither their troubles nor their consolation.. Rashi adds there "he will never see a sign of Beracha". We can further say that certainly their consolation is greater than their trouble. For the [divine] attribute of beneficence is greater than that of punishment. Alternatively, he will not see their consolation due to dying before his time or being exiled from his place.

 Level 3

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - this includes five matters.

One, not to separate from the customs of the tzibur.. (Bava Metzia 86).

Two, when they come together to fix a class of torah study or to pray or to take counsel in a mitzvah or needs of the tzibur, one should not say: "let them decide what they want. I'm happy either way". Rather one needs to advise for the good of the tzibur and help in every matter of the service of G-d.

Three, when the tzibur is in pain but he is not, he should also try to feel as if he too is in pain (Taanit 11a).

Four, when he prays for himself, he should also include them in his prayer, to include himself among all those in need.

Five, if you are the leader of the community, do not separate from them as if you are above them..

 Level 4

☆ **Chida**

Chida - Kikar la'Eden - for tzibur is roshei tevot tzadikim, beinonim v'reshaim. Thus join them so there will be a tikun for all Israel.

 **Level 3**

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "do not separate yourself from the tzibur" - in worldly matters and all the more so in matters of Heaven. For in a gathering of torah scholars, some of them are fit to be a Rav to you, others are fit to be students and others are fit to be [equal] peers (chaver), and our sages taught: "I learned much from Rabbis, more from my peers, and most of all from my students". And here there is everything.

"Do not believe in yourself until the day of your death" - for to learn alone is not correct and do not say: "it is impossible for me to say something not right".

"Do not judge your fellow.. do not say something that cannot be heard, etc." - i.e. if you learn with a peer (chaver), do not say his reasoning (svara) is impossible to hear. Rather, examine it, for perhaps "in the end it will be heard".

"do not say when I will be free I will learn,etc." - do not say: "today I am filthy with sins and bad thoughts. What gain is there for me to toil in torah and soil its beauty with my filth? Rather only when I will clean a path and purify myself to learn torah lishma." This s a mistake. For torah study shelo lishma is a great key to come to learn lishma. For without this, no man would lift his hand against the old and foolish yetzer.

 **Level 1**

Bartenura

Bartenura - "do not believe in yourself until the day of your death" - for Yochanan kohen gadol served as high priest for 80 years and in the end became a tzaduki (heretic) (Berachot 29a).

 **Level 2**

Ahava b'Taanugim

Ahava b'Taanugim - "Do not separate yourself from the community" - as the verse says: "it is not good for man to be alone" (Ber.2:18). For one needs to learn wisdom from other people. Likewise for one's physical welfare, he needs other people. And even though one who separates from people refrains from sins, but nevertheless, he also refrains from mitzvot. On this the Tana said that it is not proper to separate from the tzibur. But this is only when the tzibur is righteous, not when they are wicked. For then it is good to separate...

"Do not believe in yourself until the day of your death" - since one may think he is righteous and trusts in his own righteousness when he sees others stumbling and falling [in sin]. On this he said it is not proper to trust in this. For who knows that perhaps one can also stumble like him.

"Do not judge your fellow until you are in his place" - i.e. picture to yourself as if you yourself actually reached his place (i.e. you sinned just like him), and then it is proper for you to judge him in the way of "love your neighbor as yourself".

 **Level 3**

☆ **Chachma u'Mussar**

Chachma U'Mussar 1:178 - "do not believe in yourself until the day of your death" - i.e. it is incumbent on a man to suspect himself always, and to flee from the possibility of stumbling in sin. For it is written: "beware, lest your heart be enticed, and you turn away and worship strange gods and prostrate yourselves before them, etc." (Devarim 11:16).

Thus the torah exhorted us with a warning to guard from the enticements of the heart. And even on something which appears to you as easy to separate from. Nevertheless, know that "man's heart is evil from his youth" (Bereishit 8:21).

And the intent of one's heart (with its enticements) is to make him stumble in its net and fall from level (dechi) to level, Heaven forbid.

The way of the enticements (chalaklakot) of the heart is to embellish in his eyes (bad things) slowly, slowly until eventually "you turn away and worship strange gods, etc."

Therefore, the way of the Tzadikim is to suspect themselves always (see Ramban on Ber.14:22, who brings the Sifri that we find all the tzadikim take oaths against their inclination). Even if they are far from that lust or desire, nevertheless, they suspect themselves lest their hearts entice them more and more.

But this is not the way of ordinary people. Because they are not knowledgeable in the nature of their hearts, to suspect it of evil from its youth...

Chachma u'Mussar 1:255 - And even the greatest of the greatest of all men can stumble like the lowest of the lowest, due to the coarseness of the physicality coiled around his heels..

How much watchfulness, careful guarding, and great contemplation without interrupting for even one second does man need in order to not fall in sin! And if his eye tires for one second from guarding, immediately and right away, he will stumble, Heaven forbid.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "Do not judge your fellow until you are in his place" - if you saw your fellow had a trial (nisayon) and he stumbled therein, do not judge him negatively until you have a similar trial and are saved.

Q Level 1

☆ Sfas Emes

Sfas Emes on Avot - "Do not judge your fellow until you are in his place" - i.e. and it is impossible for you to ever reach the place of your fellow. For not all people's mindsets are alike (lo kol deos shavos). Therefore, do not judge your fellow at all.

"when I will be free I will learn [Torah]" - i.e. even if your intent is l'shem shamayim - so that afterwards your mind will be more settled to learn better, nevertheless, "If not now, when?" (Avot 1:14).

And even though "beautiful is the study of torah with work (Derech Eretz)", nevertheless work should be secondary to torah study. The majority should be in torah, namely most of the day in torah.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "Do not judge your fellow until you are in his place" - if you see your fellow stumble, what would you say on yourself if you yourself stumbled in that same sin? Certainly you would diligently find all sorts of excuses and rationalizations to justify yourself. So too, you should strive on the purity of your friend to cleanse him as if you reached his place.

Q Level 3

Chasdei David

Chasdei David - "do not judge your fellow until you are in his place" - in Midrash Shmuel - i.e. literally his place. For it is recognizable in a person's place whether his character traits are good or bad. Thus, when one reaches his place and asks the people there on him, then he will be able to judge on him. But not before he reaches his place. For then he is merely judging on the appearance of the eye and perhaps he is not correct in his judgment.

Q Level 3

Bayit Neeman - R.Meir Mazouz Shemot #142 - if you want to know on a certain Gadol (torah

scholar) whether his fear of Heaven [is real or] only external, look at his children. For the chinuch (education) which someone gives, if it is from the heart it is entirely different.

Q Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - "do not say, 'when I will be free I will learn'" - you the average person who toils in torah in some free times.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - when you have a bit of free time in the middle of your occupations, do not say: "what can I learn in such a short amount of time? Rather when I will have a lot of free time from my occupations, I will learn".

For "perhaps you will not become free", and the short time you lost is a small part of your life which is comprised of many such small parts, and this loss of service can never be replaced.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "do not believe in yourself until the day of your death" - like a driver of a fast car in a race. If he loses attention of the road even for one moment, the car could go out of the white lines and cause a disaster. So too is man's life. One must run to complete his purpose in this world in order to arrive at the designated place - the world to come. If a man loses attention and does not properly put to heart on his life which zooms by with tremendous speed; if he does not put every second of his life under great scrutiny, he is liable to "go out of the white lines", ie to tumble down in one second from all the levels he merited to and cause a great disaster.

This is what the Tanna says: "do not believe in yourself". Rather, check yourself always, every hour, every second. Do not believe in yourself. For one second ago you may be in a lofty level, but it is possible for you to already drop from your place and fall in the deep pit. Everything is possible in man's life. Until one's day of death, until the last second of his life, he is not assured of what merits he gathered. Rather, he must always stand on guard for his soul. Lest it be lost, Heaven forbid.

Q Level 4

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - it is the way of the righteous to take oaths against their [evil] inclination. For the trait of the righteous is in the secret of "continuance" (sod kaymut). And the secret of "continuance" is to not believe and trust neither in oneself nor on others. Rather, to be fenced and sworn on all their deeds, that they be absolutely certain without a shadow of doubt on its continuance.

But it is the opposite for the wicked whose trait is to rest assured and believe in themselves, like a broken unfenced wall. Thus they certainly have no stable standing.

In the talmud (Sotah 21a)

" *'for a mitzva is a candle and torah is light'* (Mishlei 6:23). The verse compared a mitzvah to a candle and torah to light, etc. and it is written: *'when you walk, it (the torah) shall guide you, etc'* (Mishlei 6:22) - this refers to this world which is compared to night.

It is analogous to a man who was walking in the middle of the night in darkness and is afraid of thorns, pits, thistles, wild beasts and robbers, and also does not know the road in which he is going. If he obtains a lighted torch (Rashi-he merited to fulfill a mitzvah), he is saved from thorns, pits and thistles; but he is still afraid of wild beasts and bandits, and does not know the road in which he is going.

When, however, dawn breaks (Rashi-he merited torah), he is saved from wild beasts and bandits,

but still does not know the road in which he is going. When, however, he reaches the cross-roads, he is saved from everything.. What is the meaning of 'the cross-roads' [in the parable related above]? - R.Hisda said: It alludes to a talmid chacham (disciple of the Sages) and the day of his death."

These words of our sages were said with tremendous precision (dikduk atzum), like all their holy teachings, according to the feeling they felt in their own lives.

"It is analogous to a man who was walking in the middle of the night and darkness" - they compared this world to night.

(as explained in Bava Metzia 83b - "You make darkness and it is night" (Psalms 104:20) - this is referring to this world, which resembles nighttime.)

And more than this [here], to pitch black darkness of night, in the way of: *"and the darkness will be palpable (veyamesh choshech)"* (Shemot 10:21).

Is it any wonder then that the wise men of the nations (scientists/philosophers, etc.) did not ever find the true path? They remained in error on the ways of life down to their final day.

For how is it possible to find something in pitch black darkness of night? The light of intellect alone is not sufficient to illuminate this darkness. Therefore, they remained lost in the darkness of this world.

"feared the thorns" - that can harm his body and pierce his eyes. For "a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise" (Devarim 16:19).

"and pits" - who also have sufficient depth to kill him - *"[it is also not good that a soul be without knowledge] and he who hastens with his feet sins"* (Mishlei 19:2).

"if he obtains a lighted torch" - they compared the light of mitzvah to a torch of light. For it is known that in the darkest of places, a single candle is not enough...

"[he is saved from thorns, pits and thistles] but he is still afraid of wild beasts and bandits" - for the light of mitzvah is not enough to save one from wild animals and bandits who wait in ambush to slay him. All their desire is to slay a man.

"When, however, dawn breaks" - i.e. the light of torah, then he was also saved from them, as written: "You make darkness and it is night, in which every beast of the forest moves about" (Tehilim 104:20).

But when the light of dawn rises, they flee to their hiding places. So too, when the light of torah shines, they flee from a man.

"but still does not know the road in which he is going" - for even with the illumination of the mitzvot and torah, nevertheless he can easily err despite that he walks on the path of truth...

"When, however, he reaches the cross-roads, he is saved from everything - this alludes to a talmid chacham (disciple of the Sages) and the day of his death" - for it is impossible for a man to be assured of which path he walks until the day of his death.. And our sages expounded the verse: "Lo! He does not believe in His holy ones" (Iyov 15:15), that it refers to Yitzchak our forefather. This matter is awesome to he who contemplates it.

Q Level 3**Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)**

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - it is written: "fortunate is he who fears always" (Mishlei 28:14) - specifically "always"! For "a man's Yetzer (evil inclination) renews itself every day [and seeks to slay him].." (Kidushin 30b). Therefore, a man needs to always be knowledgeable and aware of his situation without letup (hesech daat) of one second from his Yetzer who seeks to ambush him.

For despite all a man built up and elevated himself, nevertheless, there is no assurance of its standing and remaining. "Should you blink your eyes at it, it is gone" (Mishlei 23:5). If he blinks his eyes from his Yetzer, it is all over! In one second, it is possible for him to fall and completely shatter in pieces. And any slightest [ulterior] motive and intent in a man has the capacity to flip him around completely till utter destruction.

Due to this, a man must put his eye and heart always, all the days of his life, on his ways - to stand on guard from every [potential] breaking and destruction.

"Do not believe in yourself until the day of your death".

Q Level 3**Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)**

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - In the "Duties of the Heart" (5:5):

It is a wonder, my brother, that for any enemy that one has, if one defeats him once or twice, he will back down from you and not consider waging war again, thinking your strength is greater than his, and he abandons thoughts of defeating you and overpowering you.

But the yetzer, is not satisfied with one battle or even a hundred battles, whether he has defeated you or you have defeated him. Because if he defeats you he will slay you, and if you defeat him, he will lie in wait all of your days to defeat you, as our Sages said "do not believe in yourself until the day of your death" (Avot 2:4)

[He does not consider the smallest of the smallest of your matters as too insignificant a means of defeating you, in order that he will gain a step to defeat you on a higher matter...]

The explanation of the matter is that it is impossible to kill the Yetzer completely until he can no longer get up. And even *in that thing itself* which a man already defeated the Yetzer, nevertheless, it is possible that eventually the yetzer will resurrect and rise up again against him. Even if you already defeated him, do not think you escaped from him. Rather, it is incumbent on you to know that your great enemy waits for you in ambush all of your days to vanquish you, slay you, and uproot you from the land of the living.

This is what we brought earlier: "we find the righteous take oaths against their yetzer." For despite all their victory against their yetzer, nevertheless they never rely and believe in themselves. For they know the constant danger which they find themselves in. For the yetzer may rise up and resurrect again. Thus, certainly they took an oath against their yetzer.

Q Level 1**Rabeinu Yonah**

Rabeinu Yonah - "for in the end it will be heard" - even what is alone between yourself, do not make it heard to your ears. As our sages said in an analogy: "do not speak behind walls, for the walls have ears" (Berachot 8b). On this Shlomo said: "for the bird of the heaven shall carry the voice, and the winged creature will tell the matter" (Kohelet 10:20).

Q Level 1**Rabeinu Yonah**

Rabeinu Yonah - "do not say, 'when I will be free I will learn..'" - for you do not know what the day will bring, and also tomorrow you will be called to the new things every day, and you will need to

attend to the vanities. For there is no lack of various things every moment every hour. Thus, you will leave this world without torah. Rather, "Make your Torah fixed" (Avot 1:15).

Q Level 3

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan on Avot - "do not separate yourself from the community" - do not trust in yourself. Do not think if you are alone and separated from the tzibur, the yetzer will not sway you. Know and see that fear (shame) of flesh and blood is a mighty fence and great barrier for every person.. For "a person is a mirror to his fellow".

The reason is that if a person has a stain on his face or a mess on the hair of his head, he may not realize this. But if he looks in the mirror, the mirror will show him this and he will fix what needs to be fixed.

So too every person does not sense all of his flaws. For he is biased towards himself, and "a person does not see fault with himself". But his fellow can see them and warn him.

Thus, one should not trust himself that he is acting properly and his deeds are accepted and his heart is whole and innocent with G-d. He should not believe in himself and trust that the yetzer cannot seduce him.. Rather all the time a person is alive in this world, he does not go out of the possibility of good or evil. Therefore, every intelligent person should recognize his place and fear and worry lest he become corrupt..

"do not judge your fellow until you are in his place" - for "there is no righteous man on earth who does good and sins not" (Kohelet 7:20). Even for great Chasidim (extremely pious), it is impossible for you to not see in them some thing which needs rectification. And if one sees in his fellow something reprehensible but sees himself cleaner than him, he should not judge his fellow as lower than himself.

For this itself is reprehensible to pride oneself over him.. Rather the just way is to fear and tell yourself: "he is of physicality just like me. Perhaps I too am liable to do like him.." Thus increase to guard yourself lest you stumble like your brother..

"Do not say something that cannot be heard, for in the end it will be heard" - "for the bird of the heaven shall carry the voice.." (Kohelet 10:20)

"Do not say, 'when I will be free I will learn, etc.'" - do not think in your heart that you will make your work primary and torah study secondary, pushing off the truth until you are free from the falsehood. For it is an evil thought to place in doubt the torah of G-d, "for it is your life and the length of your days" (Deut.30:20).

When you contemplate these five mussarim in this mishna, you will see they all stem from one reason, namely, guarding oneself from what might happen.

"do not separate from the community" - perhaps you will need them.

"Do not believe in yourself" - perhaps you will sway from the path.

"Do not judge your fellow" - for perhaps you will stumble like him.

"Do not say something", and "do not say, 'when I will be free..', for perhaps you will not become free".

Let this matter not be light in your eyes, namely, guarding oneself from what might happen. For it is very precious and very few people observe this properly.

For if one lacks one of the following three traits, it is impossible to guard from this. These three traits are:

1. slow to anger (arichot apayim).
2. sound judgment (shikul daat).
3. ruling over one's spirit (memshelet b'ruach).

One who is not slow to anger will rush his deeds before his thinking. Likewise, the wise man said: "A quick-tempered man acts foolishly" (Mishlei 14:17). One who is not slow to anger does not have sound judgment to distinguish between what is proper to do and what is not proper. Both are equal to him, for he is unable to distinguish the two.

Likewise, the wise man said: "If you see a man who is wise in his own eyes, there is more hope for a fool than for him." (Mishlei 26:12).

Likewise, even if he is slow to anger and has sound judgment, but if he does not rule over his spirit, he will follow the whims of his heart. Even though he sees the straight path, he will twist it..

🔍 Level 2

☆ Raz Chaim

Raz Chaim - "Hillel says.." - Hillel has the merit to speak on the reprehensibility of arrogance for he was humble.

Regarding the Tzibur (congregation), the Pele Yoetz writes: "in the holy Zohar: 'the prayer of a yachid (i.e. an individual who skips praying in a minyan) does not ascend before the Holy King except through great mercy. And the Holy One, blessed be He, examines the debts (sins) of this man". end quote.

The reason is because he considers his prayer by himself to be like the prayer of a tzibur. If so, the Holy One, blessed be He, says "come and let us see if he is truly a tzadik that it is so proper for him to pray alone."

Thus, sometimes when one prays by himself, there is arrogance in this. On this the Holy One, blessed be He, examines his prayer.

This is what Hillel said: "do not separate from the tzibur" - for arrogant thoughts cause you to do thus, and therefore "do not believe in yourself until the death". He wrote: "*do not believe in yourself*", i.e. do not believe that you yourself alone can affect things properly in Heaven.

And a sin brings more sin. For when he is snubbed or slighted by others, he gets angry immediately and strikes the person.

Thus: "do not judge your fellow until you are in his place". Namely, if you yourself were to do this to others, you would not accept their reacting back to you like this.

Then sin brings further sin, to speak lashon hara (slander) on the fellow (which is a big part of arrogance as known). Therefore, he said further: "*Do not say something that cannot be heard, for in the end it will be heard*", a hint to lashon hara (slander). For one who speaks it does not want it to be overheard..

And "*do not say when I will be free, I will learn (eshne)*", "eshne" is from the term "shinui" (change), i.e. "when I will be free, I will change this bad trait". For perhaps you will not be free and die today or tomorrow with this rotten trait. Therefore, think immediately on repentance with service and mussar study.

 **Level 3**
☆ **Maharal**

Maharal - it is proper to ask in the teaching of Hillel:

Why was this placed here and not earlier (in chapter 1) with what Hillel said?

Furthermore, what connection do all these things have - "do not separate yourself from the community", "do not believe in yourself", and likewise all the rest who don't seem to have any connection to each other. He should have said on each one separately "he would say" as he did on the other teachings after this mishna.

The explanation of this is because the previous mishna mentioned the greatness of the tzibur - "*all who toil for the tzibur, etc.*" Therefore, the words of Hillel were also placed here. For they also explain the greatness of the tzibur. The opposite of this is the (solitary) individual who is insignificant relative to the tzibur. Therefore, he said: "do not separate from the tzibur". For the tzibur is a klal which stands (endures) as we explained. The tzibur has more kiyum (continuance). Thus one who separates from the tzibur separates from that which endures more...

You should understand that he mentioned here all the changes. For a man is intrinsically a creature of change (baal shinui), since all physicality changes intrinsically and also due to causes which come on it always and most of all due to the passage of time. No man is static. Rather he is constantly changing due to incidents, as we will explain.

Corresponding to this, he said: "*do not believe in yourself*". For man is intrinsically a creature of change. Therefore, "*do not believe in yourself*".

Corresponding to changes due to causes, he said: "*do not judge your fellow until you are in his place*". If a similar cause befell you, you too would not have stood up to the test.

Corresponding to changes due to time, he said do not think this thing will not be heard in the future. For eventually it will be heard. And he said further:

"*do not say, when I will be free I will learn, for perhaps you will not become free*", there is no assurance.

This matter is a greater change. For the first two are changes due to some big new factor. But those [due to the passage of time], namely, man's actions and incidents which are less big but constantly occurring, these cause man to not be standing for even one second.

A man thinks he will do such and such, and then new incidents and changes come on him.

Therefore, do not say: "when I will be free I will learn", and changes will come. For one is constantly changing.

Thus, these things point that man is a creature of change, the opposite of the klali (general).

And all this follows from what he said: "*Do not separate yourself from the community*".

 **Level 4**
☆ **Ben Ish Chai**

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - "*do not say something that cannot be heard, for in the end it will be heard*" - our sages said: "just like it is a mitzvah to say something that is heard (accepted), so too, it is a mitzvah to refrain from saying something that will not be heard (accepted)".

On this he said if you have some words of mussar and rebuke that the tzibur will not listen to and it will not be received by them in any way, do not say:

"Nevertheless, I will speak and give them some words. Even though now the words will certainly not bear fruit and will not avail these people who follow the views of their heart (Yirmiyahu 9:13), and they will be repulsed by the rebuke. But nevertheless it will help them later when they become old and they no longer have a yetzer which blinds their eyes and hardens their heart".

You are not permitted in this. For since now there is no listener to these words, and they will be repulsed by them, the words will be scornful in their eyes and they will increase sin to mock them, as the verse says: "do not rebuke a jester lest he hate you" (Mishlei 9:8).

He also exhorts from the opposite angle. Namely, if you see the generation is good and the tzibur lends ear to hear words of mussar and wisdom, strengthen yourself like a lion and stand on the guard to rain down on them words of mussar, wisdom, and fear [of G-d], and make known to them the proper way to go and the deeds to do. And do not be lazy in this saying "when I will be free, I will learn with them wisdom and mussar". For perhaps you will not become free. Therefore be zealous and gain. Hurry to give them waters of life, to benefit and bestow good to them in this world and the next.

Level 4

Chasdei David

Chasdei David - "for in the end it will be heard" - we find the sages were very careful even on things which were seemingly impossible to be heard and with no one there due to "in the end it will be heard":

The story is related in Baba Batra (3b) about the self-appointed King Herod, who had slaughtered all the sages and saints of his generation except for one rabbi by the name of Baba ben Butta, whom the king had blinded by gouging out his two eyes. Baba ben Butta lived, but his life was one of poverty, pain, and degradation.

Herod decided to test the trustworthiness of this lone, surviving sage, so masquerading as a commoner, he appeared before the rabbi and said, "Tell me, what do you have to say about King Herod and the terrible things he has done?"

Baba ben Butta had no idea who was standing before him, but he replied, "What can I do?"

"Why don't you curse him? Look what he did! He slaughtered all your colleagues and he gouged out your eyes. What do you mean, what can you do? Curse him!"

Baba ben Butta replied, "We were taught in Kohelet (10:20): 'even in our thoughts we should not curse a king'"

So Herod said, "That refers to a king who behaves with dignity. Is what Herod did considered kingly? Hasn't Herod abdicated the title of king by his actions?"

"Shlomo HaMelech goes on to say, 'Bechedrei mishkavcha al tekalail ashir. Even in the privacy of your bedroom, don't curse a rich man' (ibid). So even if Herod did not behave rightly, he is still wealthy, and for that alone I am not permitted to curse him. In addition, in the torah we are taught that it is prohibited to curse a leader of our people." (Shemot 22:28)

"But he didn't behave as a leader of your people. His behavior was so despicable," continued Herod, attempting to trap the sage, "that the verse doesn't apply to him. Tell me, what do you really think of him?"

The sage replied, "I am afraid to do so. Do you know why? Back in Kohelet, the verse continues: 'for the bird of the heaven shall carry the voice, and the winged creature will tell the matter' (ibid). So even if no one is here and no one sees us talking whatever I tell you will somehow reach the king's ears as if on the wings of birds."

The king was astounded and tremendously impressed by the sage's restraint, and also by his wisdom. The story ends that after this meeting, King Herod repented and changed his entire attitude towards life. (translated by Atarah Malach)

It is known from the talmud (Yomah 4b) that one who tells something to his fellow, it is forbidden for that fellow to tell anyone else without permission.. And on the verse: *"Not so is My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My house"* (Bamidbar 12:7) - but is there what to steal in Heaven? Rather, the intent is on revealing a secret (megalei sod).

Chapter 2 Mishna 6 - A Boor

He would say: a boor cannot be sin-fearing, an ignoramus (am-haaretz) cannot be a pious (chasid); a bashful cannot learn, an impatient cannot teach, and not all who engage in much business become wise. In a place where there are no men, strive to be a man.

הוא הִיהָ אוֹמֵר, אֵין בּוֹר יֵרָא חֲטָא, וְלֹא עִם הָאֶרֶץ חֲסִיד, וְלֹא הִבִּישָׁן לְיָמֵד, וְלֹא הִקְפְּדוֹן מִלְמֵד, וְלֹא כָל הַמְרַבֵּה בְּסוֹחֵרָה מִחֲכָיִם. וּבְמָקוֹם שֶׁאֵין אָנָשִׁים, הַשְׁתַּדֵּל לִהְיוֹת אִישׁ:

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - a boor is empty of everything. Even the ways of business trade (i.e. work) he does not know. He is worse than an am haaretz. The aramaic translation (targum) of "that the land not be desolate" (Gen.47:19) is "that the land will not become boor".

"an am haaretz cannot be a chasid" - but he can be sin-fearing. For he is knowledgeable in the ways of business trade (earning a livelihood, dealing with people).

An am haaretz wants to rectify the land but he lacks wisdom to discern his rectifications properly (from bartenura on Avot 5:10).

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - the boor is empty. He has neither torah nor mitzvot nor derech eretz (proper decency).. He is not even a "sin-fearing" person. For due to the emptiness in him, he does not how to guard himself even from sin.

But the am haaretz is mixed with others (involved in society), he can be fearing sin. For since he has important traits and a bit of right views, he knows how to guard himself from sins and can become a tzadik. Namely, one who does and fulfills what he was commanded. But for the level of Chasidut (extra piety), no man can approach it or reach it except one who is great in torah. For it is a trait requiring purity of heart, refinement of soul and all good traits. And this man lacks wisdom to bend it from the middle way to the extreme end and act beyond the letter of the law. On this he is called an am haaretz. For most people are like him.

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan on Avot - "boor" - this is one who has neither torah which is a tree of life, nor good deeds.. The term boor comes from "a boor field" (Peah2:1). This is a field which was not sown and grows nothing. Such a person does not fear sinning because he does not recognize the lowliness of sin and its punishment.

Q Level 2

☆ Rosh Avot

Rosh Avot - "am haaretz (lit. people of the land)" - in the book Igeret Hatiyul, brought in the book Taamei Haminhagim (pg.528): "the reason he is called an 'am haaretz' is because he holds and clings [firmly] to working the land and the vanities of this world until he thinks he is a permanent resident (toshav) of the land. But the Chachamim (wise) and Tzadikim (righteous) think themselves as temporary residents (gerim) here in this world".

A wealthy man from france once came to visit the Chafetz Chaim. When he arrived at his home, he was astonished at how bare was the home of such a great sage. The wealthy man asked him: "where are all your possessions?" The Chafetz Chaim replied: "and where are yours?" The wealthy man said: "but I am just a passing traveller here." The Chafetz Chaim answered: "so am I".

Q Level 1**Rambam**

Rambam - "boor" - he has neither wisdom nor middot (good character traits).

"*am haaretz*" - he does not have the qualities of intellect (maalot hasechel) but he has a bit of qualities of middot (character traits).

Q Level 3**Rosh Avot**

Rosh Avot - "*a boor cannot be sin-fearing*" - a hint to this in the verse: "the pit was empty there was no water in it" (Gen.37:24), which the talmud expounds: "there was no water in it, but there were snakes and scorpions in it".

The hint is: "if the pit (bor), i.e. boor (with shuruk) is empty", that there is no water, i.e. torah, then there are snakes and scorpions. That is to say, if there is no torah in him, perforce there will be sins and iniquity in him. For the "snake" symbolizes sin, as in "it is not the snake which kills but the sin" (Berachot 33a). Thus, "*a boor cannot be sin-fearing*".

Q Level 3**☆ Tiferet Yehoshua**

Tiferet Yehoshua - "*a boor cannot fear sin*" - the holy Kotzke Rebbe said on this: "it is evident. For if this boor were sin-fearing, he would have learned torah and not remained a boor."

We may say similarly for the am haaretz, since remaining an am haaretz is against the letter of the law, for every Jew is obligated to study torah, if so, how can he become a chasid, namely, act beyond the letter of the law? He did not even reach the letter of the law yet.

Q Level 3**Chatam Sofer**

Chatam Sofer, parsha Reeh - "*an am-haaretz cannot be a chasid*" - the reason is as the Chovot Halevavot wrote (5:5) : "the extra (piety) is not acceptable until one first pays the obligatory. And if a man does not fulfill all the mitzvot of the torah properly, G-d will not accept from him the extra he does"...

Q Level 3**Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)**

Siftei Daat on Avot (R. Yerucham Levovitz) - "*an am haaretz cannot be a chasid*" - i.e. when he has someone to ask [what he should do] and nevertheless, he does not ask. But if he did not have anyone to ask, and also he did not have the ability to attain by himself, and he did all in his power to toil, he tried and toiled as much as possible - behold he is worthy of ruach hakodesh and wondrous levels beyond comparison, equal to a man great in torah.

Q Level 3**Chachma u'Mussar**

Chachma U'Mussar 1:229 - he did not say "a boor is not Heaven-fearing (Yarei Shamayim)". For it is possible for him to be a Heaven-fearing. Namely, that he thinks always mental pictures of Olam Haba, reward and punishment. But nevertheless, he does not fear sin, namely, to distance and flee 70 gates from sin. Rather, he trusts that when sin comes to his hand, he will separate from it.

But since he does not distance and flee from sin, then when a sin comes to his hand, a "spirit of folly" enters in him and his intellect departs from him temporarily. (as the talmud says in Sotah 3: "A person does not commit a sin unless a spirit of folly (ruach shetut) enters into him".)

This is what we learned in Berachot 13a: "why did accepting the yoke of Heaven precede the accepting the yoke of mitzvot?.." For accepting the yoke of Heaven is fear of Heaven (yirat shamayim), while accepting the yoke of mitzvot is fear of sin - i.e. to distance and flee seventy gates from sin. This is the primary fear, to distance the yetzer (evil inclination) from the gate of sin in order that the spirit of folly will not enter inside him at all.

Q Level 1

☆ **Bartenura**

Bartenura - "a bashful cannot learn" - for one who is embarrassed to ask lest others mock him, he will remain always with his doubts.

Q Level 1

☆ **Rabeinu Yonah**

Rabeinu Yonah - "a bashful cannot learn" - the trait of shame is good in every matter except (torah) study...

Q Level 2

☆ **Meorei Ohr**

Meorei Ohr - Rabeinu Yitzchak wrote that the "bashful" (bayshan) here is better than the am ha'aretz. He wants to learn and his soul longs for torah, but he is embarrassed to ask his doubts and difficulties. And even after his Rabbi explained the halacha to him and asks him: "did you understand what I told you?", and he did not understand, but even so he replies "yes". He is embarrassed to say "no". Thus, he reaps nothing from all his toil.

The mishna exhorts on removing the veil of shame from his face. Through this, he will attain his desire and will (in torah). Likewise, we find the torah exhorts: "Ask your father, and he will tell you; your elders, and they will inform you" (Devarim 32:7)..

Q Level 1

☆ **Bartenura**

Bartenura - "an impatient cannot teach" - the Rav who is impatient (makpid) on the students when they ask him something, he cannot teach properly..

Q Level 1

Rambam

Rambam - "an impatient [cannot teach]" - he is makpid (irritated) by everything and gets angry.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan on Avot - "impatient (kapdan)" - his mind is narrow. He is unable to receive the different views of the students. For "not all peoples' views are alike" (lo kol deut shavot). Rather, the teacher needs to be of accepting mind, encouraging and explaining the questioners, even those who ask dry, off topic questions.

Q Level 1

☆ **Bartenura**

Bartenura - "not all who engage in much business become wise" - as written, "Nor is it across the sea" (Devarim 30:13) - the torah is not found by those who travel across the sea (Eiruvim 55a).

Q Level 2

Chatam Sofer

Daat Sofer ohel hinda peticha 3 - "not all who engage in much business become wise" - our sages expounded: " 'nor is it across the sea" (Devarim 30:13) - not by merchants nor by traders" (Eiruvim 55a). For one who wishes to toil and delve deeply in the torah cannot toil in business. Our sages already said "Not all who engage in much business become wise".

He who wishes to be crowned with the crown of torah should empty his heart of all matters of business and all his thoughts need to be only and solely in torah study. For "torah is acquired with minimal derech erez" (Avot 6:6), and "this is the way of torah.." (Avot 6:4), and "the torah was given to expound only to those who ate the manna, second to them, those who eat teruma" (Tanchum, Shemot 20). For only he who has no worry on his livelihood is able to expound the torah and delve into it...

Q Level 2

☆ **Tiferet Yehoshua**

Tiferet Yehoshua - "not all who engage in much business become wise" - for one who increases business, namely, he spends much time in business matters to increase his money, he necessarily minimizes in torah study. And what wisdom is this? For a man takes from an eternal world and exchanges it for a fleeting world. Thus if he increases in business, this itself is not wise.

Q Level 3**Ben Ish Chai**

Ben Ish Chai - Birkat Avot - he said "not all" to exclude one who does much business l'shem Shamayim. Namely, so he will become wealthy to increase tzedaka and many mitzvot, and assist many torah scholars in the way of Yissachar and Zevulun. Such a person will become wise. For he will be helped from Heaven and will succeed in his deeds. Namely, G-d will bless him.

Q Level 1**Bartenura**

Bartenura - "strive to be a man" - to sit at the head and instruct (l'horot).

Q Level 1☆ **Rashi**

Rashi - "in a place where there are no men, strive to be a man" - and toil in the needs of the tzibur. But in a place where there is a man already - you should toil in your torah.

Q Level 2**Rambam**

Rambam - "strive to be a man" - habituate your soul and draw it to acquire the qualities. And after there are no wise men who will teach you, teach yourself.

Q Level 2☆ **Meiri**

Meiri - i.e. if you don't find a Chacham (torah sage) to learn from him, strive to learn by yourself until you become "a man"..

Q Level 2☆ **Rosh Avot**

Rosh Avot - "in a place where there are no men, strive to be a man" - Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin explained: even if you are in your inner chambers and no one is looking, "strive to be a man" to act with mussar and derech eretz. For "the eyes of G-d.." (Divrei Hayamim II 16:9), and "the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3).

And all the more so when he is with his wife and children - "strive to be a man". Rav Chaim Vital already wrote that a man's character traits are measured only and solely by how he related to his wife. For it is the way of a man to act outside with derech eretz and decency in order to find favor in the eyes of his surroundings. But not so with his household which he is obligated to them. Therefore, a man's nature and character traits are measured only when he is in the company of his wife and household. On this, he wrote: "in a place where there are no men, strive to be a man".

Q Level 3☆ **Ben Ish Chai**

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - "man" - it is known that every bestower (mashpia) is called "man", whereas the receiver is called woman. This is the meaning of "in a place where there are no men", there is no bestower above and below, namely, no one toiling in torah in order to bestow, "strive that you yourself be a bestower (mashpia), that you learn torah at those times when the world is idle from this.

Q Level 4**Ben Ish Chai**

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - (kabalistic) - in page 6 of the book "Mishpat Tzedek" on Tehilim, I read there: in truth, the duty to toil in torah and mitzvot at all times is very great. However, the duty is greatest at times when most of the world is idle from torah study, such as friday after midday, erev yom tov, chol hamoed, or the like.

Then most people are idle from toiling in torah, etc. At these times it is a great duty for every G-d fearing person to strengthen himself and rouse his heart to toil in torah and avodah at these times more than other times. His reward from Heaven will be multiplied over many times, etc. And especially since then, the angels are idle above because there is not so much rousing (hitorerut) from below.

And in midrash shmuel, on "if you would be idle from the torah" (Avot 4:10), you think that you

alone go idle. On this, he continued "there are many idlers opposite you" (ibid).

Namely, angels above. For there are many encampments (machanot) of angels whose primary life force and spiritual flow (chiyutam and shefa) depends on the rousing from below.

Therefore, put to heart how many are going idle above due to you. For they depend on the toil of the torah scholars below. end quote.

With this, I explained the hint in the verse: "*You, who sit in the gardens the friends hearken to your voice; let me hear it*" (Shir 8:13).

The intent of "*who sit in the gardens*" is to synagogues and places of torah study. Behold, above there are "friends" who listen to you, namely, the ministering angels. They are called "friends" because they don't have any jealousy or hatred. . They listen to you. For they hope to your toil in torah since their primary shefa comes through your toil in torah. Therefore "let me hear your voice", so that I can sustain the angels through this. For their life force depends on your toil in torah.

Q Level 3

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - "strive to be a man" - Rabeinu Yonah explained: "in a place where there are not others greater in wisdom than you, strive to be a man (the word "man" connotes the greatness of man, such as 'and the man Moses..') (Bamidbar 12:3).

And even if there is no one greater in wisdom than you in your city or even in your generation, nevertheless, do not refrain from increasing wisdom. See yourself as if you were in the generation of the sages of the talmud, etc. imagine you were standing with the prophets up until Moshe Rabeinu, and [ask yourself] when will you attain their levels and wisdom?". end quote.

We must know that a man is under duty at all times and especially in our generation of lowly stature, to think always on the greatness of man and the great men of previous generations. To see and contemplate through this how great is man's obligation and to not become slack in the service.

For to our dismay in our lowly state, anyone who dons an important jacket and grows a beard and peot is considered a tzadik. The matter is shocking. These are the words of Rabeinu Yonah on our mishna...

If one does this contemplation (on the greatness of man and the great men of previous generations) he will certainly not become slack in the service.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - a boorish and empty man. He is like a barren (unworked) field, his heart was not sowed with torah nor derech eretz, mussar, and just ways. He is worse than an am ha'aretz. For the latter has derech eretz at least (Sotah 22a). For such a person, it is possible for him to be G-d fearing and not sin. But all his service, righteousness, and virtue is only out of fear of punishment. All his duties towards G-d and man are like laws he is forced to do. He does not do them due to fear of sin itself, i.e. out of fear that he will become an abomination in the eyes of G-d. For his soul was not roused in proper love of G-d and man.

"a bashful cannot learn" - he who fears that his honor might be diminished when he asks on something hard and complex that he saw in a book or heard and did not understand. For he fears he will be viewed as one who lacks understanding. Such a person will always remain lacking

knowledge.

"an impatient [cannot teach]" - he who is an impatient (kapdan) and angry person is not fit to be a teacher to the students or to the congregation. For besides that through anger, the wisdom of the teacher will depart at that time and he cannot explain the matter properly (Pesachim 66b), and both the mind of the speaker and listener will be confused, besides this, how can the student heed the words of one who hates him? Namely, the Rav or teacher who is like a fiery furnace which shoots out bolts, arrows and death all around him with fury and wrath. But "the words of the wise are heard gently" (Kohelet 9:17).

Level 3

Chasdei David

Chasdei David - all the words of Hillel here exhort on things which prevent torah study.

"a bashful cannot learn" - for if he is embarrassed to ask and is concerned others will mock him, he will always remain with his doubts and will not be able to learn properly. Likewise, a kapdan who is irritated on the students when they ask him questions will not be able to teach properly.

For through anger, his wisdom will depart (see Pesachim 66b). Likewise one who engages in much business does not become wise in torah.. Thus, strive to be a man and overcome these obstacles..

Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - if you observe the congregation in the synagogue, you will see that most fall under the name "boor" while few fall under the name tzadik. This is hinted in the word tzibur, which consists of the letter tzadik and the letters "boor". Both joined together form the word tzibur.

But only the first letter of the word tzadik is there to teach on their few number. But all the letters of the word boor are there to teach on their multitude..

Don't say "I will separate from them, and not pray with them, so my prayer will not be mixed with these boors". On the contrary it is good for you to pray with them, and your prayer mixing with theirs will avail you more, as our sages said: "any prayer mixed with that of the sinners of Israel is more accepted. For in the temple incense, the chelbana spice had a bad smell but was nevertheless counted with the required spices of the incense mixture."

Therefore, if your prayer is mixed with that of the boors which itself is repulsive, it will grant importance to your prayer. For it is impossible for your prayer to be properly whole, without any deficiency.

But now when it is mixed with the prayers of the boors, it will ascend. For its deficiency is less apparent relative to the others. This is as our sages said on the verse: "I found Israel like grapes in the desert" (Hoshea 9:10).

If you say: "since my prayer gains relative importance and level due to mixing with the prayer of the boors, if so, it is good to mix with the wicked, to sit with them and join their company so that my deeds will also gain relative importance.."

On this he said (last mishna): "do not believe in yourself until the day of your death", i.e. do not believe in yourself thinking you can join the wicked man and not learn (be influenced) by his deeds.. For it is impossible to join a wicked man and not learn (be influenced) by his deeds.

And do not say: I will also not join even those who are accepted as tzadikim for maybe internally they are wicked and this will come out through my association with them.. better for me to sit alone and abstain from everyone". On this he said: "do not judge your fellow", to say maybe he is wicked internally, "until you reach his place", and you see this actually..

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - ..if we were to explain the words of the sages according to how many people understand them, namely, that the bashful cannot learn because he does not ask on what he lacks understanding, the kapdan cannot teach because the student is afraid to ask questions, the much-engaged merchant cannot grow wise due to his many occupations - if so, any man could have said these things, even an average man... and even a school child can say these things.

Behold, we already said many times that the words of the sages are only Wisdom (chochma). They are not words of human beings which speak things according to human logic.

That which he said here: "*a boor cannot be sin-fearing, an ignoramus (am-haaretz) cannot be pious*", you should know that these two names represent two distinct levels, despite that their matter is the same, namely, they don't have torah and Wisdom.

But they are divided into two names due to their being two distinct levels.

For a thing which is desolate is called "boor", such as "*that the land be not desolate*" (Gen.47:19) - whose Targum is "will not be boor". Thus a field which does not have any produce is called a "boor field".

Likewise from the aspect of not having any wisdom, a man may be called a "boor", for he is empty of wisdom.

Similarly, from the aspect of lacking wisdom, a man may be called an "am haaretz". For a [physical] body which is connected (mechubar) to Wisdom is not the same as a [physical] body which is devoid of wisdom.

A man who does not have torah has two matters:

One, he is empty of wisdom.

Two, the body of man, which is the receptacle of wisdom, is found lacking when a man does not have wisdom in him.

From the first aspect, he is called "boor", while from the second aspect, he is called an "am haaretz".

Hence, a man without torah has a deficiency from the aspect of the body and from the aspect of the intellect (sechel).

From the aspect of the intellect not being found in him he is called a boor. While, from the aspect that all the powers of the body are lacking in him when he is without wisdom and torah, he is called an am haaretz.

This is what he said: "*a boor cannot be sin-fearing*". For "the fear of Heaven" (yirat shamayim), namely, that he receives the fear from G-d (shehu mekabel hayira min Hash-em) - and one who lacks the torah, which is the true wisdom, does not receive the fear [of Heaven] from G-d. (translator: since he is far from G-d. But not that G-d sends him fear, as explained in Rabbi Hartman's commentary)

Our sages also said this: *"if there is no wisdom, there is no fear"* (Avot 3:17), as we will explain.

This matter is clear. For when a man is close to the king, he fears him. But when he is distant from the king, he does not fear him. Since then he is not affected (by his presence) and does not fear him at all.

Likewise, a man who lacks the spiritual torah (hatorah hasichlit) is called far from G-d, blessed be He. For closeness to G-d is through the torah so that through the torah, human beings cleave to Him, blessed be He, as we explained earlier.

This matter is clear. For the clinging of a man to G-d is through a man's having torah within himself.

Without this, a man is just a [creature of physical] body (baal guf). And a [creature of physical], corporeal body has no way to approach G-d, who is devoid of body.

Only through torah which is [divine] Intellect (sichlit), through this, a man has a way to draw close to G-d. Therefore, one who does not have wisdom and torah is considered far from G-d, blessed be He. And as before, fear of the king is only when one is close to the king.

Therefore, a boor, i.e. one who does not have wisdom, does not have fear of sin. Namely, that he fears from G-d. This matter is clear.

"an am haaretz cannot be a chasid" - for a man who has in him the Wisdom [of torah], from the aspect that his body is connected to the Intellect (mechubar l'sechel), he has refinement of the physical (zachut hachomer). For without a doubt, the body of a man is not the same as the body of an animal. For since the body of an animal is not close to the Intellect (sechel), it is of completely coarse and gross physicality.

But for the body of man, since man has an intellect (sechel), his physicality is fine and pure (dak v'zach). And when he is a possessor of Wisdom completely, then he is completely devoid of the coarseness of the physicality.

Due to this, it is possible for piety (chasidut) to exist in him, namely, that he is a good man who acts piously with everyone.

The opposite of this - *"an am haaretz cannot be a chasid"*. For he is far from the good since he is of coarse, gross physicality. How then can he have piety?

For piety (chasidut) is from the aspect that he is a good man, and this good will exist when he is divested of the coarseness of physicality until he is near the Intellectual (sichli). Then good will be found in him. But this person who is an am haaretz, and he is of gross physicality, how can he be pious to act beyond the letter of the law? For that occurs only from the aspect of good alone and this good is not found in the physicality as we explained above.

Thus, he said that one who does not have a Sechel (Intellect), which is the torah, he does not have fear of Heaven in him due to lacking the Sechel which is the torah. For through the Sechel, he has fear of Heaven in him. But if he does not have the Sechel, there is no fear here as they said: *"if there is no wisdom, there is no fear"* (Avot 3:17).

And since the man lacks the level of sechel, he is [perforce] of coarse, gross physicality. Therefore, he cannot be a Chasid, to do good beyond the letter of the law. For this comes only from divestment of the physicality. And the more one turns to the physicality, the less he has good.

You will find this matter expressed clearly. Namely, that all things divested from the physicality are called good. The torah itself is called good, as written: "For I gave you good teaching; forsake not My Torah" (Mishlei 4), and in Menachot (53a): "let the good come and receive the good from the good to the good ones".

The explanation of this is that Moshe was worthy to receive the torah. Moshe was called "good" because he was the man of G-d, he was like an angel (spiritual being), divested of the physicality which is evil.

Therefore, he was fit to receive the torah which is the divine intellect (sechel Eloki), completely divested of all physicality. This is why the torah is called good.

It was given to Yisrael, for they are called "Adam", as written: "you are Adam" (Yechezkel 34:31). For since they are not of coarse physicality, therefore, they are called "Adam". For as we said earlier, the Adam has no animal physicality. So too Yisrael who are more divested of the physicality are worthy to be called "Adam" due to this.

Therefore, all these things are worthy of being called good for they are separated from the coarseness of the physicality. You can see from this that "good" applies to something separated from the physicality.

This is what he said: "an am haaretz cannot be pious". For everywhere, chasidut (piety) refers to the trait of "good". This trait does not apply to an am haaretz. For he is of gross physicality and lacks refinement of the physical. He is only of coarse, gross physicality.

Due to this, he is not a chasid, to act within the letter of the law. For Chasidut is from the aspect of divestment and refinement, i.e. being separated from the coarseness of the physicality.

You should understand this for it is words of Wisdom.

"A bashful (bayshan) cannot learn" - this is as our sages explained. It is written: "is not My word like fire?", says the L-ord" (Yirmiyahu 23:29), and "from His right hand was a fiery Law for them" (Devarim 33:2). And in Beitzah 25b:

"Why was the Torah given to Israel? Because they are brazen. The School of R. Yishmael taught: 'At His right hand was a fiery law unto them'; the Holy One, blessed be He, said: These are worthy to be given the fiery law."

i.e. just like they themselves are brazen, so too they are fit for the torah which is fire, to attach to them. For every matter which is Sichli (transcendent intellect), like the torah, it possesses power and brazenness like fire which is brazen.

Therefore, the torah is fitting for Yisrael since they too are brazen. This is what was said here: *"a bashful (bayshan) cannot learn"*. For the bayshan who is the opposite of the brazen, it is impossible for him to receive the torah.

For the torah was given to Yisrael because they are brazen. The torah connects (mityacheset) to Yisrael due to this.

Thus since he is a bashful, he cannot receive the torah. For the receiver needs to connect (mityaches) to what he receives. And since the torah is mityacheset to fire, if a man is not mityaches to this, he cannot receive the torah.

(Translator: some quotes brought in Rabbi Hartman's commentary on the Maharal:

In Gevurot Hash-em ch.72, the Maharal writes: "the Jewish people are brazen. For their soul is not immersed in the physicality. Therefore, they are brazen. For the soul acts while the physical is only acted upon (translator: by laws of physics, instincts, etc). Thus, the brazenness of the Jews teaches that their soul is not so immersed in the physicality. Therefore they are brazen. For every brazen (az) has power to act (koach poel), but one who is a bayshan is acted upon (mitpael, like all things physical)..."

And in Netiv HaTorah (ch.2): "the torah is the sechel elyon (supernal intellect) and it is thus hard to acquire. Therefore, a man needs preparations to receive the torah. For otherwise, he cannot receive it... Because man is of physical body and the torah is divine intellect. Therefore, a man needs to be far from traits which are physical and cling to that which is sichli (intellect/spiritual)..."

And in Netzach Yisrael (ch.7): "the torah and the body are two opposites. If so, how can the torah which is sichli exist in a physical body of man, which is its opposite? Therefore, the torah cannot exist in a man of physicality (adam gashmi). For they are like two unrelated and incompatible things which cannot co-exist..."

"an irritable (kapdan) cannot teach" - for a man is of physical body. Thus if the teacher is a kapdan and a kapdan is fire, his fire adds to the fire of the torah.

Already it was [hard] enough for a man of physical body to receive the torah of fire. If now the additional fire (of the kapdan) is added, it is now impossible to receive all this fire.

(in the ketav yad: "for the teacher needs to have a connection to he who receives from him. But when the teacher is a kapdan, he is all fire, and there cannot be a connection between him and the receiver).

And if Yisrael were not brazen, as mentioned, they would not be fit to receive [even] the torah which is fire. This is the meaning of *"an irritable (kapdan) cannot teach"*.

"Not all who engage in much trade become wise" - this matter was also clarified by the sages in tractate Eiruvim (55a):

"Rebbi Yochanan expounded: *'it (the torah) is not in Heaven'* (Devarim 30:12) - it is not to be found among the arrogant; *'neither is it beyond the sea'* (Devarim 30:12) - it is not to be found among merchants or dealers".

It is proper to ask: what connection is there between these two things together that he said: "you will not find the torah among the arrogant and the merchants?"

Furthermore, what is the explanation of the verse: *"It is not in heaven.. Nor is it beyond the sea.. Rather, [this] thing is very close to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it"* (Devarim 30:12-14).

The explanation of these things is that the verse comes to say that the torah is not a physical matter.

For physical matters, it is relevant to speak about distance. Sometimes they are so distant from a

man that it impossible for him to reach them. Thus he said the torah of intellect (torah Sichlit) is not like this. For it is not physical, and that which is not physical is both near and far. It is far from the aspect of its loftiness and near from the aspect that it has no physical distance away.

Therefore, the verse says on the torah that *"it is not concealed from you, nor is it far away from you"* (ibid), i.e. it does not have physical distance. For the distance in physical things is in three dimensions, height, length and width.

Corresponding to height, he said: "it is not in heaven", which refers to physical height. Corresponding to length and width, he said: 'nor is it across the sea". For the sea is on length and width of the land and covers it.

This means to say that the torah does not have any physical distance. Due to this itself, the verse hints that the torah is not in the arrogant. For since the torah has no physical distance, therefore, it is the opposite of the arrogant who thinks he is elevated above everyone.

Due to this, the arrogant leans to the physicality for distance is physical. And it is known that the trait of arrogance is a physical trait. Although it is not really elevation but the trait nevertheless tends to the physicality.

Thus he is called "arrogant (gass ruach)". For the term "gassut" (coarse) applies to the physicality not the Intellect (sechel). The Intellect (sechel) does not have any coarseness (gassut), for it is all fine (dak).

We explained this matter already in several places. And since the trait of the arrogant (gass ruach) is to turn to the physicality, therefore, the torah is not fitting for him, and the gass ruach is not suitable to the torah sichlit. For things which are not related to each other cannot connect together.

"it is not to be found among merchants or dealers" - after the verse says that the torah does not have physical distances, and mentioned that it is not over the sea which is physical distance in length, therefore, the merchants who trade and travel around the world, on its length and width..

Due this, they are unsuitable to torah. For the torah does not have a matter of physicality, namely, physical distances. Thus, the torah is not fitting for them, for it is divested of these distances...

Thus *"not all who engage in much trade become wise"*, as if to say that he is suited to travel around the world's length and width but not for torah..

He said specifically "much trade".. i.e. with excessive toil, this teaches that all of this man's matters are of physicality and he has no connection to the sechel and is not suited for it...

Know that the Tanna came to rectify (mashlim) a man in all his parts. A man has a sechel, nefesh, body, and money (possessions). These things encompass all that pertains to a man. Therefore, he said that if a man does not have a sechel, he has no fear of Heaven and no piety. Therefore, he should be a baal sechel.

Corresponding to the soul (nefesh), he said "an irritable cannot teach". It is known that anger comes from the nefesh. For his heart ignites up, therefore a man should be careful to not be drawn excessively after the traits of the nefesh.

So too, he must not be drawn excessively by the traits of the body and be compared to an animal.

For bashfulness is a physical animal trait. For the soul has extreme brazenness (as before). And afterwards, he said: *"not all who engage in much business become wise"* corresponding to the money (possessions). Namely, to not be drawn after excessive monetary occupations.

"In a place where there are no men, strive to be a man" - after mentioning the mussar of man in all relevant domains, including money, for through his money, man is able to stand and sustain himself, as mentioned in many places in the words of the sages. Afterwards, he spoke on the man himself who includes all the things which make a man whole. On this he said: *"In a place where there are no men, strive to be a man"*, i.e. when it seems there are no men, strive to be a man. For then his reward will be much greater. For without his doing for others, they would not have done the right things...

We have clarified how the mussar of Hillel encompasses straightening all man's parts, to give mussar to each part. And afterwards to the man himself.

This is the way of the Chachamim (torah sages) - to teach all-encompassing mussar.

There are more deeper matters of wisdom here. We already hinted on this above by "a boor cannot be sin-fearing, an am-haaretz cannot be pious", only that we cannot explain more than this clearly.

Level 4

☆ Rabbi Hartman on Maharal

Rabbi Hartman pg.130, hebrewbooks.org/42839 - (kabalistic) - the mishna mentions six things: "(1) an am haaretz cannot be a chasid, (2) a boor cannot fear sin, (3) a bashful cannot learn, (4) a kapdan cannot teach, (5) not all who engage much in trade become wise, (6) in a place where there is no man, strive to be a man.

These are six middot [Chesed, Yirah, Lilmod, Lelamed, Chachma, Ish], which correspond to the 6 sefirot Chagat-Nahi, namely, Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferet, Netzach, Hod, Yesod, which correspond to Avraham (chesed), Yitzchak (Gevurah), Yaakov (Tiferet), Moshe (netzach), Aharon (Hod), Yosef (Yesod).

We have explained already above that Chesed and Yirah are the first two sefirot. "a bashful cannot learn" - this is Tiferet, the trait of Yaakov who was "sitting in tents" (Gen.25:27). "a kapdan cannot teach", this is the trait of Moshe who would teach torah to Yisrael (see the Gra's commentary who brings a verse on Moshe here). His trait is Netzach (Zohar II 276b).

"Not all who engage much in trade become wise" - this is the trait of Hod. We will explain according to his words in Tiferet Yisrael ch.18:

"He called the Sechel 'taya' (merchant). For the Sechel investigates on things and travels the world through its length and width. It even investigates non-physical things and grasps them. This is the matter of 'merchant'.. who trades and circles the land, through its length and width. Therefore, the Sechel is called 'taya' (merchant). For the 'taya' also trades and circles the land's length and width and acquires merchandise."

Thus it refers to wisdom that a man grasps on his own and was not revealed to him from others. As known this is the trait of Hod, which is the trait of Aharon the Kohen (Zohar II 276b), the aspect of the Oral Torah, which bestows according to the ability to receive.

"In a place where there is not a man" - this is the trait of Yesod. For "man" refers to this (Zohar I 6a, 60a). This is the trait of Yosef..

Chapter 2 Mishna 7 - Floating Skull

He too saw a lone skull floating upon the water. He said to it: **על דאטפּוּת, אַפּוּת אַפּוּת, אַפּוּת אַפּוּת**. Because you drowned [others] you were drowned, and in the end those who drowned you will be drowned.

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "Because you drowned [others] you were drowned" - he was a wicked man who robbed people and dumped them in the river. Measure for measure you were dealt with accordingly.

"and in the end those who drowned you will be drowned" - only Beit Din (court of law) was permitted to execute you, not those who murdered you. But nevertheless, G-d allowed them to murder you due to "evil is brought about by Heaven through the wicked" (Rashi - as the verse in Shmuel I 24:13 says: "from the wicked goes out wickedness"). In the future, He will claim your murder from them.

Q Level 1

☆ Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel on Avot - Hillel wanted to speak on this wondrous matter of our faith, to teach human beings on divine providence (hashgacha pratit) and that G-d pays back measure for measure, a trait which was not annulled (Sotah 8b).

Q Level 2

☆ Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - some explain that Hillel recognized this head and that it belonged to a murderer and robber of the public. Thus, since Hillel recognized him as a murderer and robber of the public, he judged that certainly he was murdered due to being a murderer.

Hillel came to teach us on divine providence (Hashgacha pratit). For he did not say merely: "because you murdered, you were murdered, etc." For the divine providence is even more detailed than this. And if when you murdered others, you did not also dump them in the water, then you too would not have been dumped in the water after being murdered. Rather, just like you committed two evils, so too they murdered you and dumped you in the water. And likewise this will be the fate of those who murdered you and dumped you in the water in all its details. For everything is under divine providence..

Q Level 2



Sefer Ikarim 4:9 - G-d pays back measure for measure so people will recognize that there is divine providence and a righteous Judge in the world.

Q Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - "because you drowned.." - this sage saw the head of a man he recognized as a murderer and knew that he was murdered by other murderers..

"those who drowned you will be drowned" - those who murdered you will eventually be killed by bandits or executed by the government and their corpse will be dumped in the water measure for measure, as our sages said: "one who incurs death by sword - or he will be executed by the government or he will be killed by bandits" (Sotah 8b).

Q Level 2

Meorei Ohr

Meorei Ohr - it must be that Hillel recognized whose head it was and that he was a wicked man

and a murderer. For otherwise, how could he say this? Maybe it was a Chasid (pious man) who was killed on kidush Hash-em (as a martyr) thereby suspecting him of something he did not do.

🔍 **Level 2**

☆ **Chasdei David**

Chasdei David - why did Hillel speak to the skull? perhaps as a nechama (consolation), for a murdered person does not have peace in the next world until his murderer is also killed (see Devarim Rabba 2:25).

🔍 **Level 2**

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - Hillel was moved in seeing the disgrace of an unburied body. Without a doubt, you also disgraced others by throwing their skulls in water or some other act to disgrace them, and were paid back measure for measure, as our sages said that this trait (of measure for measure) was not annulled (Sanhedrin 96).

🔍 **Level 2**



Chidushei Maharich - "a lone skull floating upon the water" - a skull is a heavy object. It should have sunk to the bottom and not be floating on the surface of the water. Rather, it seems it was decreed on it to float [miraculously] because it drowned another person. This was to make known to the world the trait of "measure for measure". Thus it was decreed on it to float.

🔍 **Level 2**

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - from here we learn that every evil a man commits to his fellow returns back to him someday in a specific manner due to the attribute of "measure for measure". So too also when one does good to his fellow, the good returns back to him eventually in some way.

🔍 **Level 2**

☆ **Tosfot Yom Tov**

Tosfot Yom Tov - the skull was just a deaf bone, unable to hear. Furthermore, he was talking towards the skull. Why didn't he turn his head to the listeners and say instead: "since he murdered..."

Thus Hillel was talking to himself that it is proper to be that: "because you drowned, you were drowned". But not that every time this happens. For what we see in reality contradicts this..

And in the Midrash Rabba on the verse: "Whoever sheds the blood of man through man shall his blood be shed [for in the image of G-d, He made man]" (Bereishit 9:6):

"Rabbi Levi says: 'but many murderers die [peacefully] on their beds.. Rather, when all human beings rise up in the future [resurrection], then 'his blood shall be shed'"..

Some say Hillel's intent was only on Gilgulim (reincarnations). But it does not at all seem correct in my eyes. For the secret of Gilgulim is a hidden matter and proper to be concealed except to special individuals. And Rabeinu HaKadosh would not have included this in his mishna.

For just like "a verse does not go out of its plain maning", so too a mishna does not go out of its plain implied meaning understood by everyone.. And Hillel even said this in Aramaic which was the language fluent by all the masses at that time..

🔍 **Level 3**

☆ **Shoshanim LeDavid**

Shoshanim l'David - according to my humble view, it seems to me to argue on the Tosfot Yom Tov and say that all Hillel's words are in the way of "allusion" (Remez). This is in the way of what was reported of the holy Arizal in the Sefer Hagilgulim that the punishment for murder is that he is mitgalgel (reincarnated) in a section of water (and drowned continuously again and again).

Thus it says: "he too saw", ie he [too] gazed with his mind's eye (einei sichlo) and the ruach

hakodesh (holy spirit) within him on a "gulgolet" (skull), i.e. that there is a man "megulgal" (reincarnated, the word is similar to gulgolet/skull) on the surface of the water.

Do not be amazed at this for Rabeinu Arizal also attained this with his ruach hakodesh and was able to see and know of gilgulim (people reincarnated) in stones, plants, animals, and humans.

Through this Hillel certainly knew that it was due to the sin of murder... And because this was something proper to be concealed from the masses, he said it in such a manner that the plain meaning is that he literally saw an actual skull of a murderer. Thus the masses will understand it simply...with this we have answered all of the Tosfot Yom Tov's questions.

And if you examine deeply Rashi's words on this Mishna (in Sukkah 53a), you will find that it is close to certain that his intent there is on what we said. Only that he too concealed his words and only hinted on the above explanation.

Q Level 3

☆ Chida

Chida - Zera Yamin - "in the end.." - he did not say merely *"those who drowned you will be drowned"*, but rather *"in the end those who drowned you will be drowned"*, to hint that even if your murderers die [peacefully] on their beds, nevertheless, they will come back in a gilgul (reincarnation) and be murdered.

Thus he said: *"in the end.."*, i.e. nevertheless in the end they will be murdered, if not in this incarnation (gilgul), then in another gilgul. This matter is among the wonders of He who is of perfect knowledge...

Rabeinu Arizal explained our mishna that Hillel was as Moshe Rabeinu. Just like Moshe Rabeinu lived for 120 years, so too Hillel lived for 120 years. Just like Moshe Rabeinu led the Jewish people for 40 years, so too Hillel. Moshe was extremely humble, and so too Hillel. And just like Moshe drowned Pharaoh in the sea, so too Hillel in his generation saw a skull - which was the skull of Pharaoh, floating on the raging waters.

And he said: *"Because you drowned others"* - "and Pharaoh commanded all his people saying every son who is born you shall cast into the Nile" (Shemot 1:22) - *"you were drowned"*. And then he turned to the Jews and said: *"and in the end those who drowned you will be drowned"*. For whoever oppresses the Jewish people, at the time of the resurrection, they will be drowned and [resurrected] and drowned again and again, as our sages said (Sanhedrin 92a) on the verse: "[And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life] and some to shame and everlasting contempt.." (Daniel 12:2).

(Translator: and in the Arizal's Shaar HaGilgulim, Hakdama 22:

"one who murdered a person in this world is reincarnated in water.. His punishment is that he stands on a flow of water. He tries to stand up constantly but the water constantly throws him off balance and he has no rest whatsoever.. and he is drowned continuously.." end quote.

"he too saw" - a hint that just like Moshe saw Pharaoh drown at the Red sea, so too Hillel saw the skull.)

Q Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - it is proper to ask: does this matter (lesson) depend on seeing a skull floating on water? For if he saw the skull on dry land, would he not say also this? Why does this matter depend on water? And if the matter does not depend on water, then what about all the great men in history who were murdered (but who themselves did not murder)?..

The explanation is that the intent of "water" is that Hillel saw a person who was completely washed away, ie completely uprooted with nothing remaining in the world..

The head represents the person's root. For man is like an upside down tree as we explained in many places.. Only water has this power to wash out completely and with great force.. On this Hillel said that if he himself did not completely wash out someone else, he would not have been washed out completely..

And the person who washed you out will in the end be washed out. If not in this world, then all the more so in the next world, which is undoubtedly a far greater destruction..

This will answer why he chose a plural tense "[Because you drowned] others" and likewise "in the end those who drowned you will be drowned". For normally a single individual does not wash out another completely and uproot him so that he has no remembrance left.

But there is more [wisdom] why he used plural tense... For the primary washing away is with water. Water is everywhere in plural tense. You will never find water in singular tense anywhere in Hebrew. It is also written: "only a flooding (Shetef) of great waters [that] should not reach him" (Tehilim 32:6). The reason is that flooding (shtifa) does not apply to the single individual. He does not have the power to "flood". For it is an act which spreads out and eradicates everything. Therefore, flooding (shtifa) is attributed to water. For it has the power of the many, to spread out and eradicate from all sides... end of Maharal.

Translator: some interesting cross references I found in Rabbi Hartman's commentary: in Gevurot Hash-em ch.18 the Maharal writes:

It is proper to ask on the verse: "She named him Moses, saying 'For I drew him from the water'" (Shemot 2:10). It should have said: "for I drew him from the river", to indicate which waters she took him out from.

I say that the name "Moshe" teaches on the primary matter of Moshe and his greatness. For he was removed and taken out from the water.

The explanation is that water does not have a form (tzura) which stands and remains.. when you understand this, you will understand that the level of Moshe Rabeinu is the level of the form (tzura).

For it is separated in level from the physical. For the separated spiritual beings (sichliim nivdalim) are only form (tzura)..

But water is the opposite, for water does not have a complete form (tzura gemura). Therefore, water is always called in plural tense. You will not find water in singular tense anywhere. For since any unity is from the power of the form (tzura) which unites the matter, and water lacks a complete form, therefore since water is without enduring form, it is always in plural tense.

But Moshe was the opposite of them. He was a divested form (tzura nivdelet)... This is the opposite of water which lacks a unifying form. For this he was called Moshe, since he was removed from the water. end quote.

And on Nidah 31a, the Maharal writes:"for water is extremely physical (chomriim), until it has no form (tzura) at all, and there is nothing more distant from Form like water.."

Chapter 2 Mishna 8 - More Flesh

He would say: the more flesh, the more worms. The more possessions, the more worry. The more wives, the more witchcraft. The more maidservants, the more lewdness. The more man-servants, the more theft. The more Torah, the more life. The more yeshiva [studying torah with others], the more wisdom. The more advice, the more understanding. The more charity, the more peace. One who acquires a good name acquires it for himself. One who acquires words of Torah has acquired for himself life in the World to Come.

הוא הֵיאַ אֹמֵר, מְרֻבָּה בֶּשֶׁר, מְרֻבָּה רְמָה. מְרֻבָּה נְכֻסִים, מְרֻבָּה דְאָגָה. מְרֻבָּה נְשִׁים, מְרֻבָּה כְּשָׁפִים. מְרֻבָּה שְׁפָחוֹת, מְרֻבָּה זָמָה. מְרֻבָּה עֲבָדִים, מְרֻבָּה גְזֵל. מְרֻבָּה תּוֹרָה, מְרֻבָּה חַיִּים. מְרֻבָּה יְשִׁיבָה, מְרֻבָּה חֻכְמָה. מְרֻבָּה יַעֲצָה, מְרֻבָּה תְּבוּנָה. מְרֻבָּה צְדָקָה, מְרֻבָּה שְׁלוֹם. קָנָה שֵׁם טוֹב, קָנָה לְעַצְמוֹ. קָנָה לוֹ דְבָרֵי תּוֹרָה, קָנָה לוֹ חַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא:

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "the more flesh, the more worms" - one who eats and drinks excessively until he becomes fat and thick, he will increase worms in the grave, and "The worm is as painful to the dead as a needle in the flesh of the living" (Berachot 18b). This Tanna is teaching us that all excesses are bad for man except for abundance in torah, wisdom, and tzedaka.

Q Level 1

Tosfot Yom Tov

Tosfot Yom Tov - the soul sees the disgust (rotting) of the body and is greatly pained by this.. as lyov said: "But his flesh causes him pain, and his soul mourns for him" (Job 14:21).

Q Level 2

☆ Binyan Avot

Binyan Avot (by Kabbalist Tzemach haKohen, Jerba) - "more flesh more worms" - Rabeinu Yosef Karo writes in his Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 231): "let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven, even eating, drinking, etc. to serve your Creator.. as written 'know Him in all your ways'.."

Thus, if his intent in eating is only to increase flesh. Then, there is no benefit from this. He merely increases worms. For he did not have intent to serve his Creator.. Therefore, the Tana was careful and did not say "more eating", to hint that the sin is only on the intent to increase flesh.

Q Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "more flesh.." - this was said also regarding one's health. If one answers the demands of the body, he brings evil on himself. For the body demands to eat much and labor little, to increase tranquility and indulgences of the masses (like a child). But really all these things are nothing but the rotting of the body.

This is what the Tanna says: if you increase to answer the calls of the flesh, to the physicality of your body, you will increase only evil on the body itself - worms. For it will pull you nearer to the grave.

As known, lust (taava) is the greatest arch-enemy of man. And the more a man is immersed in this, the more he brings his end nearer. Thus, the Tanna says: "more flesh", namely, the lusts of the flesh. For through your increasing lust, you are "increasing worms", namely, you draw your end of worms nearer.

The general principle in physicality: that which a person thinks is good and beneficial, the truth of the matter is that it harms him and causes him evil. A man thinks that if he increases to eat meat, it will benefit his health and strengthen his body. But it is the opposite - the eating brings illnesses and draws his end nearer.

Similarly, a man thinks that if he increases money and possessions, he will be happy. Therefore, he puts all his strength towards attaining them. But the end of the matter is that his possessions disturb him. For "more possessions, more worry", since many people gaze intently at his wealth. Furthermore, most of the time, wealth corrupts a person. And even if it does not harm him, it will harm his children. They will become corrupt due to too much good. On this it is said: "the trial of wealth is bigger than the trial of poverty".

All this is regarding physical matters. But in spiritual matters, the opposite is correct - the more one increases spiritual possessions, the more he increases happiness and contentment. On this he said: "more torah more life". Namely, spiritual life which is the real life.

 **Level 1**

☆ **Bartenura**

Bartenura - "the more possessions, the more worry" - lest people will steal from him or perhaps bandits will come to kill him..

 **Level 2**

☆ **Binyan Avot**

Binyan Avot (by Kabbalist Tzemach haKohen, Jerba) - "more possessions more worry" - as written: "whoever loves silver will not be sated with silver" (Kohelet 5:9). For no man dies fulfilling half his lusts. He who has 100 longs for 200. There is no end to this. This is why money is called "kessef" (in hebrew). For one who has kessef is nikessaf (longs) and lusts to increase. Thus "more possessions", his belly will never be satiated. On the contrary, "more worry" to increase more money.

 **Level 2**



Amud HaAvodah, derosh hasameach b'chelko - our sages said: "no man dies with half of his lust in hand. He who has 100 lusts for 200. If he attained 200, he lusts for 400..." (Midrash Kohelet Raba 1:32). Thus, one who has much wealth is more poor than one who has little. For one who has 100 lacks only another 100. While one who has 200 lacks 200. This is what our sages said: "more possessions more worries". For the rich man worries on lack of money more than the poor man...

 **Level 2**

Chachmat Hamatzfun, Kedoshim - only the poor man can live tranquilly. For if a man acquires the slightest possession, then immediately, a worry is attached along with it. A man loses his tranquility and becomes a slave to guarding his money. He becomes completely immersed in worry and lack of trust. So too for other worldly matters such as extra wives, etc. Any extra acquisition causes sufferings to body or soul..

(Translator: and even if he just has money in the bank, he worries and thinks on investing it. For he cannot bear to see his money sitting idly in the bank.)

 **Level 1**

☆ **Bartenura**

Bartenura - "the more wives, the more witchcraft" - first a man adorns himself by extra flesh through excess food and drink. Afterwards, he seeks to increase possessions. After that, he sees that he can support many women and takes in many wives. Then each one needs a maidservant and he needs slaves to work fields and vineyards to support all their needs.. Thus they are taught in this order.

 **Level 2**

Mili d'Avot

Mili d'Avot - "more wives, the more witchcraft" - through the witchcraft they will entice him to do their will even if it is evil, similar to what was said on Shlomo: "his wives turned away his heart after other gods.." (Melachim I 11:4). Alternatively, the women themselves are the "witchcraft", namely, they will entice him through their make up and jewellery so he will do what they want.

🔍 **Level 2**



Ketuvot 59b (mishna) - "Rebbi Eliezer said: 'even if she brought him a hundred mainservants, he (the husband) may force her to work in wool, for idleness leads to lewdness (zima)'. Thus, "The more maidservants, the more lewdness" can also refer to one's own wife. For idleness leads to lewdness.

🔍 **Level 2**

☆ **Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan**

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan on Avot - "*more slaves more theft*" - for when there are many slaves, they will find an argument to steal and conceal their theft under the shadow of many slaves, saying "I am not the one who stole. Our master has many slaves". Alternatively, they will conspire together to steal outside.

🔍 **Level 3**

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - there are five lusts that awaken in a man one after the other from his childhood. First, immediately after birth, he lusts only for food and drink. Afterwards (as a child), he lusts also for money. Afterwards (at puberty) his sense of touch will awaken for relations with women or the like. Afterwards, he comes among society and wants others to honor him. Afterwards, when he begins to become old, he seeks people to serve and help him. In all of these things, if he chases after them, he will attain their opposite...

The Tanna then counted five different things which a person thinks are bad for a man but in truth, they lead to great good... Although they require great toil to acquire until his body weakens, but nevertheless, his life force strengthens through them. For G-d granted them to strengthen body and soul, unlike the first five which destroy a person's body..

🔍 **Level 3**

☆ **Ben Ish Chai**

Ben Ish Chai - Birkat Avot - come and see how repulsive are matters of this world. They are vanity and useless. Excess in them is evil and bitter. For the primary lusts of man are three:

One, lust for eating, drinking, and other enjoyments in order to be fat and healthy.

Two, lust for money. Namely, that he loves to amass much money, "he who loves money will not be satisfied with money".

Three, lust for relations.

These are the three primary lusts of man in this world.

Excessiveness in any of them is evil and bitter. You can see that the lust for eating, whereby one increases flesh, brings evil to oneself. Likewise, the lust for money is also an evil sickness. For through this he increases worry on himself. He comes to always worry about thieves, plunderers, storms in the sea, mishaps, and other potential losses. Thus, he will find that he does not have one hour of tranquility and peace for himself, not one hour without worry and distractions.

Regarding the lust for relations, he is thus forced to have many wives. Through this he increases witcheries. For women tend to be jealous of each other and each one wants her husband to love her only and hate the other [wife]. Thus, perforce each wife goes to a witch to do witchcraft on her husband so that he loves only her and hates the other wife. This is "more wives more witchcraft".

Now if this man who increased wives tries to be clever, he gives a maidservant to each wife and appoints the maidservant to watch over the wife and report to him on her whereabouts so his wife will not go to the witches.

But now, on the contrary, the matter has become more evil and more bitter. For "more maidservants more lewdness". Most maidservants are very promiscuous and perforce they sin and will lead his wives to do the same and each maidservant will be an enticer to her mistress. For after the maidservant sins, she will want to make her mistress stumble also. This is: "more maidservants more lewdness". For now his wives will also eventually sin under him.

If he tries to be clever and remedy this by buying slaves and marrying them to the maidservants so that the slaves will guard the maidservants from sinning and so that the maidservants will not need to look elsewhere for relations, this too is evil and bitter. For "more slaves more theft". Now the slaves will steal his money and the money of others. For most slaves are thieves.

Thus, whatever strategy he employs to save himself from excessive things of this world is evil and bitter and there is no remedy to save oneself.

But it is not so for matters of the next world. On the contrary increasing in them is good and proper. For "more torah, more life..."

Hence, the difference between matters of this world and matters of the next world is that for matters of this world the more one increases of them, the more he loses. While, for matters of the next world, the more he increases the more he gains...

Q Level 2

☆ Yavetz

Yavetz - the Holy One, blessed be He, made it so that excessiveness in these areas leads to loss. For these things are not themselves the goal [in life]. Rather, they are merely preparations to the goal (of perfecting the soul). For if one did not incur loss in them, people would chase after these preparation until every person would swallow his fellow alive and thus the true purpose [of life] would automatically become null and void.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "more advice more understanding" - a man should not tell himself that he is the wisest of all men and does not need the advice of others. For even if it were true that he is very wise, but nevertheless, he should increase to take counsel with others. For a man is a relative (biased) to himself and bribed by this closeness. Thus taking counsel with others who are not bribed like him will stand him up on the correct and wise path. Therefore, the more you take counsel, the more you will increase understanding for yourself so that a mishap will not come out from your hands.

Q Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "more tzedaka more shalom" - it is human nature that when one finds himself in difficulty and his livelihood does not come easily and he is hungry for bread, a spirit of jealousy and hatred enters his heart towards those whose livelihood comes abundantly and honorably. Thus, if one supports people who are in difficulties of the day and don't find their bread, he takes away the spirit of hatred which churns within them and replaces it with a spirit of love, shalom, and friendship.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "more tzedaka more shalom" - whoever gives tzedaka increases peace between the poor man and G-d. For due to his difficult situation, the poor man complains and moans that he too is a creature of G-d. Why then was it decreed on him to live in hardship and lacking everything while his fellow indulges in everything? And in the Midrash (Vayikra Rabba 34:16):

|"the poor man sits and complains: 'why am I different than Ploni? He sleeps on his bed and I have

to sleep here (on the street)'.
 If you raise him up and give to him, by your life, I (G-d) will consider it as if you made peace between Me and him.."

We learn from here that if one gives Tzedaka to a poor man and consoles him, he brings peace between the poor man and G-d... Due to this, measure for measure, the Holy One, blessed be He, increases shalom on him..

Q Level 3

☆ Binyan Avot

Binyan Avot (by Kabbalist Tzemach haKohen, Jerba) - "more tzedaka more shalom" - he increases shalom between the poor man and his wife, as the talmud says: "when barley is finished from the barrel, quarrels come" (Bava Metzia 59a).

Alternatively, he increases shalom in the world, similar to "If you oppress him, [beware,] for if he cries out to Me, I will surely hear his cry" (Shmot 22:22).

And in the time of the Arizal, it is reported that one time he was sitting with his disciples in the field where the prophet Hoshea ben Be'eri was buried. He was expounding to them secrets of the torah (kabala).

Suddenly he stopped in the middle of his words and said: "quickly gather some tzedaka amongst yourselves and send it to a poor man who sits near us in such and such a place. His name is Yaakov Alterotz. He is now sitting and crying and complaining to G-d on his poverty. His voice is ascending above and breaking through all the firmaments. It has entered the innermost chambers and the Holy One, blessed be is full of wrath on the whole city for not having pity on him.

Now I hear the announcer proclaiming in all the firmaments a heavenly decree of a thick swarm of locusts to devour all the crops around the city of Tzfat, etc. Therefore, quickly run and send him tzedaka.. when they entered his home they found him crying and moaning. after delivering the money they saw a huge cloud of locusts in the sky moving towards them. Suddenly a powerful wind swept the cloud towards the sea.. thus the decree was annulled.

You can see from a great story like this that "more tzedaka more Shalom" to the entire city.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "one who acquires a good name acquires it for himself" - how does one receive a good name? By doing kindness to everyone. By toiling and laboring on his character traits until he attains good traits which dignify him in the eyes of others. Through this he merits to have a good name in the mouth of others.

The Tanna tells us that such a man reached the virtue of a "good name", i.e. wholeness in virtues and character traits. It is as if he acquired himself for himself. For his essence improves more and more until he is all kindness and good traits and finds favor in the eyes of G-d and man.

Q Level 3

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - some explain that the Tanna is coming to distance a man from the bodily pleasures and lusts (taanugim v'taavot) which one's inclination naturally desires and to bring a man closer to the perfections, namely, the pleasures of the understanding soul (nefesh hamaskelet).

The physical pleasures are four: one, food and drink. Two, amassing money. Three, marital pleasures. Four, honor and arrogance.

Corresponding to the lust for food, he said: "more flesh...". For through enjoying and increasing eating, he increases flesh and fattens his body. On this he said: "more worms". For this serves only to harm him. Namely, after his death, there will be a lot of worms, and "The worm is as painful to the dead as a needle in the flesh of the living" (Berachot 18b).

For according to truth (kabala), one must believe that not all parts of the soul leave the body after death. Rather, there remains always a small part of the soul called in the Zohar (Shela pg.170 "hevel d'garmi".. Through this small part that remains in the body, he feels the pain of the worm.

And it is as if now while he is eating, he is increasing worms. For whatever is destined for something, it is as if it is being done already (kol haomed l'asot, k'asui dami - Shavuot 43a).

Corresponding to the second, amassing money, he said: "more possessions more worry". For the joy in wealth is only one thousandth of the worries that come out of this. It is not necessary to elaborate that there is much worry on losing it and much labor in amassing it..

Corresponding to the third, marital pleasures, he said: "more wives more witchcraft". For each one is jealous of the other (Megilah 13a), and does witcheries so he will love her, such that he will not enjoy any of them. For each one strives to take him out of the world (not to mention the loss of strength and dulling of the mind this causes).

Corresponding to the fourth, love of honor, to have many servants to increase his honor, he said: "more slaves more theft". Some explain they steal from him, while others explain he needs to steal to support them..

Thus all the types of bodily pleasures do not lead to good and it is proper to distance from them.

"more torah.. - now he comes to speak on the pleasures of the soul and the perfection they bring so that one will cling to them. He mentioned four good things corresponding to the four things mentioned previously.

Corresponding to "more flesh more worms", he said it is better for a man to "increase torah", which weakens man's strength and flesh. For through this, he will increase life, since "it is a tree of life.." (Mishlei 3:18). This is the opposite of the worm which destroys the body.

Corresponding to "more possessions more worry..", he said "more yeshiva..", and he will increase wisdom which will bring him joy, the opposite of worry.

Corresponding to "more wives" who do witcheries on him and dull his mind leaving him without intellect and understanding, he said "more counsel more understanding", ie not only will his mind not become dull, but on the contrary, he will increase understanding. For "give to the wise man and he will become wiser" (Mishlei 9:9).

Corresponding to one who chases after honor to increase slaves and maidservants, he said it is better to give tzedaka to the poor of the Jewish people, and that they be among his household (Avot 1:5). For through this, he increases tzedaka and shalom between G-d and the poor (see Midrash Rabba, end of Behar), so they don't complain to G-d for not having sustenance.

Level 3

Sforno

Meiri - he came to rouse a person that it is proper for his intent in life to be only in torah, middot (good traits), and mitzvot. But for other things, it is not proper to strive in them more than

necessary. For whoever increases in them beyond what is necessary, not only was it for nothing, but he also brings evil on himself..

As known, people have diverse intents [in life]. For some, all their intent is on bodily pleasures. Namely, eating and drinking so their neck will be thick and their body fat, desiring women and other bodily pleasures.

For some, all their intent is to amass money. Such a person will labor to increase wealth to fill up his treasuries with gold and silver.

For some, their intent is to become famous among the masses, with many servants and maidservants and great works until they are well known and their name is famous in the land.

For others, the spirit of G-d has touched their heart.. a spirit of wisdom and understanding has roused them and all their intent is to wholeness (Shlemut) in torah, mitzvot, and middot (good traits). For their intent in the land of the living is only on perfection (Shelemut) of the soul.

Corresponding to the first group who increases flesh, he said that he is increasing to hurt himself. For he increases worms and his conduct is a cause for many illnesses. Likewise, to this group "more wives more witchcraft". For when each one is jealous of the other, each will harass him and remove him as much as she can from loving the other. Most of the time, he will be damaged by this.

Corresponding to the second intent to increase possessions he said that this too causes harm to himself. For he increases worry of loss to his possessions and that others will see his wealth and try to topple him with cunning traps. Thus, his wealth is "guarded for his harm".

Corresponding to the third intent, he said: "more slaves more theft". That is to say, they will steal his money and likewise "more maidservants more lewdness". They too will spend his money with their lewd partners (noafim).

Thus, all these intents ruin his home and increased success in these areas only cause more damage and loss...

But "more torah more life", i.e. eternal life, in grasping some of the glory of his Creator...

🔍 Level 3

☆ **Nachalat Avot (Abarbanel)**

Nachalat Avot (Abarbanel) - in this teaching of Hillel, the mishna again proves the view of Rabbi regarding "what is the proper way a person should choose" (Avot 2:1)..

Hillel conducts an all-encompassing investigation on all the prevailing lifestyles led by people in order to find which path leads to happiness and success. He brought here four views.

The first view is of those who live a life of physical enjoyment. Namely, to eat, drink, indulge the body and try to live as long as possible. The masses believe this is the purpose of man and it is his portion for all his toil...

He immediately annulled this view saying: "**the more flesh, the more worms**", i.e. the proponents of this view think that in pampering their body, they will extend their days. But it is not so. For in "more flesh", by indulging in food and drink, death will come more swiftly on him and his end will draw nearer due to much flesh until he will become food for the worms...

The second view is of those people who pursue a life of enjoyment and fun in women and pleasures of people. To conquer young women and bring in all the women they choose.. Their intent in this is to arouse love and to have many children.

He said on this that it is a futile work. For **"the more wives, the more witchcraft"**. And instead of choosing women who will be *"bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh"* (Gen.2:23) that will give birth to children "in his form and likeness", they will confound him and drive him crazy with all their witcheries.. and the matter will turn out the opposite of his intent.

Due to this, the torah prohibited on incest and even for one's permitted wife, the torah prohibited her at certain times (Nidah) and even during permitted times, our sages commanded not to talk excessively with one's wife (Avot 1:5) lest he come to hirhur (arousal)..

The third view prevalent among the masses is that the ultimate success of man is to amass and secure great wealth. For through this he will live securely and will not lack anything of his needs nor need the gifts of others. Hillel said this too is vanity and his intent will not succeed for **"the more possessions, the more worry"**.

Because worry comes when a man fears that some future trouble may occur.. Thus those who lust for wealth hoped to cure their worry of lacking sustenance and pain of poverty, but they caused themselves many new worries in amassing wealth. For now they fear the matter will not be completed and they will not amass as they desire, and as written: *"[The sleep of the laborer is sweet, whether he eat little or much], but the satiety of the rich does not allow him to sleep"* (Kohelet 5:11)...

The fourth view which is the most prevalent in the eyes of the masses is that honor is the highest purpose of everything.. And the main honor is in having others serve him and minister unto him, so that servants run before him and follow him to do his work such that he does not need to touch anything. Likewise, for maidservants to serve his wife and daughters, and as the philosopher said: 'he who does not have a slave is a slave'.

Hillel said that this too is vanity and vexation of spirit. For instead of the honor and benefit he thinks he will get from the servants and maidservants, he will perforce receive constant disgrace and dishonor. For **"the more maidservants, the more lewdness"**. And this will drag in also the woman of his own household to do likewise, namely, his wife and daughters for great shame and humiliation. Likewise, **"the more man-servants, the more theft"**. For they will steal all over the city and his name will become a curse to the people for having brought in worthless people to steal from the public, thus receiving disgrace instead of honor...

But in a life of the divine torah and its study, he will find the opposite of all these things. For in physical pleasures of food and drink, excess brings death and accelerating his end. But in the torah it is the opposite: **"the more Torah, the more life"**, i.e. spiritual life of the soul. For torah is the food of the soul, imbuing it with life...

Corresponding to the second view of love of women which leads to confoundment, madness, and witcheries, he said it will be the opposite in the matter of torah. For **"the more yeshiva, the more wisdom"**. That is to say he who increases in the Beit Midrash (house of study) will not become confounded and mad. Rather, he will increase wisdom..

Corresponding to the third group who he said **"the more possessions, the more worry"**, he said it will not be so in the matter of torah. For when a person increases counsel, namely, the

"business" (give and take) in torah study, he will not acquire worry but instead will increase understanding in his soul. For *"man's wisdom lights up his face"* (Kohelet 8:2).

Corresponding to the fourth view which he said: ***"the more maidservants, the more lewdness. The more man-servants, the more theft"***, whereby his home will be full of disputes and troubles, he said it will not be so in the matter of torah and mitzvot. For in his increasing charity to the poor and all the other acts of kindness - "The more charity, the more Shalom-peace"..

It has been clarified through this that without the divine torah and its commandments all matters of this world are vanity and falsehood...

Afterward, he brought four immense benefits which result from torah and its study that do not come from the other four imaginary goals.

One, ***"who acquires a good name"***, i.e. for in pursuing food, drink, lust for women, seeking wealth and honor, he will often attain a bad name such as being called a: "glutton and drunkard" (Devarim 21:20), "adulterer", "senseless" (Mishlei 6:32), "greedy crook", "haughty and arrogant", "evil way".

But in torah and its wisdom, and in acts of charity and commandments, a person can acquire only a good name..

Two, all the imaginary goals he mentioned are all things external to himself and his soul. The honor of slaves, wealth, women, and extra flesh are not the essence of man. For in truth his essence is his form and soul. But in acquiring torah and performing mitzvot, he will acquire intrinsic perfection in his soul which will never leave him.

On this he said ***"acquires for himself"***.. Likewise, all the physical possessions of a man will be left to others after his death.. But what he acquired in torah and mitzvot ***"acquires for himself"***. For they remain by him and go with him after death, as the prophet said: *"your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of G-d shall gather you in"* (Isaiah 58:8)..

Three, the other things are not connected to torah. They are contrary and alien to it. But yeshiva, counsel, wisdom, and tzedaka are all branches of torah. Thus, in acquiring them, ***"who acquires words of Torah"***. And it is known that the purpose of man and his ultimate good depends on fulfilling and guarding the torah, as written: *"you shall not turn right or left from all of the words I am commanding you this day"* (Devarim 28:14).

Four, the imaginary material things mentioned all acquire enjoyments of this world only. They do not acquire for him ***"life in the World to Come"***. But for torah and mitzvot, one who does them acquires through them ***"life in the World to Come"*** which is real life which does not have death nor any loss, as Moshe peace be unto him said: *"life and death I have set before you, the blessing and the curse, and you shall choose life"* (Devarim 30:15).

Behold in this third teaching in which Hillel praises the torah and denigrates other material things, the view of Rabbi is further supported that a man should not choose a "straight path" for himself. Rather, that *"his desire be only in the Torah of G-d, and in His Torah he meditates day and night"* (Tehilim 1:2)

Level 4

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - *"more torah more life"* - for the torah vivifies a person. And as we learned later: "Great is Torah, for it gives life to its observers in this world, and in the

World To Come, etc" (Avot 6:8). Therefore, it is called "Torat Chaim" (the torah of life). For with it is life and without it is death.

This is as we find: "Rabbi Tarfon said to him: 'Akiva, whoever separates from you is as one who separates from life'" (Kidushin 66b).

This was not said as some sort of metaphor, but rather literally: "as one who separates from life".

We should know that the receiving of the torah depends on this fundamental point. Namely, if a man realizes that the torah is life and otherwise it is death, then he is assured that he will surely not separate from the torah.

This is called the true "receiving of the torah" (kabalat hatorah). And this is the explanation of what our sages said: "if you accept the torah, good, if not there shall be your burial" (Shab.88a).

This was not just some side explanation (although they already said on their own volition: 'we will do and we will listen') Rather, the Holy One, blessed be He, said that this realization is required in order to receive the torah. Namely, that they must know and understand that if you accept the torah, good, i.e. through the torah, you will live forever. But if not, "there shall be your burial", namely, if you don't accept the torah, death will coil around your heels.

For life is torah and without it is death. One who does not feel in himself this realization, should suspect himself that perhaps, ch'v, he is among those whose ancestors did not stand at mount Sinai, the true receivers of the torah who, in their lofty level, recognized that life is intertwined with torah.

Level 3

Chasdei David

Chasdei David - "One who acquires a good name acquires it for himself" - this needs explanation. What is this doing here? And what is the meaning of a good name?

It seems to me to explain as follows. We find deep matters in giving of names as the talmud says (Yomah 38b):

"what is the meaning of the verse: '[The mention of a righteous man is for a blessing], but the name of the wicked shall rot]' (Mishlei 10:7)? Rebbi Eliezer says: 'their names will rot for no one will want to mention their names (a man will not name his son with the name of a wicked person)'".

Thus the name rots away and is forgotten, like a metal object which rusts away and no one uses. The talmud asks there: "but what about Doeg ben Yosef? Every day his mother would weigh him and donate his weight in gold to the temple. (this child was named after Doeg in Shmuel I who was a wicked man). Thus we do call babies by the name of the wicked? [Talmud answers] see what happened to him in the end (during the siege of Jerusalem he was slaughtered and eaten by his mother)."

This implies that which he was eaten by his mother was due to his being named after a wicked man...

We thus see that the name of a person has a deep root. And in the book "Ahavat Shalom" (by Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kasov, parsha Vayera), he writes:

"the primary life of a person is the holy neshama (soul). And it is the name of a person. Thus, when one calls a sleeping person by his name, one can quickly wake him up. For by calling his

name which is his soul, one awakens his life force from the place of his root until the life force descends from level to level and reaches the person." end quote.

With this we will understand the matter: *"One who acquires a good name acquires it for himself"*. For this includes all the five things together. And just like if one is increasing torah or increasing tzedaka, or the like, he acquires for himself, namely, perfection (shelemut) in his soul, so too for his name. If he acquired a good name, he acquires for himself.

And our sages said (Yomah 38b): " 'The memory of the righteous shall be for a blessing' - where, in the Torah, may that teaching be derived? - From what is written: 'Shall I hide from Avraham that which I am doing?' since He mentioned Avraham's name, He immediately blessed him: 'Seeing that Avraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation'".

Thus, an acquisition of a good name is an acquisition for himself. For it will cause him endless blessings. See also the commentaries on the verse "The mention of a righteous man is for a blessing" (Mishlei 10:7). For every time his name is mentioned, he will be blessed.

Q Level 4

☆ Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - (kabalistic) - the orot of mochin of keter are called "chayei olam haba", and a man merits this light through the study of sod. This is what he said: "kana lo divrei torah", divrei implies two, namely, the chelek nigle and chelek nistar. Through this he acquires "chayei olam haba", namely, that he can draw down lights from the Keter which are called by the name "chayei olam haba".

Q Level 4

☆ Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Birkat Avot - "more torah, more life" - it is known that the amount of speech allotted to a man is fixed (for his lifetime, since part of his soul goes out with each word) And if he speaks much devarim betalim (idle talk) it is possible that he will die quickly. For he will have no more speech left. But, as known the speech of a man in torah is not included in this fixed amount. Thus if a man is marbe torah, then automatically he does not speak devarim betalim. For he will not have time for this. Then, automatically he will have much speech left from the amount fixed for him. Thus, perforce he will live longer in order to complete the amount of speech allotted to him and will not die until he completes the amount.

This is "more torah, more life". For through the large amount of toil in torah, he will not have time to speak idle talk. Thus he needs much time to live until he completes his allotted amount of speech and this is the best thing for his body, as we learned earlier: "All my days I have grown up among the Sages and I have not found anything as good for the body as silence"(Avot 1:17).

Q Level 4

☆ Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Birkat Avot - "marbeh torah marbeh chaim" - (kabalistic) - letters of chaim are Chai-Yam, a remez (hint) to Yesod and Malchut. For it is known that Yesod is called Chai and Malchut is called Yam (the sea). And through much toil in torah, one unifies (meyached) Yesod and Malchut thereby drawing to them abundant Shefa (divine flow) elevating them to a great state (gadlut meod). This is: "marbe chaim".

Q Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Binyan Avot - He returned and said: "kana lo divrei torah", to hint on what he said just before this, "kana shem tov", to say that only if he acquired a good name did he acquire what was said earlier. Namely, he who acquired a good name, acquires for himself chayei olam haba. But if he acquires divrei torah but is not a baal shem tov, then if he acquired life (torah) in this world, he did not acquire chayei olam haba, in the way that king David said on Doeg and Achitofel: "may they be erased from the book of life.." (Tehilim 59:29).

 Level 4
Maharal

Maharal - it is proper to ask why he chose specifically these things? There are many things which we can say that if one increases [excessively] in them, they are damaging to a person.

(for example: "whoever increases speech brings sin" - Avot 1:17. Or "whoever increases laughter, idle speech and levity bring divine wrath to the world" - Tana d'Bei Eliyahu Rabba 10:3)

Likewise, there are many other things that if one increases in them, he acquires good levels..

The explanation of this is as follows. Man is comprised of body and soul. The body is from the earth while the soul is from the Heaven (spiritual realm). From the earth to the Heaven is considered ten [units].

Our sages brought this concept in the talmud:

"The divine presence never descended below *ten* handsbreaths and neither Moshe nor Eliyahu ever ascended above *ten* handsbreaths, as written 'The heavens are heavens of the L-rd' (Tehilim 115:16)" (Sukkah 5a).

Thus, from the land to the Heaven (spiritual realm) is considered 10. Correspondingly, man who was created from both earth and Heaven has 10 different matters. Five of them are close to the land and five are close to the Heaven.

The five close to the land are all physical things, pertaining to the body which is from the earth, while those close to the Heaven pertain to the spiritual soul.

Corresponding to this, man has five spiritual organs close to the soul: two eyes, two ears, and the tongue. Likewise, five close to the body: two legs, two arms and the head of the male organ. These ten are in the body.

It is known that the eyes which have the power of sight, the ears which have the power of hearing, and the tongue which has the power of speech - are close to the soul. While the other five limbs are close to the body which comes from the ground.

And in the talmud (Nedarim 32b):

" *Wisdom affords strength to the wise more than ten rulers who were in the city*' (Kohelet 7:19) - this refers to the two eyes, two ears, two legs, two hands, the male organ and the mouth". end quote.

Thus, there are ten organs/limbs in man. Five close to the soul and five close to the body.

The two ears, two eyes, and mouth are considered spiritual for an organ which does its work without touching what it senses is considered spiritual.

For example, the ears hear from far, the eyes see further still. Likewise for the power of speech which is intellectual (*sichli*). Thus, five are spiritual and five are physical.

Therefore G-d gave man 10 commandments. Five of them are close to Hash-em, namely, they pertain to Hash-em who is in Heaven (Kohelet 5:1). For "honor your father and mother" also pertains to Hash-em, as the talmud says: "the torah equated their honor to the honor of G-d" (Kidushin 30b).

And likewise they said there: "when a man honors his father and his mother, the Holy One, blessed be He, says: 'I ascribe [merit] to them as though I had dwelt among them and they had honored Me'" (Kidushin 30b).

The second set of five speak of matters between man and his fellow who is on the earth (Kohelet 5:1).

Thus, man whose soul is from the Heaven and his body is from the earth is considered 10. For 10 is always considered a separate domain (reshut acher). Therefore, five pertain to above and five to below. Therefore man was given 10 commandments, five close to the Heaven and five close to the earth.

This is what the mishna says, this man has five possessions from the earth, namely, physical possessions from the ground, and five spiritual possessions which pertain to the soul.

He said that for those five which pertain to the body, [excessive] increase in them leads to loss and detriment. For increasing in them beyond the [needed] measure is undoubtedly a loss.

But for the five which are not bodily, they are for the soul and the more one increases in them the higher level [he attains].

This is what he said: "more flesh, more worms".

For the explanation of "flesh" is man's body itself. Thus one who increases flesh which is the body itself, increases worms. The explanation of "worms" is inexistence (he'edar). For the worm eats flesh until it is no longer found. That is to say, inexistence clings to the physicality of man, as we explained many times.

Therefore, one who increases flesh increases worms, namely, inexistence. The intent here is not only on increase in flesh. Nor is it on worms. Rather, when a man is drawn after the matter of the physicality of the body, this increase is nothing but an increase in inexistence which is the [symbolism of the] worm, as we will explain with G-d's help on: "lust takes a person out of the world" (Avot 4:22).

He first mentioned the physicality of man, namely, his body. Afterwards, he said: "more possessions more worry".

For the first thing close to man from the aspect of his body is his possessions. They are his acquisitions and are completely his. He needs them in order to obtain his livelihood before marrying a woman.

He said: "more possessions more worry". For it too is a detriment. For a man needs to occupy himself in maintaining them so they do not incur loss. Thus increase in them inevitably leads to detriment, namely, much worry.

All this is because the things pertaining to the body do not escape from loss and increasing in them inevitably leads to even more loss.

After speaking of man's possessions which pertain to him [earlier in life], he said: "more wives more witchcraft". For the order of [marrying] a woman is after acquiring possessions. Since a man

needs a woman to rectify his house.

He said that if he is increasing in women, he increases witchcraft. And even if he marries Avigail and other very kosher women who will not do witchcraft, but nevertheless, she tends to the level of witchcraft, namely, a low level. For witchcraft is most prevalent among women due to the lowly level of witchcraft and the lowly level (women are more physical than men. see Maharal on Avot 1:5). This is also due to the need for the power of imagination in doing witchcraft which is more [strong] in women.

Thus, witchcraft only works when the witch stands with feet on the ground, as Rashi explained in Sanhedrin (44b). Thus, through increasing wives, a man comes closer to the level of witchcraft. And even if his wives do not do any witchcraft, nevertheless, he tends from a higher level to a lower level and to loss due to increasing wives. For the increasing in wives leads him to the lowly level of witchcraft.

After speaking of a wife, he spoke of the maidservant. For one needs a maidservant to take care of the needs of the house more than the manservant who works in the field.

He said that increasing maidservants increases lewdness. For the maidservants are daughters of Cham. Due to this, they are full of lewdness since they are drawn after their root. Hence, increase in them is a practise of lewdness (tarbut zima). And even if the maidservants are kosher, nevertheless by increasing in them, he is tending toward lewdness. And even if there is no actual act of lewdness here, but nevertheless he tends towards the trait of lewdness...

Afterwards, he mentioned five things pertaining to the soul whereby increasing in them leads to greater levels. This is not like the first five whereby increasing in them leads to increased loss....

The summary of this mishna is that for bodily things, increase and excess in them leads to loss. This is logical. For that which loss clings to, such as physical things, excess in them leads only to loss. But for spiritual things, increasing in them only advances one to a higher level. There is more depth here but it is not proper to elaborate further.

Chapter 2 Mishna 9 - For This Created

Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai received [the tradition] from Hillel and Shammai. He would say: If you have learned much Torah, do not claim merit for yourself, because it was for this that you were created.

רַבֵּן יוֹחָנָן בֶּן זַכַּי רָבֵן יוֹחָנָן בֶּן זַכַּי קִבֵּל מֵהִלֵּל וּמִשְׁמַאי. הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אִם לָמַדְתָּ תּוֹרָה הַרְבֵּה, אַל תִּתְחַזֵּק טוֹבָה לְעַצְמָךְ, כִּי לְכָךְ נּוֹצְרָתָ.

Q Level 1



Vilna Gaon - "for this you were created" - as written "man is born for toil" (Job 5:7) and our sages said (Sanhedrin 99b):

"R. Eleazar said: Every man is born for toil, as it is written, 'man is born for toil' (Job 5:7). Now, I do not know whether for toil by mouth or by labor, but when it is said, 'for his mouth presses upon him' (Mishlei 16:26), I may deduce that toil by mouth is meant. Yet I still do not know whether for toil in the Torah or in [secular] conversation, but when it is said, 'this book of the Torah shall not depart out of your mouth' (Yehoshua 1:8), I conclude that one was created to labor in the Torah."

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "if you learned much torah, do not claim merit for yourself.." - for you are still at just the beginning. When will you reach half or all of it? For regarding the torah: "longer than the earth is its measure, and wider than the sea" (Iyov 11:9). And it is beyond the ability of the human mind to grasp its limits. How much is a man far from it! Thus, how could he possibly "claim merit for himself" when he has not grasped even one thousandth of what there is to do.

Furthermore, "for this you were created". The Holy One, blessed be He, brought you into existence from nothing only to fulfill His torah. Also for this reason you should not "claim merit for yourself" if you did much torah, since you were created for this. This is similar to a debtor who payed his debt. Does one claim merit for this? This applies also to one who fulfilled much mitzvot. If you did many mitzvot, do not claim merit for yourself since for this you were created.

Q Level 2

Tosfot Chadashim - "for this you were created (literally:formed)" - he did not say "for this you were created", but rather "for this you were formed". Because the term "formed" refers to when he was in his mother's womb and did not yet come out to the world. It is known from our sages that the fetus is taught the whole torah while in his mother's womb. Afterwards when he comes out, he forgets everything. Thus for one who learns much torah, it is enough that he will reach the level he was at when he was being formed and not yet finished (nivra). Therefore, he should not claim merit for himself if he learned much torah. Because for this he was formed, i.e. at the time of formation to learn the whole torah.

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan on Avot - "for this you were created" - there is nothing in nature which sways from the path its Creator commanded it except for man alone.. Every species, every creature under the sun, the foundations of the world, everything does not go out even a hairsbreadth from the intent it was created, not animals nor plants, nor mineral mines, nor rivers, nor seas... Thus if all the creatures, plants, seas etc. do the will of their Maker with absolute precision by nature, how much more so should man do the will of his Maker who has graced him with understanding and free will and obligated him by reason. Why then should he "claim credit for himself" more than other creations who always do the will of their Maker. Rather you are under duty to praise, exult and thank His great and awesome Name for anointing you king on all the other creations and placing them under your feet. Why did He do this? Because He graced you with understanding to recognize His greatness and serve Him out of free will...

 Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - "if you learned much torah..", day and night, "do not claim merit for yourself", that you tell yourself that you did beyond the letter of the law (asita lifnim mishurat hadin), i.e. that you learned more than what you are obligated. The truth is not so because "for this you were created", ie all that you did is not enough to pay back even one single kindness G-d did to you. The first kindness is that he brought you into existence. This is what he wrote: "for this you were created (formed)". Therefore, with everything you did, you did not pay back even one kindness. And all the other countless kindnesses He did for you are still a debt on you..

Some explain if you learned much torah, do not claim merit for yourself, i.e. do not hold (machzik) this good for yourself alone. Rather, teach torah to others, since for this you were created, to learn and to teach to others.

 Level 3

☆ Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - for the mitzvah of talmud torah is different from all other mitzvot. There is almost no patur (exemption) of oneiss (unable). Rather, even with the greatest burdens and most intense difficulties, or the like, there is an obligation of talmud torah.

On the contrary, in these cases is the mitzvah and obligation of talmud torah in truth - when the learning is against man's nature (see our words there on Avot 6:4 - "this is the way of the torah..").

It seems this is the intent of what the Tanna is teaching us here: "if you learned much torah", ie you learned even with all the difficulties and troubles which a man gets caught up with in this world, nevertheless, "do not claim credit for yourself since for this you were created". For this is the mitzvah of talmud torah from the ikar halacha (main law). There is not in this any middat chasidut (beyond the letter of the law), for you to claim credit for yourself.

 Level 2

☆ Chatam Sofer

Ketav Sofer Hachadash al hatorah, Avot - "for this you were created" - for without torah study which shields a man from the evil inclination, the Holy One, blessed be He, would not have created man..

 Level 4

☆ Chida

Chida - Zeroa Yamin - "for this you were created" - perhaps the intent is that for this is your portion which you received at Sinai. For no one else can bring it out to actuality besides you. Alternatively, perhaps as our sages said on "and He formed (vayitzer)" (Gen.2:7) with two yuds, to teach that man was created with two inclinations (Berachot 61a). And from the time the evil inclination was created with him, he became obligated to learn torah constantly to annul it. For there is no way to annul it besides torah, as our sages said ("I have created the evil inclination, and I have created the Torah as its antidote" - Kidushin 30b). This is what he said: "if you learned much Torah, do not claim merit for yourself, because it was for this that you were formed" from the time of your formation with a yetzer hara.

 Level 2

Chatam Sofer

Avot Hasoferim - margela b'pi maran the Gaon Chatam Sofer (he was used) to explain that if a talmid chacham toils only to learn torah and not le'chadesh anything of the holy torah (deduce novel insights), then "do not claim merit for yourself". This is what Raban Yochanan ben Zakai said: "if you [only] learned much torah" [without lechadesh chidushim], "do not claim merit for yourself" because for this torah you were already formed since you did not mechadesh anything.

 Level 2

Chatam Sofer

Ketav Sofer, petichah l'mesechet Gitin - "if you learned much torah" [from those before you] "do not claim merit for yourself, because it was for this that you were created", i.e. before you came to the world. Rather, toil in the torah, and G-d will "reveal to you wonders of His torah", that which was hidden from other people in the divine torah. This is their intent: "*prepare yourself for the study of Torah, for it is not an inheritance to you*" (Avot 2:12). For it is not enough to just learn what one inherited from his forefathers. Rather, let him mechadesh chidushin (derive novelties) and rejoice in his portion which G-d graced him with.

This matter requires great preparation in torah, to not be satisfied to learn without iyun and pilpul (in-depth). Rather to strain oneself.. and spend much time to delve deeply in one matter and clarify every matter there completely until halacha.. (see there for more).

Q Level 2

Chatam Sofer

Shevet Sofer chelek beit, Reeh - "It is not good that man is alone; I shall make him a helpmate opposite him" (Bereishit 2:18). For it seems to me that the primary purpose of man is to also help others become whole, and not to look and watch over only on himself. And the mechkarim (investigators) already investigated this and said that this is the primary reason why man came to this world and for this he was created', as our sages said: "If you have learned much Torah, do not claim merit for yourself, because it was for this that you were created". Rather teach also others. "Because it was for this that you were created". For this is the main intent of creating man...

Q Level 3

☆ Orot Ha'mussar

Orot HaMussar on daat chachma u'mussar II 132 - our sages said: "Rebbi Eliezer said: 'every man was created to toil, as written: "*For man is born to toil*" (Job 5:7). Rabbi Yerucham wrote that the explanation is not like people think. Namely, that one must toil in order to attain through toil. Rather, it is literal. This is the purpose: "man is born to toil" - specifically to toil. This is man's whole existence, only toil and nothing else.

For this is the foundation of: "the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to create the world with the attribute of justice" - the Sod (secret) is specifically what one earns with his own handiwork (dafka yegia kapav). Only toil. The talmud there continues (Sanhedrin 99): "I do not know whether for toil by mouth or by labor, etc".

Thus, there was a *hav amina* (initial understanding) in the gemorah that with toil in work, everything is already done. So great is the foundation of toil, "the attribute of justice". The final conclusion (maskana) of the talmud is not like this. But from the *hav amina* (initial understanding) the talmud had that toil in secular work is sufficient, it is enough for us to know the greatness of the matter of toil. The talmud continues there:

"All human bodies are toilers; fortunate are they who are worthy of being receptacles of the Torah", Rashi explains: "toilers: to toil, i.e. all [human] bodies were created to toil". end quote.

The main thing is toil. This matter of "man is born to toil", and "benefit from the work of his hand" is so great that the attribute of creation is the attribute of justice (as before).

Q Level 3

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai saved Yavneh and its sages. He saved Raban Gamliel of the royal line of king David and the grandfather of Rebbi. He laid down the foundation so that the oral law will not be forgotten from Israel. The talmud says on him (Sukkah 28a):

"He did not leave [unstudied] Scripture, Mishnah, Gemara, Halachot, Aggadot, minutia of the torah, minutia of the scribes, inferences and analogies, gematriot, the conversation of ministering

angels, the conversation of demons, conversation of palm trees, .. great matter and small matter, a great matter is that of the Divine chariot, a small matter is the disputes of Abaye and Rava.."

Despite all this he did not "claim merit for himself". So too you, even if you merited to increase torah and "do" torah so that it will not be forgotten from Israel, "do not claim merit for yourself since for this you were created", to do so the torah will not be forgotten in Israel.

Q Level 3

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - Rabbi Dovid of Lulob would explain what our sages said: "the way of the land preceded torah (derech erez kadma l'torah)" as follows. Our sages' intent in the term "way of the land (derech erez)" is to the trait of humility, which is like the land itself which everyone treads upon. Thus, it precedes the torah because this is the purpose (tachlit) of torah study, namely that the torah study be accompanied with humility.

For only one who is humble and lowly merits the hidden light in the torah and draws from the good hidden in it. But one who is haughty and pats his belly saying: "how much torah I learned, how much wisdom is in me". Such a person will not see the great good hidden in the torah. Since he sways from the intended purpose, he will not merit the light of torah.

This is what the Tanna (sage) says: "if you learned much torah" - if you walk and adorn yourself before people that you learned much torah and you pride in this that you are wise and know more than others, behold, you are bringing evil on yourself. For the good hidden in the torah will not stay by you and you will not merit it, since you swayed from the path of truth of the torah, namely, humility.

Q Level 3

☆ Chida

Chida - Chasdei Avot - I saw fit to write here what I found in a letter to Rabeinu Chaim Sargusi, a descendant of the holy gaon Yosef Sargusi, author of "Hanes Megurash" and Rebbi of the Ridbaz. Here is a quote:

The early ones explained the mishna: "if you learned much torah, etc.", i.e. do not claim merit for yourself saying "for this you were created and you have already fulfilled your obligation in fulfilling the divine intent in creating and forming you".

Do not say this. Know that people do not realize the extent of the service of G-d and that it is without limit.

I heard from torah scholars who heard from others in a direct chain till the mouth of the Rambam the following story. A certain great man did not want to read the Yom Kipur vidui (confession) because he knew on himself that he did not commit any sin. So, he thought, why should he speak lies before G-d, blessed be He, "whose seal is truth"?

The Rambam answered him: "if you, the kindhearted, only realized how severe is the service of G-d and how much one needs to serve this G-d and you were to grasp the scope of what is fitting and obligatory to this Master, you would realize that there is not a single day which you do not commit every single thing written in that vidui (confession) and much more other things.

Every man is judged by the extent of his wisdom. We find by king David that the sin of adultery was inscribed on his name despite that she was divorced from Uryah (her husband), and likewise the sin of his murder, despite that he incurred the death penalty, and the sin of the tzitzit of Saul despite that Saul was chasing David to kill him and David was permitted to kill him [in self-defense].. Likewise for many other cases. According to how much one is a man will be his judgment. And you will be taken to justice even on this which you spoke now". end quote...

Q Level 3

Maharam Shik, Avot - "do not claim credit (good) for yourself, because it was for this that you were formed.." - we will explain the intent according to Rashi's explanation on the verse in Bereishit 1:7. On the second day of creation, the torah does not say "and G-d saw that it was good". Rashi explains that this is because the work of that day was not yet completed and on something whose work is not completed, it is not called "good".

Likewise the torah has no end and no limit. On the contrary, the more one increases study in it, the more he will sense that he still did not even reach to begin to understand it and it is as if he were formed now and did not yet learn anything. The deeper he delves in the torah, the more he will see and feel his own lacking.

Regarding creation, there are 3 terms used: beriah (creation), yetzira (formation), and asiyah (done action).

"Beriah" implies creation of something from nothing. "Yetzira" applies on something which is already existing but it still needs finishing. The completion itself is called "asiyah".

Since a man can never reach the end of the torah, thus it is as if he is formed just now and he cannot call it good since good is only said on the completion.

This seems to be the intent of Raban Yochan ben Zakai: "if you learned much torah", then you will see your lacking even more than you thought before you learned and automatically "do not claim credit (good) for yourself". For "good" does not apply on something incomplete.

"because for this", ie for torah, "you were formed". It is always as if you were just formed now and not completed regarding the torah. For you will never come to finish [knowing] it.

Q Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - "if you have learned much Torah, do not claim merit for yourself" - when a man toils in torah, it is not proper for him to think that he did a chasidut (piety). Chasidut is when one does something not necessary according to strict justice. On this he said that the matter is not so. For man was created from the beginning in order to learn torah. And all the creations were created with justice and law (Din and mishpat), as written: "everything that G-d (Elokim) made shall be forever; nothing can be added to it nor substracted from it" (Kohelet 3:14).

The explanation is that which G-d created, He did so with the attribute of justice. Thus in all the genesis account (maaase bereishit) the Name, Elokim, which is the attribute of justice, was used. And everything He created with justice "nothing can be added to it nor substracted from it".

Therefore, he said it is not proper for man to "claim merit for himself" that he did something which is good, namely, something that is not from the aspect of creation itself. Rather, for this man was created, just like man was created to eat and drink and this is in the nature of his creation. So too, man was created to learn torah with toil.

We find this matter in the words of our sages in Sanhedrin 99a:

"R. Eleazar said: Every man is born for toil, as it is written, 'man is born for toil' (Job 5:7). Now, I do not know whether for toil by mouth or by labor, but when it is said, '*for his mouth presses upon him*' (Mishlei 16:26), I may deduce that toil by mouth is meant. Yet I still do not know whether for toil in the Torah or in [secular] conversation, but when it is said, '*this book of the Torah shall not*

'depart out of your mouth' (Yehoshua 1:8), I conclude that one was created to labor in the Torah."

The explanation of this is that it is impossible for man to be a creature of rest. For that which is whole/perfect (shalem) is of rest (hanacha). For it is already whole and then it rests.

But man is not so. He is not whole and since he is not whole, he is not of rest. Rather, he moves always towards his wholeness/perfection (hashlamato), despite that it is impossible to ever actualize this perfection fully. But nevertheless, it is impossible for him to be a creature of rest. For that applies to things which are perfected. But it is not so for man...

Thus he said man was created to toil, to not at all be a "creature of rest". Rather, that he always bring out his perfection to actuality without rest. For this is proper from the aspect of creation.

All the creations were created in their perfection, without lacking. But for this man, it is impossible for him to come to perfection until he will be at complete rest (death). This is why in the creation of man it is not written: "and it was good", like it was written by the other creations. For all the other creations were created in their perfection unlike man who was not created with his perfection.

For this itself is his perfection - that he moves always towards actualizing this perfection. This is his perfection. Because if he does not at all bring out his perfection to actuality, then he has no perfection at all. Therefore he must always be bringing out his perfection to actuality...

This is what the verse says: *"A [good] name is better than good oil, and the day of death than the day of one's birth"* (Kohelet 7:1). For on the day he is born, he does not have the [actualized] wholeness (shelemut) of his creation, and he is always actualizing it. But on the day of death, he is then in his perfection (shelemut). For he cannot at all become anything more. Thus he is then a creature of rest (baal hanacha).

Therefore, he said: "I do not know whether for toil by mouth or by labor". For work is only for the nefesh (life soul of the body), not for the nefesh sichli (spiritual intellect), since animals also can work.

Therefore, there is room for doubt the meaning of "man was born to toil". Does it mean toil of work which relates to the nefesh chiyunit (life soul)? Thus he brought the second verse: "all a man's labor is for his mouth" (Kohelet 6:7).. "For his mouth" is not the nefesh chiyunit since it does not depend on the mouth (speech depends on intellect).

"Yet I still do not know whether for toil in the Torah or in [secular] conversation". For perhaps the perfection of man is in the speaking soul (nefesh medaberet). Therefore, he brings the third verse "this book of the Torah shall not depart out of your mouth", thus torah study. For this is the perfection of man and for toiling in this he was created.

Due to this the torah was given on the Sabbath. For otherwise one may think that just like on the Sabbath there is rest from work, so too there is rest from Torah...

In any case, we have clarified that it is impossible other than that man was created to toil in torah. For man cannot at all be a creature of rest (baal hanacha). And even "the Heavens were not meritorious in His eyes" (Iyov 15:15), namely, to be a baal hanacha (despite their being the highest level of physical - R.Hartman). For they move always without rest. All this is because hanacha (rest) is hashlama (wholeness/perfection). And this is not proper for the physical. For the physical is not at all of hashlama (perfection).

And in sanhedrin (58b): "Reish Lekish says: 'a gentile who keeps a day of rest, deserves death, for it is written: 'day and night they shall not rest'" (Gen.8:22)

Thus, for the gentile rest is not proper at all. For it is not of man's boundary to be a creature of rest (baal shevita).

And even though a Jew has rest (of the Sabbath), this is due to his soul being completely separated from the physical. Thus, the Jew has no [physical] work on the Sabbath. But since "man was created for toil", therefore, the toil a Jew has on the Sabbath is toil in torah.

This toil is from the aspect of intellect (Sechel). And just like the gentile was created for toil of the nefesh (life soul), namely, work, and if he does not toil always, he incurs death, so too the Jew was created for toil of the intellect (sechel), namely, toil in torah, as written: "you shall contemplate in it day and night" (Yehoshua 1:8).

For from the aspect of intellect, a man cannot arrive at perfection (hashlama), since his sechel was not created with hashlama.

And the law of the Jew with respect to his intellectual soul (nefesh maskelet) is as that of the gentile regarding his soul. For the soul of the gentile does not have completion (hashlama), and likewise, the sechel nivdal (transcendent intellect) of a Jew does not have hashlama. Thus, because there is no hashlama here, he must toil without repose at all. (translator: otherwise the Jew also incurs death. see Avot 1:13).

Now we have clarified to you what Raban Yochanan ben Zakai said: "If you have learned much Torah, do not claim merit for yourself, because it was for this that you were created".

One should understand these things. For they are very very much clear and true and there is no doubt in them.

Level 4

Tosfot Beitza 23a (Telisar) - "Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai received.." - Raban Yochanan ben Zakai was appointed Nassi (chief Rabbi) in place of Raban Gamliel the son of Raban Shimon ben Gamliel because Raban Gamliel was too young when his father was killed [by the Romans]. Furthermore, the Romans decreed death on the entire family of Raban Shimon ben Gamliel but Raban Yochanan ben Zakai successfully intervened with the Roman emperor to save them. Thus, Raban Gamliel could not be Nassi.

Level 4

Bnei Yissachar, Devarim Nechmadim - (kabalistic) - as known from the talmud (Berachot 28b), at the time of his death, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai said: "prepare a chair for Chizkiyahu, king of Judah". The kabbalists explain (Shaar Hagilgulim hakdama 32) that this was because he had in him the neshama (soul) of Chizkiyahu.

Thus it seems the soul of a king of the Davidic lineage was reincarnated in Rabanan Yochanan ben Zakai since the Davidic lineage of Nessiim (rulers) was annulled in his time and Rabban Gamliel who was of the seed of the royal lineage of David was still too young.. Thus, Raban Yochanan ben Zakai assumed the position of Nassi until Raban Gamliel grew up and then the Nassiut returned to the seed of David. Therefore, in order to fulfill the verse: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah" (Bereishit 49:10), the soul of a Davidic king was nitgalgel (reincarnated) in Raban Yochanan ben Zakai..

It is known that Chizkiyahu greatly increased the study and teaching of torah in Israel. Our sages said that in his time they could not find an am haaretz in all of Israel (Sanhedrin 94b). And on the verse: "the yoke [of king Sancheriv] shall be destroyed because of oil" (Yeshaya 10:27) - "due to the oil in the study halls of torah".

Thus, he would speak on himself: "if you learned much torah", for you did not do this of your own free wil. Rather, "for this you were formed", for the soul of Chizkiyahu was reincarnated in you for the needs of the generation.

Thus it did not say "for this you were created" which would imply a first creation. But rather it used the term yetzira (formed) which implies a second time.

Chapter 2 Mishna 10 - Cemented Pit

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai had five disciples: Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenos, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya, Rabbi Yossi the Kohen, Rabbi Shimon ben Netanel, and Rabbi Elazar ben Arakh. He used to enumerate their praises: Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenos is a cemented pit which does not lose a drop. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya - praiseworthy is she who gave birth to him! Rabbi Yossi the Kohen is a Chasid (pious one). Rabbi Shimon ben Netanel is one who fears sin. And Rabbi Elazar ben Arakh is an increasingly powerful wellspring.

חֲמֵשֶׁה תְּלִמִידִים הָיוּ לוֹ לְרַבֵּן יוֹחָנָן בֶּן זַכַּי, וְאֵלוּ הֵן, רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן הוֹרְקָנוֹס, וְרַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן חֲנַנְיָה, וְרַבִּי יוֹסִי הַכֹּהֵן, וְרַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן נְתַנְאֵל, וְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲרָךְ. הוּא הָיָה מוֹנֶה שְׁבָחָן. רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן הוֹרְקָנוֹס, בּוֹר סוּד שְׂאִינוּ מֵאֵבֶד טֶפֶה. רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן חֲנַנְיָה, אֲשֶׁרִי יוֹלְדָתוֹ. רַבִּי יוֹסִי הַכֹּהֵן, חֲסִיד. רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן נְתַנְאֵל, יָרָא חֲטָא. וְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲרָךְ, מַעֲיֵן הַמִּתְגַּבֵּר.

He [Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai] used to say: If all the sages of Israel were on one side of a balance scale, and Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenos were on the other side, he [Rabbi Eliezer] would outweigh them all. Abba Shaul said in his name that if all the sages of Israel, including Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenos, were on one side of a balance scale, and Rabbi Elazar ben Arakh were on the other side, he [Rabbi Elazar] would outweigh them all.

הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אִם יְהִיוּ כָּל חֲכָמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכַף מֵאֲזֵנִים, וְאֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן הוֹרְקָנוֹס בְּכַף שְׁנִיָּה, מִכְרִיעַ אֶת כָּלָם. אַבָּא שְׂאוּל אוֹמֵר מִשְׁמוֹ, אִם יְהִיוּ כָּל חֲכָמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכַף מֵאֲזֵנִים, וְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן הוֹרְקָנוֹס אַף עִמָּהֶם, וְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲרָךְ בְּכַף שְׁנִיָּה, מִכְרִיעַ אֶת כָּלָם.

Q Level 2

☆ Magen Avot

Magen Avot - without a doubt, he raised thousands of disciples and in the Talmud (Berachot, chapter Ein Omdim), it seems Rebbi Chanania ben Dosa was his disciple. Thus, he counted only the big disciples through which the Oral Law was transmitted. They are the early Tannaim (sages) mentioned in the mishna and beraitot.

Q Level 2

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "he would enumerate their praises" - he was careful to say "He (would enumerate their praises)", not "they". For they were extremely humble and did not at all consider themselves as possessing these levels.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "a cemented pit which does not lose a drop" - so too he does not forget even one thing he learned.

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - like a wine pit which does not lose a drop. For the torah is compared to wine. He learned with such tremendous desire that he did not forget anything.

Q Level 3

☆ Binyan Avot

Binyan Avot (by Kabbalist Tzemach haKohen, Jerba) - (kabalistic) "cemented pit" - ie the side of holiness intensified within him until the Sar (angel) of forgetfulness left him. For his soul was from the Olam Hazachar. There is remembrance and not forgetfulness. For forgetfulness is from katnut as known to those who study Chen (Kabala)..

Q Level 4

Od Yosef Chaim (book on the hidden Tzadik Rabbi Yosef Dayan) - (Kabalistic) - Rabbi Yosef would say "He who is plagued with forgetting, this comes from the sitra achra (side of evil) having attached itself to him. The sitra achra enclothes itself in him due to lack of shemirat habrit and damaging the midah of Yesod. The verse says 'do not stray after your hearts and after your eyes...in order that you remember' (Bamidbar 15). When you don't stray after your heart and eyes,

then the holiness of the brit is guarded properly and it is possible to merit "remembrance" (i.e. perfect memory). He who wants to merit remembrance should repent completely and say the great vidui."

(Translator: - this is hinted in the mishna "a cemented pit which does not lose a drop". A cemented pit - bor sod, a hint to Yesod. "which does not lose a drop", i.e. who guards the Brit. see also Sefat Emet, Bamidbar, Pinchas 21.)

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "praiseworthy is she who gave birth to him" - rich in good traits until everyone says of him: "praiseworthy she who gave birth to him".. And some say because she caused him to become a Chacham (torah scholar). For during her pregnancy she went to all the study halls in her city and asked them to pray for her child that he will become a Chacham (sage). And from the day he was born, she did not take his crib out of the study hall so that only words of torah would enter his ears.

Q Level 3

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - see the Bartenura who brought the Yerushalmi that from the day he was born, his mother did not take his crib out of the Beit Midrash (study hall), so that only words of torah would enter his ears. Let us contemplate from here just how far the matter of chinuch (educating) goes and when the work begins already. For even suckling babies, gemulei chalav, from the moment they are formed, they already stand under the influence of their chinuch (education). They already stand affected and imprinted from everything that happens around them. Every occurrence, every movement, even the slightest, every waking moment of the baby from the day he is born, has a great effect, a weight which affects the scales of growth of the man and his future. This matter is well known to experts in chinuch. That one must put attention on the early beginning of the child. This was the praise to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya. For certainly success (osher) depends on this.

Q Level 3

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - I heard from the Saba of Kelm, zt'l: "a father and mother are sitting in a room. Next to them a baby is sitting in a crib. The mother and father converse one lashon hara between each other. Better that they pour molten lead down the baby's throat.

Q Level 4

☆ Binyan Avot

Binyan Avot (by Kabbalist Tzemach haKohen, Jerba) - "praiseworthy is she who gave birth to him" - from the side of the father, the son will have an Ohr Makif (surrounding light), while from the side of the mother, he will have an Ohr Pnimi (inner light). It is known that the Ohr Makif is bigger than the Ohr Pnimi. Thus, if both the father and mother are equal and praiseworthy at the time of union, then, from conception and from the womb, the child will walk in the innocent path and do righteousness, and will not sin quickly.

If the father's thought was not pure, but the mother's thought was l'shem Shamayim, the child will have good middot while young, but when he grows, his evil inclination will grow with him and the Ohr Hamakif on him which is not pure will overpower the good Ohr Pnimi and he will have a nefesh (soul) which is not good. Similarly, for the opposite.

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai praised Rabbi Yehoshua that in his youth his good deeds became well known, due to the Ohr Pnimi from his mother. For he was a special candle from youth, known for good traits and virtues and all the more so when he grew up and became known for his deeds and wisdom.

Therefore, due to his good deeds in his youth which became famous, everyone praised his mother

saying "praiseworthy is she who gave birth to him". And how much more so since she would go around the Houses of Study to ask others to pray for the child as brought in the Yerushalmi (Yevamot 1:6)..

 **Level 1**

☆ **Bartenura**

Bartenura - "*Chasid (pious one)*" - [one] who does beyond the letter of the law.

"*one who fears sin*" - he is stringent on himself and forbids on himself permitted things out of fear lest they lead to sin. For if we don't say this, what extra piety is there in this? Even an am haaretz can be sin fearing (Avot 2:5).

 **Level 2**

☆ **Meorei Ohr**

Meorei Ohr - he did this (add stringencies) more than all other people. Likewise for Rabbi Yossi who was a Chasid more than all other people.

 **Level 2**

☆ **Ruach Chaim**

Ruach Chaim - "*fears sin*" - but earlier it was taught: "a boor cannot fear sin" implying an "am haaretz" can be one who fears sin. Rather, here the intent is on a different aspect of fear of sin. Namely, that he would fear the sin itself, as one who fears and runs away from a viper or a burning inferno. The sin was actually like this in his eyes, and this is a great praise and wondrous level.

 **Level 1**

☆ **Bartenura**

Bartenura - "*an increasingly powerful wellspring*" - his heart is broad and he adds pilpul and sevarot (intense analysis and reasoning) on his own.

"*Abba Shaul said..*" - I found written that he is not arguing on the previous Tanna (sages). Both statements were said by Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai and both are true. For regarding bekiut (breadth of knowledge) and memory, Rabbi Elazar outweighed all. But regarding sharpness and pilpul, Rabbi Elazar ben Arach outweighed all.

 **Level 3**

☆ **Tiferet Yehoshua**

Tiferet Yehoshua - we should strive to understand why this mishna was placed in tractate Avot. This tractate is all entirely about teaching us the ways of life and instructing us pious traits so that we may ascend up the rungs of perfection as befitting the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Although we learn here of the greatness of the holy Tannaim, but are we worthy of becoming like them?

In truth, it was not for nothing that this mishna was placed here, and not so we know the greatness of the Tannaim. For even without this, we know that these great men, upon whom the talmud is based, achieved great heights.

Rather, it was in order to make known to us the path they tread and reached such great perfection. This is the pure perfection which the Jewish soul is worthy and capable of reaching.

The view (shitato) of Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkonos is to not forget any drop of the written and oral torah, like a pit which does not lose a drop. For each and every drop of torah stands to the right of a man always and helps him to overcome difficulties and empowers him to reach the desired perfection.

The view of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananyia is to strive that every person say "praiseworthy is she who gave birth to him (ashrei yoladto)". Namely, that a person should reach such a high level in spirituality (ruchniut) until every one who sees him will praise him in seeing the Adam hashalem (whole man), and will burst forth praise on such a person saying: "praiseworthy is she who gave

birth to him"! This path is the path of the good character traits. Namely, to imbue oneself with good character traits to their utmost extent. Only in this way can a person reach this kind of perfection.

The view of Rebbi Yossi haKohen is that a man should strive to deal with people in the way of "beyond the letter of the law (lifnim mishurat hadin)". To not stand on one's demands and to overlook (mevater) regarding other people beyond the letter of the law. If he goes in this path, he will certainly attain true perfection (shlemut amitit). For he seeks from himself much and expects nothing from others. This is the way of the Gedolei Yisrael (great sages of Israel), who when insulted, do not insult back (ne'elvim v'ainam olvim).

The view of Rebbi Shimon ben Netanel does not need explanation. For fear of sin precedes torah and all other needs of people. For without it, a person makes a disgrace of the torah.

Rebbi Elazar ben Arach was the greatest of all of them, as known and as others testified in the name of his Rebbi. His trait was to strengthen himself every day in torah and fear of Heaven like an "increasingly powerful wellspring" by itself which gushes out always without interruption. In this way he ascended up the levels of perfection. For only pure torah and fear of Heaven elevate a person up the rungs of true perfection.

Thus, the Tanna taught us the view of the great sages of Israel so that each person could strive to follow after their footsteps to the best of his abilities according to his own personal strengths and talents...

Level 3

☆ Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "he [Rabbi Elazar] would outweigh them all" - Raban Yochanan ben Zakai is teaching us that the spiritual is not like the physical. In the physical, regardless of how mighty a man is, it is impossible for him to have so much might that his strength can outweigh that of all human beings in the whole world.

But in the spiritual, namely, torah study, such a thing is possible, like Rebbi Elazar ben Arach who was capable of outweighing all the sages of Israel. He was on the level of what our sages said of Moshe: "Moshe Rabeinu weighed like all of Israel" (Mechilta Yitro 1).. Namely, his grasp (hasaga) included all the grasp of all of Israel in all generations, as our sages said: "it was said to Moshe at Sinai even what an old student taught before his Rebbi" (Yerushalmi (2:6). That is to say, all the wisdom of the torah was included in the grasp of Moshe Rabeinu.

Chapter 2 Mishna 11 - Good Eye

He said to them: Go out and see which is the straight path that a man should cling to. Rabbi Eliezer said: A good eye. Rabbi Yehoshua says: A good friend. Rabbi Yossi says: A good neighbor. Rabbi Shimon says: to see what is born (out of one's actions). Rabbi Elazar says: A good heart. He said to them: I see the words of Rabbi Elazar ben Arakh [as better than] all of yours, for his words include all of yours.

Q Level 1

Machzor Vitri

Machzor Vitri - "which is the straight path that a man should cling to" - so that he merits Olam Haba (the World-to-Come).

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "good eye" - he is content (mistapek) with what he has, does not seek superfluous things, and does not become jealous when seeing that his fellow has more than him.

"good friend" - who rebukes him when seeing something improper in him.

"good neighbor" - he is near him day and night, unlike the good friend who is not near him at all times.

"sees what is born" - he gazes and looks at what will be in the future. Due this he considers the "loss of mitzvah against its reward and the reward of sin against its loss" (Avot 2:1).

"good heart" - since the heart is the mover (meniah) of all the other powers and it is the source from which springs all the deeds..

Q Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "Go out and see.." - i.e. go outside from judging according to your [high] levels. For [at your high level] it is a small matter to act like your [respective] traits. Rather, go out and judge according to the [lower] powers of the masses - "which is a straight path that a man should cling to" so that they will eventually merit to be like you.

"good eye" - through this good trait, he will be content with the little he has and rejoice in the success of his fellow. He will not be jealous of him nor will he be worried and angry. For all these things weaken the power of memory. But when he has this trait, he will be like "a cemented pit which does not lose a drop".

"good friend" - for when the good friend advises him to fix his lackings, he will not be ashamed nor angry since he knows his friend's heart is pure (good) towards him. Thus he will heed his advice as was the case with Rabbi Yehoshua's mother.

"good neighbor" - for good neighbors bestow good deeds to each other even if they stand to lose. Through this, each one habituates himself in Chasidut (kindness, going beyond the letter of the law).

"to see what is born" - thus he makes a fence for himself to not come to sin.

"good heart" - that his heart is always joyous and prepared to benefit everyone. Through this, the joy will help to sharpen his intellect like an increasingly powerful wellspring..

"his words include all of yours" - for when the heart is quiet and joyous, it will look at everyone in a good light. Thus, he will have many good friends, [including] a good friend, a good neighbor, and in his tranquility of spirit, he will see what is born (out of his actions), and he will also love G-d with all his heart and soul.

Q Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - "good eye" - to not be jealous.. For in removing this, his heart will turn to that which is truly good.

"good heart" - that a man's intent be to the honor of his Master in all that he turns to.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "which is a straight path that a man should cling to" - Rabbi Elezer says a good eye, ie one who is content with his portion (sameach b'chelko). Rabbi Yehoshua says a good friend, ie that one clings to a good friend. Rebbi Yossi says a good neighbor, ie to seek a home where the neighbors are good, for their friendship is constant and the benefit is great when they are good. Thus the Rishonim (early saages) explained this mishna.

However it is not a straight path. For according to them, a good eye and a good heart is going on oneself while a good friend and good neighbor is going on other people.

Thus, we will explain this mishna differently:

"which is a straight path that a man should cling to" - a man should cling to all the good and just traits (middot). But, which trait can a person cling to and become perfect (shalem) in it?

For it is better for a person to hold on wholly (b'shelemut) to one trait (middah), and then it will be easy for him to attain all the other important traits rather than to hold on to several traits without being whole in any of them.

"good eye" - i.e. the trait of generosity (nedivut). For it is a good and praiseworthy trait. And in being of perfect generosity, he will attain all the other traits since this trait of generosity stems from a broad heart and good eye. Such a man is worthy of all good traits. This is what is written: "[he who despises his friend is a sinner] but he who favors the humble - fortunate is he" (Mishlei 14:21), ie the poor find favor in his eyes and he gives to them with a good eye..

"good friend" - that one clings to being a good friend to one person that his heart wishes and habituates himself that this person benefit from him (nocha hemenu). Through this he will come to love the public.

"good neighbor" - that he himself be a good neighbor towards all his neighbors. After one is good and a faithful friend to five or eight people, it will be near to him to love everyone in the world. Thus, he will be rich with all good traits.

"sees what is born" - that he puts his eye on everything and sees all the things born before they are born. And when he sees something which has reward in the beginning but loss in the end, he distances from it. Through this he will never sin. For he will consider the reward of a sin against its loss. Therefore, it is proper for a man to cling to this trait, namely, to think beforehand what will be in the end, and to consider all his ways in this manner.

"good heart" - the Rambam z'l explained: "this is the rectification of [all] traits. For a man's mindsets (deot) stem from his heart. And when his heart is good, all his traits are just and his mindsets are sound. Thus, he rejoices in his portion, joins the company of the good, and desires only things which bring benefit and not loss."

Although what the Rambam says is true but nevertheless this explanation does not fit according to our way of explaining the mishna. Therefore, it seems to me to explain that "good heart" means the trait of contentment (ratzon). Namely, the forbearant person who is not short spirited (irritable). He distances from anger and answers gently. Even if others do evil to him, he will bear it and bitterness is not in his mouth. For "his palate is sweet and he is all desirable" (Shir 5:16).

"for his words include all of yours" - for a person with this trait inside him is good to his friends, neighbors, and the whole world. The trait of generosity is also by him. For if one's body and heart is generous toward others, to want what they want and do their will, all the more so that he will donate of his money to them. Every good trait will dwell in such a person...

(translator: perhaps one could work on a good eye first and then work up the traits slowly to eventually reach a good heart, be'H).

Level 3

Orot Ha'mussar

Orot HaMussar on Chachma U'Mussar 1:132 - the wise man said: "a man (ish tochechot) [who requires] rebuke but stiffens his neck, will be broken suddenly without cure" (Mishlei 29). The Metzudot commentary explains: "a man who needs rebuke but he stiffens his neck and refuses to hear - he will suddenly be broken and no one will be able to heal him."

The Saba of Kelm would add: "a man of rebuke (ish tchechot)" - ie "man", every man is "tochechot" (rebuke). That is to say, his spiritual build up is built on tochechot. For a man does not see fault in himself, and like the talmud says: "a sword on those.. who toil alone in torah.." (Berachot 63b). And Rabbi Yochanan said [to his new study partner] (after the death of Reish Lakish): "you are not like Bar Lakish! For every time I said something he would raise 24 difficulties in my words and I would answer him 24 answers. Through this the study would broaden".

Thus, the Halacha can only be clarified through fighting each other like enemies, to question and demolish each others' words. All the more so in mussar and middot whereby human nature twists mussar and middot, and the torah says "[a bribe] blinds the eyes of the wise". How much more so for those who are not wise, and not many people are - human nature requires an enemy, ie a friend dressed up as an enemy, to question him with 24 difficulties on every footstep, so that he must answer 24 answers. Only thus can the halacha be clarified which way to go. Therefore, they said in Avot: "which is the straight path that a man should cling to? Rabbi Yehoshua says: 'a good friend'". The Bartenura explains: "so that he rebukes him on something improper". And if Rabbi Yehoshua needed a friend to rebuke him, what will we say after him?

The Midrash says on the verse in Vayigash: "Yosef's brothers could not answer him because they were shocked before him" (Gen.45:2) - (Midrash:) "woe to us from the day of judgment, woe to us from the day of rebuke.. when the Holy One, blessed be He, will rebuke each person according to what he is, etc." (see there).

Thus, every person needs rebuke. Love of rebuke is the only advice given for a man to escape the trap from the crooked nature of man in every step. Therefore, they said the good way for man is - a friend to rebuke him always, and then he will escape...

Level 3

Chachma u'Mussar

Chachma u'Mussar 1:63 - "which is the straight path that a man should cling to" - the explanation is that it will bring him to all good. This is rebuke. Namely, a good friend who will rebuke him. For we see that if the generation of the desert were not stiff-necked and instead they loved rebuke, G-d would have easily forgiven them. Therefore, Rabbi Yehoshua chose a good path for a man to cling to, namely, that he chooses a good friend who is always with him to rebuke him... and our sages said (Tamid ch.1): "all the time rebuke is in the world, contentment comes to the world", for "when a son loves rebuke, the Father will rejoice", ie our Father in Heaven.

Q Level 3

☆ **Daat Zekenim**

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - each person has one primary good trait which has the power to rectify him completely if he clings to it. Likewise, each person has one primary bad trait which has the power to topple him completely if he ignores it. Every person according to his soul.

Q Level 3

☆ **Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)**

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - "one who sees what is born" - (haroeh et hanolad) - his intent in this is to what our sages said: "Come and consider the accounting of the world - the loss incurred by doing a mitzva against the gain earned through it, and the gain obtained by doing a sin against the loss incurred..." (Bava Batra 78b).

That is to say, that a man places himself in a situation of: "in the beginning of an act, he gazes at its [final] end" (Rosh, Orchot Chaim ot 46). Without a doubt, this is a trait and a character in man (techuna u'midah). For it is the primary cause (sibah ikarit) which brings him to his goal. Namely, the good and desired purpose.

Q Level 2



Hon Ashir - "what is born" (past tense) this comes to hint that the reward for mitzvot and the punishment for sins is born already at the time one does the mitzvah or sin, even though one did not receive it yet.

Q Level 3

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "go out and see.." - he hinted with the word "go out" that when you are in the Beit Midrash (house of study), do not investigate the ways of proper traits (middot) and ways. For this is an enticement of the Yetzer (evil inclination) to annul you from words of torah and afterwards he will lead him to other things. Therefore, he said: "go out and see", when you go out of the Beit Midrash, then it is the time to investigate: "what is the straight path".

"who sees what is born", whether in secular or religious matters, as written earlier, "consider the loss of a mitzva against its reward.." (Avot 2:1).

Q Level 3

☆ **Daat Zekenim**

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - "go out and see.." - in Chochma U'Mussar (chelek beit, 10): "true contemplation (hitbonenut) is only when one attains the level of "separating from the physical" (hitpashtut haghashmiut). For without this, the distractions of the physical and its lusts prevent one from seeing clearly what is good. Thus, the whole purpose of the contemplation is to attain this "separating from physicality" (hitpashtut haghashmiut). For then one will understand and discern between good and evil." This is what Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai said to them: "go out", ie "separate from the physicality", and then "you will see", that your eyesight will be clear and capable of discerning between good and evil. (see also Tosfot Yom Tov here).

Q Level 3

Rosh Avot

Rosh Avot - "which is the straight path that a man should cling to" - even though one must cling to all good traits, but nevertheless, one must take one trait and become whole in it. Namely, to fulfill it in all its details and fine points. Likewise in the talmud: "Rav Yosef asked Rav Yosef the son of

Rabba: 'with what was your father very careful?' (Shabbat 118b), ie which mitzvah was he most meticulous in?

Likewise, one should take one tractate and become proficient (baki) in it so that it is clear to him like a garment and he reviews it all his days (even though one needs to learn the whole torah). There is a story of one person who would learn very much tractate Chagigah. He was proficient (baki) in it backwards and forwards. When he died, there was no one to attend to his burial for he was childless. But a certain woman who shone like the sun attended to him diligently. They checked and found that this was tractate Chagigah.

Q Level 3

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "good eye" - the interior of a man's soul is measured by how he looks at everything.. This is analogous to one who looks through glass. If the glass is clear, he sees everything according to what it truly looks like. But if the glass is colored, he will see everything tainted with that color of the glass.

So too with man. He whose eye is evil sees the evil in everything. While he whose eye is good sees in everything, the good, the beneficial and the proper.

Therefore, Rabbi Eliezer says that a man needs to acquire for himself a good eye and to see only the good and beneficial in everything.

It is known that Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev was a model of good. Due to this, he never found any blemish in any Jew whoever he may be. For when a man does not have a trace of evil, he is unable to see in others what he does not have in himself. And if he sees something bad in his fellow, he judges his fellow to the side of merit.

But if one sees evil in others, this is a clear sign that he himself is afflicted with that same evil trait which he sees by others, and one can say on him: "take the beam from between your eyes!" (Bava Batra 15).

Q Level 3

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "good eye" - when a man has a good eye on his fellow, through this, he is mashpia (sends spiritual flow of) good to his fellow, and afterwards this shefah (spiritual flow) returns back to the man himself. For a man who has a good eye brings down blessings and abundance to everyone through his good eye.

With this we can say on the verse: "*a good eye will be blessed, for he gave of his bread to the poor*" (Mishlei 29:9). It should have said: "a good heart will be blessed". What is "a good eye"? Rather, the explanation is "*a good eye will be blessed, for he gave of his bread to the poor*". For already with his good eye, he is mashpia to the poor bread and all good. Afterwards, this shefah returns back to the good-eyed man himself.

The opposite is also true, ch'v. When a man has an evil eye on his fellow, then through this he is mashpiah evil on him and damages him and also the whole world. Afterwards this comes back to the evil-eyed man himself. For the eye has spiritual powers to harm or benefit.

Q Level 3

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "good friend" - for a person clings and becomes one with his friend and soaks in the interior of his friend inside himself. Because every man is influenced (mushpa) by his friend and his friend's interior until it becomes in him like his own second nature. By himself, a man is closed and hangs on to his views. But in the presence of his friend, he opens an opening to let in the views of his friend and he clings to his friend's view and traits.

Thus, if a man has a good friend, he himself becomes good. On this Rabbi Yehoshua said: "what is the proper path a man should cling to? - a good friend. Because when a man clings to a good friend, he learns from him the good and proper path.

The Tanna is coming to teach us just how great is the power of joining the company of a good friend. For through this, one can uproot bad things in himself which took root in his nature and also cling to the good traits of his friend until they transform him to also become second nature.

This is what the Tanna emphasized "that a man should cling to", ie if he joins the good friend, the good friend's qualities and traits will cling to him and transform him..

Level 3

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "good neighbor" - both good and evil churn (mitrotzetim) inside a man battling each other always. Thus, when a man is in a good environment, the good side strengthens [and gets the upper hand]. But when he is in a bad environment, the evil side strengthens.

For man is influenced by his surroundings and neighbors and when a man has good neighbors, he is influenced by them and overcomes his evil traits and goes in the right path. But if he finds himself in a bad environment with bad neighbors, eventually, he will be influenced by them and will sway from the good path.

A good wife is both a good friend and a good neighbor for life. In the talmud (Sanhedrin 100b): "all the days of the poor man are evil" - this refers to one who has a bad wife." Thus, all the days of a rich man are good - this refers to one who has a good wife.

For in a bad wife, when she encounters a small thing to bear (sevel), she immediately transforms it to a big deal and embitters the life of her husband due to this. But for a good wife, even if she bears a great suffering, she does not moan and complain. Rather she accepts it with love and understanding, until even her husband does not even know about it and is not pained.

On this our sages said: "how great is a good wife that the torah is compared to this" (Yevamot 63b).

Level 3

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "good heart" - by nature, a man is selfish. He feels himself and feels what he lacks. But if he also feels what his fellow lacks, this is called a good heart, and he strives to lighten the pain of his fellow.

Level 3

Chasdei David

Chasdei David - "good eye" - and the opposite to distance from is an evil eye. The plain meaning seems to be that one needs to distance from envy (tzarut ayin), as the talmud says: "it is forbidden to stand [and gaze] at the field of one's fellow when the crops are fully grown" (Bava Batra 2b) and likewise in Bava Metzia 30a..

Thus, it seems a good eye means to refrain oneself from looking at the belongings of others and even if he sees, his eye is not pained by the good of his fellow and he is not jealous when his fellow has more than him. Rather, he is content (mistapek) with what he has, as the Bartenura explains. See there...

(Some explain a good eye as the talmud says: "a seller sells with a good (generous) eye" (Bava Batra 37b), and likewise "a giver gives the gift with a good eye" (ibid 65a). But this refers to a seller or to a giver of a gift. It does not seem to fit with the word "way" (derech) which implies a constant matter.)

However, this needs clarification. How could he establish a good eye as a way for a man to cling to. It seems to be just the absence of an evil eye (ie not an independent matter. Just the absence of envy)..

We may explain as the Chida wrote in his book "Devash Lepi" (Maarechet 70 ot 7), that for one who clings to a good eye, an evil eye (of others) cannot affect him.. Just like by Yosef who merited that an evil eye cannot harm him or his seed due to his having a good eye towards his brothers and providing for them..

Thus, according to that, a good eye is not just the absence of an evil eye. Rather, it is a positive act [of having a good eye]. Thus, he needed to say to cling to a good eye and not just to distance from an evil eye. For even if one distances from an evil eye he still needs to teach us to conduct ourselves actively with a good eye.

It is proper to clarify the matter of evil eye. This needs explanation. How does an evil eye affect things? Is not one's livelihood fixed on Rosh Hashana (Beitzah 16a)? Thus, how is it possible for one to be damaged by the [evil] eye of another?

And in the talmud (Bava Metziah 107b):

" 'And G-d shall take away from you all sickness' (Shemot 7:15) Rav said: 'this refers to an evil eye'. This is in accordance with his opinion [expressed elsewhere]. For Rav went up to a cemetery, did what he did, and then said: 'Ninety-nine [have died] through an evil eye, and one through natural causes..' [ie he uttered certain words on the graves and was able to know if the person died in his time or due to evil eye]. He said 99 percent died due to evil eye (ayin hara) and one percent in the normal way of the land".

We will answer as follow. The world can be conducted either through the attribute of justice (Din) or through the attribute of mercy. Everything depends on the person himself. On the high holidays we beseech the Holy One, blessed be He, to rise up from the throne of justice and sit on the throne of mercy.

But if a person puts an evil eye on others, namely, he finds fault (mekatreg) on his fellow, then he causes that Din (judgment) be roused on his fellow. Through this, he causes that he himself will also be dealt with the attribute of Din (justice).

This is as the talmud says: "with the measure that a person measures, he is measured with" (Sotah 1:7). Thus, through a good eye, they will not be so meticulous with him and he will be saved even from sudden death and will draw kindness on himself.

This is what Rebbi Eliezer said that a person should cling to a good eye. For through this, he will be dealt with the attribute of mercy. He also said to distance from an evil eye for that causes the attribute of justice to be roused, as before..

In my humble opinion, it seems to me to explain "good eye" in a different manner. Namely, to be careful not to look at forbidden things and to guard the eyes and conduct oneself with kedusha and taharah (holiness and purity)...

In the talmud (Shab.64a): "why did the Israelites of that generation require atonement? Because they fed their eyes lewdness (looked at women)"...

And in Yomah 74b: "Resh Lakish said: Better is the pleasure of looking at a woman than the act itself as it is said: 'Better is the seeing of the eyes than the wandering of the desire' (Kohelet 6:9)". And in Tosfot there: "therefore, one must be exceedingly careful of this.."

In the talmud (Bava Batra 57b): " 'who closes his eyes from seeing evil' (Isaiah 33:15) - this refers to one who does not gaze at women.. " The talmud explains there that if there is an alternative route, he is called a wicked man and it is forbidden even though he does not intend [to derive pleasure]. For regarding looking at women, even if he does not intend, there is a concern of pleasure (chashash hirhur). Therefore, if there is an alternative route, he is called a wicked man... (see there for a long discussion).

According to all this, the intent of a good eye is shmirat einayim (guarding the eyes).

Translator: and in the torah it says "you shall not go after your hearts and after your eyes.. in order that you remember.." Thus by guarding the eyes one will become a cemented pit which does not lose a drop. Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, z'l, reportedly attributed his photographic memory to guarding the eyes. Also, it is said that Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu zt'l asked Baba Sali zt'l why he merited to perform such great miracles with his prayers. "If it is because of your torah, I also have torah. If it is because of going to the mikva daily, I also go, etc." Baba Sali smiled and answered him. Yes, you have torah, etc. but you do not have my shmirat einayim (guarding of the eyes). Never in my life have my eyes seen anything improper.

 **Level 3**



Avodat Yisrael, Avot - for he was "like an ever strengthening wellspring". Namely, he would always strengthen himself in the service of G-d, blessed be He. On this he said "a good heart". For the word heart (Lev) is of the word "flame" (Lahav), namely, that the flame needs to be always blazing and burning in his heart in the service of G-d, blessed be He.

 **Level 3**

Maharal

Maharal - see next mishna.

Chapter 2 Mishna 12 - Evil Eye

He said to them: Go out and see what is the evil path that a man should distance himself from. Rabbi Eliezer says: "an evil eye". Rabbi Yehoshua says: "an evil friend". Rabbi Yossi says: "an evil neighbor". Rabbi Shimon says: "he that borrows but does not repay. For he who borrows from man is as one who borrows from the Al-mighty, blessed be He, as it says (Psalms 37:21) 'The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous one gives graciously'" Rabbi Elazar says: "an evil heart". He said to them: "I see the words of Rabbi Elazar ben Arakh [as better than] all of yours, for his words include all of yours".

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "what is the evil path that a man should distance himself.." - it was necessary to ask them this because it is not necessarily so that for everything good, the opposite is evil. For example, the trait of Chasidut is to go beyond the letter of the law. But one who is not a chasid and goes by the letter of the torah is not evil. Similarly, for being content with little, which is a good eye, the opposite of this is seeking luxuries. It is not an evil path. For he does not harm anyone in this. Likewise for the other traits.

Q Level 1

☆ Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - "evil eye" - don't think that since he does not damage anyone, it is not an evil path. Rather, it is indeed evil. It is the mother of all evils. Even if a person is perfect in every other middot (character traits), nevertheless, this trait will bring him to commit all evils.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "he that borrows but does not repay" - this is the opposite of "one who sees what is born". For if he does not pay back, he will not find someone to lend him at a time of need and will face starvation. He did not say merely: "one who does not see what is born". Because it is possible for one to not see what is born and nevertheless not run into any trouble. Namely, he will be able to save himself when that thing born comes.

"but the Righteous One gives graciously" - i.e. the Holy One, blessed be He, who is the Tzadik (Righteous One) of the world, pays the lender what the borrower did not pay back. Thus, the borrower remains obligated to G-d.

Q Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "evil eye" - when his mind's eye judges everything to the side of evil, he is not content with what he has, he is jealous of his fellow and judges him negatively. He suspects his Rabbi and the Holy One, blessed be He. He becomes in doubt on the foundations of Judaism, on torah from Heaven, on its explanation we received (the oral law). He does not merit the treasure of torah and [eventually] descends to Gehinom.

"evil friend" - who entices him always to sway from the just path.

"evil neighbor" - who angers him always and thus destroys his middot (character traits).

"he that borrows but does not repay" - this is the opposite of "to see what is born". He does not see

that if he does not pay back now, in the future he will not find someone to lend him and thus he will die of starvation..

"evil heart" - for the heart is the root of everything. And when the root is rotten in a tree, everything rots. Likewise, if the heart is evil, the (evil) inclination of the body will strengthen over the intellect, and he will join the company of those similar to him, an evil friend, an evil neighbor, and he will not make a fence before sin, etc.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - *"bad friend"* - i.e. that he himself is a bad friend and a bad neighbor to his peers and neighbors.

"he that borrows but does not repay" - at the time of the loan, he should have thought and looked if he will be able to pay it back at the due date. If one recognizes that he will not be able to pay it back, then even though he needs the loan very much, nevertheless, he should not borrow now and instead push it off.

"For he who borrows from man is as one who borrows from the Almighty" - don't think after I don't have any money to pay back and he already brought me to Beit Din and the judges did not find anything to collect from me and I was judged exempt by Beit Din, therefore what is my sin and fault? It is not so. For although you are exempt from the Beit Din below but not from the judgments of Heaven (dinei Shamayim)...

Q Level 2

Mili D'Avot - *"evil heart"* - ie a bad intellect (sechel). Namely, one who is not drawn after the intellect in all his matters. Instead he follows the physicality (chomer). Such a person has a sick and bad intellect and this will lead him to the lusts and the petty things.

Q Level 2

Tosfot Yom Tov

Tosfot Yom Tov - *"Rabbi Shimon says: he that borrows but does not repay"* - not "seeing what is born" is not necessarily evil. Since many people do not see the born (nolad) and nevertheless go in the just path or they fulfill the torah l'shem Shamayim (with pure motives), not out of hope for reward or fear of punishment. Rather, lishma (for its own sake) and this is the highest form of divine service. Thus, Rabbi Shimon did not say that the evil path is one who does not see the born (nolad).

Q Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - *"he that borrows but does not repay"* - why is this trait so bad? Because the world is built on kindness (Olam Chesed Yibane). Without kindness the world cannot endure. Thus, one who lends and does not pay back is the exact opposite of kindness. He smites it by paying back good with evil, and our sages said (Midrash HaGadol Vayera 22:20): "there is nothing as hard on the world as ingratitude".

Q Level 3

Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer, Bamidbar - *"he that borrows but does not repay"* - the other sages said something and its opposite. But in the words of Rabbi Shimon how does this apply?

It seems to me to answer based on his previous statement. Namely, he said: "who sees what is born" instead of: "who sees the future".. For the former term: "who sees what is born" applies to both the past and the future (Nedarim 30b).

Now, every Jew is under duty to lend money to his fellow when his fellow asks him. If the lender is unable to pay afterwards, he is not considered a wicked person (rasha) due to this. Thus, the

verse did not say "the wicked lend money and do not pay (shilem)" (past tense) but rather it says: "the wicked lend and will not pay (yeshalem)" (future tense), ie in the beginning, at the time of the loan, already the lender borrowed the money with intention to not pay it back.

This way also applies towards G-d. The righteous man "sees what is born", ie his debt to G-d for past and future (favours). For every day he becomes more indebted to G-d. Therefore, he does not seek from G-d any miracle or great abundance. For he knows that he will not be able to pay it back. But nevertheless, his will is always to pay it back. Therefore, this is a good way and the opposite is an evil way. Namely, similar to "the wicked lend and will not pay back" ie at the time he becomes indebted, he does not intend to pay back. For he thinks that everything G-d gives him is not enough for him and what others have is as if it is stolen from him and everything belongs to him (see Shaar Bechina intro) and he is not obligated to G-d for anything. Thus, "he who borrows from man is as one who borrows from the Almighty".

Q Level 3

☆ Binyan Avot

Binyan Avot (by Kabbalist Tzemach haKohen, Jerba) - "he who borrows from man is as one who borrows from the Almighty" - as known, a man's livelihood (parnasa) is in G-d's hands, blessed be He. Everything is fixed on Rosh Hashana for the year. Thus one who lends from a lender and does not pay him back reduces his livelihood from what G-d decreed for the lender. Thus, it is as if he borrowed from G-d..

Q Level 3

☆ Chida

Chida - Zeroa Yamin - "The wicked borrow and do not repay" - .. one who lends from man and does not pay back loses all his merits. For the Holy One, blessed be He, does not pay back the reward of his merits. This is what he said: "like one who borrows from the Almighty", to equate his debt to man like a debt to G-d. Just like for one who is obligated to G-d, if he does not pay back, G-d also does not pay back his merits, so too for one who owes his fellow and does not pay back, G-d also does not pay back the reward of his mizvot.. Thus he is certainly left a wicked man. For he has in his hand only sins and not mitzvot..

Q Level 3

☆ Orot Ha'mussar

Orot HaMussar on Daat Chachma u'Mussar 2:14 - what is this matter of "evil neighbor" that our sages generalized as being "the evil path that a man should distance himself from"? Who cares if one has an evil neighbor in his neighborhood? What difference does this make?

But the foundation of the matter is that "evil" is an actual existence. And this existence of evil clings so much that if only his neighborhood is evil, there is already no advice and no strategy [to save oneself] - for certainly the evil will cling also on him.

Likewise for an evil eye, an evil friend, an evil heart - all of them are an existence of evil; *"his words include all of yours"* - all these things are branches of an evil heart.

An evil heart is this existence of evil. It is (mamash) a deadly poison. If we could take apart the heart of an evil person, we would find and see how the heart is teeming and full of evil inside it.

"For the stone shall cry out from the wall, and the beam from the timber shall answer it" (Chavakuk 2:11). As it implies literally, namely, that in essence, evil clings so much that it even literally sticks to stones and wood.

We can see just how awesome is this matter of "evil neighbor" from what our sages said: "why was the parsha (reading) of the death of Aharon immediately after the parsha of the king of Edom? Because since they associated (nitchabru) with this wicked man to pass through his land, they lost this Tzadik (Aharon)" (Bamidbar Rabba 19:9).

The death of Aharon! Imagine what an unbelievable shock it was for them. This is the man who stood between the dead and the living (who held up the angel of death).. (Bamidbar Rabba 19:11). For he was the wellpring of Shalom. But even so, a bad neighbor caused his death. Such is the great extent of the clinging of death of an evil neighbor - so much so that it can cause the death of Aharon the Kohen!

Likewise for the opposite on the good side. We need to understand it also in the way of an actual "existence". "*Which is the straight path that a man should cling to?*" - "a good eye", "a good friend", "a good neighbor", "a good heart". "Good" is an existence. Furthermore, the "trait of good is greater [than the trait of evil]" (middah tova meruba). It is the biggest existence there is.

The secret (sod) of such a life (of good eye, etc.) is an existence of good. Even a slight clinging to this has the power to revive the dead literally (mamash).

A good man brings blessings and good, revival and healing to all his surroundings. The slightest joining to him, a mere touching of good brings shefah (divine flow) of life and blessing to everyone.

Our sages said regarding Avraham our forefather:

"'you shall be a blessing' (Gen.12:2) - Avraham himself became a wellpring of blessing. Everyone who touched Avraham our forefather became blessed. From a look and glance of Avraham our forefather, sick people became healed" (Bereishit Rabba 39:17). In the end there, our sages said that even for desert travellers and sailors, when they would merely utter the name of Avraham our forefather, ie a tiny connection to him - they would be saved in his merit.

This level that a man becomes a channel to bring shefah and blessing to the world, it seems to be the highest level. But after a little contemplation it seems from the words of our sages that it is a level incumbent on everyone [to strive for].

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "good heart" - for the heart is the person himself and his essence, and its influence rules all his deeds.

Q Level 2



Toldot Yaakov Yosef (Chukat) - for one who has an evil heart, his heart tends to condemn others and think bad on them. But when one has a good heart, his heart tends to find the good in others.

Q Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - it is proper to ask why did Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkanos see fit to choose this trait of "good eye"? Furthermore, what did Rabbi Yehoshua see to cling to this trait of being a good friend? Is there really such a lofty trait in this? All the more so for "a good neighbor" - what (lofty) virtue is there in this?

Another question: when Raban Yochanan asked the opposite - "which evil trait should one distance from?", all of them answered the opposite trait (ex. evil eye versus good eye) except for Rebbi Shimon who said: "one who lends but does not pay back" instead of the opposite "one who does not see what is born (nolad)".

Another question: Raban Yochanan ben Zakai said that a good heart includes all of them. But a good heart does not include "one who sees what is born". These two traits are not connected to each other..

(the maharal will now bring a simple explanation to answer all the questions and then afterwards a

deeper explanation).

HUMAN LOGIC EXPLANATION

"go out and see which is the straight path that a person should cling to" - ie that this way has much good and therefore it is proper for one to cling to it. He said: "go out and see", ie that you investigate and examine people until you discover which is the best midah (trait). For these things were not learned from the torah. Thus, one needs to examine and investigate in the world and therefore he used the term "go out and see".

Rebbi Eliezer ben Horkanos said a good eye. For this trait leads to much good for a man, since all the time, every moment, he sees wealth, greatness, and other qualities (maalot) in people and his eye is good towards others. Hence, this trait applies more often than other traits. One can exercise it more frequently than other traits and he can give a good eye quickly like the blink of an eye. Therefore, he said to cling to this trait more than all the other traits.

Rebbi Yehoshua added "a good friend". For when he is a good friend to someone, certainly this includes having a good eye. Because if he has an evil eye, he is unable to be a good friend due to the evil eye in him. Furthermore, the trait of good friend is better than the trait of "good eye". For it is with speech and advice while "good eye" is only in sight (it is the way of friends to give advice to each other).

Rabbi Yossi added a good neighbor. For this is even more than the good friend since the good friend is good only in advice (speech), while good neighbors are good to each other in deed, namely, to lend to each other and help each other in deed. This also includes benefiting each other in speech and in advice. Thus a good neighbor includes speech (of a good friend) and all the more so it includes a good eye which is of sight only.

Rebbi Shimon ben Netanel added "one who sees what is born", i.e. to perform acts of kindness to other people. For the neighbors' favors to each other is only in lending things or the like. This one benefits and the other loses nothing (ze nehene ze lo chaser). The lender does not lose anything. Thus it is not called an act of kindness like one who lends money or the like. Thus he said "one who sees what is born". For he thinks that someday he too will be in need and the fellow will reciprocate kindness to him.. Every kindness stands to be paid back except for a kindness to the dead..

Thus one who sees what is born does not refrain from doing kindness to his fellow.. this is why when he asked them (next mishna) which path to distance from, he said "one who lends but does not pay back". For this is the opposite of one who sees what is born as we explained (for afterwards no one will lend to him again).

Rebbi Elazar ben Arach said "a good heart". For when a man has a good heart, everything is included. He does kindness to others and all the previous good things we mentioned are included in this.

Regarding one who sees what is born, sometimes he will refrain from benefiting someone due to worrying about loss. For since the good he does is only for the nolad, namely, perhaps he will also need this man. But if helping him incurs some loss, he will not help him. For the future need is only a maybe while the current loss is a certain, and a certain overrules a maybe (ein safek motzi misei vadai).

But he who has a good heart does not refrain from any kindness even if it incurs a loss for him.

Therefore, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai said "I see the words of Rabbi Elazar ben Arakh [as better than] all of yours, for his words include all of yours".

"which path should a person cling to" - ie that a man needs to cling completely to this good trait and habituate himself very much in it until this trait is fixed in his soul. For thus the good traits need to be fixed in him until they are as second nature. And all the more so is he not called a "possessor of a good trait" (baal midah tova) when he is not habituated in it and it is not fixed in his soul until it is as second nature.

Likewise for the evil traits (next mishna), he said one should distance from it a very great distance. Not it nor anything similar to it. For if he draws close to it then he has some closeness to the evil trait to some degree.

"evil eye" - for one must distance very far from [the trait of] evil eye. Because the eye can do its work in the blink of an eye, giving an evil eye to another. Therefore, this trait is most liable to do evil and one should distance from it. Furthermore this evil trait leads a man to jealousy, hatred, and many other countless sins..

"evil friend" - (speech) he damages his fellow by giving him bad advice and all the more so that he has an evil eye.

"evil neighbor" - (deed) bad neighbors damage each other in many ways through their deeds. All the more so through speech like the evil friend who gives bad advice and through an evil eye.

"he that borrows but does not repay" - worse than all of them is he who pays back evil to one who does good to him. He holds back his fellow's money and pays back the good with evil. This is antithetical to one who "sees what is born", namely, one who bestows good and acts good towards his friend knowing that the good will be paid back. But this person is the opposite. He is wicked and refuses to pay back thus shutting the door for next time. All the more so does he do all the damages of the evil neighbor and the evil eye person.

Rabbi Elazar ben Arach added evil heart. This includes all the evil traits we mentioned previously, as Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai said. With this explanation we have answered all the questions.

Everything is in order. First he brought the good trait one can practise with the eye. Afterwards, he brought what one can practise to his fellow through speech. Afterwards the good one can practise to his fellow through deed as neighbors do good to each other reciprocally whereby one benefits and the other does not lose anything. For that which one neighbor lends his tools or the like, he loses nothing.

Afterwards he brought one who sees what is born (nolad), who benefits others with his money (loans or the like).

More than this, one who does kindness to his fellow and benefits him despite incurring a loss. This is the possessor of a good heart. He benefits others even if he loses in the matter.

Likewise for the evil traits which each one mentioned. Each one adds on to the previous. This is how one would explain this mishna according to logic and reason.

TORAH WISDOM EXPLANATION

But this mishna is a very wondrous teaching according to Wisdom.

Let us explain this mishna in that manner. Every person of understanding will see that without a doubt this is the correct explanation..

You should know that this mishna has very wondrous matters, not like people think that the words of the sages were said merely by common logic. It is not so. For all the words of the sages contain great [divine] Wisdom.

You should know that a man is comprised of many divisions. We already explained this previously. Sometimes he is divided into two divisions, body and soul. Sometimes he is divided into three divisions as we explained earlier regarding "on three things the world stands, justice, truth, and peace".

Man can also be divided in many other ways depending on the aspect under discussion.

You will find the torah valued man at five shekalim for a male baby to 50 shekalim maximum for a man (Vayikra 27). From this you can know that man's shekel is five.

This matter contains great wisdom. For man has a body and its powers and a soul and its [spiritual] powers.

The powers of the body carry and join to the soul and its powers. The body and the soul are joined together and the body carries the soul.

Some powers of the soul are not completely separate (from the physical) while others are completely separate, namely, the power of intellect (koach sichli) which grasps (understands) things.

Each power has its own "carrier" (nosseh meyuchad). Without a doubt, that which carries a power which is not completely separate (from the physical) is not the same as that which carries a power which is completely separate (from the physical).

Therefore that which carries the power which is completely separate (the intellect) is more (spiritually) fine and pure than that which carries the power which is not completely separate like the nefesh (life soul).

Thus, we have four matters: power of the (lower) soul (koach nafshi), and power of the intellect (koach sichli), and each one has its own carrier power in the body. Thus, they are four.

However, don't think there is not a fifth power. For the powers are not really independent at all. Rather, they have a single root. Thus there is a fifth power which is like a root to the other powers.

This power is in the heart, which is the root of all of man. There this power dwells. This power is not separated completely nor is it completely in the body.

Soon, we will explain each of these powers from the words of the five sages in this mishna.

Know that these powers were also mentioned in the words of the sages. They called them: "ruach, nefesh, neshama" (B.Rabba 14:9). For they are three powers besides the carriers, as we will explain. Due to this, they are five.

With this you will understand what our sages said in Eirubin 13b: *"two and a half years Beit*

Shammai and Beit Hillel argued: Beit Hillel said better for man had he not been created and Beit Shammai said better for man that he was created. They finally took a vote and decided that it were better for man not to have been created than to have been created.."

Why was it mentioned here "two and a half years" more than anywhere else?.. The answer is that man has five powers as we mentioned, namely, the powers of the body and the powers of the soul. Two and a half tend to the body and two and a half tend to the soul. Therefore, two and a half tend to evil (physicality) and two and a half tend to good (the intellect). For the fifth power has no pair. For it has a connection to the power of the body and also a connection to the separated (non-physical) power (of the soul). Thus, it tends to both sides and is therefore divided.

Hence, these say better for man had he not been created and those say better for man that he was created.

The explanation of "they argued for two and a half years", ie from the aspect of these two and a half, these said better for man that he was created and from the aspect of the other two and a half those said better for man had he not been created. This corresponds to the number of powers which tend to the evil and to the good.

But "*they finally took a vote and decided that it were better for man not to have been created than to have been created*". For from the aspect that he has parts near to the good it is better for him that he was created. While from the aspect of man himself, [better had he not been created].

This is because man has two aspects. One, from the aspect of his different powers. Two, from the aspect of his being a man which contains all the parts together.

From the [first] aspect of his different powers, half tend to the good and half to the evil. But from the [second] aspect of man which includes all the parts together, he tends to the evil. For generally the man is evil (since he does not have a majority of good). But if he had a majority of good, the good would incline the evil [to the good]. But now since there is no inclining, for he is half and half, it is better for him had he not been created. Since the evil corrupts the good and thus there is no inclining to the good.

Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel also argue in tractate Rosh Hashana (17a) regarding those who are half meritorious (zakai) and half guilty (chayiv). Beit Shammai holds they descend to Gehinom, scream out and ascend, while Beit Hillel holds from the verse "abundant kindness" (shemot 34:6) that He inclines towards kindness.

However, both agree here that since there is half/half and man does not have good [powers] which inclines the scale, better had he not been created.

Therefore, "they voted" all of them together that better had he not been created because there is an aspect of man that it is better for him had he not been created (for the half evil corrupts the half good, as before - R.Hartman).

You can understand these things from the name "Adam" (Aleph-Mem-Dalet). It begins with Aleph corresponding to the power which is one. It continues with Dalet for these four powers we mentioned are pairs. They have a good and evil part. This is what was said on "[G-d] formed [man]" (Ber.2:7), "formed (vayyitzer)" is written with two yuds. For man has two formations as they said in tractate Berachot (61b).

Therefore, afterwards is the letter Mem. It teaches that these five powers are half to here and half to there. For the "Mem" itself indicates division since it divides the hebrew alphabet, half to each side.

That which they said "two and a half years", this is to hint to two times and a half... these forces must be five because a power which is separated (from the physical) must have a carrier (intermediary medium)...

This is why one must do kria (rip his shirt) when witnessing yetziah nefesh (death of a Jew). For yetziah hanefesh is like a sefer torah which is burnt. The torah similarly has five books like the soul has five powers as we said, and the fifth book includes everything. This matter is exceedingly deep regarding these five powers and we cannot explain further.

You should just know that the soul is the candle of G-d, as written: "the candle of G-d is the soul of man" (Mishlei 20:27). This candle's spark spreads and branches out to five branches, namely, these five powers we mentioned. Half of them tend to the body and half to the nefesh (soul). Understand this.

Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai saw that each of his five disciples excelled in a good trait which corresponded to one of these five parts in man. Thus it says "he would count their praise" instead of "he would tell their praise".

Because here it was a count. For their praise included all praise so that there is not anything to add nor to subtract, since it encompassed all the five parts...

He began with Rebbi Eliezer ben Horkanos saying *"a cemented pit which does not lose a drop"*. This is a praise on the koach nafshi (spiritual soul power which is not completely separated like the intellect - R.Hartman). He said that he has the power of (perfect) memory, a spiritual power. It is the most praiseworthy of all. For on it stands the acquisition of wisdom.

This itself teaches that his soul was separated (nivdal), not immersed in the physical. For that which is completely separated is unchanging. But something physical changes and reacts.. Therefore, he said that his soul is a *"a cemented pit which does not lose a drop"*, ie that his spiritual power is separated (nivdal)..

Thus it says regarding the soul: *"but the soul will not be filled"* (Kohelet 6:7). For the soul receives things, it receives knowledge of things and holds them..

He praised Rebbi Yehoshua ben Chanania saying: "praiseworthy is she who bore him". We already mentioned that the power of the soul has a bodily carrier (nossei gufani) which "carries" the separated (transcendent) spiritual power. Rebbi Yehoshua had this quality, namely refinement of the physical (zachut hachomer). Therefore, he said: "praiseworthy is she who bore him", to teach on the good physicality he came from. For if the woman he came from did not have good physicality, such a person of refined and good physicality would not have come out of her..

Without a doubt, the woman is more physical than the man.. Therefore, he said on Yehoshua ben Chanania: "praiseworthy is she who bore him". For Rebbi Eliezer ben Horkanos had the power of nefesh nivdelet (separated soul), while Rebbi Yehoshua ben Chanania the level of purity of the physical (zachut hachomer), which is the power that "carries" this soul power which he praised Rebbi Eliezer ben Horkanos for. Note that Rebbi Eliezer and Rebbi Yehoshua were peers (chaverim) throughout the whole talmud, they are likewise peers here..

After mentioning the spiritual power and its carrier, he praised Rabbi Yossi HaKohen that he is a Chasid (pious one). This too is a quality in the bodily power of man, it carries the intellect (nossei hasechel).

The explanation is that Chasidut indicates that he has extremely refined and fine physicality, more than the first (of Rabbi Yehoshua - RH). From this comes Chasidut, to do good beyond the letter of the law, as explained earlier (Avot 2:5). Therefore, it is not relevant to say: "praiseworthy is she who bore him". Because this level is so divested of the physical that it is as if he is not at all connected to physicality which is connected to the woman...

Afterwards he said: "Shimon ben Netanel fears sin". He praised him for the refined and clean intellect that he has. Thus he said that he "fears sin". For this trait teaches on pure and refined intellect. This is what they said earlier "a boor cannot fear sin nor can an am haaretz (man of the land) be a chasid" (Avot 2:5). This is as what we explained there, namely, that when he has the coarseness of physicality and due to this he is called an 'am haaretz' (man of the land). For he is of gross physicality like the land. Thus it is impossible for such a person to be a Chasid. For Chasidut is when one has refinement and good of the physical as we explained.

And when he is a boor, namely, that there is no wisdom in him, it is impossible for him to fear Heaven as we explained. Because one who fears Heaven is moved (mitpa'el) by G-d and fears Him. Such a situation is only possible for one who is close to G-d. For one who is far from the king certainly does not fear the king. Only one who is close to the king, and near to him. Then, he will feel fear of the king.

Therefore, "a boorish man cannot fear sin". as we explained there. We will explain further later on by the mishna: *"if there is no wisdom, there is no fear. If there is no fear, there is no wisdom."* (Avot 3:17). For these two things, wisdom and fear are tied and joined together such that one cannot exist without the other.

Thus, that which he said: "Rabban Shimon ben Netanel fears sin", he was really praising him for having a pure, fine, and clean intellect, and therefore, he fears sin. For the pure and clean intellect is the opposite of the boor, who is far from the intellect...

This praise corresponds to what he praised Rabbi Yossi HaKohen. For he praised Rabbi Yossi for the power of carrying the power of intellect (nossei koach sichli). Thus, the order of these four sages is very precise..

"Rabbi Elazar ben Arakh is an increasingly powerful wellspring" - for he had the root of the sechel and a powerful sechel (intellect). Therefore, he compared him to an *an increasingly powerful wellspring*". For the spring has a root and source from which it flows and increases. So too Rabbi Elazar has the root and power of sechel completely whole. Due to this he always increases wisdom. For this is the way for something which has a powerful root, it spreads out from the root and increases continuously. But something without a strong root ceases immediately..

Thus he praised Rabbi Elazar with this praise we mentioned earlier. Namely that man has a power which is a root to all the powers.. This power is in the heart. Thus the heart is considered like the root from which the powers of the neshama (soul) branch out.

Due to his having this power as completely whole as possible, therefore he was like an increasingly power wellspring.

You should know that one who has this quality becomes like a wellspring and spreads out on all sides, including all the wisdoms and all good traits. Rabbi Elazar had all the praiseworthy traits of the other sages mentioned previously and included everything.

We have explained these things but there is more depth when you understand the Sod (secret) of the Neshama (soul), as written: "and the breath of the Almighty permits them to understand" (Iyov 32:8). From there the soul emanates (atzula). Therefore, the soul has five names: "nefesh, ruach, neshama, chayah, yechida" (Ber. Rabba 1:5). And the value of a male is five shekalim (Vayikra 27:6). Corresponding to this, there are five books in the torah, and from this you will understand the matter of the five disciples mentioned here..

"Rabbi Eliezer said: A good eye" - here the Tanna called them "Rabbi" because they said a matter (dvar) of Halacha. Therefore, it is proper to call them with the title "Rabbi"..

As we said earlier, the level of Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkanos is that he had the power of nefesh nivdelet min haguf (his soul was separated from the physicality of the body), and through this he had a good soul. Therefore, he praised the trait of "good eye". For one who has a good soul has a good eye. Likewise for the opposite, one who has an evil soul is evil eyed. We find in several places that one with an evil eye is called an "evil soul"...

In truth, the power of (inner) sight is the most separated spiritual power of all the senses.. sight is a separated power close to the intellect. For in scripture sight is associated with the intellect.. such as "my heart saw [much wisdom]" (Kohelet 1:16). Thus, Rabbi Eliezer was drawn after his level and potential of having a separated soul and the trait which follows this, namely a good eye. Thus, he praised the trait and said: "a good eye".

"good friend" - as we explained earlier, the level of Rabbi Yehoshua was from the aspect of the power which "carries" the nefesh nivdelet (separated soul) and connects to it. He had perfection (shlemut) in this power. We explained earlier clearly that there are powers which are like carriers and connect to the power of the nefesh (soul), and that it cannot be otherwise. (Translator: "the Ohr Hachaim on Emor says that the soul and body are more opposites than fire and water. Thus an intermediate medium between them is required).

When this Chaver (friend, ie carrier) which connects to the soul is good, it is considered a good creation which does not do evil to the person. Therefore, Rabbi Yehoshua praised "a good friend". For he had the level of being pure and good in the power which is the friend to the soul and its carrier. It is a good friend and because of this a man does good to others. For when man is divested of the pettiness of physicality and he becomes of good and pure physicality until he becomes a good friend to the soul, then he himself will be good (and thus good to others - RH).

Therefore, he said that the trait a man should choose is to be a "good friend". The intent is to be a good friend to the soul.

Thus, the praise Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai gave to Rabbi Yehoshua was "praiseworthy is she who bore him". Earlier, we explained this to mean that he was of pure and good physicality. And one who has pure and good physicality necessarily says that the good trait a man should cling to is to be a "good friend". The plain meaning is also intended. Namely, that Rabbi Yehoshua praised a good friend, like his own trait of being a good friend to the soul.

Therefore, he praised a good friend. For it is all the same thing - that which he was a good friend

to the soul and also literally a good friend to other people. Because a good friend [to others] does good. He inclines his friend to the good. So too, the friend to the soul - he inclines everything to the good until the man becomes good.

Thus, Rebbi Yehoshua praised the trait of "good friend". For all the intent of a good friend is to incline his friend to the good. Therefore he said that the trait one should cling to is to be a good friend. For through this man becomes completely good.

"Rabbi Yossi said 'a good neighbor'" - as before, Rabbi Yehoshua said "a good friend" due to his power of being a good friend to the soul. Rabbi Yossi was praised for being a "Chasid". We explained previously this was from the aspect of being a "carrier".

He had (perfected) the power which is a neighbor to the intellect's power. It was good. Therefore, he said "a good neighbor".

Understand the difference between a friend and a neighbor. For the friend (chaver) joins (mitchaber) completely with his friend and does not separate from him. He is with him completely. But the neighbor is only due to sharing residence with him and being a good neighbor.

This itself is the difference between one who joins (mitchaber) to the soul power versus one who joins the intellectual power. For one who joins the soul power has a connection and mixing with him (chibur v'eruv imo). But one who joins with the intellectual power does not have mixing with it. He only has a connection with it.

The reason is because the intellectual power is completely separated (from physicality). It has no joining and mixing with the carrier. Rather, it exists with it and has a connection only due to this. But it has no mixing whatsoever.. Thus, while the former is called friend, the latter is called neighbor... (see also Maharal on Avot 1:4).

We explained earlier that the level of Rebbi Yossi was from the aspect of purity and good in him. This aspect itself is Chasidut, as we explained earlier. Therefore, he said the trait a man should cling to is "good neighbor", ie that a man be divested of the gross and thick physicality, to purify his physicality, to become a good neighbor to the intellect.

For when he is a good neighbor to the intellect, he is good and a chasid to the public. Thus, Rabbi Yossi was drawn after the quality in him.

The explanation is also as the plain meaning, that one should be a good neighbor to his fellow human being just like he is a good neighbor to the intellect. For a good neighbor is completely good...

When you understand these things we said, you will have no doubt on our explanation. For they are very clear matters in wisdom. There is no doubt on them except to one who does not understand words of Wisdom.

"Rabbi Shimon says: one who sees what is born" - without a doubt, this too is clear testimony to the explanation we mentioned. For the good trait he said follows from his virtuous level.

As before, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai praised him saying: "Shimon ben Netanel fears sin". We explained that fear of sin exists when the intellect is fine and pure (dak v'zach). For then one has more fear of sin.

The opposite of this is one who is a boor. Thus, *"a boor cannot fear sin"* (Avot 2:6), ie completely.

That which Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai praised Rabbi Shimon ben Netanel for the virtue of "fear of sin", this teaches that he had a fine and pure intellect. From this is fear of G-d, and this obligates "to see what is born". For only one with a fine and pure intellect can see the nolad (what is born). We explained this already by *"who is wise? One who sees the future"* (Avot 4:1).

Thus because Rabbi Shimon had a pure and fine intellect, he would see the future. For the intellect is like a candle which illuminates well. Through it one sees the nolad (future consequences). This is the opposite of the fool "who walks in darkness" (Kohelet 2:14). He fails to see what is before him...

The level (maalah) of this trait of "seeing what is born" is that he has a divested and clear intellect (sechel pashut v'zach). Therefore, his intellect sees the nolad, as we said earlier. His level is certainly lofty from the aspect that he is similar to the upper ones who are divested (peshutim).

Therefore, we said that his trait is fear of sin. For whoever is close to the upper ones (elyonim) has fear of sin and he is far from the lower ones who are not divested (peshutim)...

"good heart" - Rabbi Elazar ben Arach said: "a good heart", ie that one habituates himself to have a good heart. For this is the root of man, since the heart is the root of man and from it stems all the powers of the body and soul.. In all of them, the heart is the beginning and root (Zohar, Midrash Nelam 1:138 - RH).

As before Rabbi Eliezer was like an overpowering wellspring. A wellspring has a flowing root and source. Therefore, he said: "a good heart" since the heart is the root and beginning of man and everything branches out from it just like the wellspring flows and ascends from its source and root. Thus, that which he said "a good heart", this also follows from his trait. Namely, that he was an "increasingly powerful wellspring". In this power which is the root of everything and from which everything stems, he had it perfectly (b'shlemut).

This is what Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai said: "I see the words of Rabbi Elazar ben Arakh [as better than] all of yours, for his words include all of yours".

For when the heart is good, everything is whole (b'shlemut), whether the powers of the soul or the powers of the body. Because the heart is the source and root of living creatures. This is indicated by its being in the middle of the body. For everything which is in the middle is the root and beginning of everything...

(see there for much more... He ends off:) "...without a doubt these are the words of the Chachamim, despite that it is impossible to explain their words according to the [full] depth in them."

Chapter 2 Mishna 13 - Honor Fellow

They [each] said three things: Rabbi Eliezer said: Let the honor of your fellow be as cherished to you as your own, and do not be easy to anger. Repent one day before your death. Warm yourself by the fire of the sages, but beware of their coals lest you be burned; for their bite is the bite of a fox, their sting is the sting of a scorpion, and their hiss is the hiss of a serpent, and all their words are like fiery coals.

הם אמרו שלשה דברים. רבי אליעזר אומר, יהי כבוד חברך חביב עליך כשלך, ואל תהי נוח לזעם. ושוב יום אחד לפני מיתתך. והוי זיהר מתחמם כנגד אורן של חכמים, והוי זהיר בגחלתן שלא תקוה, שנשיכתן נשיכת שועל, ועקיצתן עקיצת עקרב, ולחישתן לחישת חיה, וכל דברייהם כגחלי אש.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "let the honor of your fellow be as dear to you as your own.." - when will this be? when you are not easily angered. But if you are easily angered, it is impossible for you to not demean the honor of your fellow.

Q Level 2

Bartenura

Yavetz - since you are obligated on guarding the honor of your fellow, then do not become angry on him. Because if you get angry on him easily, this itself is not proper honor towards him. For a person will not get angry on someone he is obligated to honor.

Q Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "Let the honor of your fellow.." - he brought three things that it is proper for one to become whole in. One, good character traits (middot), two, guarding the mitzvot, and three, torah study.

Regarding good character traits (middot), he exhorted strongly against anger. For many bad traits stem from anger. And since most of the time anger is due to one person slighting the honor of his fellow, and then the fellow answers back with a little more, and then he too answers back with even more, and so forth in a (vicious) cycle.. Thus, the Sage said if you want to guard from anger which destroys body and soul, "let the honor of your fellow be as dear.., etc."

Just like you don't like it when someone slights your honor even just hintingly, so too guard from saying to your fellow something that will slight his honor even if it is just a little bit.

And just like if you slighted someone, it is not pleasing to you if he slights you back more than you slighted him, so too, if someone slights you, do not slight him back more than he slighted you (as Beitzah 20b).

Q Level 2

☆ Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - "let the honor of your fellow be as dear to you as your own.." - since he was praised for being a "cemented pit", that he does not forget anything of his learning, thus he came to exhort people on this. He said one will attain this through having a friend (study partner, chaver). For then each speaks verbally to the other and when they utter the words with their mouths, they will not forget as we mentioned earlier (previous mishna)..

This is the meaning of "let the honor of your fellow, etc". That is to say, in order that his friendship endures, you must be careful of his honor very much. For if you don't do this, the cord of friendship will quickly sever without a doubt.

He gave one general principle to keep the friendship. Namely, to not be easily angered by him.

Just like a man is not easily angered on his own words, so too, do not become angry on the words of your fellow. Thus, when you don't get angry and treat him with great honor, the friendship will endure.

Some explain Rabbi Eliezer to be exhorting on anger. Namely, if you want to not be easily angered, strive that "the honor of your fellow be as dear to you as your own". Through this you will not be easily angered. For a man gets angry only when he does not consider important (machshiv) the other person and belittles him. But if he considers him important and honors him like himself, it is impossible to get angry, as before.

Some explain that a man needs to be whole in good character traits and mussars (ethics). Through this, he will come out of the category of a "boor". He will attain this by honoring others. Thus, he said: "let the honor of your fellow, etc." Secondly, one needs to be whole in the mitzvot deeds. Corresponding to this, he said: "repent one day before your death, etc." Third, he needs to be whole in torah. Corresponding to this, he said "warm yourself by the fire of the sages.."

Q Level 2

Maharal

Maharal - "let the honor of your fellow be as cherished to you as your own".. For when a man has [acquired] this trait, he is certainly whole (perfect) with other people in everything...

Q Level 3

☆ Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - we should know that the honor which we imagine to ourselves is proper and fitting to honor others with and likewise all mental pictures we may have [of honor], even the honor of kings - the foundation of the matter is that all this does not reach the right and true honor [one should give] as befitting and as halacha.

Thus, Rabbi Eliezer said to his students: "be careful (hizaharu) of the honor of your fellows" (Berachot 28b). For extreme carefulness (zehirut) is required in this matter. See the Maharsha there.

Even the simple among the people feel belittled (mevuze) when they are not honored as befitting them. For when a man walks in the marketplace, he [really] wants that everyone stops his matters and honors him. And if not, he feels lacking and belittled. Does he not think to himself: "do people really know who I am? If they did, certainly they would act differently!"...

How beautiful are Rashi's words on Shemot (20:23): "you shall not ascend with steps upon My altar, so that your nakedness shall not be exposed upon it".

Rashi: "these matters are a kal va'chomer (logical inference), that if [concerning] these stones-which have no intelligence to object to their humiliation - the Torah said that you shall not behave toward them in a humiliating manner (minhag bizayon). [In contrast,] your friend, who is [created] in the likeness of your Creator and who does object to being humiliated, how much more so [must you be careful not to embarrass him]!-(Mechilta)".

It comes out of Rashi's words an amazing matter. There is a concept of "humiliating manner (minhag bizayon)". Not only did the torah forbid "humiliating" itself, but even "humiliating manner (minhag bizayon)" by itself.

On who was this said? On inanimate stones and how much more so on your fellow who is in the likeness of your Maker, etc.

According to this, it is possible that which we imagine to be honoring our fellow the "honor of kings"

is in fact just "humiliating manner (minhag bizayon)" and far from true honor [deserved].

Thus when one acts in a "humiliating manner" (minhag bizayon) towards his fellow, he transgresses the verse "you shall not ascend with steps upon My altar, so that your nakedness shall not be exposed upon it" - "how much more so for your fellow who is in the likeness of your Maker".

According to this, is it not evident (pashut) that it is difficult to speak even one word to another person?

Q Level 4

☆ Alei Shur

Alei Shur Vol.2, 2:8 - every person needs honor and his life depends on it. Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel, the Saba of Slabodka, would say that a person cannot live without honor. If it were possible to take away all of one's honor, he would die.

Scripture says: "kadosh, kadosh, kadosh Ha-Shem Tzeva-ot, the world is full of His honor (kavod)" (Isaiah 6:3). G-d is holy, that is to say, separated and divested of all physicality and corporeality (chomer, v'gashmiut). He is beyond the limits of bodies. How then can we recognize him? By this that "the whole world is full of His honor". With this that He created the whole world, He reveals Himself and this revealing is called honor. Thus, the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted that we be capable of recognizing Him to some extent.

"All that is called by My name, I have created, formed, and made for My Honor" (Isaiah 43:7). From this we understand that in a place where there is holiness, in that place there is honor.

In a man there is also holiness, for a holy soul was placed inside him. And it obligates treating him with honor...

The word honor (kavod) comes from the root "heaviness" (kaved). The opposite extreme is "cursed" (klala), which is from the root "lightness" (kal). When I treat someone with koved rosh (not lightheaded), I honor him. But if I am being light with him (mekilim bo) , I am cursing him.

All the while a person looks that others honor him, it becomes difficult for him to honor others. For he sees himself as the center of the world and thus he alone deserves all the honor... Rabeinu Yonah writes in Shaar Haavodah:

"The first gate for the serving (religious) person is to know his own worth and recognize his qualities and the qualities of his forefathers, and their greatness and importance, and their being cherished to the Creator, blessed be He. One should strive and strengthen himself always to stand up to this level and conduct himself therein all the time... And if G-d forbid, a person does not recognize his level and the level of his forefathers, it will be easy in his eyes to go in the way of the heretics (peritzim) and expose himself as one of the disgraceful (nevalim), to fulfill his lusts.."

Thus, the first key in the service of G-d is for one to recognize his level and importance...

The closer a person is to another, the more difficult it is to fulfill one's obligation of honoring the other constantly.

Two friends who meet occasionally can easily honor each other. It is harder for two people who meet daily. likewise for partners and even more difficult for neighbors. Even harder is the members of one's household, and perhaps even harder still is the honor of one's wife..

Honoring one's wife is a very great obligation and necessity! For her eyes are lifted towards him, her tears come easily, and her life is dark if her husband does not give her honor.. The primary shalom bayit (peace in the home) depends on this that the husband knows well how to honor his wife...

Regarding others, we find our sages say that a man is asked at the time of his judgment: "did you crown your fellow.." (Reishit Chachma, Shaar Yirah, ch.12), i.e. to give him honor of kings and be annulled before his will. To such a degree!..

ALL matters of service of G-d literally (mamash) are connected to foregoing one's own honor. Torah and prayer, fulfilling the mitzvot whether one receives honor or the opposite, rebuke and forgiving. The work in this is constant and continues throughout one's life.. and in the Mesilat Yesharim: "it is impossible for one to be a faithful servant of his Maker all the time he is concerned for his own honor"..

As mentioned earlier, honor (kavod) is revealing the inner worth of a person or something. And honor of G-d is revealing His holiness which is above all grasp...

We learned in Pirkei Avot:

"Everything that G-d created in His world, He did not create but for His Honor (glory). As is stated (Isaiah 43:7): "All that is called by My name and for My Honor, I created it, formed it, also I made it." And it says (Exodus 15:1): "G-d shall reign forever and ever" (Avot 6:11).

According to our way, we will translate this Beraitha in our words: "all that the Holy One, blessed be He, created in His world was only to be revealed through it". This is the truth. All of the entire creation, from the highest creations to the lowest, the entire creation generally and in all its details - it is all only a revelation! There is nothing which does not have a place and no man without a time whereby a spark of this revelation is ignited. On this king David sang the song of honor: "A song of David. Prepare for the L-ord, [you] sons of the mighty; prepare for the L-ord honor and might.. the L-ord of honor thunders.." (Tehilim 29).

Q Level 4

☆ Alei Shur

Translator - honor is the soul of a person. There are verses on this such as "Awaken, my honor (Ura Kevodi)" (Tehilim 57:9) - which refers to the soul (Metzudot). The soul comes from the "Kisei HaKavod" (G-d's "Throne of Honor"). A person must know that if he harms the honor of his fellow, he is harming his soul. Without a doubt, it will be extremely difficult for the person to bear this and most likely he will not be able to bear it. Thus one needs to be very careful when interacting with people to be mindful not to slight the person's honor in any way, to have one thought in one's mind - "try not to harm this person's honor". This is a difficult work which requires constant awareness. See for yourself how most psychological pain is related to one's honor being attacked in some way. The talmud even compares embarrassing someone to murder. For as before harming the honor of someone is akin to harming his soul which is his deepest essence.

Q Level 2

Midrash Raba (21:22) - "let the honor.." - even for a talmid chacham, if his eye is narrow (Tzar) towards his fellow in this world (i.e. he does not like to see other people's success), then his eyes will be full of smoke (i.e. blurry) in the World to Come.

Q Level 2

Beit Levi, Beit Yisrael, Avot - there are some people that when he sees his fellow being honored by others, he gets goose bumps over his whole body. For this honor is not also being done to him too. Likewise, when he sees the fellow has wealth or sons or blessings, and he himself does not, his

heart becomes [bitter] against his fellow. For he thinks the honor, wealth, and sons his fellow has should be his. On this, the Tanna says: "let the honor of your fellow be as dear to you...,etc.", i.e. if they honor your fellow, or he gets blessings and sons, let this be as dear to you as if this honor and wealth were bestowed to you.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - by nature a person always judges himself favorably. When he errs or loses or damages, he always finds a reason to exonerate himself. We never find people getting angry with themselves even if they committed great sins. On the other hand, a person gets angry on others who err or sin even for the slightest misdeed and he does not strive to exonerate them and understand them like he strives to understand himself. Thus the Tanna says strive that "Let the honor of your fellow be as dear to you as your own". Just like you don't get angry on yourself when you cause a loss or damage, so too don't get angry on your fellow if he sinned or caused loss or damage to yourself or others.

Q Level 3

Chasdei David

Chasdei David - when the Baal Haflaah was accepted as Rabbi of Frankfurt and the time of inauguration arrived, he secluded himself alone in a room. They heard from outside the door that he was speaking to himself saying: "welcome the Gaon and Tzadik, Rabbi, etc."

When he was asked afterwards on this, he replied according to the mishna "Let the honor of your fellow be as dear to you as your own". Namely, that the honor which your fellow honors you should be as important in your eyes as if you honor yourself. And just like when one honors himself, it is worth nothing and he does not feel any feeling of arrogance on this, so too should be in your eyes when other people honor you." This explanation is sweeter than honey.

** Do Not Be Easy to Anger **

Q Level 1

☆ Yismach Moshe

Yismach Moshe, Nasso - "do not be easy to anger" - for if the anger is not l'Shem Shamayim, then it is as if one worships idols. And if you say it is l'Shem Shamayim, if so, it is a matter of holiness and holiness requires preparation and a settled mind (hachana v'yishuv daat). Therefore, do not be easy to anger. Understand this.

Q Level 2

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - scripture says: "a man is born as a wild donkey" (Iyov 11:12), and there is no greater animal wildness than the trait of anger.

Q Level 2

☆ Sfas Emes

Sfas Emes on Avot - "repent one day before your death" - the Kedushas Levi would say that these two things are one. For when a person gets angry, his neshama leaves him. This is "do not be easily angered", for if you get angry, then your neshama leaves, etc. and this is death and you need to repent.

Q Level 2

Kedushat Levi, Avot - the zohar states that when a person gets angry, his soul flees from him and this is a matter of death. Therefore, when a man would like to get angry, he should think immediately that he needs to repent before G-d. For this is a matter of death.

Q Level 2

Avodat Yisrael, Avot - Rabbi Levi Yitzchak would explain that anger is similar to death. For one's soul leaves him. And he said: "repent one day, etc." Thus, before you get angry you must do vidui (confession) and repent. For through this you are going to die. And certainly, when you confess

first, you will no longer get angry.

Q **Level 2**



Beit Levi, Beit Yisrael, Avot - "your death" - if one wants to get angry, he should see to it that he repents first because it is like the day of death. For the Zohar writes (2:182) on the verse "who rips his soul in his anger" (Iyov 18:4) that for every sin, one needs to rectify only that sin he transgressed. But for anger, he must repent so much so that the holy soul returns back after leaving him during his anger. Therefore, anger is the most severe sin of all. For his soul left him and he is left with only an animal soul (nefesh behemit), and this is like death. Thus he must repent before this.. Hence, he wrote "your death", specifically "your death". For he is committing suicide. For the day of actual death is not called "your death" since it is not in your ability. Through this advice you will be able to be saved from anger.

Q **Level 2**

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "do not be easy to anger" - it is known that anger is a very bad trait. But nevertheless, it is human nature to be drawn after it. Therefore, they said that since one should get angry sometimes, therefore he must be careful not to be easily angered. If you wish to get angry, weigh on the scales of your intellect if it is proper to get angry for that thing. If you find any argument to remove the anger from your heart, annul it from your heart. But for something which is proper to get angry on, let your anger be with you (in control)...

**** Repent One Day Before Your Death ****

Q **Level 1**

Bartenura

Bartenura - "repent one day before your death" - for one does not know when he will die. Thus he should repent today since maybe he will die tomorrow.

Q **Level 2**

☆ **Tiferet Yisrael**

Tiferet Yisrael - "Repent one day before your death" - here he exhorts on guarding the mitzvot. For a man's heart tends more towards sinning than towards being righteous. Because in sinning he will attain the pleasure quickly, while the punishment and reward for the sin and mitzvah is on the [faraway] day of the Throne (of justice)...

Therefore, retract from your outlook and look at it as if today is one day before your death and the day of G-d (judgment) is near.

He did not say: "lest you die today". For one can save himself saying that he does not feel any weakness or illness yet. But much can happen between today and tomorrow.

Q **Level 2**

☆ **Ahava b'Taanugim**

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - "Repent one day before your death" - i.e. even if you were wicked all your days, do not abandon hope of (G-d's) mercy, and don't think He will not accept you. For even if one is on his deathbed (gossess), if he repents, the Holy One, blessed be He, receives him (Yerushalmi Chagigah 2:1, Shaarei Teshuva 1:9)...

Q **Level 3**

☆ **Tiferet Yehoshua**

Tiferet Yehoshua - "Repent one day before your death" - a person has no conception of death itself. But he has a conception of "the day of death". For this is a concept of time and which he can grasp. For he can see how swiftly each day passes and he is already ten, twenty, forty.. he was a child then a teenager and then married, first child, etc..

Why does a person not feel that he is going to die and leave this world? Man was created a composite of body and soul. The body is mortal and disintegrates after death. But the soul is

immortal and lives forever. For it is "a portion of G-d from above" (chelek Eloka mimaal), so to speak, as our sages said: "there are three partners in man.. mother.. father.., and the Holy One, blessed be He, gives him a spirit and soul" (Nidah 31a).

The soul is "a portion of G-d" and remains alive forever and passes on to the Afterlife, as our sages said: "the souls of the righteous are hidden under the throne of glory" (Shab.152b), and likewise the Rambam writes: "the soul lives on forever and ever" (Yesod Hatorah 4:9). We learned from here that the soul is a "portion of G-d" and thus man has a part which death has no power over. Due to this, he has no awareness or expectation of death. For that is permanent inexistence.

We find this concept of the eternity of the soul expressed in our day to day lives. When a man hears about the death of someone, even if it is someone he recognizes, nevertheless, his heart is not so moved by it. Even though it is proper to be moved when facing the death of a living man. For each person is an "entire world" (Olam Maleh) and if he dies, an entire world was destroyed. Likewise, scripture says: "*The righteous man has died, but no one takes it to heart*" (Yeshaya 57:1).

Rather, the reason for the matter is because a man does not disappear completely. Rather, he moves on to another world, and his soul continues to live forever and ever. It is due to this that a person does not quake as he should upon hearing of a death.

Q Level 3

☆ Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim in name of the Saba of Kelm - - "repent one day before your death" - for in the eyes of the intelligent person, even when he is healthy, the closeness of death stands before his eyes. And the Zohar says: "fortunate are those who imagine in their hearts as if this day they are leaving the world".

In truth, many doctors already said that it is the way of the world for people to be surprised when they hear sometimes about a perfectly healthy person who went to lie down on his bed at night and died suddenly, never waking up from his sleep.

But it would have been more fitting to wonder on a human being who walks and is alive for even one second. For when one learns of how many mishaps are liable to occur each and every second, if not that the hand of G-d did this to guard him and sustain him..

Q Level 3

☆ Daas Chachma u'Mussar

Daat Chachma U'Mussar 1:38,40 - "repent one day before your death (Avot 2:10)" - Rabbi Eliezer taught us that the way to come to arousal (hitpaalut) of the body is not through intellectual and wise thoughts. For wisdom is not the language of the body. One needs to speak to the body in a different language altogether, namely, superficial ideas which are not at all connected to wisdom. Thus he said: "repent one day before your death", i.e. repent today for perhaps you will die tomorrow. Namely, that one thinks and reviews this thought always on his tongue. For who is so wicked and a sinner as to not want to repent in the final moments of his life? Who would not be roused to repent when death hovers over him? This is the only way and means to affect the body and reach the desired purpose, namely, repentance and good deeds.

Q Level 4

☆ Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot 2:10 in name of Rabbi Naftali Amsterdam - the way and order of mussar study according to what I heard from the mouth of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter zt'l is to divide one's learning time into two parts. For example, if a person fixes one hour for mussar study, he should divide it into two half hours.

One half hour to learn in books of mussar in the same way one learns other books. Namely, to

contemplate them and their thoughts such as the Mesilat Yesharim or Chovot Halevavot or the like.

The second half for learning with (emotional) arousal (hitpa'alut). Namely, to learn sayings of our sages and review it many times. Whatever saying it is, whether in "Duties of the Heart" or "Reishit Chachma", or in "Pirkei Avot", or the like.

Level 4

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot (Rabeinu Yerucham) in name of the Saba of Kelm - "repent one day before your death" - i.e. repent today for perhaps you will die tomorrow, as explained in the talmud (Shab.153a).

(There Rabbi Eliezer first said: "repent one day before your death". His disciples asked him: "but does a man know which day he will die?" He replied: "all the more so should you repent today perhaps you will die tomorrow. Thus all your days will be in repentance.")

The explanation is that he first spoke to them in the way of shock arousal (hitpa'alut): "repent one day before your death" in order to open their hearts quickly. Afterwards, he spoke to them in the way of the intellect: "repent today for perhaps you will die tomorrow".. For the feeling of shock arousal lasts only a short time. But the intellect can maintain a thought..)

Thus, the way to arouse the body is not through wise intellectual thoughts. For wisdom is not the language of the body. One needs to speak to the body with merely superficial thoughts which are not at all connected to wisdom. For who is so wicked and a sinner that he does not want to repent in the final moments of his life?

Likewise the Saba of Kelm wrote in his letters: "a man must know that if he has a foolish student, he needs to learn with him according to his level of little understanding and weak intellect. For if a man tries to learn lofty wisdoms which are beyond his intellect, the foolish student will remain foolish.

So too regarding a man with himself. One should not think he will conquer his will with great and lofty concepts. For we can see that "a man is born as a wild donkey" (Iyov 11:12)... Rather one needs to break himself with simple ideas such as thinking of the day of one's death.

Thus, our sages brought: "It is related that a certain pious man gave a dinar (gold coin) to a poor man on the eve of Rosh Hashana in a year of drought. His wife scolded him. Then he went and passed the night in the cemetery" (Berachot 18b).

My teacher (Rabbi Yisrael Salanter) explained that after the pious man had stumbled in anger, he went to remind himself of the day of death. It is good to remind oneself in a cemetery for the seeing breaks the heart. Thus, know with whom you are dealing with. For to break the heart, one needs to employ simple thoughts.

Level 3

Chachma u'Mussar

Chachma U'Mussar 1:35 - in the talmud: "Rabbi Eliezer said to his disciples..". Behold, the disciples of Rabbi Eliezer were the great Tannaim such as Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Akiva. Did they not already know the Midrash " 'behold it was very good' (Gen.1:31) - this refers to death" (Ber.Rabba 9:5). For it is good to submit (humble) the soul., as Rabeinu Yonah wrote (Shaarei Teshuva 2:25)?

Rather the whole novelty (chidush) of Rabbi Eliezer was to teach them to bring the remembrance

of day of death as close as possible. It is not enough to just know it superficially. For that will not bring one to action. Only when one draws it close to the senses (hitkarvut lachush) and this is impossible without much mental effort in this..

Q Level 3

Chachma u'Mussar

Chachma U'Mussar 1:87 - another explanation, repent today for perhaps you will die tomorrow - do not procrastinate your time until tomorrow like the way of every disgraceful lazy person. For besides the plain meaning, we also learn that it is good advice for a man to think as if only one day and one daf is before him. Likewise for tomorrow and for the second daf, and so on. Do not push yourself off for later on.

Q Level 2

Ye'arot Devash 11 - "Repent one day before your death" - in truth, when one sees how many people died suddenly without having made preparations for the journey, he should repent for maybe his time has come, and what will he answer on the day of reckoning?

Q Level 2

Pirkei Moshe

Pirkei Moshe - "Repent one day before your death" - our sages said: "fortunate is he who comes here with his learning in his hand" (Pesachim 50a). For that which is of use for Olam Haba is to have in one's hand and memory what he learned. If he forgot it, it won't help so much like it helps for one who has it in his hands.. Thus it is proper for one to think at all times that it is one day before his death.. so that he strives every day that his learning is in his hands...

**** Warm Yourself by the Fire.. ****

Q Level 1

☆ **Bartenura**

Bartenura - "warm yourself by the fire of the sages, but beware of their coals lest you be burned" - do not conduct yourself lightheadedly (kalut rosh) with them so that you will not be punished on account of them.

"bite of a fox" - it is difficult to heal. For its teeth are thin, curved, and arched. Thus the doctor needs to cut the flesh with a knife and open the wound.

"sting of a scorpion" - this is worse than a snake bite.

"hiss of a serpent (saraf)" - like the burning "breath" that goes out of the Saraf when it speaks. Alternatively, just like the Saraf does not listen to the voices of the charmers like other snakes, so too for a talmid chacham. If you offend him and come afterwards to appease him, he will not accept appeasement.

Q Level 1

Rambam

Rambam - do not think that if he bites you with words, you can come back and appease him. For he will not listen just like the Saraf.. You can know this from the story of Gechazi who went against Elisha his Rabbi and fell into a horrible illness (leprosy)...

Q Level 1

☆ **Tosfot Yom Tov**

Tosfot Yom Tov - the Rambam writes: "when you join the sages (Chachamim) and men of high virtue (anshei maakot), do not act frivolously with them and do not be haughty over them. Rather, let them be aware that you will draw close to them only when they draw you close. And do not draw close to them more than they draw you close so that you will not lose their intention towards you (to help you) and their love transforms to hatred, whereby you will not attain the virtues you hoped for.

He compared this to one who warms himself by a fire. If he sits far away, he will benefit from the heat. But if he draws too close, he will be burned.

 **Level 3**

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "Warm yourself by the fire of the sages" - he said this corresponding to torah study, which is called light, as written: "torah is light" (Mishlei 6:23). Although one can receive the [benefit of] light from far away, but he cannot "warm himself" from the light [of fire] if he is far away. Thus, he said: "warm yourself, etc.", i.e. do not be satisfied to be illuminated from the study from afar. Rather see to it that you draw close to them and you warm your emotions when seeing their deeds of holy fire. For "Shimush (service of) Chachamim (Torah sages) is greater than learning Torah" (Berachot 7b).

"but beware of their coals lest you be burned" - be careful not to slight their honor by being always around them. For even if they seem to you like dim coals without blazing power to harm you, nevertheless, be fearful of them lest you be burned.

"their hiss is the hiss of a serpent (saraf)" - a "saraf" is an extremely venomous snake.. even if they don't curse you, but they merely speak and pour out their souls to G-d to have pity on them.. G-d will claim (revenge of) their honor (from you).

 **Level 2**

☆ **Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan**

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan on Avot - "all their words are like fiery coals" - for they are the word of G-d and scripture says: "is not My word like fire?" (Yirmiyahu 23:29).

 **Level 3**

Darchei Chaim - "all of their words are like fiery coals" - even if it seems to you that it is their own words and not words of torah, i.e. that they reprimand you for themselves and not for torah, nevertheless, know that it is like fiery coals. Namely, just like coals have no benefit from burning things, so too the talmidei chachamim (torah scholars) do not at all have intent for their own benefit. Rather, they are merely doing the emissary work (shlichut) of G-d. (Likewise for the analogy of the snake which [often] does not bite for any benefit).

 **Level 2**

☆ **Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel**

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel on Avot - "warm yourself..." - just like the warmth of the body is the life (kiyum) of the body, so too the warmth of the torah is the life (kiyum) of the soul. And even if you habituate yourself to warm yourself from their torah and to toil with them, nevertheless, be careful of their coal to not make light of their honor and joke on them, lest you be burned.. for one who makes light of the honor of the sages, who does not respect their torah, will be burned.. Our sages already said: "wherever the sages set their eye against one, [the result was] either death or poverty" (Moed Katan 17b), and "he gazed at him and the man died" (Shab.34a), and "he gazed at him and the man turned into a pile of bones" (ibid). All this due to their great might in G-d's torah and the great levels reached to those who are worthy. On this he ended off: "all their words are like coals of fire", because they are the word of G-d, as written: "is not My word like fire, says the L-ord" (Yirmiyahu 23:29). Thus one who disrespects will be burned. But one who warms himself rightly and properly will benefit and live forever.

 **Level 3**

Ne'edar baKodesh - for the torah has two parts, an elixir of life and a death potion. As our sages said: "if he merits, it becomes an elixir of life, but if he does not, it becomes a death potion" (Yomah 72b).. Just like fire can be either beneficial or destructive.. so too one who learns torah improperly (not to fulfill).. he ignites within himself the fire of the yetzer hara which is compared to a serpent... (see there for more)

 **Level 3**

☆ **Ben Ish Chai**

Ben Ish Chai - Zechut Avot - "Warm yourself by the fire of the sages" - he hints in this, that if you did not merit to torah, strive to support (machzik) those who learn torah..

"by the fire (literally:opposite-keneged)" as Rebbi said, the reason I attained more wisdom than my peers is because I saw Rebbi Meir from behind. If I had seen him from the front, I would have been wiser. Thus he said opposite (keneged), i.e. from their faces. For a man's wisdom lights up his face (Kohelet 8:1).

Q Level 3



Lev Avot - "by the fire (literally:opposite-keneged)" - to warm yourself opposite them (kenegdam) - for if you want to do repentance (teshuva), contemplate those who stood kenegdam (against them), i.e. who did the opposite of their words and consider how much trouble they caused themselves. Since those who transgress the words of the sages are sentenced to the Gehinom of snow. By contemplating this, you will warm yourself and not wind up like them. But nevertheless, be careful not to be burned by their coal. For one who comes too close to them (dishonors them) is sentenced to the Gehinom of fire.

Q Level 3

☆ Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Birkat Avot - "all of their words are like burning coals" - for coals sometimes appear to be [extinguished] ashes but in truth they are fiery, only they are encloded in ashes. So too the words of our sages and especially agadah, they seem to the eye like stories but in truth they contain lofty secrets and hints. Only that they are encloded in subtle hints so that not every person can understand them.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - Why is a talmid chacham (torah scholar) like a coal? Because its exterior does not testify on its interior. Externally, it looks dark but it has light and warmth which heat and illuminate its surroundings. So too, for a talmid chacham, even though he is a body, comprised of gross physicality, but nevertheless, due to his toil in torah, he purifies even his physical body until his entire being is pure and clean, illuminating and shining the whole world with his torah.

On this our sages said: "even though talmidei chachamim (torah sages) appear ugly and dark in this world, but in the future, their appearance will be like flames (lapidim)" (Midrash Shir Hashirim Rabba 5:9).

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "beware of their coals lest you be burned" - like one who warms himself from a fire. If he stands at a distance as is proper, he will benefit and won't be burned. But if he draws too close, he will be burned. So too one who warms himself by the fire of the sages and benefits from their wisdom, he must stand before them out of awe, fear, and heavy-headedness. He should not act light-headedly before them nor draw closer than they draw him. For this trait obligates him severe punishment. And it goes without saying when one stumbles in sin (not to do so before them).

Q Level 2

Rashi

Rashi - "but beware of their coals lest you be burned" - that you are not punished due to transgressing their words.

Q Level 2

Chida

Chida - Petach Einayim - "all their words are like fiery coals" - for in the biblical prohibitions, the punishment is according to the severity of the sin he committed. Some incur lashes, some death by Heaven, some death by Beit Din. But one who transgresses the Rabbinical prohibitions incurs death (Berachot), even for something light. Thus, "all their words are like fiery coals". For there is no distinction in the words of the sages between severe and light (transgression).

 **Level 4**

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "beware of their coals lest you be burned" - i.e. do not argue on the words of our sages, saying something which is the opposite of their words. For "one who breaches a fence will be bitten by a snake" (Kohelet 10:8).

"their bite is the bite of a fox.." - for the words of our sages are divided into three categories. One, Midrash which has no (halachic) differences. Two, monetary laws. Three, forbidden and permitted (issur v'heter). Corresponding to the first, he said: "bite of a fox" which does not have deadly poison, just pain only. So too one who argues on the Midrashim which have no Halachic difference will have punishment and pain for arguing against the words of our sages.

Corresponding to the second category he said "sting of a scorpion" which has deadly poison. For he exempted the guilty and obligated the innocent (to pay). This is a sin but it has a healing like the venom of a scorpion. Namely, the money can be returned.

Corresponding to the third whereby "the crooked can no longer be straightened" (Kohelet 1:15), he said: "hiss of a saraf (extremely venomous snake)", which has no remedy.

 **Level 3**

Binyan Avot

Binyan Avot (by Kabbalist Tzemach haKohen, Jerba) - if you examine, you will find that these three things are included in the trait of "good eye" which he said previously. For one with a good eye will always be careful of the honor of his fellow like his own, and even more. Likewise, he is not easily angered and due to his good eye, he will choose to sit with torah scholars and all the more so be careful of their coals.. Likewise for the other disciples of Rabban Yochanan ben Zokkai, each said three things which stem from the trait (middah) he chose.

 **Level 4**

Maharal

Maharal - you should know that each of these sages chose to say three things. This is because they are words of mussar which a person should "inscribe on the board of his heart" (Mishlei 7:3), always and never remove them.

Normally, a person can remember three things. But for more than three things, he will forget some of them.

Therefore our sages said: "one should always teach his students in a concise manner" (Pesachim 3b). Thus here they each chose three things. Likewise, you will find most of the mussar in this tractate is given in three teachings.

For three things can be of one matter and connected to each other. This is the special quality of three which connects them when they are two extremes and the middle one between them. Thus the special quality of three is that they all have a connection together and when a person remembers any one of the three, it reminds him of the other two.

But if one says many things (more than three), it is impossible for them to be connected together and be one matter and then there is no remembrance of them and forgetfulness comes in. Therefore, each one said three mussar teachings which are of one matter and one thing.

"Rabbi Eliezer said: let the honor of your fellow be as cherished to you as your own" - we already mentioned in the beginning of this tractate that man needs three things to become whole.

One, that he is whole with G-d, as we explained there..

Two, that he is whole with other people.

Three, that he is whole with himself.

If he is not whole with himself, he is a "lacking person" (baal chisaron), as we explained.

Thus, Rabbi Eliezer began: "let the honor of your fellow be as cherished to you as your own". For when a man has [acquired] this trait, he is certainly whole (perfect) with other people in everything..

Corresponding that he not be a "person of lacking" with himself, he said: "do not be easily angered". For anger is evil within man himself, as the verse says: "remove anger from your heart, and you will remove evil away from your flesh" (Kohelet 11:10). And in Nedarim (22a): "Rabbi Yochanan says: "whoever gets angry has all sorts of Gehinom ruling over him, as written: 'remove anger from your heart and evil from your flesh'..." (Nedarim 22a).

Likewise there, "whoever gets angry, even the Shechina is not important before him, as written: 'The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek G-d' Tehilim (10:4)."

Likewise there: "Rabbi Nachman says it is certain that his sins outnumber his merits". End quote.

And there is no greater lacking in himself than this that he said "forgets his learning and increases foolishness", and all the other things mentioned there.

Afterwards, he said "repent one day before your death". Our sages explained this to mean that he repents all his days for one does not know the day of his death" (Shab.153a).. This is so man will be good towards Heaven. For if he sinned against G-d, he should repent to Him with all his heart and soul... (see there)

Thus, Rabbi Eliezer gave mussar to a man to make himself whole in all three areas..

Afterwards he said three further matters which pertain to the intellect (sechel)..

"Warm yourself by the fire of the sages" - i.e. cling to the sages. This is called "warming oneself", for when one warms himself, he receives benefit through this..

"but be careful of their coals lest you be burned" - be careful that this closeness not cause you to be too habitual with them and sin against them..

Then he explained for "their bite..their sting, etc.".. This is due to the great power of the intellect of torah sages. For the power of intellect is not like the power of the physical. It is vastly greater since the intellect "acts" completely (but the physical merely reacts).. (see there for more).

Chapter 2 Mishna 14 - Evil Inclination

Rabbi Yehoshua says: "an evil eye, the evil inclination (yetzer הרע, ויצר הרע, עין הרע, אומר, רבי יהושע אומר, ושנאת הבריות, מוציאין את האדם מן העולם, and hatred of people remove a person from the world."

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "evil eye" - he is not satisfied with what he has and seeks other things. Some explain he puts an ayin hara (evil eye) in the property of his fellow or his children and damages him.

Q Level 1

Rambam

Rambam - "an evil eye" - fervor (charitzut) for money.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "evil eye" - ie one who is not satisfied with his portion and he "eyes" his fellow who is richer than him asking himself "when will I become rich like him"?.. This thought ruins his body. For his spirit will diminish and it takes him out of the world. This is the "evil eye" which Rabbi Yehoshua referred to. The proof to this explanation is that he wrote here "evil eye (ayin hara)" in masculine tense, namely, that he "eyes" with evil, whereas previously in mishna 9, he wrote "evil eye (ayin ra'ah)" (feminine tense) which we explained refers to stinginess..

Q Level 1

Rambam

Rambam - "the evil inclination (yetzer harah)" - great lust and evil of the soul.

Q Level 1

Rashi

Rashi - "hatred of people" - baseless hatred (sinat chinam).

Q Level 1

Rambam

Rambam - "hatred of people.." - the illness of marah shechora (melancholy/depression). This brings a person to be repulsed and hate what his eyes see (i.e. people around him). He will prefer the company of wild animals and solitude in deserts and wilderness. He will choose to live in an uninhabited area. Such people choose this [lifestyle] not as perishut (asceticism). But rather, due to the evil of their lust and jealousy of other people. Without a doubt, this kills a man. For his body will become ill and he will die before his time.

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "hatred of people" - baseless hatred. The Rambam explains that he is repulsed by the company of others and loves to sit in solitude. I heard that it refers to a harsh man who brings on himself the hatred of others and causes that everyone hates him.

Q Level 1

Tosfot Yom Tov

Tosfot Yom Tov - regarding what the Bartenura wrote that he brings on himself the hatred of others, the Midrash Shmuel writes that some explain that everyone curses him and the curse takes effect on him and he leaves this world, as our sages said: "let not the curse of a layman be light in your eyes.." (Megilah 15).

Q Level 3

Chasdei David

Chasdei David - "hatred of people" - the primary matter of baseless hatred (sinat chinam) I heard from Rabbi Yehuda Segal zt"l, the Manchester Rosh Yeshiva. He asked: "are we talking about a fool who hates his fellow for nothing? Certainly there is a reason he hates him, such as he hurt him or the like". He explained that since everything is from hashgacha elyona (Divine providence), even what one's fellow hurts him through his possessions, speech, or deed. Thus, from Heaven

the punishment was directed to him through his fellow and his fellow was but a messenger on this. Thus why should you hate him for this? Hence the hatred is for nothing. The explanation of this is exceedingly deep...

Q Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - "evil eye" - on others and coveting their money.

"evil inclination" - lust for the [physical] pleasures (taavat hataanugim).

"hatred of people" - due to jealousy.

"remove a person from the world" - from every balanced and praiseworthy trait the Rav praised him for in saying "praiseworthy is she who gave birth to him!".

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - he exhorts on the three duties of man - torah, avodah (divine service), and acts of kindness.

"evil eye" - his eye is evil and weak in matters of emunah (faith) which the torah taught. He contents himself with its words and in the roots of Judaim such as torah from Heaven, the afterlife, and other similar foundations of torah (i.e. he does not deepen [thought] in these matters).

"evil inclination (yetzer hara)" - his yetzer overpowers him and prevents him from serving G-d and fulfilling His commandments.

"hatred of people" - he hates others to not benefit them.

"remove a person from the world" - since he has nothing to base his success in this world and the next.

Q Level 2

☆ Binyan Avot

Binyan Avot (by Kabbalist Tzemach haKohen, Jerba) - Rabbi Yehoshua said earlier that the evil path to distance from is an evil friend. Now he brings three things which result out of the trait of evil friend.

One, the evil friend's eye is evil on his fellow and he inserts an ayin hara (evil eye) in his properties, sons, and all that is his in order to damage him. The cause of this ayin hara is diminishing and not being content with what one has. Therefore, when he sees something more than what he has by his fellow, he envies him and inserts an ayin hara in him. From this his yetzer intensifies within him to accumulate wealth or the like in order to rise above his fellow. And if he cannot obtain this in a permitted way, he will steal and rob. Through this he brings on himself the hatred of others. Thus three things which take a person out of the world, this world and the next. This world, for when he chases money so much and is never satisfied with what he has, he dies in worry...

Q Level 3

☆ Chida

Chida - Chasdei Avot - the masters of mussar wrote that it is written "brit" (covenant) on the eyes (brit ayin), "brit" on the skin (brit me'or, ie male organ), and "brit" on the tongue (brit lashon). One who damages them commits a grave sin. The siman for this is on the verse: "when a soul commits a sin (ki timol ma'al)" (Vayikra 5:3), ma'al is letters mem-ayin-lamed.

This is what he said: "ayin hara" (evil eye), that he blemishes his eyes and breaks the brit (covenant) of the eyes. From this he is drawn to the yetzer hara, to blemish the brit of the me'or (male organ), as written in Sotah 8b: "we have a tradition that the yetzer hara can rule only on what his eyes see. From this he is drawn to lashon hara (slander) or the like. For the brit of the tongue and the brit of the skin are aligned and depend on each other. Through this "he is removed

from the world".

Q Level 2

Sfas Emes

Sfas Emes on Avot - "evil eye, evil inclination, hatred.." - corresponding to jealousy, lust, and honor which also "remove a person from the world" - evil eye is jealousy, evil inclination is lust, and hatred of people is honor.

Q Level 3

☆ Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - "evil eye" - in the Bartenura: "he puts an ayin hara (evil eye) in the property of his fellow or his children and damages him".

And in the Talmud: "Rav went up to a cemetery, performed certain (kabalistic) things, and then said: Ninety-nine [percent have died] through an evil eye, and one [percent] through natural causes" (Bava Metziah 107b).

The existence of ayin raah (evil eye) is an existence of poison, a substance which destroys and damages by a mere looking..

The existence of good is an existence of life, while the existence of evil is an existence of death. Besides this nothing else exists. If you wish to know what is this deadly poison of evil in man and just how far it goes, go and consider the dead bodies in the cemetery. Ninety percent of whom died due to ayin hara (evil eye).

It seems though that it is not the eye itself which kills. Rather, the eye is a channel (tzinor) which brings this evil poison within man to the thing being looked at. And the evil within man is the deadly poison.

For evil is the existence of death. And when man shines his eye on something, through this he connects and clings to the thing he is seeing. This is the secret of the matter of seeing of the eye.. Thus an evil man has the power to bring death to the world by the gaze of his eye. This is very awesome!..

Q Level 3

Daas Chachma u'Mussar

Daat Chachma u'Mussar 3:136 - "remove a person from the world" - and likewise later on in chapter 3 mishna 10 and chapter 4 mishna 21 it uses this expression. We are used to thinking that this expression is coming to emphasize the reprehensibility and severity of the thing. But it is not so. Just the opposite! It is to teach on matters which are not themselves sins so much, but nevertheless, they take a person out of the world. This is similar to "he went out of his world" (Vayikra 24:10, Rashi, regarding the blasphemer).

For the middot (character traits) and the lusts, first of all, they take a person out of the world, and he is already not in his world (while alive). This is the cause of all that is reprehensible and all sins. And even though a man does not sense this, but slowly, slowly, they take the person out from the world. It is incumbent on man to first and foremost to be in his world. From this comes out all of his success.

Q Level 3

☆ Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "evil eye" - he who has an evil eye on his fellow will never see in him any trace of good. For his eye will not allow him to look without a personal taint of hatred on the fellow and his deeds.

More than this, even when the evil-eyed person sees him doing acts of kindness and righteousness all of his days, diligent in torah and service of G-d, fear of G-d appearing on him,

nevertheless the evil-eyed person will not find that he is good. Rather, he will say that the fellow is not doing this l'Shem Shamayim (for G-d). But rather for obtaining honor or to bother people (lekanter) or to be haughty in his torah or the like.

Due to this the Tanna is so stringent (machmir) on evil eye (ayin ra'ah), because this person will not come to do good to someone else since he sees in every person a liar and a faker, and everything others do is for their own honor and glory.

Certainly such a person will not learn from people who do much kindness to all since he does not believe in them. Thus he takes himself out of the world.

Q Level 3

☆ Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "evil eye.. removes a person from the world" - it is like one who throws a stone at a wall. The wall does not absorb it and it bounces back and hits the thrower. So too for an evil eye. He whose eye is evil and he puts his eye to harm someone, if the other person is not deserving of damage due to some merit which shields him, the evil of the evil-eyed person goes back on him and damages him...

One who has an evil eye is vulnerable to the evil eye of others and they are liable to hurt him and take him out of the world. But for one who does not have an evil eye, then the evil eyes of others are not able to rule over him and harm him. On this our sages said:

"When one is particular (makpid), they are particular about him, while when one is not particular (makpid), they are not particular about him" (Pesachim 110b).

That is to say, since he himself is particular (makpid), then the hakpada (particularness) of others can hurt him. So too for evil eye (ayin hara). When he uses it on others, he opens the gate to himself to be vulnerable to the damaging eyes of others.

Q Level 3

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "hatred of people.. removes a person from the world" - hatred is the complete opposite of the continuance (kiyum) of the world. For we already learned that "the world stands on three things: torah, avodah, and acts of kindness" (Avot 1:2). And what is acts of kindness if not love of man? For one who loves bestows kindness on others. But for one who hates, not only is he unable to bestow kindness, but he also does evil to his fellow. Thus one who hates others acts against the continuance of the world and has no place in G-d's world. Due to this, the Tanna says that hatred of the public takes a person out of the world.

Q Level 3

Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "removes a person from the world" - a man who wants the tzelem Elokim (image of G-d) to remain within him must toil with all his strength to uproot from himself these three evil traits. For if he does not work on himself diligently, without interruption, they are liable to take root within him and transform him into a man who is completely full of evil. They will rule over him and destroy him completely until he falls into the pit and remains without human form. This is as taking him out of the world.

Q Level 4

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - "evil eye" - ayin hara ie the eye of wickedness and sin in looking at reprehensible things - this is the first cause of sin which takes a person out of the world. Afterwards, the second agent of sin is the heart which desires. This is the yetzer hara (evil inclination), the heart of stone. Likewise for hatred of others, just like "love your fellow as yourself" (Vayika 9:18) is the fulfillment of the whole torah (Shab.31a), so too hatred of others is a cause for transgressing all the torah. Thus, each of these three remove a person from the world. For the end

of the wicked is destruction.

Some explain this on what Rabbi Yehoshua said earlier, namely, the good path a person should choose is: "a good friend". On this he said that one who wants to be a good friend must be careful of these three things. For one who is stingy-eyed (tzar ayin) on his fellow will be drawn to have a yetzer hara. Namely, he desires and envies the property of his fellow. From this the yetzer hara will intensify within him until he hates him. Thus, first the eye sees, which is the first agent of sin. After the seeing, desire of the heart follows, which is the yetzer hara, as before. Afterwards, he is drawn to hate that person. Through this he loses the friendship. Thus he exhorted to guard from these three things if he wants to have a good friend, as before.

Level 4

Rosh Avot

Rosh Avot - this corresponds to the mishna later: "jealousy, lust, and honor remove a person from the world" (Avot 4:21). Evil eye corresponds to jealousy. For he is jealous of his fellow and not content with what he has due to what his fellow has. Some explain "evil eye" to refer to putting an evil eye on his fellow's possessions or sons and hurting him. This too is due to jealousy.

Yetzer hara corresponds to lust, as the Rambam writes: "much lust".

"Hatred of people" corresponds to honor. For because he seeks honor and does not get it, he hates others and thus he is in anger and disputes and his life is not a life..

To what is the yetzer hara similar to? To a man who wanted to buy the house of his fellow. But his fellow refused to sell it. He pressed him daily and increased his offer from time to time. But his fellow refused adamantly saying: "this house is an inheritance of mine from my fathers and my soul is bound to it. How then can I sell it to you?"

The man answered him: "if so, at least sell me the tiniest place there, a place to fix a nail, so that I will have a small inheritance at least".

The fellow who did not want to sell the house at all tried to brush him off by giving him a very high price. But to his amazement, the man agreed to this price.

They both sat and signed a contract between themselves. From then on, the buyer would come at odd times to the home of the fellow and leave. After a few hours, he would return to use that nail he hanged. The next time he came, he also brought his wife and sons and daughters and all that he had.

When the fellow would complain to him, he would wave the contract which he brought and say to him: "but I have a legitimate contract which was signed fully lawfully. Who are you to complain on me"?

The owner of the house saw that he had no escape. He had no choice but to sell him the house against his good and left disheartened.

Similar to this is the yetzer hara. When a man gives him a foothold to rule over him even a little bit, in the end he will come to rule over his body and soul, as our sages said: "*for this is the way of the Yetzer hara - today it tells one to do a small transgression, and another one tomorrow, in the end it gets him to serve idolatry!, and he goes and serves [them]*" (Shab.105b)..

Level 4

☆ Maharal

Maharal - it is proper to examine why these three things take a person out of the world. For we

cannot say that these things were said [merely] by [human] logic and estimation.

We already explained earlier (Avot 1:2) that the good in the created things grants them (worthiness to) existence and continuance. Without this, they would have no continuance at all. The proof of this is that which it is written "and G-d saw that it was good" (Genesis 1) when He created [the world], ie the created beings are worthy of continued existence due to the aspect of good in them...

But for something which is evil, inexistence clings to it due to the aspect of lacking and evil in it. Therefore, it will come to complete inexistence.

Thus, when the creation is good, it is worthy of existence. For it is removed from inexistence.

You should know that there are three things which scripture calls "evil".

One, the yetzer harah as written: "for man's inclination (yetzer) is evil from his youth" (Gen.8:21).

Two, an evil eye, which is called evil as written: "al-ayin" (Mishlei 23:6).

Three, likewise "evil" is used on the heart as written: "Do not partake of the bread of an evil eye [person]" (Yirmiyahu 3:17) and a few other places.

Thus, he said that when a man has an evil eye, [he means] that the evil very much clings to him. And likewise, evil inclination (yetzer hara), which is called "evil" due to the greatness of the evil in it.

And hatred of the public, which is only due to an evil heart, as written: "do not hate your brother in your heart" (Vayikra 19:17), and hatred is only in the heart.

He did not say more generally "an evil heart", as written earlier "an evil heart" (Avot 2:9). For "evil heart" applies even on one who merely refrains himself from giving tzedaka (charity) or the like. And on what he said "removes a person from the world", this is proper to say only on someone whose heart is so evil that he has reached hatred of the public. That is a completely evil heart.

For when G-d created His world, He wrote on each one "it was good". But these three things are evil, the opposite of the creation which the Holy One, blessed be He, created in His world.

Therefore, these three things remove a person from the world. For just like the good in the creations is the continuance of the world, so too, these three things take him out of the world..

And since Rabbi Eliezer exhorted previously on matters to bring a person to Life in the World to Come so that one will not be banished from the World to Come, Rabbi Yehoshua said this general principle so that a person will not be destroyed from this world.

Thus, the three things Rabbi Yehohua said are connected to each other and are one matter as is fitting.

(Maharal, Netiv Lev Tov ch.1 - that which comes out further from this trait (of evil heart) is baseless hatred (sinat chinam). This is jealousy in the heart. For the evil heart has jealousy when his fellow has any good or level (maalah). This is the opposite of the good heart which rejoices when his fellow attains good. But this person is jealous of him and does not want that his fellow has this level (maalah). This trait is very evil..")

Chapter 2 Mishna 15 - Money Of Fellow

Rabbi Yossi said: let the money of your fellow man be as precious to you as your own, prepare yourself to study torah for it is not an inheritance to you, and let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven.

רַבִּי יוֹסִי אָמַר, יְהִי מָמוֹן חֵבֶרְךָ חֲבִיב עֲלֶיךָ כְּשֵׁלְךָ, וְהִתְקַן עֲצֻמְךָ לְלַמֵּד תּוֹרָה, וְשָׂאִינָה יְרֵשָׁה לָּךְ. וְכָל מַעֲשֶׂיךָ יְהִיוּ לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם:

Q Level 1

Mital Hashamayim - he who rejoices on the money of his fellow like his own is prepared and ready to learn torah. For worries of one's livelihood which prevents him from learning torah are only due to a man's chasing after more money. This in turn is due to being jealous of others who have much. Thus if he rejoices on what his fellow has, he does not chase to make more money than he needs, rather only what he needs. Thus automatically he has free time to learn torah.

Q Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - "let the money of your fellow man be as precious to you as your own" - the Rav praised him for the trait of Chasidut which is to do good to others. You will attain this trait in your hand when "the money of your fellow is as precious to you as your own", due to your love of what is good for him.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan on Avot - "let the money of your fellow man be as precious to you as your own" - this mishna exhorts to distance oneself from what was said previously. One who cherishes the money of his fellow does not hate the public. Likewise, one who rectifies himself to learn torah will not have an evil eye (be jealous). For the first condition in rectifying oneself to learn torah is histapkut (being content with what one has which is the opposite of jealousy)..

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "prepare yourself to study torah for it is not an inheritance to you" - do not say "since my father is a chacham (torah scholar) and my grandfather is a chacham, "the torah returns to its host", and I don't need to seek after it.

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "prepare yourself to study torah" - strive (hizdarez) to rectify yourself from all detriments which prevent its study, whether worry of livelihood or due to physical weakness or little intellect or other pains. Think as if all these things are rectified when you sit to learn torah.

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "for it is not an inheritance to you" - to attain it without toil and without concentrating (yichud) all of your thoughts on it.

Q Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - "prepare yourself to study torah" - more than the preparation you have by nature. "For it is not an inheritance to you", so that what happens to you [in torah] will not be like what happens to inheritors who acquire money without any exertion. For in this, little exertion is not enough. And only when you attain talmud torah, will you attain Chasidut. Without this, you will not attain it, as written: "an ignorant man cannot be pious" (Avot 2:6).

Q Level 2

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "it is not an inheritance to you" - even though our sages said: "whoever is a talmid chacham and also his son and also his grandson, the torah returns to its innkeeper" (Bava Metzia 85a).

If so, you may say the torah will come after you and you don't need to prepare yourself for this. Therefore, the Tanna taught us that this is a mistake. For this is merely like a man who knows an innkeeper in the city and he usually goes to him to lodge by him. But this is provided the innkeeper also greets him and receives him with a pleasant face and prepares the lodging place. But if the innkeeper refrains from greeting him, the man will turn away and look for someone else who will receive him with a pleasant face. So too the torah returns to its innkeeper, but he needs to receive it and prepare himself for this. Otherwise the torah will not lodge by him..

Rabeinu Simcha was asked: "all Jews are descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov who knew and fulfilled the torah. Since the torah returns to its innkeeper, why are there am haaretzim (ignorant Jews) in Israel?" He answered along the lines of what we said.

 **Level 3**

☆ **Ben Ish Chai**

Ben Ish Chai - Zechut Avot - "prepare yourself to study torah" - this hints to what the mussar masters and kabalists say. Namely, before learning one should take upon himself the positive mitzvah of teshuva so that the study be with purity..

 **Level 1**

☆ **Bartenura**

Bartenura - "let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven" - even when you are eating and drinking, etc, do not have intent for bodily pleasure. Rather, that you be healthy to do the will of your Master.

 **Level 2**

Sforno

Sforno - "let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven" - let your intent be to do the will of your Maker, to go in His ways. For "He is a Chasid-pious in all His deeds"(Tehilim 145:9).

 **Level 2**

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Zechut Avot - "let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven" - I am exhorting you not only on torah study, but rather all your physical deeds such as work, eating and drinking, should be L'Shem Shamayim (for the sake of Heaven)..

 **Level 3**

Sfas Emes

Sfas Emes on Avot - Rabbi Yossi was a Chassid and these three things parallel what our sages said: "he who wants to be a chasid, let him fulfill the matters of [Pirkei] Avot. Some say nezikim (damages), some say berachot (blessings)".

Avot corresponds to "prepare yourself to study torah". Thus we study pirkei avot before Shavuot. For it is a preparation to talmud torah.

Matters of nezikim (damages) corresponding to "let the money of your fellow man be as precious to you as your own".

Matters of berachot (blessings) - corresponding to "let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven"...

"prepare yourself" - ie to be a vessel (kli) prepared to receive the words of torah. The preparation is the wholehearted annulment. Namely, to not want other than to know the will of G-d (in order) to do so, as our sages said: "the torah is compared to water which flows to low places", ie to he who has no personal bias through annulling himself to the will of G-d, blessed be He.

 **Level 2**

☆ **Ahava b'Taanugim**

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "prepare yourself to study torah" and through this *"all your deeds will be for the sake of Heaven"*. For the torah study is an antidote to the yetzer hara (evil inclination). Thus all your deeds that you do after the study will certainly be L'Shem Shamayim.

🔍 **Level 3**

☆ **Chida**

Chida - Zeroah Yamin - as our sages said: "before a man prays that words of torah enter his body, let him pray that tasty things (ma'adanim) not enter his body". For as we explained the maadanim are from the Sitra Achra (side of evil). And if his body grew with the Sitra Achra, the words of torah are unable to enter. This is what he said: "prepare yourself", that your body be pure and not have a foothold by the Sitra Achra.

"to learn torah" - for when you are a kli (vessel) which can hold the Beracha from the Sitra d'Kedusha (side of holiness), afterwards you will learn torah and the words of torah will enter in your body.

"it is not an inheritance" - ie an inheritance comes regardless whether he is a tzadik (righteous) or rasha (wicked). Either way he inherits his father. But the torah is not like this. If he is a rasha (wicked man), he damages and the torah does not enter his body.

🔍 **Level 2**

☆ **Chida**

Chida - Kisei Rachamim - "prepare yourself.." - to think thoughts of teshuva-repentance before the learning.

Alternatively, prepare yourself with proper clothing. To not be without head covering or half dressed or the like. For the torah is all Names of the Holy One, blessed be He. Thus he said prepare yourself with proper dress, and with fear, love, and joy.

🔍 **Level 3**

☆ **Chida**

Chida - Lev David ch.30 - "let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven" - your deeds specifically, such as eating, sleeping, dressing and other physical pleasures - let them all be l'Shem Shamayim. Namely to have intent to serve one's Creator. To eat in order to have strength to serve G-d. Likewise when he sleeps and other physical matters, he should truthfully put to heart and mind that he does everything to serve G-d. For though this his strength will not weaken (lo yutash kocho) and he will be able to be diligent in the service of G-d, as explained in the Shulchan Aruch siman 231.

If he does thus, then he did not benefit from this world and did not take a bribe from the Yetzer Hara. But if he had intent for physical pleasure, like the way of the land, all the pleasures are considered as if he took a bribe from the yetzer hara. And then the Yetzer will be able to blind his eyes and he will go from one evil to another. For a bribe blinds the wise, who then walk in darkness..

🔍 **Level 3**

☆ **Chida**

Chida - Kisei David, drosh 15 - (kabalistic) - and in the holy Zohar:

"In every act a person does, let him request that it be for the Holy Name. What does this mean? To utter with one's mouth a Holy Name, that it is all for His service. Thus, the sitra achra (side of evil) will not rest on it.

For the sitra achra is always prepared before people and ready to rest on that deed, Due to this, it is written "you shall guard yourself from everything evil".

And in the book Reishit Chachma: even when doing a mitzva, there could be some ulterior motive (peniah). But when one says first that it is for His service, all the Chitzoni (outside evil forces) are removed so they don't spoil the mitzvah. And even for matters of this world, he should say "l'Shem Hash-em" so that the Sitra Achra will not rest on any one of his physical actions.

And in the Zohar Tazriah:

"Rabbi Yehuda opened 'Woe to him who builds his house without righteousness' Yirmiyahu 22:13). For every place where there is Tzedek (righteousness), all the ruchin v'mazikin (evil spirits and demons) flee. He who precedes to seize (a small place), seizes the (whole) place. If an impure spirit seizes a place, the holy spirit will not rest there. For it is not its place. But if a holy spirit seizes a space beforehand, all the ruchin v'mazikin (evil spirits and demons) are unable to take hold there.

Rabbi Moshe Alshich wrote in Chakirat HaRambam whether or not G-d's thought spreads out and affects the physical world. Perhaps no due to its great spirituality and sublimeness. But for G-d's speech, despite that it is vastly more spiritual than this physical world [it does affect the physical world]. This is what our sages said: "the righteous and the wicked did not say" (Yalkut Devarim 10).

According to this, even though "a good thought is mitztaref (joined) to an act", nevertheless, it is unable to create an angel. For "it is enough for a servant [to be limited like his Master]". Thus one needs to utter the thought verbally, to utter the holy Name, and then an angel is created who goes out and takes the place.

And even if he has some ulterior motive (peniah), ch"v, the angel does not allow the Sitra Achra to take hold. This is the meaning of "in all your ways [know Him]", whether for matters of holiness or for matters of this world, "know Him", to utter with one's mouth the holy Name, "and He will straighten your paths". These are the narrow paths as the Alshich wrote. Namely, the Sitra Achra which is always ready, etc. and the holy angel drives them out and siyata d'Shmaya rests there. (see there for more)

Level 3

Daliof Yechezkel (R.Y.Sarna), chelek beit, Avot - "prepare yourself to study torah" - even though the ability to attain the loftiest level is implanted in man. For he was created for this. Nevertheless, there is a condition built in and it is set from the beginning of creation - everything depends on him and the path he wants to tread and the extent he is prepared to toil on attaining the virtues.

It is as one who needs to create something from nothing. That is to say, like one who has no previous ability at all and needs to attain everything solely through his own labor. For this too he was created, as written: "man was born to toil" (Iyov 5:7), the purpose of his creation and coming to the world is his toil.

For he could have attained everything before coming to this world without any toil like all the angels. For man's soul is like an angel and even higher than an angel.

If after its creation, the soul could attain everything without toil, then its coming down to this world is for nothing. Therefore, perforce the soul was created only to toil.

This is what Rabbi Yossi said: "prepare yourself to study torah". ie prepare yourself with all traits of rectification and preparation. Put in your mind that it is as if you don't have any previous rectification and preparation. Rather everything is like creating something from nothing. Then you will merit torah like your fitting innate ability.

For if you labored real labor by the sweat of your brow, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might - then you will find, ie you will find the innate abilities you are fit for, like a man searching for a lost object... For the torah does not come like an inheritance, without toil. Rather only through toil..

 **Level 3**
Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven" - ie the things of "reshut" (non-mitzva) such as eating, drinking, sitting, standing, walking, marital relations, conversation, and all bodily needs - they should all be for serving your Creator or for something which leads to this.

Eating and drinking: it goes without saying that one should not eat forbidden foods. But even if one ate and drank permitted things when he was hungry and thirsty, if he did so [with intent] for his bodily pleasure, this is not praiseworthy unless he had intent to fulfill the needs of his body and ate his necessary amount in order to be able to serve the Creator. Furthermore, excessive eating causes harm to a person, as the doctors said that most illnesses are caused by excessive eating. And a person is obligated to eat only until the feeling of hunger is removed. For the palate always lusts to eat until the belly is full. And through this will come all illnesses and all pains. This is what scripture says: "*a righteous man eats to sate his soul, but the stomach of the wicked shall feel want*" (Mishlei 13:25). For the stomach can only grind what it can hold. But the wicked fill it up eating out of lust of the palate until its lust is finished, they harm and ruin their stomach. But the tzadik eats to sate his soul, to remove the hunger only. He upholds the body and loves his soul to do what is right in G-d's eyes..

Sitting, standing, walking: it goes without saying that one should not sit with scoffers nor stand in the way of sinners nor walk in the counsel of the wicked (Tehilim 1:1), but even to sit with the just and stand in the way of the righteous and walk in the counsel of the innocent - if he is doing so for his own benefit, to fulfill his bodily desires and lusts, this is not praiseworthy unless he did so for the sake of Heaven.

Lying down: it goes without saying at a time where he can toil in torah and mitzvot and he is drawn to sleep in order to enjoy himself. This is is not proper to do. But even when he is tired and needs to sleep to rest, if he did so for his own pleasure, it is not praiseworthy unless he intended to fulfill his bodily needs so that he could serve his Creator. He grants sleep to his eyes and rest to his body for his health and so his mind will not be unclear in torah study due to fatigue.

Marital relations: it goes without saying that he should not commit a sin. But even during the Onah time mentioned in the torah, if he did so for his own pleasure or to fulfill his lust, this is reprehensible. And even if his intent is so that he will have sons to serve him and fill his place, this is not praiseworthy unless he had intent to have sons who will serve G-d or to fulfill the Onah written in the torah, like a man who pays his debt.

Conversation: it goes without saying that one should not slander or speak obscenities (navlut peh) or the like. But even in words of wisdom, his intent needs to be to serve his Creator or to toil in something which brings to His service.

The summary of the matter: a man is obligated to put his eyes and heart in all his matters and weigh all his deeds on the scales of the intellect. And when he sees something which brings him to the service of his Creator, he should do it. Otherwise, he should refrain from it. Thus wrote Rabeinu Meir of blessed memory.

 **Level 3**
Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - "prepare yourself to study torah" - one who comes to pray should not come to contemplate in fear [of G-d] in the middle of the prayer. Rather, before the prayer, he should sit and reflect. Thus, they enacted the reciting of Ashrei beforehand. So too for all the mitzvot. We should do them with preparation beforehand. This is what we learned: "prepare yourself to study torah"..

Furthermore, one must first rectify his character traits so the torah can rest on him.. Otherwise his torah is considered like devarim betaim (useless chatter).. For the character traits are the foundation of the building of the 613 commandments...

Q Level 3

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - "let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven" - see the Ramban's commentary on the verse: "you shall serve Him" (Devarim 6:13). Here is a quote:

"that you be at all times like a slave who ministers on his master always, making his master's work primary and his own needs secondary until through this he comes to what our sages said: "let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven".

Namely, that even the needs of the body are done in the name of service of G-d. Eating, sleeping, and doing his bodily needs to serve G-d.. and to have intent in all his bodily needs to the verse: "I shall praise the L-ord in my life; I shall sing to the L-ord as long as I exist" (Tehilim 146:2). end quote.

The explanation of his words is that the entire purpose of man's life is to thank and praise G-d, blessed be He. The matter is not like people are used to thinking.

Namely, people think that while a person is alive he needs to thank and praise G-d for the gift of life which G-d bestowed as a kindness.

Rather, the entire matter of life is primarily to thank and praise G-d. For the foundation of the matter is that in the entire creation there is not even a hair's breadth which is for itself. Rather it's existence and essence (metziuta u'mahuta) is to minister and demonstrate His glorious kingdom and splendor. This is the secret of the purpose of the entire creation and its formations. There is nothing else at all besides this - *"To make known to people His mighty deeds and the glory of the majesty of His kingdom"* (Tehilim 145:12). And as we learned later on: (Avot 6:11): "Everything that G-d created in His world, He created it only for His glory, as written (Isaiah 43:7): 'All that is called by My name and for My glory, I created it, formed it, also I made it'".

See also the Ramban's commentary end of parsha Bo: "the intent of all the mitzvot is for us to believe in our G-d and thank Him for creating us. This is the intent of creation. There is no other reason and the lofty G-d desires from the earthly beings only that a man knows and His G-d who created him."

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - we already explained that it is the way of these sages to give whole mussar to make a person whole (shalem) in everything. We explained that this entails three areas - between man and other people, between man and himself, and between man and G-d. These are the three things through which man will be whole in everything as is proper.

Thus Rabbi Yossi also came to make a person whole in these three areas. He said: *"let the money of your fellow man be as precious to you as your own"*. Through this one will become whole with his fellow. He chose this trait over "cherish the honor of your fellow.." For if even the money of his fellow is cherished, all the more so that he cherishes his friend. And this is a much greater mussar.

Corresponding to man's being whole with himself, we explained earlier (Avot 1:2) that this is through the torah. It takes a man out of the lowliness of the physical, making him into a person of Intellect (baal sechel). Thus he said: "prepare yourself to study torah..". I.e. that he prepares

himself to torah. For the torah is not an inheritance to man. Therefore, he must rectify and prepare himself for torah..

"let all your intent be l'Shem Shamayim" - this is the third wholeness, that man becomes whole with G-d until all his deeds are l'Shem Shamayim (for the sake of Heaven). Thus, he gave mussar to man to become whole in everything..

Q Level 3

Chachma u'Mussar

Chachma u'Mussar 2:108 - *"let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven"* - in every project (esek), the owner of the project needs to stand over his project. For example, when building a house, even though the craftsmen are well skilled in building, but nevertheless, the owner of the house needs to stand over them. Why? Because the purpose (tachlit) of the house is chiselled before its owner more than any craftsman. Thus, more than anyone else, he will put to heart to rectify the small lackings which will detract from the purpose of dwelling peacefully in the house.

Hence, the primary builder is the purpose.

Now, if for a house of wood and stones, the primary builder is the purpose, how much more so, for the building of man which is extremely fine and lofty, that if he does not place the purpose of man before his eyes always, it is like an (unsupervised) craftsman who builds a house for others. Without a doubt, the purpose of dwelling peacefully in the house will not come out completely.

Therefore, he who wants his house to be built properly, namely, man himself - he must stand with the purpose before his eyes always. Then the peaceful house of man will be built properly. This [purpose] is what we learned: *"let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven"*. He should place this purpose before his eyes always. For it is the most lofty to elevate man's deeds in the best way.

Q Level 3

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - *"let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven"* - alternatively, this means towards the soul. For all matters of the body are to stand and minister onto the soul. (Daat Chachma u'Mussar 3:224)

Let us expand on this explanation. The Rambam writes (Shemonei Perakim ch.1):

"A man must subjugate all his powers.. and place before his eyes always one single purpose.. and place all his deeds, movements, restings, and all matters, aligned towards this purpose, until all of his deeds do not contain anything of the useless (hevel). That is to say, an act which does not bring to this purpose. For example, to place his intent in eating, etc. for his body's health. And the intent of bodily health is so that the soul will find healthy and wholesome tools to acquire wisdom, etc. until he reaches this purpose.

Thus his intent is not only to pleasure, but to that which avails (mo'il).. The prophet already exhorted us in this saying: *"know Him in all your ways"*.. ie that you place a purpose on that deed, namely, the truth.. And our sages already summarized this matter with few concise words saying *"let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven"*. end quote.

The kabbalists wrote that the entire creation from its beginning till its end, everything was created with two aspects - giving and receiving. This they called *"dusra v'nukva"* (male and female), ie giver and receiver. That is to say, everything in creation receives shefa (flow) from that which is above it and then turns and gives to that which is below it, and so on, from the highest of the highest till the lowest of the lowest. This from this and that from that.

For thus was ordained the order of progression (hishtalshelut of the mystical worlds). Indeed we find written by the angels: "all receive from each other (ol malchut shamyim)" and "give permission to each other (l'hakdish l'Yotzram), etc".

This needs explanation. For after it says they "receive from each other" perforce it implies they "give permission to each other". Why then does it repeat it again?

Rather certainly this is the secret of what we explained. Namely that the hishtalshelut of the creation occurs in the manner of giver and receiver. The lower one [receives] from the higher one and then gives to that which is lower still, this from this and this to this. Thus is the will of G-d that the creation act in this manner. The highest creation is called "keter" or "merkava". It receives shefa from G-d Himself. From there the shefa passes down to the one below it until eventually it reaches the lowest of the lowest who is only a [final] receiver.

This is the secret of what our sages brought: "the Holy One, blessed be He, created two faces in Adam haRishon" (Berachot 61a). This is the secret matter of giver and receiver.

Likewise without a doubt, according to the degree of one's clinging to G-d will be the corresponding receiving and suckling (yenika) of shefah from Him, blessed be He.

Behold "the soul is a portion of G-d from above", pure and sublime. And when the soul clings to Him, blessed be He, without separation barrier, as written "you shall cling to Him" (Devarim 10:20), certainly the soul receives and suckles shefah from His essence. From there the shefah passes to the body where the soul resides, to the 248 limbs and 365 sinews of the body which correspond to the 248 limbs and 365 sinews of the soul, as written in the holy books.. (see Shaarei Kedusha)

Let us contemplate further in this. For in being a "receiver". It is self understood that this requires two fundamental things.

One, that the receiver is perfectly aligned in all his being with the giver. He is submitted and turns his face towards him to beseech from him to give him his needs. But if he turns his face away from him, certainly he will receive nothing.

Two, besides this, the receiver needs to have receptacles (kelim) to receive, that the giver has what to fill the request of the receiver.

Now, regarding body and soul, certainly the body has receptacles to receive from the soul. For its limbs and sinews are aligned to those of the soul.

But in order for the body to receive from the soul, we also need for the body to turn towards the soul, towards above.

That is to say that "he places his gaze and aspiration in all that he toils all of his days towards the true purpose" (see Path of the Just ch.1). But if his actions are for the sake of his own pleasure, certainly in this he is turning his face away from the soul and then it is not possible for him to receive anything from the soul.

It is already self understood what "cutting off" (karet) is for the body when it turns its face from the soul after it ceases to receive any shefah from it.

This is what our sages said: "which short parsha (text) is there upon which all the essential

principles of the Torah depend? 'in all your ways know Him and He will direct your paths' (Mishlei 3:6) Raba said: even for a matter of transgression" (Berachot 63a)..

That is to say, that the body turns its face towards the soul, towards the true purpose in all the manners of a receiver.

With this we will also understand what our sages said: "a transgression performed with good intention (lishma) is better than a precept performed without good intention (shelo lishma)" (Nazir 23b).

For although there is nothing more evil than sin, but nevertheless, if he did it lishma, for the sake of the true purpose, and the body stands in a position of receiver, turning towards the soul, in this he receives light from the soul.

And in this way he will certainly come to know G-d, as our sages said: " 'know Him in all your ways' - even for a sin" (Berachot 63a). But if he did a mitzvah shelo lishma, not for the sake of the true purpose. Rather his gaze and aspiration was towards the body, to below. Then the body has turned its face away from the soul and is not in a position of receiver and thus will not receive light from the soul. He then becomes completely physical and automatically his deeds are nothing.

These are the words of the Rambam we brought earlier and this is what our sages taught us in concise words "let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven"...

The torah writes: "And upon the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand, and they perceived G-d, and they ate and drank" (Shemot 23:11). And our sages said on this: "like one who bites his bread and speaks before the king - this is 'and they ate and drank'" (brought in Rashi on Bamidbar 11:16).

This is astonishing! Who is the verse speaking about? On the greatest men of the "generation of knowledge". On these of whom it is written: "they saw G-d". They were on the spiritual level of seeing "visions (chizayon) of G-d", the highest level of attainment. On them it is said: "they ate and drank" - that their visions of G-d became as eating and drinking!?

On the other hand, by Yitro we find (the opposite). It is written: ".. and Aaron and all the elders of Israel came to eat with Moses' father in law before G-d" (Shemot 18:12).

Hence from a mere meal of bread it was considered "basking in the radiance of the Shechina (before G-d)"!

From here is a faithful proof to our words. Namely, the primary thing is where does a man's face turn? Above towards the soul or below towards the body and not the true purpose? For then, even if he engages in the loftiest most sublime matters, nevertheless, since he is not standing in a position of receiver from the soul, the true form of the matter becomes ruined and transforms to something else.

Even a vision of G-d transforms to eating and drinking. Therefore, [even] by great sages of Israel, despite that they were on sublime spiritual levels, nevertheless, on their level, their vision had a turning towards below, towards the body, and it already says by them: "and they ate and drank" (i.e. a spiritual vision became a gross physical act).

But by Yitro it was the opposite of this. Their meal was done for a true purpose and they turned

their face towards above, towards the soul. They stood in position of receiver, to suckle (yonek) and receive spiritual light from above. Despite that they were eating a meal of bread which seems like a small thing. But nevertheless, it became an instance of "basking in the radiance of the Shechina (divine presence)", "to eat bread before G-d". It is awesome and wondrous to one who contemplates this deeply.

More than this, we find the torah writes: "The king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one who was named Shifrah, and the second, who was named Puah" (Shemot 1:15). Rashi writes there (quoting the talmud Sotah 11b):

"Shifrah - this was Yocheved, [called Shifrah] because she beautified (Meshaferet) the newborn infant. Puah - this was Miriam [called Puah] because because she cried and talked and cooed to the newborn infant in the manner of women who soothe a crying infant [From Sotah 11b]".

Thus, these honorable women merited to be called by a special name in the torah because of small worth acts like these, beautifying and calming a baby, which is anyways the normal way of women. But through this the torah dedicates to them a name and hand (yad v'shem).

It is evident that there is no more important place for a person than to have a line in the holy torah which lives on and endures forever and ever..

From all this the secret of our words is clearly seen - the main thing is to where is one's face turned. Is one's face turned towards above, towards the soul, towards the true purpose and he stands in a position of receiver, to suckle the shefah (spiritual flow) from above?

For then small insignificant acts stand at the heights of the universe - "love of chesed given by the divine light of the face of the living King".

This matter is astonishing to he who contemplates it. This is what scripture says: "The way of life is above the intelligent person, in order that he turn away from the grave below" (Mishlei 15:24). For to the intelligent person (maskil), the way of life is above, his face is turned towards above. So that he turns away from descending below.

(and in Daat Chachma u'Mussar II pg.6 "the great man is he who goes and elevates (nosee alumot) greatness into the smallest things. On the other hand, for the small man even the loftiest things are transformed into mud and garbage in his hands).

To summarize, we brought the words of the Rambam who wrote: "a man needs to subjugate all the powers of his soul (mind), etc. and place before his eyes always one single purpose, etc. and place all his acts, etc. as bringing towards this purpose until his acts do not have any of the worthless (hevel), ie an act which does not bring to this purpose.

For example, [the proper way is] to place one's intent when eating towards.. health of one's body alone, etc. On this example, one's intent should not be only to pleasure .. but rather to that which is beneficial.. and our sages already summarized this whole matter with concise words.. "let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven" (Avot 2:14).

This includes more things. For the secret of the matter is that in the nature and course of the creation, there is no room in the creation for personal enjoyment and benefit at all. The entire matter of "for myself" is of the secret of "this world was created with a Heh, for whoever wants to go out let him go out", ie go out from the course, go out from the world - to become separated completely.

For "G-d has made one corresponding to the other (ze lumat ze asa HaElokim)" (Kohelet 7:14), and the "for myself" is itself the second chariot (of evil).

But when everything follows the [normal] course and within the course, there is then no existence of "for myself". This is what we learned "let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven". (Daat Chochma u'Mussar I pg.46)

(Zer Daat commentary there: in kuntras sif davar pg 51, he writes: "the whole sod (secret) of the yetzer is the "for myself" (l'atzmo). The matter of "for myself" is the entire shem haetzem (essence name) of the yetzer. The yetzer IS the "for myself"... The entire torah on one foot is that evil is due and only due to the "for myself".)

And in Daat Chochma u'Mussar II 7, 88: - for the creation and existence of man is only for another.. and likewise "love your fellow as yourself" is the great general principle of the torah" (Ber.Rabbah 24,7). For "to another" (l'zulato) is the makeup and foundation (mahut veyesod ha'adam) and the foundation of the entire torah.

Thus perforce and certainly "let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven", for His honor and will, blessed be He. This is the order and [smooth] running of the creation as it was established. But other than this is considered turning the plate upside down.

Level 4

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan on Avot - .. in order that you not judge me as one who speaks excessively, I present an introduction.. Know that reasons (taamim) fall into two categories. Some [reasons] are "wisdom" and are called plainly: "wisdom". Other [reasons'] intent and purpose is to inspire people to action..

For the former, one should not speak too much. Rather, one should strive to explain them in concise language. But for the latter which obligates action, one must elaborate and satiate the listener with words and bring analogies and proofs from the words of our sages and true stories demonstrating that those who did thus succeeded while those who did not do so stumbled, etc... Most of the reasons in this tractate are of the second type..

Regarding "let the money of your fellow be cherished like your own", every child understands the reason. But to bring it to actuality, by my life, only a tiny few reached this conduct in the past and in our times. They are so few as to be annulled. Therefore, I deemed proper to elaborate in explaining this trait. For it is the cornerstone (pinat) of the torah.

When a man asked Hillel, the elder, to teach him the torah on one foot, he replied "love your fellow as yourself" (Shab.31a). And this is the reason of "let the money of your fellow be as cherished as your own, etc."

"love your fellow as yourself" does not mean to obligate that both should be of equal weight literally. For the perfect Rock, blessed be He, would not command His servants something which is impossible to do. For how could a man love his fellow like himself?

Rather, the reason of: "love your fellow as yourself" is only that one should love his fellow with the same type of love that he loves himself. Namely, the love of oneself and the love of another are like two people of the same kind but who differ in form. So too, love of oneself and his fellow can differ between much and little.

So too for the reason of "let the money of your fellow.." A man of pure eyes and a pure heart, has

this trait. And whoever does not have this trait, this is due to evil-heartedness. Likewise, the wise man said: "The soul of a wicked man desires evil; his neighbor finds no favor in his eyes" (Mishlei 21:10).

This precious trait (of love your fellow's money as yourself) testifies on its possessor three qualities: good sound reason, purity of heart, and bitachon (trust) in G-d with all his heart. I will explain each one separately.

Purity of heart - for one with a pure heart, without any mixture of impurities, even if he thinks it impossible that he will receive any benefit from this person, nevertheless, his purity of heart will give him joy in the success of his fellow and he will bestow love. For everything rejoices and delights in what is similar to it. He is good and thus he desires good. Hence, he cherishes the money of his fellow. This person has of the trait of his Maker, as written: "G-d is good to all" (Tehilim 145:9) and "G-d rejoices in His handiworks" (Tehilim 104:31).

But for the man who is not pure, the impurity in his heart separates between him and justness (yosher). And for one who is not just, justness is his opposite and every thing hates its opposite.

So too this person hates the good of his fellows. For this poor person, all his days are evil. For it is impossible for there to not be any successful people in the world. When the world is happy, he is in pain.

The wise man spoke of these two types, the pure and the impure, saying: "the one with an impure heart shall have his fill from his ways, and above him is a good man" (Mishlei 14:14)... But the pure man rejoices in the good of the world, and "all the days of a poor man are wretched, but he who has a good heart always has a feast" (Mishlei 15:15).

Bitachon (trust in G-d) - the man who trusts in his own efforts (instead of G-d) will look at the money of his fellow as if it is a lost object of his which his fellow found and that this money is stolen from him. He will be pained until his fellow returns to him the lost object and gives back the stolen money he stole.

Such a person's envy rages like the sea and he desires everything his fellow has. This poor man does not fear the word of G-d for he trusts on his own efforts. When his fellow finds a lost object he tells himself: "if I had passed by this place before him, I would have found it". And if his fellow profits in business, he tells himself: "if I were there when that merchandise came to him, I would have profited that money". Similarly for other matters.

Every small coin his fellows profit are like thorns in his eyes and in his sides. But "he who trusts in G-d will be surrounded by kindness" (Tehilim 32:10).

True bitachon (trust) is that he trusts in G-d with all his heart, and he removes from his thoughts any other trust and any other hope or expectation from his own efforts or from any human being. But rather the help of Heaven - He grants life and sustains all living things. One who has acquired this lofty trait will not be jealous of the success of his fellow. For he will tell himself: "this is a gift from G-d. The fellow did not acquire it through his efforts nor did I lose it due to lack of effort. Rather, "the blessing of G-d grants wealth and toil will add nothing to it" (Mishlei 10:22).

Not only will he not envy the success of his fellow and be saved from the disease of jealousy which causes the bones to rot, but when he hears of the success of his fellow, he will consider it a good tidings. And "good tidings makes the bones healthy" (Mishlei 15:30). And he will rejoice and delight

on the good tiding two joys:

One, such a bitachon (trust in G-d) intensifies only in a pure heart and a pure heart will gladden on the good of one's fellow, as we explained.

The second joy is that when he sees the success of his fellow, he will strengthen bitachon (trust in G-d). For he too will succeed through him, as the wise man said: "he whose hands are pure grows stronger and stronger" (Iyov 17:9).

"do not be easily angered" - ie if the money of your fellow is not cherished like yours, then all your days are pain and angry vexations. And when the trait of anger strengthens in you, your soul will be disgusted by your toil and you will get angry and enraged all day. Thus, first the sage taught us the path to straighten the soul, renew proper intent in the heart, and removing anger from our hearts. Afterwards, he exhorted: "do not be easily angered". Since it is the way of the expert doctor to first clean out the factors which causes the illness.

When you remove anger from your heart, it will be easier to remove the evil from your flesh. All the more so, if you see that tomorrow you are dead, it will be easier to remove the evil of lust of flesh. For tomorrow you are dead and will grow worms and rot. Then you will take provisions for the road which you will go to forever and ever..

Chapter 2 Mishna 16 - Shemah

Rabbi Shimon said: Be careful with the reading of Shema and the prayer. And when you pray, do not make your prayers fixed but rather as [a plea for] mercy and a supplication before G-d, as the verse states, 'For gracious and merciful is He, slow to anger, abounding in kindness, and relenting of the evil [decree]' (Joel 2:13). And do not be wicked before yourself.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "be careful with the Shema and prayer" - to read it in its proper time. Likewise for prayer, to pray each prayer in its proper time.

Q Level 4

☆ Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - he used the term zehirut (be careful) because in the morning, at the time of Shema and prayer, laziness strengthens over a man to not get up from his sleep. Thus he said "be careful" to push off the laziness from yourself and get up from your sleep..

Q Level 1

☆ Chida

Chida - Kisei David, drosh 18 - among the very first halachot in the shulchan arush is "Strengthen yourself like a lion to get up in the morning to serve your Creator..". Namely, fear of G-d at the beginning of the day, to get up in the morning and not miss the reciting of the Shemah in its time.. For if he begins by transgressing the first halacha in the Shulchan Aruch, he will go out from one evil to another, to miss prayer in a minyan, kadish, barchu, kedusha.. I don't want to say the severity of the matter so that people will not be mezid (more guilty)..

Q Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "be careful with the Shema and prayer" - the intent is not just that one recites the shema and prays or that one does not transgress the times. For this a complete obligation (chiyuv gamur) and our sages are speaking only of chasidut (beyond minimum obligation) (as written in Bava Kama 30a). Rather since they are a complete obligation and a man says them several times a day, therefore it is common for one to not have good intent in them. Therefore, the Tanna exhorted here that one should be careful to have intent very much.

"reading the Shema" - because one reviews to himself all the fundamentals (ikarim) of our holy faith. In the first parsha, emunah in the yichud Hash-em, blessed be He, (faith in the absolute Unity of G-d, i.e. that G-d and only G-d is absolutely One as explained in Duties of the Heart, Gate 1), love of Him, fear of Him, and torah study. Namely, one's obligations towards G-d.

The second parsha contains emunah (faith) in the divinity of the torah and guarding the mitzvot, as it opens: "And it will be if you hearken.. which I command". It also contains emunah in providence of reward and punishment in this world and also hints on reward and punishment in the next world, as it ends "in order that you lengthen your days like the days of heaven and earth". And this is only possible in Olam Haba. That is to say, do My mitzvot only for that, not for this world.

The third parsha exhorts greatly not to be swayed by the enticements of the yetzer hara (evil inclination), by lusts or heretical thoughts, as written: "do not stray after your hearts", namely, the yetzer hara, "and after your eyes", namely, bad thoughts (machshavot to'ot). For all sins of this world stem from these two.

Since all the things in these parshas are fundamentals (ikarim) to all Jews and their obligations in this world, the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded us to review them every day. Thus if despite all this, a man says them without intent (kavana), then all his recital (of the Shema) was for nothing.

Likewise for prayer, besides that in all of them one is speaking to the King, as written "blessed are You..etc.", and how could one be so brazen-faced then as to not have his mouth and heart equal, but even without this, how could he think G-d will accept his prayer if he did not plead before G-d with great humility (hachna'ah yetera). Instead of this, his thoughts fly to all corners of foolishness and vanity. Perhaps even on matters of sin. How could he not be embarrassed to say at the end of his prayer before the Knower of thoughts: "May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to You..".

What will he say if G-d answers him angrily: "what did you think in your mind?"

Therefore, our sages said: "a person's prayer is not heard unless he puts his soul in his palm", "his soul" refers to his thoughts, "in his hand" refers to watching over them well so they don't sway and so he does not forget before Whom he is standing, as written: "Let us lift up our hearts to our hands, to G-d in heaven" (Eicha 3:41).

"as [a plea for] mercy and a supplication before G-d" - to pray in a pleading manner, like a poor man standing broken hearted at the entrance to the king (Berachot 29).

"For gracious and merciful is He, slow to anger, abounding in kindness, and relenting of the evil" - there are three types of prayer and all are included in this verse:

1. that G-d saves him from troubles, and even if he sinned and "when the ox is fallen, sharpen the knife" (Shab.32a), nevertheless, that G-d will hold back anger and not punish him perhaps he will repent.

2. that G-d benefits him with some good despite that he does not deserve it according to his deeds, i.e. that G-d increases His kindness to him.

3. When he repents, that G-d forgives his sins completely and withholds the evil he deserved.

All three types of prayer are accepted only through G-d's being gracious and merciful to you. Namely, when you pray in the way of supplications (tachanunim).

 **Level 1**

☆ **Bartenura**

Bartenura - "do not make your prayers fixed" - like a man who has a fixed debt and says: "when will I unload this debt on myself?" Alternatively, "fixed", like a man who is used to reading one chapter or one parsha. He reads it rotely, not in a supplicating manner like one who seeks mercy.

 **Level 1**

☆ **Bartenura**

Bartenura - "for gracious and merciful is He" - He wants supplications and through the supplications, He immediately has mercy.

 **Level 1**

Rashi

Rashi - "for gracious and merciful is He" - from here [we learn] that He wants tachanunim (supplications) and has mercy immediately.

 **Level 2**

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - that he prays before G-d like a poor man who pleads to someone asking for something he needs. For "a poor man speaks with supplications" (Mishlei 18:23). And not like a

man who asks for something he does not need, whereby he does not plead with a lowly heart and broken soul. Every person needs to ask on his soul. "For there is no righteous man in the land who does good and does not sin" (Kohelet 7:20). Likewise, the prayer should not be on him like a burden and he should not pray like one paying a debt.

"for gracious and merciful is He" - for every person needs mercy. If times are good when G-d withholds wrath from him and graces him, it is not due to his own merits that G-d has mercy on him. Thus, one must plead to Him lest G-d relents on withholding the evil due to a sin (shema yigrom hachet). For a miracle is not done all the time.

"do not be wicked before yourself" - to not be wicked in your own eyes, [thinking] one is unable to repent. For then he abandons hope of repenting.. Likewise one should not be a tzadik in his eyes, as our sages said:

"He (the unborn child) takes an oath: 'be righteous, and be never wicked; and even if all the world tells you, you are righteous, consider yourself wicked'" (Niddah 30b). i.e. not literally a wicked person but rather let it be in your eyes as if you are half meritorious and half guilty. Thus if one does a mitzvah - fortunate is he for he inclined himself to the side of merit. But if he does a sin, woe to him for he inclined himself to the side of guilt.

This is what our sages said: "a man should always see himself as if he is half meritorious and half guilty, as written (Mishlei 14:16) 'the wise man fears and turns from evil'" (Kidushin 40a).

i.e. for the wise man, even though he turns from evil, he fears because he is in his eyes like a wicked man. Thus he runs after mitzvot so they incline him to the side of merit and flees from sins so they don't incline him to the side of guilt.

Q Level 3

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - *"before G-d (literally: before the Place)"* - the matter is as our sages taught: "the Holy One, blessed be He, is called the Place of the world" (Ber.Rabba 68:9). And as written in the holy Zohar: "human beings should fear before their Master. For He is great and rules [over everything], and [He] is the root of all the worlds" (Zohar chelek 1, 11a). This means He holds and sustains all the worlds, just like a place (space) holds something placed in it. This is the meaning of: "before the Place (G-d)", i.e. one needs to pray with awe and fear and self-sacrifice (mesirut nefesh mamash) to Him for He is the Place of the universe. And like our sages said: "a man's prayer is not listened to unless he puts his soul in his palm" (Taanit 8a).

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - *"do not be wicked before yourself"* - do not do something which today or tomorrow you will call yourself wicked due to this. Alternatively, the Rambam explained - do not be wicked in your eyes, i.e. do not consider yourself a wicked person. For due to this, you will go off to evil ways completely..

Q Level 3

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - *"do not be wicked in your own eyes"* - this too greatly prevents intent (kavana) in prayer. Namely, when one considers himself to be wicked and abandons hope of mercy and he thinks all his prayers won't help him.

Q Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - the level of "fear of sin", which Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai praised, will be attained by you through zehirut (watchfulness) on the reading of the shema. For it exhorts on the greatness of the holy King who warned against sin. (translator: for the Shema speaks of the absolute Unity of G-d, namely, that He is devoid of any boundary, limit, plurality, etc. and is thus infinite as explained in the first gate of Duties of the Heart).

Through this your prayer will not be fixed (kevah), like one who unloads a burden. But rather [beseeching] for mercy and supplications. For through prayer you will sense that you need to obtain all your requests from Him forever and you will fear sinning before Him.

"And do not be wicked before yourself" - as did Elisha (Acher). For since he thought there was no remedy for him, he did not want to repent. Rather it is proper that if you sin, think that there is a remedy still while G-d is withholding the evil.

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - a man needs to be careful in Shemah and prayer. For these two are "receiving [on oneself] the yoke of Heaven". Likewise, prayer is service (avodah) of G-d and man needs to be careful in this due to his being a man. For he was created for this purpose of serving his Creator. Therefore, in man's being a man, he needs to be careful of the shemah and prayer. For through this, he accepts upon himself the yoke of Heaven and His service, as he was created for..

"And when you pray.." - man's prayer needs to be supplications (tachanunim), like a man who seeks from another in a supplicating manner (derech chanina). But if he prays in a fixed and obligated manner, this is not complete service. For service is when a man [feels he] needs G-d and is totally dependent on Him. This occurs when he thinks that everything G-d does to him is a compassion and a grace (i.e. a free, undeserved gift out of compassion for him).

But if when he prays his mindset is that he deserves that G-d fulfill his request, then he is not completely dependent on G-d. Therefore, the prayer must be in the way of supplication, and seeking from G-d in the way of supplication. And then certainly man needs G-d.

Therefore, if the prayer is like a burden on him, that it seems he just wants to discharge his obligation - this is not considered prayer, which is a service to G-d teaching that man is dependent on G-d.. For when the prayer is in a manner that man is totally dependent on G-d as in truth he is, and his prayer is supplications, G-d will fulfill his request..

And the primary way of supplications is that man lowers himself before G-d, blessed be He, and prays before Him like a slave before his master.

This matter is not in thought alone, only in deed, namely, the prayer itself, i.e. the speech, that he lowers himself before G-d...

Q Level 4

Chachma u'Mussar

Chachma u'Mussar 1:83 - *"And when you pray, do not make your prayers fixed but rather as [a plea for] mercy and a supplication..."* - for the primary thing in prayer is to implant in a man fear of Heaven, that he understands well that all his life and needs depend on He who spoke and created the world..

Q Level 4

Chachma u'Mussar

Chachma u'Mussar 1:110 - *"but rather as [a plea for] mercy and a supplication"* - for man does not need to remind G-d what he seeks. For if he will be righteous, the Holy One, blessed be He, will give him without his asking. Rather the primary thing in prayer is to remind oneself that there exists a Creator of the world and all one's life and needs depend on Him. When one contemplates this well, through this he fulfills the mitzvah of fear of Heaven.

Q Level 4

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - *"And when you pray, do not make your prayers fixed but rather as [a plea for] mercy and a supplication before G-d..."* - the Ramban writes (Shemot

13:16): "the intent in the verbal reciting, the synagogues and public prayers is so that people will have a place to assemble and thank the Almighty who created and formed them and so they should declare this before Him saying: 'we are Your creations'" end quote...

 **Level 4**

Chachma u'Mussar

Chachma u'Mussar 2:1 - the primary service of G-d stands on faith in divine providence (emunat hahashgacha). But since all matters of the world appear only in the way of cause and effect, thus in order to picture to oneself that it is all from G-d - this is the matter of prayer. Due to this a man need to seek mercy and supplications, etc. mamash (literally) like a poor man asking at the door, in order to bring the picture closer. This is the reason prayer is called "Avodah" (service of G-d), and that which he asks for his needs, this is to remind himself that he is in G-d's hand every second. For he does not at all know what is truly good for him, and he only needs to trust G-d that He will do what is best for him, as king David said: "I calmed and quieted my soul like a suckling on its mother" (Tehilm 131:2).

 **Level 4**

Kochvei Ohr

Kochvei Ohr 9 - the purpose of G-d's will in all this seems to be that it is all for man's good. For in truth, the Holy One, blessed be He, does not need man's prayer. For nothing is concealed from Him. Therefore, it is known that the purpose of man's creation in this world is only in order to benefit him afterwards; to bequeath to him eternal life and eternal delight when he comes for reward in the world of recompense (gemul) - due to the fruit of the labor of his hands and toil in torah and mitzvot. This is explained at length in chapter 1 of the "Path of the Just", see there.

It seems that due to this comes the mitzvah: "guard yourself lest you forget the L-ord your G-d" (Devarim 8:11).

Rabeinu Yonah writes in Shaarei Teshuva (3:27): "through this [verse] we were exhorted to remember G-d, blessed be He, at all times". end quote

i.e. to not forget G-d, blessed be He, for even one second. For when the remembrance of G-d is in his heart always, he will walk in the just ways of G-d always, to guard the whole torah and the mitzvah, as written in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 1:1, Rama): " 'I have set Hash-em before me always' (Tehilim 16:8) - this is the general principle of the torah and of the righteous.." see there.

But when the soul is imprisoned in the prison of the physical, and "the inclination of the heart of man is evil from his youth" (Gen.8:21), and his heart turns towards the physical pleasures, then man is liable to forget G-d and sway from the path of the torah and the mitzvah. Thus the divine wisdom saw to set a path for man to remember Him always. Namely, through man's asking for his needs everywhere he turns whether in secular or spiritual matters. For "if G-d did not help him, he would not be able to defeat his inclination which strengthens over him every day and seeks to slay him" (Sukkah 52b).

And G-d commanded man to pray to Him always and seek mercy before Him on his needs. This is the reason why man's eyes should be lifted always towards G-d and that the remembrance of Him be in man's heart always; not forgetting Him for even one second in order that man walk in His ways to guard the whole torah and mitzvah.

 **Level 4**

Chatam Sofer

Ketav Sofer Hachadash al hatorah, Avot - a man does not know what is good or bad for him. If he seeks wealth, perhaps it will corrupt him or bandits will come at night and kill him and take everything. And the wise man already said: "There is a grievous evil that I saw under the sun; riches kept by their owner for his harm" (Kohelet 5:12).

If he prays for life, perhaps he will not live well and maybe he will corrupt his ways and it is better for him that he dies meritorious (Sanhedrin 71b, and as we find by Chanoch). Likewise for other things.

Thus, it seems difficult that we pray on life, livelihood, sons, etc., especially on the high holidays: "remember us to life (Zachrenu l'chaim)", "in the book of life". How do we know this is good for us?

Rather, our prayer is on condition. If G-d sees that this is good for us but our deeds caused us to not deserve this good, therefore we make supplications before G-d that He forgive us and annul the evil we deserve and inscribe us in the book of life and parnassah (livelihood) if it is good for us.

But if it is bad for us, we are not asking for it. This is the meaning of "don't make your prayer fixed", i.e. to not pray on something to fix yourself on this that G-d should grant your request. For who knows if it is good for you?

Rather let your prayer be "mercy and supplications to G-d.. for He relents the evil". Namely, if the thing is evil before You, G-d should not give it to you even though you deserve it. And if the thing is good before You, then G-d should relent on the evil and give you this thing even though you deserve evil instead.

Level 4

Avodat Yisrael, Avot - it seems to me to explain in the way of the Rashba. When one stands in prayer, he needs to be careful in three things.

One, to not think one is worthy of having his request done. Rather, to hope for kindness of G-d, that He should bestow on him a free gift, as written by Moshe Rabeinu: "I pleaded (vaetchanan) to G-d" (Rashi - "the word 'chanun' in all cases is an expression of signifying a free gift").

Two, one needs to know that the Creator can certainly help him and to not doubt this.

Three, to put one's trust only in Him alone and that besides Him there is no other help.

On this the sages enacted the first three blessings of the Amidah. In the first blessing "who bestows acts of kindness" (gomel chasadim tovim), to teach that man does not have (merit) of his good deeds (since G-d helped him).

In the second blessing: "who revives the dead, supports the fallers, heals the sick, and unbinds the bound" (mechayei metim, somech noflim, rofei cholim, matir asurim) - to believe that He is all-capable.

And in the third blessing: "You are holy..and holy ones praise You forever.." Holy ones (kedoshim) refers to the upper worlds. They praise You forever for all admit that besides Him there is no king, redeemer or savior (melech goel u'moshia).

Similarly, in the Shemah is clarified two of these three aspects. "I will give the rain of the land in its time" - that He has the power to do everything. "guard yourselves lest..and He will close the heavens". And when I don't give rain, you will not be able to be saved by anyone else...

Chapter 2 Mishna 17 - Apikoros

Rabbi Elazar would say: be diligent/eager in the study of Torah, רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אָמַר, הֵיָּי שְׂקִיד לְלַמַּד תּוֹרָה, Torah. Know what to answer a heretic (apikoros). Know וְדַע מִה שֶׁתִּשָּׁיב לְאַפִּיקוֹרוֹס. וְדַע לְפָנַי מִי אֶתָּה עֵמֶל. וְנֶאֱמַן הוּא בְּעַל מְלֶאכֶתְךָ will pay you the reward for your labor. שְׂיִשְׁלַם לְךָ שְׂכָר פְּעֻלָּתְךָ

Q Level 1

☆ Rambam

Rambam - "be diligent/eager (shakud)" - shekeida is from the term in scripture: "for I hasten (shaked) My word to perform it" (Yirmiyahu 1:12), i.e. quick and striving. Alternatively, its meaning is habitual and diligence (hergel v'temidut), as in the verse: "to be diligent (lishkod) at my doors day by day" (Mishlei 8:34).

Q Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "be diligent/eager in the study of Torah" - since he was praised for being an "an increasingly powerful wellspring" (mayan hamitgaber) and understanding one thing from another, he now explains the path to get there. He said one will obtain this only through diligence in Torah and to review the matter time after time. Through this the secrets of Torah hinted there will be revealed to him, as they said "turn it over again and again for everything is in it" (Avot 5:2). This is the meaning of "be diligent in the study of Torah", i.e. every time you review the matter, let your intent be to learn Torah, i.e. to learn and understand something [new] which you never learned before. You will attain this through shkeida (eagerness).

Q Level 3



Meor Yisrael pg.254 (Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, zt'l) - to become a true talmid chacham requires great shkeida, day and night, not to forego (mevater) on even one second. Even if he walks or travels, he should learn Torah. Even if he rides on a bus from one neighborhood to another, a matter of ten minutes, he should take with him a small book, and during the ride, let him find a quiet corner, a crack in a rock, and open the book and learn, one daf when going and one daf when returning. "Kovetz al yad yarbe". Even one amud is a great treasure. As long as he learns, and reviews and learns, in the end of the matter, he will be among the gedolei hador (greatest of the generation)...

Q Level 1

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "be diligent in the study of Torah and know what to answer a heretic" - to fix oneself to learn Torah so that one will know what to answer the words of the apikoros. For if one does not refute him according to his claims and lies, the world will learn from him and drink bad water thinking he defeated you. and thus the Name of Heaven will be desecrated.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "heretic (apikoros)" - from the term "hefker" (unbridled), that he mocks the Torah and considers it as if it is hefker. Alternatively, he puts himself as hefker and is not concerned for his own soul that perhaps evil will befall him for mocking the Torah or those who study it.

Q Level 2

☆ Rambam

Rambam - "Know what to answer a heretic" - you need to learn things that you can use to answer a gentile apikoros and debate with them and answer them if they ask you. Our sages taught: "this applies only to a gentile apikoros, but for a Jewish one, all the more so, he will become more heretical" (Sanhedrin 38)., i.e. he will increase to mock (and one who answers him will transgress (Vayikra 19:14): "do not put a stumbling block before a blind man" - Meorei Ohr).

Due to this, there is no need to speak to him at all and there is no remedy and no medication for

him whatsoever, as written: "*none who go to her return, neither do they attain the ways of life*" (Mishlei 2:19). They further said: "although you may learn the views of the gentiles to know how to answer them, but guard yourself to not put to heart (i.e. accept) anything of those views and know that He whom you stand before knows the hidden (thoughts) of your heart. Thus, he continued: "know before Whom you toil", i.e. that you align (kavin) your heart with emuna (faith) of G-d.

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan on Avot - the reason is that the gentile does not know the fundamentals of Torah nor did he hear of it from his fathers or see its glory himself. Therefore, if he makes claims on it, one should not wonder on him and it is proper to have pity on him and answer him proper answers to refute his view. Perhaps he will listen and heed. But one who knows all these qualities of Torah and tasted its ways and recognized it and nevertheless denied it - this is nothing but rebellion and betrayal (mered u'maal). Whatever you answer him will make him angry and furious and cause him to increase sin. Therefore, it is proper to keep quiet due to "do not put a stumbling block before the blind" (Vayikra 19:14).

Q Level 3

Hon Ashir - ... we are not accountable (acharay) for a Jewish apikorus. For one should not answer him, as the Talmud says. And for a gentile apikorus, we are not responsible (arevim) on him. For "the ways of G-d are just; the Righteous walk in them, but the Sinners stumble in them" (Hoshea 14:10), and we don't care, as the midrash says on the verse "we will do and we will hear". Due to this, one may err and refrain from knowing what to answer a heretic. Thus he said examine and see the difference between the light of Torah and the darkness of the false views..

And so a man does not say: "I will first study those false views and afterwards, I will study Torah, just like the shell is before the fruit". On this Rabbi Eliezer exhorted first: "be diligent to study Torah" and afterwards "know what to answer a heretic".. For if you do the opposite, you will be caught in an evil trap. For you will first accept the first views and afterwards won't believe the words of Torah. Like a man who sat in darkness and afterwards it is very hard for him to look at the light... (see there for more).

Q Level 3

Chasdei David

Chasdei David - the talmud (Sanhedrin 38b) comments on Rabbi Elazar's words: "Rabbi Yochanan said: 'this applies only to a gentile apikorus, but for a Jewish apikorus, all the more so will he become more hefker (heretical)'. end quote...

For if you answer him, the debate will cause him to mafkir himself even more. For he recognized the truth from the beginning and even so, he abandoned it. Thus, you will not be able to answer him something that he will accept.

And in our times, one should not debate even the gentile apikorsim. In the old days, at least they admitted and believed in the existence of some higher power, but they mistakenly attributed to idols or the sun, moon etc. But today people are not interested in any higher power. They just want to be "hefker" (unbridled).

Q Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - through diligence (shkida) in Torah study alone, and only through this, will you find a sufficient answer to the deniers, as written: "if you seek it like silver, and search for it like treasures, then you will understand the fear of the L-ord, and you will find the knowledge of G-d" (Mishlei 2:4-5). Through this you will become an "overpowering wellspring" on every one who argues, as the Rav praised him.

Q Level 2

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - one might conclude that if a person learned those parts of Torah which would provide an answer to a heretic, but he never met one to defeat, that he learned in vain. This is not so - "know before Whom you toil." G-d desires the heart of man, and He will certainly pay you your reward, just as if you had actually met a heretic and had defeated his spurious arguments (ascentofsafed.com).

 **Level 3**

☆ **Tiferet Yehoshua**

Tiferet Yehoshua - if there are apikorsim in the world who mock the word of G-d, they bring a ruach hatumah (spirit of impurity) to the world. This tumah destroys the world and brings destruction to human beings. Only the Torah purifies the world and pumps living waters in man which purifies his soul. Therefore, Rabbi Elazar advises that the most crushing answer to the apikorus is: to study the Torah diligently day and night. Through this alone, the ruach hatumah will depart from the land.

Alternatively, be diligent to learn Torah so you will know what to answer the apikorus in you - this is the yetzer hara who seeks ways how to remove you from your wish and the wish of your Maker.

 **Level 3**

☆ **Yismach Moshe**

Yismach Moshe, Vayikra - "Know what to answer a heretic (apikorus)" - this seems difficult. what novel knowledge is needed for this? - Just tell him the truth.

The explanation is that truth is a divine light, as written: "Torah is light" (Mishlei 6:23). And every supernal light needs a vessel fit to receive it, as explained in the Kuzari in many places.

But this apikorus is not prepared to receive and even so, in order to sanctify the Name of Heaven, one needs to answer him something which will appease him even though it is not truth - this needs wisdom and knowledge.

 **Level 3**

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - three things are necessary for success in learning.

1. Eagerness and Diligence. If he's not diligent to review everyday what he learned the previous day, he will lose before he gains. And the subjects will not be firmly grasped in his mind. Therefore 'Be eager to study the Torah'

2. Thoughtfulness and depth in the subjects learned. One should not move away from anything he learns until he can answer 7 questions. (see the hebrew for details). When you can answer the 7 questions, all difficulties will be clarified for you. Also, you'll understand the background well, and if there's a contradiction to what you already know.

You'll also ask yourself if there are any extra words, and if yes, why this word was written. This way things will become clear like a new garment. Therefore 'know what to respond to a heretic'. i.e. It's not enough to know reasons clearly enough to answer a kosher Jew. Rather, contemplate things so thoroughly that you can even answer a heretic who does not accept our faithful Tradition and only accepts what the human intellect can grasp.

3. Removal of worries and all other thoughts when learning. Therefore 'Know before Whom you toil and who is your employer who shall pay you the reward of your labor.'

a. Know before Whom you toil. Means, be embarassed to think other thoughts while busy doing your Employer's work.

b. faithful is your Employer etc.. Means due to your efforts in Torah study, you will not need big efforts to obtain your livelihood.

 **Level 4**
Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - the Rambam explained:

"The matter of shekeida is from the verse "for I hasten My word to perform it" (Yirmiyahu 1:12), i.e. swift. (i.e., without any pause whatsoever - Daas Torah chelek 3, pg.250). Alternatively, its matter is habit and temidut (constancy)". end quote.

This is explained in Daat Chochma u'Mussar (1:61). Namely, the essence (mahut) of Torah is "love" - clinging and joining (davek v'chibur) of man with the Creator, blessed be He. For "the Holy One, blessed be He, the Torah and Yisrael are one", they cling and join "until becoming one". Thus, since the essence (mahut) of Torah is love and clinging, therefore whoever learns Torah haphazardly (l'perakim) or if he interrupts his study, this is not in the category of Torah. For Torah is eternally joining and clinging. Thus there cannot be any separation (hefsek) whatsoever. This is what our sages said:

" 'He who commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding' (Proverbs 6:32) - this refers to one who studies Torah intermittently" (Sanhedrin 99b).

Furthermore regarding interrupting (hefsek) in Torah study: it is written in the Torah: "I will fill him with a spirit of G-d, with wisdom and understanding.." (Shemot 31:3). What is wisdom (chochma) and what is understanding (tevuna)?

On this our sages said (Sifri Devarim 1, Rashi brings it in Devarim 1:13):

"What is the difference between the wise (chachamim) and the understanding (nevonim)? The wise (Chacham) is like a rich money-changer. When he is brought money, he deals with it. But when money is not brought to him, he sits idle. On the other hand, an understanding person is like a merchant money-changer.

When he is brought money to see, he engages with it. And when he is not brought money, he turns and brings of his own [to do business].

I.e. he understands [and deduces] one thing from another. The explanation is as the Ramchal explained. Namely, that understanding (tevuna) is joining one thing to another and supporting one thing from another.

For through wisdom alone, the things which are in the domain of wisdom but are separate - they don't have a connection to each other. But the secret of understanding (tevuna) connects one thing to another and binds them together.

Perhaps we can say that the word "understanding" (tevuna) comes from the word "building" (binyan). Namely, joining one thing to another and uniting them purposefully.

This is the secret of the Torah. For on the Torah, it is written: "from His mouth comes knowledge (daat) and understanding (tevuna)" (Mishlei 2:6). Because the secret of Torah is in understanding (Tevuna), connecting one matter with another and uniting them, to go from one thing to another and another to another, etc.

This is what our sages said:

"Ben Azai would sit and expound [Torah] and fire would blaze all around him.. Rabbi Akiva asked him: 'perhaps you were toiling in the matters of the divine chariot (kabala)'? Ben Azai answered: "no". Rather, you were sitting and weaving together (chorez) in words of the Torah, and from the Torah to the prophets and from the prophets to the holy writings (ketuvim), and the matters were joyous as they were given at Sinai, etc". (Shir Hashirim Rabba 1:52).

This needs understanding. Because he would sit and join words of Torah, etc. that this was the reason the [holy] fire would blaze all around him? Such an occurrence to weaving together words of Torah?

Rather, certainly, the reason is that this is the secret of Torah. It is built on tevuna (understanding). To join and combine one thing to another until they are united together.

And then the matters are joyous as they were given at Sinai. For example, when one learns tractate Bava Kama, it appears every sugya is an independent matter. But when one learns it a few times, it appears clear that the whole tractate is all one sugya (subject matter).

From what comes out of our words, we will understand well the matter of "do not interrupt" by Torah (study). For the secret of Torah is joining the matters, to connect one thing to another, and another to another, etc.

Now we will understand well why our sages screamed like cranes on not interrupting Torah [study]. For interrupting is the biggest damager in Torah.

(And in Daas Torah (chelek 3, pg.250), he writes - the Rambam explains the matter of shekida from the verse shoked ani al devaray, i.e. swift, etc. end quote. That is to say, without any interruption whatsoever. For it is already clear by us from other places, that in the middah (way) of G-d, "a full vessel can hold more (wisdom) while an empty vessel cannot hold" (Sukkah 46). And through a slight interruption one is already in the category of: "an empty vessel cannot hold".)

Q Level 4

☆ Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot - (Rabeinu Yerucham Levovitz) - "Know what to answer a heretic" - knowledge which is in a general manner is not considered and is not called knowledge. Rather the knowledge must penetrate the matter, descending into the details and details of details in all its fine points, to contemplate the subtleties of the matter in all its parts and subparts in finest detail. This kind of knowing is called with the name knowledge (yediah).

This is what the mishna teaches us - be diligent/eager to learn Torah in such a way that you will be able to answer an apikorus. i.e. with the word "daah" (know), that you drill down in all its details and fine points of all its parts. For then you will be able to contend and defeat this reprehensible apikorus with your arguments.

Thus he continued "and know before Whom you toil". For this kind of learning Torah in all its details and distinctions is called "toil" (amelut).

Q Level 4

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim - (Saba of Kelm) in Mishlei 16:26 "the soul which toils, toils for him". The explanation is that everywhere things follow the end purpose (tachlit). The tachlit (purpose) of man's toil (in work) is only the money he profits from this. But the toil itself has no purpose. For it is just preparations (for making money).

However, the service of G-d is not like this. For he is rewarded "according to the pain/difficulty"

(lefum tzaara agra).

Thus "toils for Him" refers to G-d. For He has no need for the blood of rams. "G-d wants the heart" (Sanhedrin 106b) only. This is the meaning of "the soul which toils - toils for him". For the purpose is the toil itself.

This is what scripture says: "What profit has man in all his toil that he toils under the sun?" (Kohelet 1:3). For the primary [fruit] of the toil in this world is solely the purpose that results from it, namely, the profit (money) he will receive. If he had profited the money without toil and strain it would have been great. Hence, there is nothing extra on the toil.

On the other hand, for the service of G-d it is not so. There the primary [fruit] is the toil for Him, blessed be He. For this is the primary love, as the Ramchal writes (Path of the Just, ch.16):

But those of true understanding do not need even this reason. For they are not to be motivated by their own interests at all. Rather, all of their aim is to increase the honor of His Name, blessed be He, and to bring gratification to Him. The more the impediments against them increase, so that they will require more strength to overcome them, the more they will strengthen their hearts and rejoice to demonstrate the strength of their faith. They are as a military general, distinguished for his bravery, who always chooses the most difficult battle, to demonstrate his prowess in emerging victorious.

This matter is familiar by every lover of flesh and blood who will rejoice when given an opportunity to show the subject of his love just how powerful is the extent of his love to his beloved.

Hence there is an advantage specifically with great toil. See that this matter is wondrous.

Q Level 1

☆ Sforno

Sforno - "know before Whom you toil" - that it is proper for you to increase toil for His Honor.

"and faithful is your Employer that He will pay you the reward for your labor" - even though it is proper for you to not have intent for this, but rather to do His will.

Q Level 2

☆ Yismach Moshe

Pirkei Moshe - "Know before Whom you toil" - in order to be diligent in Torah study and to be "diligent (lishkod) at the doors of Torah study day by day" (Mishlei 8:34) - "Know before Whom you toil". When you picture to yourself that you toil before G-d, blessed be He, who watches and observes your toil, the work will not be too much.

Q Level 3

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "Know before Whom you toil" - i.e. before Him mamash (actually). For He Himself stands over you. Because: "The Holy One, blessed be He, has nothing in this world but the four cubits of Halacha" (Berachot 8a). This is enough to rouse one's ear in the Torah study. For Hash-em Tzevakot (the L-ord of Hosts) dwells there.

Q Level 3

Chida

Chida - *Roshei Avot* - "be diligent to learn (lilmod) Torah" - one can ask, it should have said: "be diligent in Torah", or "be diligent in talmud Torah". Perhaps this is to hint that one should be swift and consider in his eyes as if he did not yet learn [anything] and now he wants to learn. Thus he said "to learn Torah", that it be in his eyes as if now he wants to learn [from the beginning]. And with this desire and zeal he will succeed in his learning. And in truth, "its measure is greater than the sea", and also there is [vastly] much more to learn still relative to what one has learned already until it is as if one did not learn [anything].

"before Whom" - to say that one should be like an ox on a yoke and a donkey with a load, i.e. with all one's strength.

"Whom" - who recognizes your thoughts, movements, and toil. For He examines the heart and reins. And due to His humility, even though He made you from the womb, He will pay you reward as if He were obligated, as written: "'pay' implies out of justice (din)" (Chulin 130b). All this is due to the greatness of His kindness.

Q Level 3



Siftei Chaim Moadim chelek 3 - "be eager in the study of Torah and know what to answer a heretic (apikorus)" - through toil in Torah, one merits to stand before Him, mamash. When a man chooses good and turns his heart only to words of Torah, through this, he removes from himself the barriers and separations between himself and the Holy One, blessed be He.

Thus, he merits to stand before Him and receive (lihiyot mushpa) from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, in a direct manner, a divine gift. This is what he said: "be eager in the study of Torah and know what to answer a heretic (apikorus)".

The simple meaning is that through diligence (shkeida) in Torah study, a man acquires much knowledge and he knows what to answer an apikorus.

But we can say that the intent of the Tanna is to say that through diligence and toil in Torah, when he chooses good and empties from his heart other interests of this world, he merits to answer the apikorus.

Namely, the yetzer hara which dwells in a man's own heart and finds for him excuses and rationalizations to distance him from Torah study. Through toil in Torah, one merits to answer and drive him out of his heart through seeing the absolute truth in a clear manner.

Q Level 4

Chachma u'Mussar

Chachma u'Mussar 2:354 - "and faithful is your Employer that He will pay you the reward for your labor" - Rabeinu Yonah writes here: "The sages exhorted one to know this. But it is not in order to serve G-d due to love of reward or fear of punishment. Rather, just like a man is obligated to investigate and know the (absolute) Unity of G-d, and His greatness, ways, and the wonders He performed in order to increase love of Him, so too one is obligated to know that He is faithful to pay reward of deeds and to consider in one's heart the greatness of His kindness.

For even though He is the Master of all deeds and owns everything and all of us are His servants who are obligated to serve Him like a purchased slave without giving us any reward, nevertheless, He will reward us. Thus we should increase love [of Him] over this and serve [Him] out of love and fear.

We have received a tradition [from Sinai] that: "Hash-m's attribute of Tov (to benefit) is greater than His attribute of punishment" (Yomah 76a). We should be astonished by this that G-d's trait of good is not like that of flesh and blood. For, one who honors a king does not deserve any favor. Since, that is how it should be. It is a duty incumbent on him. But one who mocks the king will get very severely punished, since he went against his duty. For it is a man's duty to honor the king.

According to this, reason dictates that so too, one who does the will of G-d does not deserve any reward. For thus it should be and he is obligated to do the will of the King of the world.

Likewise, one who commits a sin and transgresses the will of the King of the world, his punishment

should have been much greater, multiplied over many times, than the reward given to one who does his duty and what he is forced to do in truth.

But behold, not only is the reward and punishment not equal, but just the opposite - the reward is much greater than the punishment. For the punishment is on three or four (generations), while the reward is for two thousand generations, and according to Rashi on Makot 23 it is without limit.

One should be moved from here on G-d's trait of goodness.

Level 4

Chida

Chida - Zeroah Yamin - (Kabalistic) - shakud (Shin-Kuf-Vud-Dalet) - this hints that in toil in Torah, one submits the 400 men of Eisav from the Sitra Achra (shin+kuf=400) and he joins the "vuv-dalet" which is Kudsha berich Hu and His Shechina and in the end he will be kadosh which is the letters of shakud. And as written in the book Ohr Hayashar that the author was told in a dream that the word kadosh hints that he joins the daled-vuv and separates the 400 of the sitra achra. For in the word kadosh, the daled-vuv are joined in the middle while the kuf and shin are separated and are on the outside..

Chapter 2 Mishna 18 - Day Is Short

Rabbi Tarfon would say: the day is short, the work is great, the workers are lazy, the reward is much, and the Master of the house presses.

רַבִּי טַרְפוֹן אוֹמֵר, הַיּוֹם קָצֵר וְהַמְּלָאכָה מְרֻבָּה, וְהַפּוֹעֲלִים עֲצֵלִים, וְהַשָּׂכָר הַרְבֵּה, וּבַעַל הַבַּיִת דּוֹחֵק

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "the day is short" - the life in this world is short.

Q Level 2

☆ Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - "the day is short" - he did not say "the time is short", but rather "the day is short". This is so one does not think he has [plenty of] time to live in this world and toil in Torah. Rather, only one day. And the day is not long like in the summer, but it is short only like the winter.

Some explain that he said "the day is short" and not "the time is short", to teach a man that even in the short life he has, most of his time is considered as night. For in all of a man's days various troubles befall him.

The time man has that he can sit tranquilly and toil in Torah is little. This is the meaning of "the day is short". Namely, the time which can be called "day" and not "night", whereby one can toil in Torah is short, and especially in this exile where troubles have intensified on us.

Q Level 3

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "the day is short" - i.e. the days of man are short for attaining the proper Shelemut (Wholeness). For almost as soon as his intellect's eye is opened to see that the world and its matters are vanity, old age has already seized him and soon he will be no more.

"the work is great" - i.e. the number of his duties to G-d and man are many in number and quality.

"the workers are lazy" - the powers of the body and nefesh (lower soul) are lazy and tend more to evil than to good.

"the reward is big" - in this world and in the next, as written: "for it is your life and the length of your days".

"the Master of the house presses" - do not say that G-d does not care whether or not a man makes himself whole in Torah and mitzvot. For how greatly does a [human] father care (makpid) that his son makes himself whole. All the more so for the Holy One, blessed be He.

The main intent is for man to muster zeal with all his strength in fulfilling the Torah due to the five points mentioned..

Q Level 3

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "the day is short" - these are man's days. They are short relative to the work of Torah whose measure is greater than the sea.. This is what was said that all those forty days Moshe Rabeinu ascended mount Sinai, he did not sleep. It is like a king who told his servant: "go and count gold coins from now until tomorrow, and everything you count is yours!"

How could he sleep? Every second he wastes on his lusts will be a great loss. So too Moshe said:

"how can I sleep?! I will lose so many pearls of Torah!"

All the more so for us, lest we give [excessive] sleep to our eyes and slumber to our eyelids.

 **Level 3**

☆ **Ben Ish Chai**

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - "the day is short" - all of a man's life in this world is called one day. The reason is to teach us a great mussar (teaching). Namely, a man should not look at the seventy or eighty years of his life as if they are many.

For then he will tell himself that he still has time to do for G-d. Rather, he needs to see in his eyes as if all his life in this world is only one day and he has no more than today. Similarly, Rabbi Elazar said: "repent one day before your death".

The talmud (Shab.151) explains that the intent is because one does not know when he will die. Thus all his days will be in repentance. For he will repent today since maybe he will die tomorrow.. In truth this is a great mussar which every person with a brain will admit to.

For no flesh and blood is assured in this world of tomorrow, and one only has today. Every person who truly puts this to heart is assured that he will not sin...

Rabbi Tarfon is also teaching us another mussar. Namely, we need to picture in our minds that the holy work asked of us in this world is great in quality. For in two hours of prayer and fixed Torah study, which is a short time, a man builds great and awesome [spiritual] worlds.

Therefore, one should not be concerned nor worry on his toil and efforts, even if it is a great and even if he loses money.

He should also think in his mind that in this holy work, the workers are lazy. Namely other people who are obligated in the holy work.. they do not toil in it properly. Therefore, realize that if one toils energetically (b'zerizut), as is proper, he will be praiseworthy in this work and his reward will be very very great..

 **Level 3**



Shaarei Teshuva, shaar sheni - "the day is short" - among the things a man is obligated to remember is the day of death. This is in order that he not become idle or lax in the service of G-d. Rather that he pushes off sleep from his eyes to toil in Torah. He contemplates in fear of G-d and rectifies his character traits. He attains levels of fear and love [of G-d] and thinks thoughts how to increase and augment mitzvot to be a treasury and repository for his soul, as written: "The wise-hearted acquires mitzvot (commandments)" (Mishlei 10:8). For he will know and remember that the days are short, as our sages said: "the day is short..". But for one who does not remember the day of death always, it seems in his eyes as if he has free time and can slowly attain his desire.

 **Level 1**

☆ **Bartenura**

Bartenura - "the work is great" - the Torah's measure (yardstick) is greater than the earth.

 **Level 2**

☆ **Ahava b'Taanugim**

Rabbi Avraham Azoulay - Ahava b'Taanugim - "the work is great" - with a "Heh yadua" (emphasizing "THE work"). For it is not because the day is short that the work is great but if there were a lot of time, the work would not be considered great. Rather, even if there was a lot of time, the work is intrinsically great.

 **Level 3**

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Birkat Avot - "the work is great" - the work incumbent on man to rectify all the roots of his nefesh, ruach, and neshama is great. And the masses of people are lazy in their work. For

each one does the lust of his heart and does not care about rectifying himself. Thus, when one finds a man who is not lazy in rectifying himself and he is very zealous to complete the tikun of his nefesh, ruach, and neshama which is incumbent on him, certainly, his reward is very great, doubled over many times without limit..

Q Level 1

☆ **Rabeinu Yonah**

Rabeinu Yonah - "the workers are lazy" - this refers to human beings who are lazy to learn Torah. For even the zealous sages become lazy in it for it is human nature to be lazy, without exception. Only some are more and some are less.

Q Level 2

☆ **Ahava b'Taanugim**

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "the workers are lazy" - i.e. not only the idle people who sit on street corners are lazy. But even the workers who toil in Torah day and night - they are called lazy relative to what is proper for them to do.

Q Level 3

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "the workers are lazy" - the laziness of workers is due to one of two reasons.

One, because the wages are low. Thus, he works lazily.

Two, even if the wages are high, the workers work lazily since the owner (baal habayit) does not stand over the workers to push them.

On this he said that in the work of Torah and mitzvot, the workers are lazy despite that there are two qualities. Regarding the wages, he said: "the reward is great". For there is no measure of the reward of the Tzadik even in this world., and all the more so in the next world.

Likewise, the baal habayit stands and presses saying "hurry to finish your work!". He pushes and exhorts them every hour and every second through sufferings and sending the prophets. Despite all this, the workers are lazy.

He said "the workers" in plural tense instead of singular tense as he continued "it is not incumbent upon you to complete the work..", to teach on the great power of the Yetzer Hara (evil inclination). Namely that even when many people gather together to serve G-d and learn Torah where by nature each person helps the others, even so they are lazy and don't do the will of their Maker.

Q Level 3

Chida

Chida - Zeroah Yamin - "the day is short, the work is great, the workers are lazy, the reward is big, and the Master of the house presses" - it seems he should have said: "the workers are lazy" in the end. It appears the answer is that a talmid chacham is not suspected of this. Namely, he is not suspected of becoming lazy if he puts to heart that the reward is great and the baal habayit presses.

Rather it is because he does not put to heart these two things that he becomes lazy. Therefore, Rabbi Tarfon comes to remind and exhort saying wake up look and see that the reward is great and the baal habayit presses. Through this, you will be energetic (zariz) and drop the laziness.

Q Level 1

☆ **Ahava b'Taanugim**

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "the reward is great" - even for the worker who toils in Torah, he is called lazy relative to the greatness of the reward.

Q Level 2

☆ **Ben Ish Chai**

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - "the reward is great" - it is not proportional to the time you toil in it.

For in a short time, you profit a thousand, thousand, multiplied many tens of thousands of precious pearls. Therefore, do not worry if three or four hours of the day have passed in Torah study and prayer. For if you had gone out to the marketplace for material work, what would you have profited in this time? What worth is this time of material work relative to the profit you would have gained in holy spiritual toil which is priceless and unimaginable? It is not even like a drop in the ocean.

🔍 **Level 2**

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - "the reward is great" - the spiritual pleasure of the radiance of the Divine presence (haschar hu hataanug haruchani bziv haShechina).

🔍 **Level 1**

☆ **Bartenura**

Bartenura - "the Master of the house presses" - as written: "you shall contemplate in it day and night" (Yehoshua 1:8).

🔍 **Level 2**

☆ **Ahava b'Taanugim**

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - "the Master of the house presses" - the Holy One, blessed be He, brings sufferings so one will wake up and repent and return to his G-d, and toil in Torah day and night. For the Holy One, blessed be He, does not abandon a person to let him remove the yoke of Heaven from himself.

🔍 **Level 3**

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "the Master of the house presses" - it is not like a percentage job where if one does a little, he gets paid a little according to the percentage of the whole job and the owner does not care. Rather, the Holy One, blessed be He, commands you to do the work of Torah and not to delay your work in what you can do. If you transgress His command, you will be severely punished. For you do not have permission to be idle from it for even one hour (shaah achat).

🔍 **Level 4**

Maharal

Maharal - it is proper to ask on what Rabbi Tarfon said. Namely, that man's time is short and the Torah is vast - but he himself said afterwards: "it is not incumbent upon you to complete the work" (next mishna).

Furthermore, he only needed to say that "the work is great" and I would have known that "the day is short" relative to the work. For otherwise, it would not be called that the day is short.

Furthermore, "the Master of the house presses" - if the intent is that G-d is the Baal Habayit (Master of the house) and wants that man learns [Torah] always, he already said "the work is great". For if the baal bayit (master of the house) does not want the worker to do his work, then it is not called that the work is great.

Furthermore, that which he said: "the workers are lazy". What does this teach us? It would have been better to say simply that one should not be lazy.

Know that Rabbi Tarfon came to tell a person not to turn to idleness (batala), and if he turns to idleness, he is called completely negligent (poshea l'gamrei).

For even though our sages said:

"The one who [sacrifices] much and the one who [sacrifices] little have the same merit, provided that the heart is directed to Heaven" (Berachot 5b). And he said "it is not incumbent upon you to complete the work".

But if one was negligent (poshea), then this does not apply. For it is incumbent on a man to toil in Torah as if he is coming to finish everything (learn the whole Torah). Thus, he should do.

And when he looks at the work to do, whether from the aspect of the baal habayit or from the aspect of the man himself, or the time, reason necessitates that he should not turn to idleness and also do his work with the utmost zeal possible. If he does not do thus, he is called a poshea (negligent).

For man is obligated to do as if he is coming to finish everything. And then he is not called a poshea when he does his part.

This is because from the aspect of time, "the day is short". For our days are like a passing shadow (Tehilim 144:4).

He said: "the work is great". For David said: *"I have seen an end to every purpose; but Your commandment is exceedingly broad"* (Tehilim 119:96), i.e. something which has boundaries and limits, like all physical things.

For all physical things have boundaries and thus have limits (are finite). Hence, it is possible for physical man, who is also of borders and limits, to encompass them.

But for the Torah which is Intellect (Sechel), physical man cannot encompass it. For man is of boundaries.

Therefore, even if the day was not short and man were alive for all the days of this world, nevertheless, since this world is of finiteness, the work of Torah would still be great to him. Thus, "the day is short, the work is great".

"the Master of the house presses" - i.e. G-d who gave the Torah - He presses [man] to do with zeal (b'zerizut). For G-d is removed from the physical and as known, the non-physical's work is not inside time. Rather, He acts without time. This is the greatest zeal.

But since man works through physical powers, laziness applies to him. Thus, if we compare the work of man in Torah relative to the Baal habayit, i.e. G-d, to which this work is towards, it comes out that He is pressing very very much.

For He is completely divested of fatigue due to His enormous power. And since G-d gave the Torah of Intellect to man, it is proper for man to conduct himself as if he were not physical as much as he can.

"the workers are lazy" - there are two opposites here:

One, the baal habayit presses very much due to His acting completely without time.

Two, by nature man is the opposite of this. For he is of completely physical body.

Man is not similar to any of the supernal ones (angels). Thus, due to his being of completely physical body, therefore he is intrinsically lazy. Because thus it is for every thing which operates by the physical, his work is with laziness..

This does not mean to say that man should do more than he is capable of doing. Only that from the aspects of time, the work, the Baal Habit, and the worker, it is impossible to do what is proper.

Now, if a man increases laziness and turns to the idleness, then certainly he is a complete posheah. For how could he consider turning to the idleness, and increasing eating and drinking, or the like of the idle things.

How could he not be diligent (shakud) on the Torah and learning with zeal despite his being a physical man. For even if he were eagerly learning Torah with great zeal, it is considered laziness, as we said.

For every physical creature is considered lazy relative to the Intellect (Sichli). Since G-d gave the Torah of Intellect to him.

But he should engage in the Torah with zeal and not turn to idleness as if he is coming to finish the Torah. For he who has much work, and the day is short, and the Master of the house presses, will work with the utmost zeal possible. The truth of this is very clear. And he said this here because [Rabbi Elazar] said previously "be diligent in the study of Torah"..

Chapter 2 Mishna 19 - Not Finish

He [Rabbi Tarfon] would say: it is not incumbent upon you to , לא עליך המלאכה לגמר, ולא אתה בן חורין לבטל ממנה. אם למדתך תורה הרבה, נותנים לך שכר הרבה, and your Employer is faithful to pay you the reward of your שכר הוא בעל מלאכתך שישלם לך שכר labor, but know that the giving of reward to the righteous is in ידע מתן שכרן של צדיקים לעתיד לבא the world to come.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "it is not incumbent upon you to complete the work" - the Holy One, blessed be He, did not require that you finish all of it or lose your reward. Perhaps you will say: "I will not learn and I won't take reward!"...

"neither are you free to idle from it" - the yoke to work is upon you by force.

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "it is not incumbent upon you to complete the work" - do not think, I am not so smart and cannot finish it. What good is my labor and what will my toil help? - It is not your job to finish it. Rather since you are toiling in Torah, you are fulfilling the command of your Creator.

"but neither are you free to idle from it" - don't say since I am not obligated to finish the work, I will not burden myself. Rather, I will learn one hour per day! It is not so. For you are an acquired servant to contemplate in it day and night - then you will succeed..

Q Level 3

Yesod HaEmuna, Rabbi Baruch of Kasov - "it is not incumbent upon you to complete the work" - there is a worker (poel) and craftsman (kablan). The worker is hired for the day, while the craftsman takes upon himself to complete the job. What is the difference between the two? The day worker is not permitted to pause from his work.

This is what is written "it is not incumbent upon you to complete the work". i.e. you are not a craftsman (kablan) but rather a day worker. Therefore, "you are not free to idle from it". Perhaps this is the reason there is no reward in this world. For payment is due at the end and the end is only after death. Because all the time he is alive it is not called the end since he is still bound to the work.

Q Level 3

☆ Tiferet Yehoshua

Tiferet Yehoshua - "neither are you free to idle from it" - one might think why should I learn Torah matters I will never use?

Know that the learning itself and the knowledge is a divine commandment. It acquires for a man a straight intellect, perfection in his soul and illuminates his soul directing him to the path of Life.

Q Level 3



Ohr Yechezkel, part 6, yegata umatzata - a person should not despair on seeing the work is great and many trials stand before him and his abilities are not sufficient to bring him to greatness. For "it is not incumbent upon you to complete the work". True, one who learns Torah and attains Shlemut (levels of perfection) will receive much reward. But nevertheless, he should know that the main thing depends on toil and effort. According to his toil will be the reward.. Even if one does not see with his eyes progress and attainment of levels, nevertheless he must know that the reward of the righteous is not in this world. It is in the next world. There he will delight in G-d on all he toiled

and labored to break his bad character traits and tendencies

Q Level 3

Tosfot Yom Tov

Tosfot Yom Tov - since he said earlier that the reward is great, a man may tend to tell himself: "I will receive great reward if I learn one hour. Afterwards I will sit idle from Torah because I already have much reward to receive."

Thus, he said: "If you have learned much Torah, you will be given much reward", otherwise no. For on the contrary you will be punished for the sin of bitul Torah..

Q Level 2

☆ **Ben Ish Chai**

Ben Ish Chai - Birkat Avot - "if you have learned much Torah, you will be given much reward" - true a man needs to toil for his livelihood, but the hours you toil in Torah should be more than the hours you toil in your livelihood. This is "if you have learned much Torah", i.e. more than what you toil in your livelihood. Then certainly you will be given great reward in olam haba.

Q Level 3

☆ **Tiferet Yehoshua**

Tiferet Yehoshua - "giving of reward" - from the word "gift". For even the reward of the righteous is a gift of G-d in the world of truth. For as our sages said:

"Man's Evil Inclination gathers strength against him daily and seeks to slay him, for it is said: 'The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him', and were not the Holy One, blessed be He, to help him [man], he would not be able to prevail against him', for it is said: 'The L-rd will not leave him in his hand'" (Kidushin 30b).

Thus all the mitzvot a person did in this world were performed only with G-d's help. Without His help, one would not be able to become a tzadik. Thus the reward is a gift.

Q Level 3

☆ **Tiferet Yehoshua**

Tiferet Yehoshua - "know that the giving of reward unto the righteous is in the world to come" - take heart to know and understand that it must be in the next world. For if it were openly in this world, there would no longer be any free will.

Q Level 3

☆ **Sfas Emes**

Sfas Emes on Avot - "know that the giving of reward to the righteous is in the world to come" - specifically for the tzadikim. But for the wicked, when they have some merit, they are paid in this world, as written: "He pays those He hates..." For the Beinonim (middle people), they are paid partially in this world and partially in Olam Haba.

Q Level 4

☆ **Chida**

Chida - Zeroah Yamin - in the book Eished Bachalim, the author asks: "why does G-d not pay reward in this world due to the mitzvah of (Devarim 24:15): 'do not delay payment of wages' (baal talin)?" He answers that fear of G-d is in man's hand. And when a man does a mitzvah or learns Torah with fear [of G-d], he acquires it with the law of "improving the vessel" (koneh b'shevach kli), and in that case there is no mitzvah of 'do not delay wages' (baal talin). This works for a tzadik but for a rasha there is no fear. Therefore G-d pays him in this world due to 'do not delay' (baal talin). This is a summary of his words.

Thus here it says "your Employer is faithful to pay you the reward of **your work**". For you acquired (your work) through shevach kli... understand this well.

Q Level 4

☆ **Ben Ish Chai**

Ben Ish Chai - Birkat Avot - "know that the giving of reward to the righteous is in the world to come" - there is to ask, how can he be given great payment in Olam Haba? It appears like interest, because if he were paid in this world in cash, it would not have been so much..

The answer is that it is like the wages of a worker (schar sachir) whose din (law) is to be paid at the end, i.e. in the next world. Thus the time of payment was not during his time in this world.. If you ask "but it looks like interest?" On this he said: "*know that the giving of reward to the righteous is in the world to come*", in Olam Haba, i.e. I am stipulating a condition on you that the payment will be in Olam Haba and thus you have no claim in this world...

Q Level 4

Chida

Chida - Zeroah Yamin - "know that the giving of reward to the righteous is in the world to come" - it is implied from what our sages said in the talmud (Bava Kama 9a) and Rashi and Tosfot that which a man does beyond his obligation, G-d will pay him reward in his life (in this world). For this is not in the category of "there is no reward for mitzvot in this world". From there we learn that one who does more than his obligation, his reward is from justice (din). For he was not commanded on this.

Q Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - "it is not incumbent upon you to complete the work.." - there is to ask a big question here. Here it is implied that everything (the reward) is according to the greatness [of the amount] of Torah he learned. For he said: "*If you have learned much Torah, you will be given much reward*".

However in the Talmud (Berachot 5b):

R. Eleazar fell ill and R. Yohanan went in to visit him. He noticed that he was lying in a dark room, and he bared his arm and light radiated from it. Thereupon he noticed that R. Eleazar was weeping, and he said to him: Why do you weep? Is it because you did not study enough Torah? Surely we learnt:

"The one who [sacrifices] much and the one who [sacrifices] little have the same merit, provided that the heart is directed to Heaven".

This implies he who learned much and he who learned little are equal.

But here he said: "*if you have learned much Torah, you will be given much reward*".

We may say that here it is referring to toil. Namely, if you learned Torah and you pained yourself greatly, "you will be given much reward", according to the toil and effort, as we explained earlier in the chapter (on be careful of a light mitzvah like a weighty one.. - Avot 2:1), see there.

But certainly if one person learned much Torah in one year and toiled for that year, while another person learned a little Torah in one year and toiled for that year - both are equal.

This is also the explanation of that mishna which Rabbi Yochanan brought proof from. It said by the burnt offering of a bull: "*a fire offering, [with] a pleasing fragrance to the L-ord*" (Vayikra 1:9), and by a mere flour offering: "*[it is] a fire offering [with] a pleasing fragrance to the L-ord*" (Vayikra 2:2), to teach "*The one who [sacrifices] much and the one who [sacrifices] little have the same merit, provided that the heart is directed to Heaven*".

The intent is not that both are completely equal. For if so, why would anyone bring a bull? Rather, the explanation is that when a rich man increases in the Korban and brings a bull while the poor man brings only a bird or a flour offering, it does not mean that the rich man has more reward. For since the poor man was equally pained in bringing the bird or flour than the rich man was pained in bringing the bull - both are equal.

But if the poor man brought a bull that is certainly greater. For he pained himself more...

So too if one learned a little and another learned alot but both pained themselves equally, their reward is equal. And that which was said here: "if you learned much Torah..", it refers to much toil and effort even though he did not learn much Torah... For it is impossible to finish the work of Torah. Thus, the reward is not for having learned much and finishing the work since there is no finishing... (see there).



Pirkei Avot
Ethics of the Fathers
Chapter 3

with a select treasury of commentaries
compiled by Rabbi Yosef Sebag

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Chapter 3 Mishna 1 - Where Going

Akavia ben Mahalalel would say: "Reflect upon three things **הַסְתַּכַּל אֹמֵר, בֶּן מְהַלְלַל אֹמֵר, וְיָבִיא בְּךָ מִהַלְלָל אֹמֵר, הַסְתַּכַּל אֹמֵר,** and you will not come to the hands of sin: Know from where **בְּשִׁלְשָׁה דְבָרִים וְאֵי אֶתָּה בָּא לְיָדֶי עֲבֵרָה.** you came, where you are going, and before Whom you are **דַּע מֵאַיִן בָּאתָ, וְלֵאן אֶתָּה הוֹלֵךְ, וְלִפְנֵי מִי** destined to give a judgment and accounting. From where you **אֶתָּה עֹתִיד לִתֵּן דִּין וְחֶשְׁבוֹן. מֵאַיִן בָּאתָ,** came - From a putrid drop. Where are you going - to a place of **מִטְפָּה סְרוּחָה, וְלֵאן אֶתָּה הוֹלֵךְ, לְמִקוֹם** dirt, worms, and maggots. Before Whom are you destined give **עֵפֶר רִמָּה וְתוֹלְעָה.** a judgment and accounting? Before the supreme King of kings, **לִתֵּן דִּין וְחֶשְׁבוֹן, לְפָנֵי מֶלֶךְ מְלָכֵי הַמְּלָכִים,** the Holy One, blessed be He. **הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא.**

(huge number of commentaries here)

Q Level 1

☆ Rambam

Rambam - this reflection brings to humility, [namely,] when he reflects from where he came. And when he reflects on his end, this will bring him to belittle matters of this world, while reflecting on the greatness of the mitzvah will bring him to hurry to hearken to G-d's commandments. And when he attains these three things, he will not sin at all.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "know from where you came" - when you look where you come from, the thought will cause you to be humble of spirit (shefal ruach) and you will be saved from the trait of arrogance, as written: "all proud of heart are an abomination to G-d" (Mishlei 16:5).

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel on Avot - Where you are going - in order to despise his material ambitions. For he is going to the grave, a place of worms and maggots. With this contemplation, he will be disgusted with his physical side and complain to himself of the future day when all his physical powers will be annulled and he will not trust in his (continued) life [in this world].

Q Level 2



Alshich Devarim 17 - three things cause one to remove from oneself the yoke of Heaven and destroy himself. One, going after the lusts of the body such as relations and unnecessary eating. Two, conducting oneself with arrogance. Three, not conducting oneself with Temimut (innocence), but rather with cunning and deceit (mezimut v'chikrei lev).

He exhorted on all three. Corresponding to the first he said: "know from where you came - a putrid drop". Thus, if you pursue the physical, you will be no better qualitatively than that which the physical is made from (a putrid drop). For every thing returns to its root.

Corresponding to the second, he said: "where you are going, to a place of worms.." Thus, how can you pride yourself and not be exceedingly lowly of spirit?

Regarding the third he said: "before Whom you are destined to give a judgment and accounting, etc." who knows your [true] motives.

Q Level 2

☆ Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "where you are going" - he did not say "where you will go", to teach that every hour, every second, a man goes and draws closer to death. Thus he used present tense and not future tense.

Q Level 2

Tosfot Yom Tov

Tosfot Yom Tov - "where you are going" - for a man goes towards his final abode and gets closer and closer to death. Because the day of death is from the day of birth since from the day he is born, he goes and approaches towards death. Thus, he used present tense (going) and not future tense (will go).

Q Level 2

☆ **Sforno**

Sforno - it is proper for you to contemplate the beginning and end of your existence for your physical part and your spiritual (sichli) part. For the physical part, both its beginning and its end is putrid and disgusting. Therefore, one should not make excessive efforts on its behalf. But for the spiritual part, its matter will be good or bad. According to your efforts on its behalf will be the judgment on it before the Holy King. Therefore, it is proper for you to strive on its success so that its judgment will be meritorious and to guard from its detriments.

Through this contemplation, you will not come to sin. For you will not increase efforts on attaining physical lusts. Rather you will strive for the success of the spiritual part in order to be meritorious on the day of reckoning.

Q Level 1

☆ **Bartenura**

Bartenura - "putrid drop" - even though at the time of pregnancy it is not rotten. For it rots only after three days in the woman's womb. But nevertheless, he called it a putrid drop. For it is liable to (dry out and) rot immediately when outside the innards of a woman.

One who reflects that he comes from a putrid drop will be saved from arrogance. And one who reflects that he is destined to go to a place of dirt, worms, and maggots, is saved from lust (for physical pleasures) and desire for money. And one who reflects that he is destined to give a judgment and accounting separates from sin and does not stumble in transgression.

Q Level 1

☆ **Binyan Avot**

Binyan Avot - "where you are going" - for many stages pass over a man. Once a man reaches growth of his beard, this is a first sign that he is going to the way of the land. When he starts to have white hairs in his beard, this is a second sign. When his beard is full of white hairs, this is an even greater sign. When his strength wanes and his flesh sags - he is standing on the edge of the pit. Thus, all his days, he is going to a place of dirt worms and maggots.

Q Level 2

Meorei Ohr

Meorei Ohr - when a man thinks of the day of his reckoning always, and he does not have the ability to extend his days for even one tiny second, and his situation and standing in the grave, how the shine of his face and the light in his eyes also leave him. His flesh blackens and rots with maggots over it. His body becomes as one who never washed or rinsed with water... With this thought it is proper for you to call vain the pleasures of this world and to not seek luxuries and to distance from all bad traits and draw close to all good that accompanies him in the grave and testifies good on him before G-d, blessed be He...

It is proper to look always with one's mind's eye and reflect on the day of his standing before his Creator. The book is open and all one's deeds are written in it, whether good or bad. He will not be able to deny them, as written: "For every deed G-d will bring to judgment-for every hidden thing, whether good or bad" (Kohelet 12:14), and "G-d will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every deed there" (Kohelet 3:17).

When one reflects on this, he will be careful that most of his deeds be good and just so that the testimony written by the finger of G-d will be good.

And Rav Yisrael wrote: "it is proper for every person to weigh his deeds before they are weighed

against him. For it is impossible to escape. He will be asked on all his deeds, big or small, the revealed ones and the concealed ones. If so, how will one stand before his Maker? What will he answer when he is asked, as written: "then what will I do when G-d arises and when He visits what will I answer Him?" (Iyov 31:14). Woe to that shame, woe to that humiliation...

Q Level 3

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "where you are going" - .. free will is in a man's hands. If he wishes, he can transform the gross physical to become spiritual, or the opposite, ch'v, he can corrupt the ruach (spirit) until it becomes [coarse physical] like his flesh. The generation of the flood committed evil. They corrupted the spirit (ruach) until it became like flesh. On this the verse says: "Let My spirit not quarrel (yidon) forever concerning man, because he is also flesh, and his days shall be a hundred and twenty years" (Gen.6:3), "nadan" means container, ie the ruach will no longer be in the body, "for he is also flesh" it transformed to gross physical.... with this we will understand the matter of reward and punishment whereby the ruach and neshama feel (the pain of the body)...

Q Level 3

☆ **Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel**

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel on Avot - "a place of worms" - it says only a "place" of dirt, etc. ie a place where there is dirt. For in truth some people do not become dust in the grave. But these are very few. One needs to be a very great tzadik for this.. Even in our times in Brisk, we have heard that they dug up graves and found two men whole. But this is rare. In truth though for simple people, it is a great kindness for them to become dust. For through this, their soul ascends to its place. Without this, the soul would have no tranquility as brought in the holy books. In any case this contemplation arouses lowliness (shiflut, humility).

Q Level 3



Merkavat Hamishna R. Y. Elashkar - the mussar masters told of a king who had a young brother who was used to laughter and pleasures. One day the king invited him to eat by him.

The king hung a sharp sword over his head hanging by a thin string. When he was eating he lifted his eyes upwards and saw the sword over his head. His heart shuddered and he was unable to eat anything.

The king asked him: "what is wrong that you are not in a mood to eat?" The young man answered: "how could I rejoice in this feast when a sword is hanging over my head?"

Then the king rebuked him on his evil ways saying to him: "how can you wonder on the sword and forget the joy when it is only a doubt whether or not the sword will fall on you, yet you don't wonder on the natural death which is certainly your destiny without any doubt whatsoever and which is liable to befall you every second and every hour?"

Q Level 3

☆ **Chasdei David**

Chasdei David - "where you are going" - it seems the Tana is comparing man's life in this world to a person who is walking on the road. For man's life is like a long road which begins when he comes into the world and ends when he reaches old age..

It is known that the Chafetz Chaim lived in great poverty. I heard from one who learned by him that he did not have even a stone floor in his home. In honor of the Sabbath, the Rebbitzen would disperse sand on the floor to cover it.

I also heard from his grandson, Rabbi Avraham Gershon Zachs, Rosh Yeshiva Chafetz Chaim in Monsey, that there were no chairs in the house, only long benches..

One time a guest came to visit him and wondered greatly on the greatness of his poverty. He

asked the Chafetz Chaim: "where is your furniture?" The Chafetz Chaim answered him with a question: "and where is your furniture?"

The man replied: "I am only travelling, but in my house there is furniture". The Chafetz Chaim answered him: "I am also in the middle of the road and my furniture is prepared for me in my true home in the world which is all good".

The Tanna wanted to hint to us that throughout life man is on the road and his primary purpose is to reach the world which is all good. Therefore, he should not waste his life on acquiring material possessions. Rather, his primary occupation should be to prepare himself for Olam Haba.

Q Level 3

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "look.." - look before it comes to your hand. Think always and then it will help. Do not say: "I will wait until arrogance and pride enters my heart, and then I will reflect that I am dust and won't be proud. Likewise for every sin, if it comes to my hand, I won't do it".

Thus he said that without preparation beforehand, it is unlikely that you will guard from it. For the evil inclination lies in ambush always on all his ways and steps, as Shlomo said: "like a robber she lies in ambush" (Mishlei 23:28).

And without a doubt, at the time of action, it is difficult to separate from the sin and he will get caught in the trap. Rather one must be always like a warrior on guard ready to wage war against the slave who rebels against the king.. (see there for more).

Q Level 4

Ramchal - Path of the Just, ch.23 - for in truth, all these thoughts are counter to arrogance and they foster humility, because when a man looks at the lowliness of his physicality and the baseness of his origin, he will have no reason whatsoever to be haughty but only to feel shame and humiliation.

To what is this similar? To a pig-herder who rose to become the king. As long as he remembers his early days, it will be impossible for him to become arrogant. Likewise, when one considers that at the end of all his greatness, he will return to the earth to be food for maggots, all the more so will his pride be submitted and his roaring arrogance quieted. For what is his good and his greatness if his end is shame and dishonor?

And when he contemplates further and pictures in his mind the moment he enters before the great Beit Din of the heavenly host, when he finds himself before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, who is absolutely pure and holy, in the midst of the assembly of holy ones, mighty servants, strong in power, obeying His word, without any blemish whatsoever, and he stands before them, base, lowly, and petty in and of himself, defiled and polluted due to his deeds. Will he then raise his head? Will he have what to answer? And when they ask him: "where has your mouth gone? Where is the pride and honor which you assumed in your world?"

What will he answer? What will he reply to this rebuke? Behold, certainly if for one moment, a person were to visualize in his mind this truth with a true and strong picture, all of his arrogance would blast off in flight, never to return.

Q Level 2

Rashi

Rashi - our sages expounded all these from the verse: "remember your Creator (Borecha)" (Kohelet 12:1). "Borecha" - this is the Holy One, blessed be He, that you will give a judgment and accounting before Him. Read it also: "Be'erecha" (your source) - that you remember your origin, a putrid drop. Also read it: "Bor'echa" (your pit) - that you remember your grave, that you are going

to a place of dirt, worms, and maggots.

Q Level 2

Vilna Gaon

Vilna Gaon - as written in Kohelet 12:1 "remember your Creator (Borecha)..". Rabbi Akiva expounds this (Midrash Vayikra 18) - be'ercha - this is putrid liquid, bor-echa - this is worms and maggots, Borecha - this is the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He. see there. And our sages said in Sotah, the writing, dirt, and water (which comprises the Sotah water) corresponds to these three things. Water - from where you came. Dirt - where you are going. Writing (with G-d's Name) - before Whom...

Q Level 3

Zechor Miriam, Chafetz Chaim, ch.13 - "from where you came, where you are going... from where you came, where you are going" - double expression. the first is going on the soul.. to contemplate on his primary existence - from where did he come and for what need (purpose) did he come to this world.

"and where are you going" - ie that you will be forced to return to your original place. Therefore be careful not to sin so you won't fall from your level.

Now he speaks on the physical side which is lowly and petty and certainly from this aspect it is not proper to become arrogant and sin. Thus he repeats...

where are you going? - present tense. For every day your vitality decreases and through this your hair turns white and your strength diminishes.. if so, with what should you be proud? With your physical side? It is dust and will return to dust.

Q Level 3

☆ Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "know where you came from... where you came from" - Why did he say two times: "know where you came from"?

Some explain the Tanna's intent is on three other things that one must also take [to heart] in order to not come to sin. These other three were said on the soul and one also needs to look at them in order not to sin.

On this he first said plainly look on three things, ie three hidden things. Namely, from where comes your soul? From the Throne of Glory, it is a portion of G-dliness and it is not befitting for a portion of G-dliness to sin.

"Where are you going?" - to the place where your soul comes from. Thus it is not proper to withhold this good from your soul. For due to sin, the soul will not be able to ascend to its place.

"before Whom you will give a judgment and accounting" - even the holy soul needs to give a judgment and accounting in order to ascend to a higher level than where it was before. Look at these three things and do not withhold the great good your soul will attain and you will not come to sin. And three more things corresponding to the body..

Q Level 3

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan - "where you come from" - when a man puts this to heart, he will not become proud and he will be "lowly in his eyes" (Tehilim 16:4) and be saved from the illness of arrogance, the head of all ailments of the soul which weaken it...

"where you are going" - when a man puts this to heart, it will lessen in his eyes the enchantments of this world and all its many benefits of wealth, property, and honor, imaginary honor which in truth

is shame. All who chase these things, the lust will kill him. For they turn away from truth and righteousness to do their mistaken wishes.

And when the intelligent man looks at these two things, man's beginning is a humiliation and his end is worms, then he will consider in his heart with knowledge and understanding: "if so, with what is man more honorable than other living creatures? With what is his great strength that he rules over all the animals and they are his slaves, as written: "have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, etc." (Gen.1:28).

The intelligent man will investigate the difference between man and animal to know what is all this. He will see that man speaks and has understanding and knowledge of G-d.. while the animals are devoid of sense and only slightly more elevated than plants.

Then the intelligent man will say:

Now I understand. The superiority of man over the animals is from the aspect of knowledge, not of body and possessions.

For through understanding he distinguishes between life and death, good and evil.

And since he has this quality and perception, G-d who granted this to him, wanted him to use it to study torah and mitzvot, to despise evil, namely, the body and its possessions, and to choose good, namely, knowledge of G-d's torah and good deeds.

If he aligns his deeds according to the torah, he is a Kohen (priest) of G-d. But if he has intent to increase flesh and wealth, he will descend below.. And on these two things G-d observes and judges.

Therefore, look "before Whom..". For who can tell Him what to do? And you have no escape and refuge from His judgments other than to do His will.

Now son of man look at these three things calmly, carefully and with great understanding and you will not come to sin.

Level 3

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "you will not come to the hands of sin" - ie to the cause that brings to sin. It is like the handle of a vessel used to hold it with.

There are three causes that cause man to sin:

One, arrogance and lust after imaginary honor. Namely, he is embarrassed to act against the simple minded people who mock the service of the Creator.

Two, due to lust after earthly pleasures such as eating, drinking, and relations. Or love of bribes which blinds his eyes.

Three, because he was struck with the blindness of heresy and thinks there is no knowledge and justice in the grave.

All these three causes stem from a single root, namely, he thinks and acts as if he is in an eternal world which he will never leave. He forgets that his entire life is like a dream which flies in time that is divided into past, present, and future.

Thus, if the log of arrogance is kindled in his heart, the Tanna reminds him of the past: "from where

you came? from a putrid drop".

If your entire being is founded on boiling excrement (tzoah rotachat), how can you be proud?

If you say: "but all human beings are equal in this. All of them were created from a similar filth".

But nevertheless, it is enough of a disgrace and embarrassment. The king and the lowlife are equal, both of their existences came out from filth. How then could worms like this be proud?

And if the fire of bodily lust burns in you, or preoccupation with the present causes this strange fire within you, look where you yourself are going. Down below like lead, to a place of worms and maggots. For running after these lusts is what will shorten your life. Your only gain is to fill the pit of your grave with even more crawling creatures of all sizes.

If the poisonous waters of heresy entered you, look into the future, that you will give an accounting..

Perhaps you err in your view and you willingly lose all this great success.

He said: "before the King of kings", and not "before the Holy One, blessed be He. For one who is found guilty in a human court can still appeal the judge's sentence and plea to the king or the emperor and ask him for mercy. If that does not help, he can plea to Heaven. For if there is no judgment in the land, it is permitted to say [to G-d] "see and judge".

However, all this is for judgment in the land. But then in the heavenly court before the King of kings sitting in judgment over you and He is holy. We are unable to express this word the way we will feel it inside ourselves then. It is the absolute truth in the spiritual and it is impossible to escape from this in any way.

Q Level 3

☆ Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "hands of sin" - some explain one needs to look at all three together. Then it will help that he won't sin. Thus, he said: "look at three things", and he specified the count. Through this you will not come to sin. He did not say "sin will not come to your hand", to teach that not only this looking will help that you will not go looking for a sin to do, but even if an opportunity to sin comes to your hand, you will not go to its hand, namely, you will have the power to conquer your evil inclination.

Some explain: "to the hand of sin", for from the sin itself an angel of destruction is created in order to take revenge from man. On this he said: "look at three things and you won't come to the hands of sin", ie you will not fall in the hands of sin who would take revenge on you.

Some explain "the hands of sin" to mean the little things that people trample with their heels. They are the "handles" to take the sin and from them one is drawn to sin. For from the light things he is pulled to the severe things. On this he said if you look at these three things not only will you not come to sin itself but even for the handles of sin, the light things which are handles of sin - you will not come to them...

Q Level 3

☆ Divrei Yoel

Divrei Yoel, Hoshana Raba - "to the hands of sin" - there is to infer from his words "to the hands of sin". For he could have said just "to sin".

It is known that when a man sins, he creates a Mazik (destructive spiritual being). And as our

sages said: "one who commits a sin acquires a prosecutor" (Avot 4:11). The word "acquires" is from the term: "Who acquires Heaven and Earth" (Gen.14:19) (G-d acquired them through creating them).

Here too ["one who commits a sin acquires a prosecutor"] means he creates a Malach (spiritual being, see Ohr HaChaim beginning of parsha Tissa). Then this Mazik rules over him and controls him.

This is what the Tanna exhorts: "look at three things and you won't come to the hands of sin". Namely, you won't be delivered "in the hands" of the destructive Malach (spiritual being) you created through the sin. For through sins, a man is no longer under control of himself.

This is as our sages said: "the righteous' hearts are in their domains, while the wicked are in the domain of their hearts" (Ber.Rabba 34:10). That is to say, they are not in control of themselves. Rather, they are in the hands of these destructive beings which they created through their sins. We can see this tangibly how people are prisoners in the hands of their sins. For every Jew has holy sparks and wants to be a good Jew and not waste his days on emptiness. But he is not in control of himself. For he is conquered under the hands of all the Mazikim created through his sins and there is no other advice or healing than to remove them from the world so that they no longer rule over him.

Level 3

Ohr Yechezkel, darkei avodah 288 - let one contemplate to himself and remind himself that all of his existence is only a putrid drop. And from this drop, an entire world of infinite wisdom emerged. Is it conceivable that such a vast creation emerged from such a tiny thing? This is none other than the hand of Creator of the world and everything in it who did this.

This thought is so obvious. Just lack of thinking power (chisaron koach hamachshava) prevents us from recognizing all this. For when one thinks a bit in this, it will be impossible for him to refute it. Every person realizes that nothing forms by itself. How much more so that such an important creature like this did not form by itself.

(Translator: G-d does this in such a way that even the scientists cannot point to a miracle anywhere. Yet at the same time, things happen too fast and too complex for them to grasp the totality of all that happens. It is in this realm beyond human inquiry where G-d operates to maintain free will.)

Level 3

Kerem Tuvia, Tazria - "from a putrid drop" - who cares about the past? Right now he is a big and great man. Behold is not this said also on a man on the level of Moshe Rabeinu? Rather, the intent is that reminding oneself of the beginning of his formation and his nothingness results in feelings of gratitude and submission towards the Creator, blessed be He who benefited him from then until now.

When one contemplates the immense good the Creator did for him, namely, that He formed him completely from a putrid drop, then how can he come to sin?

For example, if some human being did him a tremendous favor, how could he afterwards have the heart to wrong him or go against his wish? Would one even consider doing such a thing?

Therefore, first and foremost, a man must put to heart the good that he was created. And specifically because he became a great and important [creature] that he must give a judgment and accounting before the Holy One, blessed be He...

"where are you going" - another thing to look at in this mishna is where you are going. For after rotting of the body, after he has been purified by the decomposition of the flesh, he will arise in the [future] resurrection of the dead.

As the Talmud says: "the dead of Beitar received atonement after decomposition of their flesh" (Sanhedrin 46a). This is a purification of the body.

After he has become pure and clean, he will be resurrected in a new body, like the prophecy of Yechezkel with the dry bones which grew flesh and sinews. Namely, from those dry bones, the previous body was reformed: "He revives the dead with great mercy" (Amidah prayer).

When a man looks and contemplates all this good that G-d did to him in the past, present, and future, how is it possible to sin? - and he will not come to sin.

Q Level 3

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (Daas Torah III, pg.194) - "you won't come to sin.." - from where does this certain promise come from that merely through looking at these three things already he won't come to sin? Another wonder, every man knows these three things already and nevertheless man sins. The explanation is that we are not talking about merely looking. Rather, it is a work on man to enter and stand himself into a situation of these three things...

"putrid drop" - that a man looks and contemplates always on the lowliness of man..

Our sages said (Ber.Rabba 17:5) that Adam called himself by this name to remind himself that he was created from the ground (adama=ground). This is a wonder. The ministering angels sought to say Shira (song) before him thinking he was some sort of divinity. For they saw his divine image of G-d and he was in an immensely elevated state before the sin.. But Adam did not ever mistake himself.. He deemed it more proper to call himself on the aspect of his coming from the ground and to call himself this name always in order to remember always that he is dust and not forget it for one second..

This is a great proof on the study of mussar which obligates one to remember and contemplate always the lowliness of man. This is what we learned: "look at three thing.."

Q Level 3

☆ Chachma u'Mussar

Chachma u'Mussar II:231 - "know.." - the question is well known. This knowledge is not concealed from the eyes of every man. Even if he realizes that the Almighty is the Judge of the land. But nevertheless, his will overpowers his mind and it is difficult for him to conquer his lusts.

The explanation is that all the while this knowledge has not taken root in his heart tangibly like a physical sense (kemo b'chush), he is unable to conquer his yetzer. For the will overpowers the intellect. Only if the intellect becomes tangible (chush).

This is the meaning of: "And you shall know this day and set it in your heart [that the L-rd He is G-d in Heaven above, and upon the earth below; there is none else]" (Devarim 4:39). Namely, the knowledge of G-d needs to be set in the heart until it is tangible. This is the meaning of "know", ie that the knowledge be by him tangibly (b'chush). This is the primary work of man - to bring emunah (faith) and yirah (fear) to the tangible.

Q Level 3



Shaarei Ohr 41:4 (Rabbi Yitzchak Blazer) - "look (histakel) on three things" - see Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 229: "one who sees a rainbow says... and it is forbidden to look with great depth

(asur l'histakel bo beyoter). And in the biur haGra: "the term "look" (histakulot) means with great depth (iyun harbeh)."

Thus that which the Tanna said: "look on three things..", this means with great depth and much contemplation in these three things. For mere knowledge of them will not affect a man in the least..

Without a doubt it is not through one or two times, one or two days, will it make a mark in man's soul, to fear G-d and to not come to sin. And especially for one whose heart is a stone heart, hard as a boulder. Rather, let one look daily at these three things. Every person should increase or decrease according to his makeup, occupation, and traits (techunato, v'isko, u'midotav).

Level 3

Kochvei Ohr

Kochvei Ohr 41:1 - it is clear from the mishna that the foundation of fear of G-d stems only from the power to see what is born (re'iah hanolad, ie the future). Namely, through this that a man contemplates and sees what will be with him in the end of days. To worry to spare his soul from the pit (she'ol) and to inherit eternal blissful life. This power to see the nolad (future) is from the realm of wisdom, as our sages said: "who is wise? he who sees what is born" (Tamid 32a). The Mefarsh explains: "he who understands in his heart what future events will be and he guards from it".

This is what Shlomo said in his wisdom: "the wise man fears and turns from evil" (Mishlei 14:16). For there is no wisdom like the fear of G-d. This is what scripture says: "hen, fear of G-d - it is wisdom" (Iyov 28:28). For fear of G-d is the ultimate wisdom.

Level 4

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - our sages teach: "no man sins unless a spirit of folly rests on him" (Sotah 3a). This is the order of the matter. The root of all sins is from the enticements of the heart (pituy halev). Similar to: "lest your heart be enticed" (Devarim 11:16).

This enticement can only occur when the physical, which is the body, possesses free will, according to his view. Namely, he imagines to himself that he has freedom to do what his heart desires. Who can protest against him? Then he is immediately seduced by all sorts of enticements and does not wish to forego on any of his wants in the least. Once he is enticed, his outlooks change. For his want thinks for him. He sees everything according to his wishes which deceive him and which adduce proofs which are sound and wise according to his wants.

Thus, he continues until "and you sway and serve other gods" (Devarim 11:16). According to his view, everything proceeds in the just path. At this point, there is no advice. All the wisdoms, thoughts and contemplations will not help him. Not even 48 prophets. There is no remedy except: "And the wrath of the L-rd will be kindled against you" (Devarim 11:17). For then the fear breaks him and he loses free will and the enticements disappear.

This is what our sages said: "the body is tough (kashei), but fright breaks it" (Bava Batra 10a).

This is an awesome point. Our sages revealed to us that there is no advice and no remedy before him all the time he is in his stiff state except to break him, and with what? with fright (pachad) that shatters him into pieces. This is his nature.

And then when he is afraid, he loses his imaginary free will and realizes that he is not as free and able to do as he wishes. Rather, he is very much forced in his deeds.

Through this, all the things he trusted fall down. Namely, all the wisdoms and ideologies he built and erected crumble down and disappear like smoke. Immediately then, his intellect will

strengthen on its guard and shine its light and he will recognize the truth.

This is what we learned: "look at three things and you won't come to sin, etc.". For through these three things, the body loses its sense of freedom and free will. And there is no other advice for the body to be assured of not coming to sin except for looking at these three things. For through them, he loses all his free will and wants, and becomes greatly forced. Fortunate is the man who has reached this.

The Saba of Kelm would say on this matter of "forced and free will" of man that this is all of a man's wisdom (haskalato) - to recognize the future as if it is the present. For a man does not know his time. He does not know when is the day he will have to give a judgment and accounting before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He. For through this, he will be forced in his deeds and there is no greater forcing than this.

But to our dismay, man does the opposite. Instead of being forced, he makes freedom and will. For he distances his end from himself. Thus, in his view, he chooses his deeds and it is as if it is his permission to do whatever is good in his eyes. For the day is still long.

Now we will understand and contemplate the greatest success in mussar study. All its foundation is to make a man forced in his deeds. Without mussar study, by nature man is easily led to become a chooser. What hope is there for him? This is what our sages said: "therefore the rulers of their evil inclination said: 'come let us consider the accounting of the word'". For through this he will become forced in his deeds and not a person of free choice. (Daat Chochma Umussar III:26,28)

Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - "look at three things.." - with this looking, you will be saved from the evil trait of jealousy. For when a man sees by his fellow wealth or prestige, he becomes jealous of him and desires the wealth and prestige of this man also for himself.

In truth, if man's lifetime in this world were eternal and the wealth and prestige were continual, then he has a reason to be jealous on this.

But since his life is short and considered as a passing shadow, as written: "our days in the land are as a passing shadow", and "a man's days are but vanity, like a passing shadow", and at death, he leaves his wealth and prestige to others.

And in the fixed place where he dwells many years, namely, the grave, there every one is equal together, whether in prestige or clothing or wealth.

Therefore, on what is there to be jealous of and on what is he chasing to attain? For it does not endure. And whatever is standing to be lost is as if it is lost already.

Level 3

☆ **Rabeinu Yonah**

Rabeinu Yonah - "where you are going" - And when you think where you are going, you will not desire the [physical] pleasures and luxuries. For why should you toil for naught. Likewise you will call all wealth, honor, and [material] good as useless vanity. For "everything is vanity and vexation of spirit" (Kohelet 1:14). On this Shlomo wrote the book of Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) and began: "everything is vanity, says Kohelet" - to call vanity all good and all precious things [of this world]. And after he called everything vain, he ended and concluded: "The end of the matter, everything having been heard, fear G-d and keep His commandments, for this is all of man" (Kohelet 12:13).

Every man and every creation was created only to fear G-d, blessed be He. For how could a man sin when he thinks before Whom he is destined to give a judgment? Besides the punishments and troubles for his sins, he will feel a tremendous shame without equal. It is analogous to a man before a flesh and blood king. If he will be caught deceiving or lying, will he not be tremendously humiliated? How much more so before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He. Furthermore, when the soul is naked without the body, the feeling of shame is multiplied over many times than when it is in the body. For the nature of the body is to forget. If a man does something disgraceful and becomes humiliated before others, after a year or two, the matter will be forgotten and the shame will subside.. For the nature of the body to forget mixes with the soul's nature and causes it to be forgotten or go stale. But when the soul is alone, without body, there is no forgetting. For the soul is pure and clear, completely free of physical nature. And when it is ashamed before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, the humiliation will remain forever and ever like that time. Thus it will stand humiliated eternally. This is what our sages said: "woe to that shame! woe to that humiliation!" (Bava Batra 75a).

Therefore, one who puts to heart these things will never come to sin.

Q Level 3

☆ Chida

Chida - Devarim Achadim, Drosh 9 - "judgment and accounting" - this is a great general principle - to place between his eyes that he is destined to give a judgment and accounting before G-d who knows his hidden things, as written: "I, the L-rd, search the heart, test the reins, to give everyone according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds" (Yirmiyahu 17:10).. Let one have between his eyes always that he is destined to give a judgment and accounting before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, and through this he will align his thoughts properly.

Q Level 4

☆ Binyan Avot

Binyan Avot - "The Holy One, blessed be He" - you are going before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, who does not forget nor show special favor (masoh panim) nor accept bribes. And no one can protest to Him and tell Him: "what are You doing?" (Kohelet 8:4).

He said: "the Holy One, blessed be He". For due to the power of His extreme Holiness, He is meticulous with a man and does not overlook when man profanes himself even with a light word..

There's a true story of two women who were conversing on this matter of judgment and accounting that one needs to give on all his deeds. One woman said jokingly: "when I get to the Heavenly court on my day of judgment and they ask me: 'why did you do such and such'? I will make myself like a mute who is unable to speak."

Only a few days passed and the woman became mute until her last day. Thus you see that even for just light words jokingly she became a mute until the day of her death.

Another story about a young man who died suddenly before his time. After 12 months, he came to one of his relatives in a dream. His relative asked him: "what happens to you in that world?" He answered: "every day I am judged for not being careful on the blessings on bread (hamotzi), fruit, and grace after meals (birkat hamazon) with intent (kavana) of heart.

Those appointed to judge (punish) me say: "you ate for your own pleasure" (I'hanatcha achalta).

I asked him: "didn't we learn that the wicked are punished in Gehinom for 12 months? Twelve months already passed from your day of death. Why are they still judging you after twelve months?"

He answered: "they are not judging me in Gehinom severe judgments. Rather they are judging me outside Gehinom with light judgments and they say that it is for your good, so that I merit Gan Eden and takes my portion in full. end quote.

The general principle is that on everything man does, it is imprinted above and on every thing there is reward and punishment. Fortunate is the man who comes out of the Heavenly Beit Din meritorious.

Level 4

Chida

Chida - Chederei Beten, Vayigash 9-11 - "judgment and accounting" - he should have said "accounting and judgment". The Alshich explained that first the sinner is taught the sins and their punishment and afterwards he is reminded how he transgressed them and then punished. Thus, he first says judgment and then accounting.

Thus, first he is taught. For example, if he had relations with a goya - he bowed to another god and she is tied to him like a dog. If he had relations with a niddah, he is tamei (impure) and made the land tamei (impure), he brought harsh decrees [to the word] and is obligated on everything [that resulted]. If he gave her something by hand, he transgressed a negative commandment: "do not draw near.." (Vayikra 18:19).

If he desecrated the Sabbath - he incurs stoning. If he spoke in the synagogue - he made light (zilzel) of the Shechina and it is like he has no portion in the G-d of Israel. If he was masiach daat from Tefilin - he made light of the honor of G-d and of fear of Him. If he did not check the Tzitzit and they were lacking, he blessed a blessing in vain and annulled a positive commandment.

If he benefited from this world without a blessing- he is like Yeravam, he steals from G-d and profanes (ma'al). If he honored himself by putting someone down - he has no portion in the world to come. Letzanut (scoffing), Lashon Hara (slander), Sheker (lying), Chanufa (flattery) - he is pogem (defiles) the four letters of G-d's Name and does not receive the Shechina (Divine presence).

Anger - he worshiped idols and offered a sacrifice to idols. Parties and strolls - ma'al (profanes) the life which the Holy One, blessed be He, gave him.

He ate worms (in fruit) - on each one five sets of lashes.

He shaved his beard with a razor - five sets of lashes for each time. If he drank stam yeynam - he transgressed "do not sway [from what they tell you]", and does not merit Gan Eden. If he degraded a talmid chacham - he made light of the fear of G-d and there is no remedy for his wound. If he did not answer amen - they shut the gates of Gan Eden on him. If he became arrogant - kafar b'ikar (denied G-d). If he interrupted his study with idle talk - he is force fed hot coals, etc. etc.

He is first taught all the laws and afterwards he gives an accounting.

We may say this is also the meaning of (the double expression): "woe to us on the day of judgment, woe to us on the day of rebuke" (Ber.Rabba 93).

For on every judgment he is taught, he shudders and fears since he recognizes his sin. This is "woe to us on the day of Din (judgment)".

Afterwards from the day of rebuke, when they rebuke him on his deeds.

Level 4

☆ **Ben Ish Chai**

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - "judgment and accounting" - it seems both are the same thing. Why the double expression? It seems to me to explain that if a man stole several times from his fellow and was caught and brought to justice. The human judge will decree on him to pay back double. This is Din. Afterwards, he will make an accounting (cheshbon) with him. For this theft, he must pay such and such. For that theft such and such. Likewise if he stole from many people. All this is possible to do only when he has enough money to pay for everything.

But if the thief does not have the money to pay, the accounting is lost. Likewise, for capital cases. If he murdered one man, he is executed. But if he murdered ten people, the accounting is lost. For it is only possible to execute him once for one person. The human beit din will not be able to pay him back for the other nine people he murdered.

However, G-d will make a Din (judgment) for the murderer to pay back with his life and He will also make an accounting with him for the other people he murdered through a gilgul (reincarnation) or the like.

Likewise if he incurred four death penalties due to committing four capital sins, the human court cannot pay him back for everything but rather they can only execute him for one of them.

But, the Holy One, blessed be He, will pay him back everything, one at a time, through some set up He will do for him..

Level 4

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - it is clear what judgment (din) means. But for calculation (cheshbon), we will explain it according to the words of the Saba of Kelm (Chochma u'Mussar 1:1) in his explanation of the Midrash on the verse "Rachel was jealous of her sister" (Ber.Rabba 33:4):

"woe to the wicked who transform the attribute of mercy to the attribute of justice.. fortunate are the righteous who transform the attribute of justice to the attribute of mercy".

The explanation is that when a man is judged, all his deeds are brought together. One deed will be brought to clarify a second one.

For example, for one who annulled torah study, he will justify himself saying that he was not healthy and thus was not permitted to put himself in danger.

Then a different deed of this world will be brought which he did toil very much more and he was not concerned for his health. Thus, the second deed proves the first deed that this was nothing but laziness and laxness in the sin of bitul torah.

Another example, one who does not give tzedaka like he should. He claims he is not permitted because he has debts and he needs to guard his money to pay off his debts.

A different deed will be brought where he spent a large sum of money for his own honor and was not concerned for this. Likewise many more countless examples like this.

This is the meaning of "the wicked transform the attribute of mercy to the attribute of justice". In for their claim of having good intent l'Shem Shamayim (for G-d), a different deed will come and clarify the falsehood in the first deed and they will be punished on both of them.

But for the righteous it is the opposite. Even if they have deeds that appear bad such as: "Rachel

was jealous of her sister". It seemed like this was the evil trait of jealousy. But a different deed is brought where she conquered her desire to justify herself and transmitted it (the signs) to her sister. Thus, this proves that she did not have the evil trait of jealousy.

Rather she only had the "jealousy of scholars" on her sister's good deeds (which is good and beneficial). Thus, the attribute of justice transformed to the attribute of mercy.

This is the meaning of "judgment and accounting" (din v'cheshbon). Namely, an accounting of all the deeds together. This is what scripture says: "He Who forms their hearts together, Who understands all their deeds" (Tehilim 33:15).

Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - Akavia ben Mehallel came to teach a man to remove the cause of sin. For as long as the cause of sin has not been removed, he will come to sin. The cause which brings man to sin is the Yetzer Hara which G-d placed in man..

Even if a man thinks and knows that he is destined to give a judgment and accounting before the King of kings, but nevertheless when his evil inclination strengthens over him, he sins and is not concerned on what will be in the future.

Therefore, a man must remove the power of the Yetzer Hara which is the cause of sin.

The yetzer hara strengthens in a man through the power of arrogance of the heart (gavhut halev). All lust, all jealousy, etc., of the things which cause man to come to sin, stem from the power of arrogance of the heart.

This is because the Yetzer Hara entices a man until he brings man to destruction. Therefore, there is instigating and enticement only when man thinks himself to be on a very high level. Then the Yetzer Hara entices him until it topples him and destroys him completely.

But when man's heart is broken inside him, then there is no Yetzer Hara to entice him to topple and destroy him. For he does not have an important existence in his eyes and he is of no substance (hu davar sh'ein mamash).

These things are clear.

Our sages hinted in many places that the Yetzer Hara is only from the power of this trait. For example, in Nedarim 9b:

Rabbi Shimon HaTzaddik said: In all my days as a priest, I never ate the guilt-offering of a ritually impure nazirite except for one occasion. One time, a particular man who was a nazirite came from the South and I saw that he had beautiful eyes and was good looking, and the fringes of his hair were arranged in curls. I said to him: My son, what did you see that made you decide to destroy this beautiful hair of yours.

He said to me: I was a shepherd for my father in my city, and I went to draw water from the spring, and I looked at my reflection in the water and my evil inclination quickly overcame me and sought to expel me from the world. I said to myself: Wicked one! Why do you pride yourself in a world that is not yours? Why are you proud of someone who will eventually be food in the grave for worms and maggots? I swear by the Temple service that I shall shave you for the sake of Heaven.

I immediately arose and kissed him on his head. I said to him: My son, may there be more who take vows of naziriteship like you among the Jewish people.

Thus, when he saw himself handsome and nice, immediately, the Yetzer Hara would strengthen over him.

And he said this strengthening of the Yetzer was in order to drive him out of the world. For this is the matter of the Yetzer Hara - it seeks to destroy that which is built, not that which is demolished. For then destruction does not apply... (see there)

Thus the primary Yetzer Hara which causes man to sin is in order to drive him out of the world. But when man has the day of death before his eyes, the Yetzer Hara departs from him.

For we have already explained that the Yetzer Hara is the Satan who is the Angel of Death. He entices a man to bring him to inexistence.

Therefore, if a man reminds himself of the day of death as if he already received inexistence, then man no longer has any power and through this the Yetzer Hara who is the Satan and the Angel of Death departs from him...

This is what was said here: *"look at three things and you won't come to sin"*. For when one looks from where he came, a putrid drop, namely, that from the aspect of the beginning of man, he is considered as nothing.

And from where he is going, namely, from the aspect of his end, he is likewise as nothing. For he is going to a place of dirt, worms, and maggots. Thus when from the aspect of his beginning and end, man is not important - then he annuls his arrogance (gavhut) completely, as if he is nothing.

For if his beginning were important but his end were not or vice versa, then he would have some importance.

But when he is considered as nothing both from the aspect of his beginning and also from his end - it is as if he is completely nothing.

Due to this, the Yetzer Hara departs completely. For the Yetzer Hara is in man only when he considers himself an important creature. But when man does not consider himself anything, the yetzer hara does not rule over him.

Do not ask: "but if one thinks of himself as a putrid drop, then he will abandon hope of doing good?"

This is not so. Due to being created from a putrid drop, he will not abandon doing mitzvot. On the contrary, he will do mitzvot and through this he will become an important supernal creature.. He will acquire qualities and will not remain in his lowliness (of the body)...

"before Whom you are destined to give a judgment and accounting" - even though there is no yetzer hara, but nevertheless, one will sin if there were: "no judge and no justice" (Vayikra Rabba 28:1). For why shouldn't he sin?

Corresponding to this, he said: "before Whom...". When he knows all these things together, he will certainly not come to sin.

We can also explain this as follows. "before Whom..." is teaching that man is not important from three aspects: from: one, from the aspect of his beginning. On this it says: "from where do you come?".

Two, from the aspect of his end. On this he said: "where you are going"?

Three, from the aspect of himself. For When he exists, he is not considered as anything. On this he said: "before Whom..".

That is to say, for all the deeds a man does while he is alive, he must give a justice and accounting, and "it is better for him if he were not created" (Eiruvim 13b).

Due to this, he is considered as nothing from all sides..

Furthermore, and this is the main explanation, know that man is an effect and G-d is his cause. When man thinks he is an effect, he has an attachment to the Cause and will not come to sin.

For sin and the yetzer hara are found only when man strays from the Cause and does not consider himself an effect of the Cause.

Therefore he said: "look at three things and you won't come to sin", which means straying from G-d. Thus, "know where you came from...,etc.". All the things as we said, namely, man is not at all important independently on his own.. When he is considered as nothing both from the aspect of his beginning and his end - in this he is completely an "effect"..

If he does not look that he has a Cause, he does not enter under the domain of the Cause. But when he accepts on himself G-d as a Cause, namely, that he knows that he is destined to give a judgment and accounting before Him, then man knows that G-d is the Cause and man is completely an effect.

Through all these things, man enters under the domain of the Cause and does not come to sin, namely, straying from G-d who is the Cause. And then the Yetzer Hara does not rule over him.

This is a correct explanation and it is primary.

When you understand words of truth, that through looking at these three things, one does not stray from G-d, not to the right nor to the left. And he becomes connected to G-d and through this he won't come to sin.

Understand these things very well.

This is what our sages brought in a Midrash (Kohélet Raba 12:1):

"Remember your Creator (Borecha)" (Kohélet 12:1). "Borecha" - this is the Holy One, blessed be He, that you will give a judgment and accounting before Him. Read it also: "Be'erecha" (your source) - that you remember your origin, a putrid drop. Also read it: "Bor'echa" (your pit) - that you remember your grave, that you are going to a place of dirt, worms, and maggots.

You will understand this from what we explained here. For everything is hinted in what was written.. For since man has a Cause, namely, G-d, thus man is an effect and an effect has a beginning from nothing. Otherwise it is not an effect from the aspect of its beginning.

This is "be'erecha" (your source).

Likewise, from the aspect that man has a Cause and he is an effect, he has an end and disintegration. For otherwise, he is not an effect completely. Since he would be similar to the Cause from this aspect of no end.

Thus, the verse says: "remember your Creator", as if it says: "remember G-d who created you and He is your Cause"...

"look at three things.." - he did not say "know where you come from". What relevance is this language of "look"?..

We explained earlier that we find a difference in man's creation to the other creatures - he walks completely upright. This matter is not a coincidence.

Rather, since man is liable to sin, as they said: "would that it were that the fear of Heaven be upon him like the fear of flesh and blood" (Berachot 28b).

For man does not have the fear of the Shechina (Divine presence). Therefore, he said look at how G-d created man in order to distance him from sin.

G-d created man in such a way that he can look from where he came. For the thing from which man came, namely, the male organ from which comes out the putrid drop, is opposite him.

You will not find this in any other creature like it is by man. Namely, the thing from which comes out the putrid drop is opposite man. All this is so he looks from where man came.

Likewise man looks down also to know where he is going and also man looks above to know before Whom he will give a judgment and accounting.

Thus he said that man should look at these three things as G-d created him for this. And when he looks thus, he will not come to sin.

(Rabbi Hartman - the intent is not for a man to look at his milah, as he wrote in Be'er Hagolah 5:123.. and likewise in the Talmud: "Rabbi Yossi said: 'All my days, I never looked at my mila.'" (Rashi: due to great tzniut modesty). And in Netiv Haperishut ch.2 "that which he never looked at his milah, this was a matter of holiness. For the eye is the power of the soul. And he would distance from the lowly due to his soul". Rather, his intent here is that man was formed in such a way that his male organ is opposite him. Through this he should contemplate from where man comes.)

Chapter 3 Mishna 2 - Pray Government

Rabbi Chachina, the deputy high priest, would say: pray for **הַיּוֹי מִתְּפִילָּה**, the peace of the government, for if not for fear of it, each man **אִישׁ בְּשִׁלוּמָה שָׁל מְלָכוֹת, שְׂאֵלְמָלָא מוֹרָאָה, אִישׁ בְּשִׁלוּמָה שָׁל מְלָכוֹת,** would swallow his fellow alive. **אֶת רֵעֵהוּ חַיִּים בֹּלְעוּ.**

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "pray for the peace of the government" - even of the (gentile) nations.

"for if not for fear of it, man would swallow his fellow alive" - as written: "You made man like the fish of the sea" (Chavakuk 1). Just like by fish, every bigger fish swallows the smaller fish, so too by human beings, without fear of the government every bigger person would swallow the smaller person (Avodah Zara 4b).

Q Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "swallows his fellow" - his mercy became corrupted to the extent that he swallows his fellow alive while the fellow feels the pain of being swallowed, but he does not care.

"alive" - i.e. he swallows him whole, without taste of chewing. He does not care that he is doing this abomination to his fellow for only a little benefit.

"if not for fear of the government" - only the fear that he will be punished for this by the government prevents him from harming his fellow.

Q Level 3

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - there is an obligation on every man to always be grateful towards the world (public). For without them, how could he live alone? The source of this is in the Midrash: "this teaches a man must be grateful towards the place he benefits from" (Ber.Rabba 79:6).

And if he does not put to heart and does not feel grateful to those things which all his life depends on, this is nothing but pettiness and disgracefulness...

This is what the mishna is teaching us. "pray for the peace of the government". From the aspect of the obligation of gratitude. For "if not for fear of it, each man would swallow his fellow alive". And our survival and existence depends on the guarding and protection of the government on us. Due to this, let us express our gratitude and pray for them.

Q Level 3

☆ Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan - "man would swallow his fellow alive" - similar to "let us swallow them alive like the Sheol" (Mishlei 1:12). Sheol is the grave which swallows people whole. So too, we will swallow them and won't need to cut their limbs in pieces due to our overpowering them with our might.

Likewise the prophet said: "you made man like the fish of the sea.." (Chavakuk 1:14) and our sages said: "Just like by fish..."

the Tana is coming to rouse us and exhort us that our minds alone are not enough to straighten and civilize our ways. Because: "sin lies crouching at the door" (Gen.4:7), and all of us stumble in it. Thus we need the stick of the government. So too the torah of truth screams out: "If a matter eludes you in judgment.." (Devarim 17:8), and the torah decreed death on one who acts brazenly

to not heed the words of the judges. I elaborated on this to distance from the ways of the philosophers who rely on their minds and lean on their understanding and [eventually] deny the torah.

Q Level 3

Chachma u'Mussar

Chachma u'Mussar 1:11 - for man's nature is evil. All his aspiration is to look at his fellow with an evil eye and to feel hatred, jealousy and anger towards him. If not for fear of the government, how many corpses would fall in every city and the world (mankind) would become extinct.

"every man would swallow.." - people ask : "why do we find that [religious] people are more careful [of mitzvot] between man and G-d than those between man and his fellow man?" For in matters between man and G-d, he dedicates a few hours per day such as in prayer or the like. But for matters between man and his fellow people almost disregard them. This is truly a wonder.

The answer is that man knows of his Creator more than he knows of his fellow next to him.. If man were to "coronate" (mamlich) his fellow like he coronates (mamlich) his Creator, without a doubt, his conduct towards his fellow would be completely different. But since he does not contemplate his fellow and does not think about him, thus he does not "know" his fellow. Due to this, we can know already what kind of outlook he has towards his fellow.

It is to such an extent that "each man would swallow his friend alive". For he does not know of him at all.

The sage emphasized "a man and his friend", i.e. even his friend who is always with him and almost never leaves his side. Even so, he is foreign to him. (Daas Torah 2:234)

Q Level 3

Avot al Banim (R.Shaul Brock) - *"be praying for the peace of the government"* - he said "be praying" and not "pray". The Tiferet Yisrae wrote that one should pray always until he is called by the title "the praying man". It seems to me to explain that the evil inclination wants to annul a person from proper prayer. He shows him how he sinned and is not worthy to pray and all the more so for others and all the more so still for the whole congregation and the whole country. On this the sage comes to teach that one should not listen to the words of the Yetzer as we say on the confession of Yom Kippur "even though I am not worthy to pray for myself and all the more so for others.." On this he said "be praying" that you are worthy of praying and do not belittle your prayer. For "Hash-em is close to all who call out to Him".

Q Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Birkat Avot - (kabalistic) "pray for the peace of the government (Malchut).." - all our intent in seeking the Geulah needs to be for the honor of the Shechina which is the Malchut. For when the Shechina has shalom, we and all of Yisrael will have Shalom, amen.

Alternatively, it is known that Malchut is represented by the final Heh and one needs to join it always with the letters "Yud"-"Heh"-"Vav" of the Shem Havaya (G-d's Name), blessed be He.

This is what he said: "Hevei" (hinting to the letters "Yud"-"Heh"-"Vav" of the Shem Havaya, blessed be He) pray (i.e. joining. For "prayer" is a term connoting joining) for the Shalom of the Malchut. For through the hashpaah that will be drawn down to Malchut, there will be a joining (chibur) of the letters Yud-Heh-Vav with the final Heh, for they Mashpiah to her.

Q Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Zechut Avot - (kabalistic) "for the peace (b'shloma) of the Malchut" - b'Shalom-Heh. Namely, that the Malchut be built up with 5 partzufim (Heh=5), whereby Shalom connotes

Shelemut (wholeness).

 **Level 4**

☆ **Maharal**

Maharal - when you contemplate the creation, you will find that there was a change in man's creation, something not found in the other creatures. For all of them were created many simultaneously.

But man was created alone. Even his female counterpart was not created independently by herself as would have been fitting. It was not so. Rather, man was created alone.

And in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 37a): "therefore man was created alone, to teach that whoever destroys a Jewish soul, it is as if he destroyed the entire world, and whoever saves a Jewish soul, it is as if he saves the entire world"...

The explanation is that according to Wisdom and the creation of the world, it was necessary to have only one man and not more.. For man is the king of the lower creatures (tachtonim), as the torah writes in the creation (Gen.1:26). And it is known that it is proper for there to be only one king, as our sages said: "two kings cannot wear the same crown" (Chulin 60b).

Thus since man is the king of the lower creatures, due to the way G-d ordered the world, it is proper for man to be alone. Thus one who saves a Jewish soul is as if he saves the whole world. And likewise, one who destroys a Jewish soul is as if he destroys the whole world.....

Thus by nature, man's heart always tends to arrogance (gavhut, grandeur). If not for fear of the government, man's heart would tend to arrogance to such a great extent that each man would want to be everything, that there would not be anyone else in the world besides him and he would be singular.

All this is due to the arrogance in man's heart. He does not want that there exist another man with him in the world. This is due to the nature of the creation as we explained..

Chapter 3 Mishna 3 - Two Sit Together

Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon would say: if two sit together and no words of torah are [spoken] between them, this is a sitting of scoffers, as it is written: "nor sat he in the sitting of scoffers.. [rather, the Torah of G-d is his delight]". But if two sit together and there are words of torah [spoken] between them, the Shechina (Divine presence) abides between them, as written: "then they that fear G-d spoke to each other; and G-d listened and heard; and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear G-d and give thought/honor to His Name" (Malachi 3:16). From this verse we only know concerning two. How do we know that even if one sits and is involved in torah that the Holy One, blessed be He, designates for him reward? Because it is written: "Let him sit in solitude and be [involved] in silence, for he shall take for it [reward]" (Eicha 3:28).

רַבִּי חֲנִינָא בֶן תֵּרַדְיֹון אָמַר, שְׂנִיִּים שְׂיוֹשְׁבֵין וְאִין בִּינֵיהֶן דְּבַרֵי תּוֹרָה, הֲרִי זֶה מוֹשֵׁב לְצִים, שְׁנַאֲמַר (תְּהִלִּים א) וּבְמוֹשֵׁב לְצִים לֹא יֵשֵׁב. אֲבָל שְׂנִיִּים שְׂיוֹשְׁבֵין וְיֵשׁ בֵּינֵיהֶם דְּבַרֵי תּוֹרָה, שְׂכִינָה שְׂרוּיָה בֵּינֵיהֶם, שְׁנַאֲמַר (מְלָאכִי ג) אֲזַ נְדַבְרוּ וְיֵרְאִי :: אִישׁ אֶל רַעְהוּ וְיִקְשֹׁב :: וְיִשְׁמַע וְיִכְתֹּב סֵפֶר זְכוֹרֹן לְפָנָיו לְיֵרְאִי :: וְלִחְשְׁבֵי שְׁמוֹ. אִין לִי אֲלֵא שְׂנִיִּים, מִנִּין שְׁאֲפְלוּ אֲחָד שְׂיוֹשֵׁב וְעוֹסֵק בְּתוֹרָה, שְׁהִקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא קוֹבַע לוֹ שְׂכָר, שְׁנַאֲמַר (אִיכָה ג) יֵשֵׁב בְּדָד וְיֵדַם כִּי נִטַל עָלָי.

Q Level 1

☆ Chatam Sofer

Shevet Sofer, chelek beit Shlach - "if two sit together.. letzim (scoffers)" - if two people sit and toil in useless talk, certainly in the end they will come to words of letzanut (scoffing) and it is as if they are already now a sitting of letzim (scoffers).

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "sitting of scoffers (moshav letzim)" - they fix a sitting for idle talk. This is called a moshav letzim regarding bitul torah (wasting time from torah study). For this chapter talks on the matter of bitul Torah.

But for two people who sit and toil in torah, the Shechina rests between them, as written: "then they that fear G-d spoke to each other.." - the plain meaning (pshat) of the verse is that it is referring to the righteous in the future. When people will see their exalted level and ask "why did they get all this?" They will answer: "because they spoke in words of torah to each other, and G-d wrote this in the book of remembrance and now gives them the reward of their work.

Q Level 2

☆ Sforno

Sforno - even though their words do not contain any scoffing (letzanut), but nevertheless since there isn't any words of torah, it is considered a sitting of scoffers. For his whole matter is vanity and a waste (kol inyano hevel v'davar nifsad). He brought a proof from the verse: "nor sit in the company of scorners; But his desire is in the Torah of G-d" (Tehilim 1:1-2) - ie every sitting is a sitting of letzim except that which has words of torah.

But two who sit and there are words of torah between them, even though their main conversation was not on this - the Shechina is among them.

In saying the outcomes of both opposites, he teaches the greatness and importance of the matter in order to also rouse the masses...

Q Level 2

☆ Chida

Chida - Chasdei Avot - "sitting of scoffers" - i.e. they are talking useless things without benefit such as wars of kings or the like..certainly they are scoffing (mitlotzezim) on the great reward of indwelling of the Shechina (hashraat haShechina) and having their words inscribed. All these things

are not important in their eyes or heresy has been injected in them to scoff (mitlotzet) the sages who said this, and there is no greater sitting of scoffers (moshav letzim) than this.

Q Level 3

☆ Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulay - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - "if two sit together and no words of torah are [spoken] between them, this is a sitting of scoffers" - the two are sitting quietly and nicely but nevertheless wasting their time and there are no "words of torah between them, etc."

That which he did not say "they are not toiling (oskim) in torah, this is because "words of torah" implies a verse or agadah or simple teaching, while "toil in torah" implies in depth analysis (pilpul v'svara) to bring out the matter in truth.

On this he said: "two who are sitting and there is not between them even "words of torah" which is light - this is a sitting of scoffers (moshav letzim).

"there is not words of torah between them" - some explain that the intent is not that they are not toiling in torah.. Rather, the intent is that even if they are toiling in torah. But since each one is sitting on his own in his own place and they are not toiling together - this is called a sitting of scoffers (moshav letzim). For the reason they are not learning together is because each one takes lightly the view of his fellow and mocks his knowledge. Because he thinks: "what benefit will I gain to join him?" Due to this there are no word of torah between them and each one learns alone.

Q Level 3

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - "a sitting of scoffers" - the foundation and root of letzanut is not putting to heart and not considering things important. And in Shaarei Teshuva 3:177:

"the fourth category (of letzanut) are those who fix themselves always to idle talk and useless conversation like those who sit on street corners... For he is idle from torah study.. How could he not remember and not put to heart during those times which he wastes that he could attain eternal life if he would fix those times for torah study.. The sages would exhort their students not to mitlotzet (jest) even haphazardly".

Q Level 3

Daiot Yechezkel (R.Yechezkel Sarna)

Daiot Yechezkel (R.Yechezkel Sarna) - "how do we know that even if one sits and is involved in torah that the Holy One, blessed be He, designates for him reward?" - what is he coming to teach? That there is reward for a mitzva?? (this is obvious). Rather, it seems the explanation is that even though there is not the lofty level of Hashraah (dwelling) of the Shechina that exists when two make a place for the Shechina, but nevertheless, even by one the Holy One, blessed be He, fixes reward for him. Namely, the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself in His honor and glory. Due to the person having honored Him and given thought to His Name, He fixes for him special reward besides the reward of torah study which is exceedingly great.

Q Level 2

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - we learn from here that the opposite of a "sitting of scoffers" is not a "sitting of wise men" (moshav chachamim) or a "sitting of sharp scholars" (moshav lamdanim). Rather, every place where they are toiling there in words of torah, this is already a place where the Shechina resides. It does not need to be a place where two great sages discuss deep matters of halacha, "uprooting mountains and grinding them together" through sharp logic and deep arguments (pilpulim). Rather any time two Jews sit together and one of them speaks to the other some thought of mussar or a vort on the weekly parsha (torah reading) - this is already a place where the Shechina resides. Amazing!!!

Q Level 3

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - in the talmud (Berachot 6a): "two are written in the book of remembrances but one is not written in the book of remembrances".

This is a wonder! For "all your deeds are written in a book" (Avot 2:1). Why then does it say two inscribed but not one?

We can answer that for one's personal book of deeds, certainly all torah study is inscribed even that of a single individual. But when two learn torah, in addition to the mitzvah of torah study, there is also bringing benefit to the public (zikui rabim). For each one benefits his fellow and sharpens his fellow. This is what is inscribed in the book of remembrances. Besides the torah of each one, there is an additional matter written in a book. Namely, each person brought merit to his fellow in torah study. As understood, this does not apply for one person learning by himself.

Q Level 3

"*Merkavat Hamishna*" - by nature when two people sit, words will come out between them. We already explained on the mishna "whoever increases speech brings sin" (Avot 1:8) that speech is divided into 5 categories: forbidden, disgusting, warned against, permitted and mitzvah.

Thus as long as they are not speaking torah, inevitably they will come to the other categories and "all chatter (pitput) is forbidden except the chatter of torah" (Yerushalmi Berachot 9:5). "ki im btora cheftzo" - of all speech (sicha), the Holy One blessed be He wants only speech of words of torah..

Q Level 4

☆ Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - "if two sit together and there are words of torah [spoken] between them, the Shechina abides between them" - the mishna is teaching us a great foundation regarding the greatness of torah. For we were taught in Sanhedrin (39a): "whenever there are ten people (in a minyan), the Shechina rests." But less than this, the Shechina does not rest. The mishna is teaching us that this is only for prayer. But for torah, it is not so. Rather, any place where there is torah, the Shechina rests there.

The reason is as our sages said: "the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Yisrael: 'I gave to you the Torah, to separate from it, I am unable.'" (Shemot Rabba 33:1).

Rather, in every place you go, make for Me that I should dwell there, as written: "they shall make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell amongst them" (Parsha Teruma).

The explanation of "to separate from it, I am unable" is not that it is difficult to separate from it. But rather that literally (mamash) He is unable.

If it were not written, it would be impossible for us to say it.

The explanation is that we find in Sifri (brought in Ramban on Bamidbar 30:3) that there is an aspect called: "the life of the king" (b'chayei hamelech) and there is the aspect of "the king himself" (melech atzmo).

The secret of the matter is that the torah is of the aspect of "the life of the King". Thus, "to separate from it, I am unable". This is what we learned that "even if one person sits and toils in torah, the Shechina rests with him.

This is what our sages said: "even though there were twelve synagogues in Teveria, Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Assi prayed only between the pillars (which support the Beit Midrash where they learn)..

In the Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni Mishlei 938):

"both the soul and the torah were compared to a candle, as written: 'the soul of man is G-d's candle' (Mishlei 20:27), and 'a mitzvah is a candle and torah is light' (Mishlei 6:23). Says the Holy One, blessed be He: 'My candle is in your hand and your candle is in My hand. If you guard Mine I too will guard yours'. This is analogous to two people who owned vineyards. One lived in Galil but his vineyard was in Yehuda, while the other lived in Yehuda but his vineyard was in Galil. One day they met and one said to the other: "guard my vineyard in Galil and I will guard your vineyard in Yehuda. If you lay desolate my vineyard, I will lay desolate your vineyard". So too, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: "guard My torah and I will guard you.."

It is clear from the Midrash that the torah is the candle of G-d mamash (without exaggeration). "My candle is in your hand", an aspect of "the life of the King", and "to separate from it, I am not able".

If it were not written, it would be impossible for us to say this. The secret of the matter is that the candle of G-d is mamash (without exaggeration) in our hands.

"My candle is in your hands" - "you ascended on high, you took captives; you took gifts to be among men" (Tehilim 68:19).

The ways of G-d are truly known to us. For behold we have been commanded to walk in His ways (Devarim 11:22). He too is also known to us, so to speak, as written: "My beloved is white and ruddy... His head is as the finest gold;...His eyes are like doves beside rivulets of water,...His jaws are like a bed of spice, etc. etc. this is my beloved, and this is my friend" (Shir HaShirim 5:10-16).

All this knowledge is due to "the candle of G-d in our hands" - mamash!

This is what the Midrash says: "says Akilas to king Andrinus: 'I wish to convert and be a Jew'. He replied: 'what do you see in them that you wish to convert?' He said: 'even the smallest of them knows how G-d created the world, what was created on the first day.. on the second day.. on what the world stands and their torah is true".

For due to His candle in our hands, everything is revealed to us.

🔍 Level 4

☆ Chida

Chida - Zeroa Yamin - (kabalistic) - man was created mixed and intertwined with all the worlds. He draws shefah to vivify his soul through torah and avodah (service) which are the causes to draw on us the Shechina which is the life (chiyut) of the Nefesh, Ruach, and Neshama. Through this, Shefah is drawn down to all the worlds.. This is what is said "yoshev badad", "badad" is gematria 10, that he has intent to join the 10 sefirot in the four (bedalet) word, "veyidom", with correct thoughts, "ki natal" - he takes the shefa to all the worlds and "alav" to his nefesh, ruach, neshama due to this...

🔍 Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - even though when a person says something to his fellow which is not words of torah, just useless stories, he is not called a "letz" (scoffer/jester). For a letz is one who is drawn after words of laughter and a man very much enjoys words of laughter. And when a man tells useless things to his fellow, this is not laughter that he enjoys. But nevertheless, when two sit together and converse useless talk, a man is also drawn to this. Thus it is similar to words of laughter that a person is drawn towards due to the enjoyment (of laughter).. and it is called a sitting of scoffers (letzim).

Furthermore, when two sit together, they are fitting to speak words of torah and when they refrain from this, and instead engage in idle talk, relative to the torah it is called completely a sitting of

letzim. For they are refraining from words of torah which was proper for them...

When two are speaking words of torah it is torah completely. For torah is when the torah is uttered verbally. This is called "complete torah" (Torah gemura). This is relevant only with two for one needs to utter the words verbally. But for one person, even if he utters the words verbally, since it is possible without this, it is not at all called words of torah. And sometimes he does not utter the words and just thinks on them without speaking. Thus the thought is primary not the speech.

But when they are two, then it is impossible without speaking, this is called "words of torah"...

Therefore, he said: "two who sit... the Shechina is with them". For when they are two, their torah is called "divrei torah" and therefore the Shechina is with the Torah. This matter is explained in the torah. For immediately after the giving of the torah to the Jewish people, G-d commanded to build the Mishkan, as written: "they shall make for Me a mishkan so that I will dwell amongst them" (Shemot 25:8).

And in the Midrash (Shemot Rabba 33:1) " 'they shall take for Me teruma' - this is analogous to a king who had an only daughter. One person asked from the king to marry her. The king gave her to him. The person sought to return to his homeland with his wife.

The king said to him: "my daughter which I gave you is my only child. I am unable to separate from her because of this. Now, I cannot tell you not to take her since she is your wife. Rather, do me a favor, wherever you go, make for me a small room so I may dwell among you.

So too the Holy One blessed be He says to Yisrael: "I gave you the torah. To separate from her I cannot. Rather every place you go make for Me a small sanctuary that I may dwell among you". end quote.

The reason the torah is called a "daughter" is because a daughter is an offspring of her father and comes from him. So too for the torah, Hash-em brought it to actuality to ordain it. Just like a daughter comes from the father himself, so too for the torah.

This is not like those who think that G-d gave the torah only according to what is proper for man and no more. For if that were the case, the torah would not be a means and path for man to be with G-d.

(Rabbi Hartman - in Tiferet Yisrael ch.9, he writes: "the torah takes a person out of nature and brings man to cling to G-d, blessed be He.. the torah teaches and guides one to the path of life, whereby one acquires the final success, namely, clinging to G-d through doing the torah (asiyat hatorah). This is the difference between the torah and the other wisdoms. Other wisdoms do not bring a man to this clinging. Even though through wisdom also one certainly becomes "intellectual" (sichli). But nevertheless that which he acquires of the intellect (sechel) is not enough to cling with Hash-em, blessed be He, who is completely separated from everything.

That which brings man to this clinging is the torah. For it teaches the path to G-d through which one can cling to Him... man has a connection to G-d through the torah..."

Thus if the torah was only tailored according to the receiver, how could it be a means to cling to its Giver? The Giver and receiver are separate.

Thus he writes here that the torah is a means and path to bring one to be with G-d.. and in Tiferet Yisrael ch.26: "all the mitzvot of the torah are divine. The torah is not a natural or cultural law or

civil law for the maintenance of society, as some people claim. Rather, the torah is divine. All its words are divine. It is due to this that one merits Olam Haba. If its words were merely cultural, one would not merit Olam Haba through them..."... and in Netiv HaTorah ch.5: "a man cannot approach G-d except through the torah. For man is flesh and blood and thus there is no way for him to approach G-d except through the torah sichlit (of intellect). Through this man has a closeness to his Creator"... "the torah is the intermediary between man and his Creator..")

Rather the torah is an intellect/wisdom which necessarily follows from the Truth of G-d (hatorah hi hamuskal shemitchayiv m'amitat Hash-em yitbarach).

Therefore, the torah brings man [near] to G-d and G-d is with man when he toils in torah. Thus the torah is called the "daughter" of the Holy One, blessed be He. For wisdom is called an "offspring" (tolada) as the Rambam elaborated on (Moreh Nevuchim 1:7)...

He said "an only [daughter]". This is because the torah is an intellect/wisdom (muskal) which is obligatory. For everything in the torah, it is impossible for it to be otherwise. And it is impossible for it to be in a different manner. Due to this, the words of torah are singular and this is the reason that the torah is one, as we will explain later (Avot 6:10). Thus the torah's beginning is "Aleph" - "I am the L-ord your G-d" (Shemot 20:2) to say that the Torah is one. That is to say, all the torah's words are obligatory and perforce. It is impossible for them to be otherwise. Even for a small dot in the torah, it is impossible for it to be in a different way. Rather it must be the way it is.

This does not mean to say that it is not proper for the torah to be otherwise. But really it is not obligatory to be like this and it could possibly have been different.

It is not so. For then the torah would not be "singular" since something which is merely proper but could be different is not singular (meyuchad).

Rather the words of torah must be thus perforce and it is impossible for them to be in a different manner. That which is obligatory is singular. This is the meaning of "an only daughter".

Due to this, it is impossible [for G-d] to separate from the torah (as earlier) since He has a singular, inseparable connection to the Torah (which contains the singular ways of G-d of which there are none other). For that which is singular does not have any leaning to either side. This is the meaning of: "To separate from it, I am unable".

Because G-d is with the torah. He is unable to separate from it due to the torah's being ordered (mesuderet) from G-d in an obligatory manner. Thus it is inseparable from Him...

"even if one sits and is involved in torah that the Holy One, blessed be He, designates for him reward" - ie he takes and accepts upon himself the decree of G-d. Because there is no greater accepting of the decree of G-d like one who sits and toils in torah. For the torah is a decree of G-d on man, to toil in the torah and labor in it. Thus, this person who sits and toils in torah accepts upon himself the decree which G-d decreed on man.. And thus G-d fixes reward for him.. And certainly whoever accepts upon himself the decree of G-d is worthy of payment [of reward].

For he accepts the yoke and every yoke is the primary work (for only then does one subjugate himself to the work) - R.Hartman).

And every work stands for payment. Thus after the verse says: "it is good for a man to accept a yoke in his youth" (Eicha 3:7), it says right after *"Let him sit in solitude and be [involved] in silence, for he shall take for it [reward]"*. That is to say, when he sits alone and accepts upon himself the

decree of G-d, namely, the yoke, this fixes the reward.... Without a doubt, the Shechina is with him. For he is a servant of G-d and His yoke is upon him...

This teaching was brought close to the words of Rabbi Chanina sagan Hakohanim who said: "if not for fear of the government, each man would swallow his fellow alive", which refers to a man who is without torah..

Chapter 3 Mishna 4 - Three At Table

Rabbi Shimon would say: three who ate at one table and *שְׁלֹחַן עַל שְׂאֵלָה* have not spoken over it words of torah, it is as if they had *אָכְלוּ אֶת־עֹלֹתֵי דְבָרֵי תּוֹרָה*, eaten of sacrifices to the dead (idols), as written: "for all their *כִּי כָּל מִזְבְּחֵי מֵתִים, שְׁנֵאֲמַר (ישעיה כח)* tables are filled with vomit and excrement, without [a clean] *אֲבָל* Place" (Isaiah 28:8). But three who ate at one table and *שְׁלֹחַן עַל שְׂאֵלָה* spoke over it words of torah, it is as if they had eaten from *מִשְׁלַחַן שֶׁל מְקוֹם הַ* the table of G-d, as written: "and he said to me: 'this is the *מַדְבַּר אֵלַי (יחזקאל מא)* table that is before G-d' (Yechezkel 41:2)".

Level 1

☆ Sforno

Sforno - "vomit and excrement" - eating whose entire matter is for maintaining transient life (chayim nifsadim). It is proper to contemplate the difference between a table whose purpose is only this versus a table whereby one is eating from the table of the Holy One, blessed be He. Namely, the Kohanim (priests) who eat from the table of Heaven, ie the Altar, whereby the whole matter of their eating is for the purpose of eternal perfection. Relative to this, it is proper to call the table whose matter is transient to be full of excrement and vomit..

"*this is the table that is before G-d*" - as stated in the previous mishna "two who sit and there are words of torah between them - the Shechina is between them".

Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "*this is the table that is before G-d*" - when he speaks words of torah, immediately, it is called a table which is before G-d..

Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "*three who ate*" - it did not say "three who are eating". For then it is forbidden to speak lest the food goes down the wrong pipe. Rather when they are sitting after eating, they are obligated in words of torah and in a time of difficulty (shaat hadechak) they have discharged their duty with birkat hamazon (Magen Avraham 170).

"*three who ate*" - he said three people because in the case of one or two people, one could say they don't have the time. But for three people, generally they have the time, otherwise they would not have sat together and risked finishing before the others. For that would obligate waiting for the others for grace after meals (birkat hamazon).

"*spoken over it words of torah*" - to demonstrate that he eats to live and not lives to eat. Through this he testifies on himself that he is not like an animal who is fed only in order to do physical labor. Rather he eats so that he will have strength to do the service of G-d.

"*sacrifices to the dead*" - these are animals slaughtered for idolatry. The reason is because he ate only to strengthen his body for worldly matters which decay and die with the body and are his idolatry that he worships.

Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "*as if they had eaten of sacrifices to the dead*" - since there are no words of torah between them, which is casting off the yoke of torah. They eat and drink and enjoy, but remembrance of the torah does not enter their hearts - woe to them and woe to their enjoyment.

Level 3



Avodat Yisrael, Avot - when one eats with purity and holiness, he can attain light and joy and desire to serve the Creator from this. But if he does not eat with holiness, he attains bad thoughts of lust of this world, G-d forbid.. Thus the Hebrew letters of the word Shulchan (table) become "I'nachash", the serpent, who is the Sitra Achra.

Q Level 3

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "as if they had eaten of sacrifices to the dead.. vomit and excrement"

as the verse says: "They became attached to Baal Pe'or and ate sacrifices of the dead" (Tehilim 106:28), and our sages said "the Pe'or idol is worshipped by defecating before it" (Sanhedrin 64a)... For one who eats with proper intent and with torah elevates the food..like an offering (korban) in the temple which did not produce excrement... but for one who eats otherwise, not only does he not rectify the physical but he corrupts even the spiritual and pushes it into the klipot... and it is as if he is eating only the evil and death in the food. For the good portion gives life to the thing while the bad does the opposite.. (see there for more)

Q Level 4

Iyun Tefila, Birkat Hamazon - "for all their tables are filled with vomit and excrement" - the word "eating" (achila) comes from the word completion (chala, as in "vayichal" of the Sabbath kidush). This teaches on the thing coming to completion and perfection (gemur v'hashlama), as in "the house was completed (chala) in all its matters" (Melachim I 6:38). For before a thing comes to completion, it lacks perfection (hashlemut).

We see that G-d's will is that the disintegration of something is its elevation. The inanimate loses its form and takes the form of a plant. The plant loses its form and takes the form of animal by being eaten by the animal, and so forth.

See that the purpose in the whole creation is for the lower level form to disintegrate and ascend to a higher level.

Thus the word "eating" (achila) comes from the word completion and rectification, to ascend from a lower level to a higher level.

However, the elevation of an animal consumed by a human is only if the human uses his physical powers for man's true purpose. Namely, so that his body is healthy for the service of G-d. Then the consumed animal is elevated and also receives holiness.

But people who are immersed in eating and drinking only for the physical benefit, then this is only corruption of the food. For such people, even though they look like human beings, but really they are animals. The animal they eat receives no elevation whatsoever. On the contrary, it is a going down for the animal. For on such a person, it is written: "for all their tables are filled with vomit and excrement without a Place".

In a true man, only the waste product is expelled. But the good part comes to great benefit.

For these savages however, even the good part which remains in the body of man is only vomit and excrement.

Q Level 4

☆ Maharal

Maharal - know that everything that exists, the universe and everything in it [belongs] to G-d, as written: "The land and the fullness thereof belong to G-d" (Tehilim 24:1). And G-d gave to man the earth and what is on it, as written: "The heavens are heavens of the L-ord, but the earth He gave to human beings" (Tehilim 115:16). For it is not proper for man to have more than what is on the land. Therefore he said here that a table upon which torah was said - this is the table that is before

G-d.

For G-d provides sustenance to all the creations. But despite this it is not called a table of G-d for "the earth He gave to human beings" (Tehilim 115:16).

But since the torah is from above the Heavens and "the Heavens belong to G-d", thus all the more so the torah belongs to G-d and the table upon which torah was said becomes a table to G-d due to the torah. Through this human beings merit to eat from the table of G-d.

This is like a flesh and blood king who provides for his servants. That which his servants eat is not called that it belongs to them. For it is not their food. Rather it is considered the food of the king who provides for his servants who serve him...

Furthermore, you should know that G-d is the King and every king provides for his people. A flesh and blood king provides their physical needs.

But the supernal King created body and soul. And just like He provided the needs of the body, so too He gave the torah which is the sustenance of the soul. For "the soul without knowledge is not good" (Mishlei 19:2). Therefore, immediately when He came to be coronated over the Jewish people, He proclaimed: "I am the L-ord your G-d.." and gave them the torah which is the sustenance of the soul after having given them the manna which is sustenance of the body...

Therefore a table upon which words of torah is spoken is attributed to G-d. For His servants eat from it the sustenance they received from the King, both sustenance of the body and sustenance of the soul.

But when words of torah are not spoken, one cannot attribute this table to G-d. For He provides for body and soul. Neither can one attribute it to the man himself. For every table is as a servant who receives from his Master (thus ultimately it comes from G-d). Therefore, it is as if they ate from sacrifices of the dead. Since there is no sustenance of the soul. Rather, only of the body which is dead (without the soul)...

Chapter 3 Mishna 5 - Awake At Night

Rabbi Chaninah ben Chakinai would say: "one who stays awake at night, one who walks alone on the roadway, and one who turns his heart to idleness (time-wasting) - is liable for his soul. רַבִּי חֲנִינָא בֶן חַכִּינַי אָמַר, הַנֶּעוֹר בַּלַּיְלָה וְהַמְהַלֵּךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ יְחִידִי וְהַמְפִּנֵה לְבָבוֹ לַבְטָלָה, הֵרִי זֶה מִתְחַיֵּב בְּנַפְשׁוֹ

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "walks alone" - and thinks in his heart on useless matters (divrei havai).

"is liable for his soul" - since night is a time of damagers. Thus one who walks alone at night is in danger from bandits and other hazards. But if he had thought in torah, the torah would have protected him.

Q Level 1

Rashi

Rashi - "awake at night" - and thinks in his heart useless matters.
"turns to idleness (batala)" - to be idle (batel) from words of torah.

Q Level 1

Tosfot Yom Tov

Tosfot Yom Tov - "who turns his heart to idleness" - even during the day, ie that he is drawn after idleness (batala) and seeks the idleness.

Q Level 2

Vilna Gaon

Vilna Gaon - "turns his heart to idleness..is liable for his soul" - as written: "lest they be removed from your heart all the days of your life" (Devarim 4:9) and "guard your soul very much" (ibid).

Q Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - after bringing proper zeal on "sitting in your house" (Shema, b'shivtecha b'beitecha), namely in your Beit Midrash (house of study) and in the tractate of [eating at] your table, he now mentions zealous matters in "when you go on the road and when you lie down" (Shema).

Thus, "one who is awake at night" and likewise, "one who goes on the road" when alone and there is no one speaking useless words to him, and likewise one who "empties his heart" from toiling in temporary matters of this world, and now he is free from distractions. He can now do for G-d, to gaze at His works and His torah to give life to his soul. But nevertheless, he is lax [and turns to idleness], then without a doubt, he is liable for his soul.

Q Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - "one who stays awake at night" - some explain that one who does not wake up from his sleep to study torah because sleep has overpowered him is not "liable for his soul". For he is close to blameless (oness). But one whose nature is to be awake at night and even if he wakes up from his sleep, he does not study torah but instead "turns to idleness", he is "liable for his soul".

"walks alone on the roadway" - for if others are travelling with him and speaking useless talk, he is not "liable for his soul" since he is like one forced by the evil inclination and by people who are used to speaking of the vanities of the world. But when he travels alone, then there is no one to prevent him from learning and thinking in torah. Despite this, he "turns to idleness".

Some explain, "one who is awake at night..." The intent is that it is proper for a man to watch over all his matters and not mistreat himself lest he harm himself. Night was given to man for sleep, so that his bodily powers rest. Our sages estimated that one needs eight hours (Rambam Deot 4:4)..

Thus one who is up all night is liable for his soul (for damaging his health).

Likewise, one who travels alone is "liable for his soul". For all the roads are dangerous then.

Likewise, one who turns his heart to idleness, he refuses to toil in torah or work is also "liable for his soul". For this will bring upon him natural slumber and melancholic (tohu) thoughts. Likewise, our sages said: "idleness brings to mental instability" (Ketuvot 59b).

liable for his soul" - his blood will be claimed from him, similar to "But your blood, of your souls, I will demand [an account].." (Bereishit 9:5).

Q Level 3

☆ Rambam

Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim 3:51) - Know that we already explained in the chapters on the Creator's guarding of the creations (human beings) that the Creator's guarding of a person is according to the person's thoughts.

The whole man (haish hashalem) who has attained the wholeness (shleimut) is he who does not remove his mind and heart from being before G-d always. And thus the Creator's guarding will cling to him... Know that at the time when you empty your thoughts from the Creator and instead engage in your matters and needs, the communion (chevra) between you and Him is severed. And then you are no longer with Him and likewise He is no longer with you. For the connection between you and Him has already actually severed at that time. Therefore, the Pious men would be meticulous at these times and would exhort on this saying: "do not remove G-d from your mind" (Shab.149a). And David said: "I have set the L-ord before me always, because [He is] at my right hand, I will not falter" (Tehilim 16:8). Namely, his mind was not empty of G-d..

Q Level 3

☆ Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - "one who stays awake at night.. turns his heart to idleness" - Rabeinu Yona writes:

"Because they are times of favor before G-d. Thus he should think only on things favorable before G-d, namely, words of torah. For those times are so important and fitting for thinking in torah. Because he does not have work to do nor does he hear the voices of other people.."

Similarly, the Rambam writes in the Guide for the Perplexed (Moreh Nevuchim) (3:51):

"When you are alone, by yourself, without others, and when you wake up from your sleep on your bed, be very careful to not put your thoughts during these glorious times on anything other than this spiritual service. Namely, to draw close to G-d and stand before Him in the true way.."

The Rambam exhorted very much on "these glorious times (itim nichbadim)". For at these times one is free and clinging to G-d is then easy. In light of this, guard yourself and be careful from wasting them.

In truth, a man's station should have been the Beit Midrash (synagogue). Namely, that man clings with the Creator continuously, without interruption, as the Rambam explained there the level of the holy forefathers. Even when they were occupied in worldly matters with other people, such as business dealings or buying things, they would do these things only with their limbs. But their hearts and minds did not turn away from G-d. Rather, their intent and purpose in all their deeds was to draw close to G-d very much.

This was the exalted level of the forefathers. Namely, in all their deeds and movements, the connection between them and the Creator was never cut. They would cling continually to the Creator. There was never a trace of anything not for the sake of G-d.

So too the Ramban (Nachmanides) writes on the verse: "and to cling to Him" (Devarim 11:22):

"To remember G-d and love of Him always. Namely that one's thought not part from Him when walking on the road, lying down or waking up, to the extent that one's words with other people is with his mouth and tongue but his heart/mind is not with them. Rather he is before G-d. This is possible for these exalted people.. for they themselves are a sanctuary for the Shechina". end quote.

But nevertheless, even one who has not reached the level of this clinging, but nevertheless during favorable hours and glorious times when it is easy for you the drawing close to G-d, it will be a heavy sin for man if he is not careful of wasting them. And it goes without saying that all the more so should he not make his house of study into a mundane place (shelo y'ase beit midrasho l'makom chol) (Daas Torah, chelek Heh pg.157).

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - after teaching the greatness of one who toils in torah and the opposite for one who refrains from words of torah, he taught this: "one who is awake at night, etc." The explanation is that G-d arranged the world (nature) as is fitting. Along with this, he also ordained the way of proper protection/guarding. Some things go out of this protection/guarding as we will explain.

Thus he taught that when a man goes out of the order of guarding which G-d ordained, he is liable for his soul..

"one who stays awake at night" - for night was created for sleeping or torah study (Eirubin 65a). When he does thus, G-d guards his soul. For he deposits his soul in G-d's hand as written: "In Your hand I entrust my spirit; You have redeemed me, O L-rd, G-d of truth" (Tehilim 31:6).

Thus, for one who is awake, his soul is not deposited in G-d's hand and at nighttime, the mazikim (damaging forces) have permission to rule. Thus, one who is awake at night goes out of G-d's protection and from the order of the world.

Likewise for one who *"who turns his heart to idleness"*. This is even during the day. For G-d created the world and its order of guarding when one conducts himself according to the order of the world. But this world was created to be active not to be idle. For there is nothing in the world which is idle. Everything works towards the use of the world.

Then, everything is under the protection G-d ordained for the world. But this person who is drawn after idleness and seeks idleness, he goes out of the order of guarding (ordained by G-d)..

This is different from the previous case of "one who is awake at night". For the term "awake" implies that this is because he is not sleeping not because he is idle..

But nevertheless, it does not appear to be referring to all who are awake. For one who does work at night, even though he is not studying torah, but nevertheless: "all torah without work will in the end be abandoned" (Avot 2:2). Thus, work which is a need of torah is not included in this.. Rather only if he is awake and turns to idleness, he is "liable for his soul".

"one who walks alone on the roadway" - for G-d placed man to be in an inhabited area with other people. One who is not in inhabited areas goes out of the order of the world...

Furthermore, man's protection is when he is with others and included in the "many" (klal). And even if he is alone in his home, but since in the city there are many inhabitants, then man has protection there.

Therefore, "*one who walks alone*", specifically alone. For since he came out of the protection by going out on the road alone.

This matter is very wondrous. For when two are together, they are not vulnerable to be damaged (by demons, (translator: which were not concealed in the past), as our sages said in Berachot (43b): "one person sees (the demon) and is harmed. Two people see but are not harmed. Three people don't see them and are not harmed"

The explanation is that man was created in the image of G-d (tzelem Elokim, Genesis 1:27). Due to this exaltedness, he is worthy of ruling over the lower creations, as our sages said (Shab.151b): "a wild animal does not attack a man unless it perceives the man as an animal, as written 'he is like the animals' (Tehilim 49:13)".

That is to say, due to the image of G-d (tzelem Elokim) man has, the animal does not rule over him unless this divine image (Tzelem) is removed from him

When they are two men, there is more [intense] divine image for he is amongst two. And when they are three, there is more Divine image still.

It is likewise so in torah. There is a difference between one and two and between two and three. For the torah is spiritual (sichlit). It is not something physical and it does not join with one man like it joins with two and likewise for three men more than two.

So too for this image of G-d (tzelem Elokim), it is not called on a man when he is alone. Only when they are two and even more when they are three. Therefore, two are not harmed but three are completely removed from the mazikim (demons) until the demons are not even seen. This is not the place to elaborate.

(Rabbi Hartman: since seeing is connection. Thus lack of seeing is lack of connection. And our sages said: "it is forbidden to look at the face of a wicked man..." (Megilah 28a).. for one's eyes will connect to the evil.. see there for more.)

Thus for one who travels on the road alone, it is called that he is minimizing the tzelem Elokim in being alone and the Satan prosecutes at a time of danger...

He said in the previous mishna that three who ate at one table and said on it words of torah, it is as if they ate from the table of G-d ,while if they did not say on it words of torah, it is as if they ate from sacrifices to the dead. From this we learn that through torah, man attains clinging to G-d. And one who separates from the torah, separates himself to the other side and comes out completely from the domain (reshut) of the Holy One, blessed be He.

Thus he followed this teaching (next mishna) that one who turns to idleness also departs from the order of the world and its protection. Therefore he is "liable for his soul" in going out of the order of the world. For according to the order, man is under G-d who guards the world..

Chapter 3 Mishna 6 - Yoke Of Torah

Rabbi Nechunya ben Hakana would say: "whoever takes upon himself the yoke of torah has the yoke of the government and the yoke of livelihood removed from him. And whoever removes from himself the yoke of torah, has the yoke of the government and the yoke of livelihood placed upon him".

רַבִּי נְחוּנְיָא בֶן הַקָּנָה אָמַר, כָּל הַמְקַבֵּל עָלָיו עַל תּוֹרָה, מֵעֲבִירִין מִמֶּנּוּ עַל מַלְכוּת וְעַל דְּרָךְ אֶרֶץ. וְכָל הַפּוֹרֵק מִמֶּנּוּ עַל תּוֹרָה, נוֹתֵן עָלָיו עַל מַלְכוּת וְעַל דְּרָךְ אֶרֶץ:

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "the yoke of the government (*malchut*)" - the yoke of the king and ministers (government).

"the yoke of livelihood (*derech erez*)" - the toil and efforts in making a livelihood because his work is blessed.

"whoever removes from himself the yoke of torah" - one who says: "the yoke of torah is difficult and I am unable to bear it".

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "yoke of the government" - since he makes his torah primary and his work secondary, The Holy One, blessed be He, will guard him from all evil and from the need to interrupt his torah study. And G-d will not put in the king's heart to take him for his work. He will be saved from the government to do the will of his Father in Heaven to toil in torah.

"yoke of *derech erez*" - he will not need to do much work for his livelihood. A little work will suffice him to sustain himself. For the work of a Tzadik (righteous man) is blessed and he is happy with his portion.

"whoever removes" - he thinks to work a lot through abandoning the work of torah. But G-d foils his plan and puts in the king's heart to take him for his work. For "a king's heart is like rivulets of water in the G-d's hand; wherever He wishes, He turns it" (Mishlei 21:1).

"the yoke of livelihood placed upon him" - he will strain and wander after his livelihood but will not find it. And even if he finds it, he will not be happy with his portion. He will squander all his days in vanity to amass wealth and increase it, similar to: "Whoever loves silver will not be sated with silver" (Kohelet 5:9). Thus all his days are troubles and he wastes them in toil and strain and he will not have rest forever.

Q Level 2

☆ Vilna Gaon

Hanhagot HaGr'a - immediately upon waking up from one's bed, to say wholeheartedly and with joy: "I accept upon myself the yoke of torah today" (*Hanhagot HaGr'a*)

Q Level 2

Vilna Gaon

Orchot Chaim, Keter Rosh ot 71 - Rabeinu said something which experience testifies on: when one gets up in the morning and accepts the yoke of torah today truly and wholeheartedly, namely, that he resolves in his heart to not listen to anything and no distraction will annul him today - then all the annullments (*bitulim*) will leave him and he will certainly succeed in torah that day. And according to the strength of receiving the yoke of torah in the morning and the strength of the resolve to learn, so too will be the divine help from G-d that day and the leaving of the distractions.

Q Level 3

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "whoever takes upon himself the yoke of torah.." - he takes on himself the yoke of torah anew every day what he did not have the previous day. For he always advances and strengthens himself very much to toil more. The Holy One, blessed be He, pays him back reward. For not only is a new yoke of the Malchut not placed on him, but even the old yoke which was upon him until now is removed as reward for accepting on himself the yoke of torah anew..

Furthermore, not only the yoke of the government taxes and fees is removed from him, but even for the yoke of earning a livelihood which is upon every human being to provide for his wife and children as the way of the land - nevertheless, G-d provides his livelihood without effort on his part. For his work is done by others...

"whoever removes from himself the yoke of torah.." - not only does he not take upon himself anew the yoke to learn torah, but even the yoke which was already upon him until now he becomes increasingly lax and idle always.

"has the yoke of the government, etc. placed upon him" - measure for measure, not only is the old yoke of the government not removed from him, but even a new additional yoke of the government is placed on him.

Q Level 3

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - it is written: "man was born to toil" (Job 5:7). Thus, every person must toil and endeavor in something during his life. This must be something heavy and pressuring that he is forced to toil in otherwise it is not considered toil. Hence, since man was born to toil, then only if he toils in something specific will he find satisfaction (sipuk) in life. For then he will have fulfilled the purpose of his creation and the form of man within him.

Thus for something very easy, there is no satisfaction in doing it. Only when man invests himself and toils in something difficult for him - then he will have joy and satisfaction when he succeeds in standing up to the thing he took upon himself.

Thus it is not enough for a man to sit and study torah lightly, such as reading the torah portion every day, or "chok l'yisrael", or tehilim in order to save himself from the yoke of the government and livelihood. For then he will not have toil - neither in torah nor in livelihood. How then will he find satisfaction and fulfillment of his purpose in life (to toil)?

Therefore, G-d fixed in the creation that only one who takes on himself completely the yoke of torah and this is his goal and life and all his labor and work is to attain a certain ambitious level in torah - he will merit to be exempted from the yoke of government and livelihood.

For since he has taken on a yoke, then he has what to fulfill man's purpose to toil, and there is no need to saddle on him another toil...

Q Level 3

Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer - In the midrash "the sword and the book descended wrapped together from heaven. If you don't toil in torah, behold here is the sword" (Devarim Rabba 4:1).

The intent is that removal of the yoke of torah is not like transgressing other sins. For the latter, the punishment is destined for the future. For his book will be examined. But for bitul torah it is not so. The punishment is wrapped around his heel. For it is like two buckets (on a pulley). When one rises, the other descends..

Q Level 4

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - this is a great foundation in the service of G-d. A man

must know this great primary principle. It is not like the world thinks, namely, that the primary goal of man's service is to acquire levels and good traits and much torah and knowledge (daat). And if it were possible to acquire everything easily and without toil, it would be good, but what can we do, we must acquire these things even if they entail much work.

This is a mistaken view in the world. Rather, the primary job of man is specifically - the work and strain and difficulty. This is a great foundation brought in Daat Tevunot, that the world was created with G-d's concealment (hester panim) and with the attribute of justice, namely, with the yetzer hara (evil inclination) and much (room for) errors. Because man's primary job in this world is solely - difficulty and toil. This is "man was born to toil" (Iyov 5:7). Namely, this is the whole intent and purpose. The whole creation of this world is only to be a yoke on man. The primary intent in everything is the yoke, that man will bear a yoke..

This is what we learned: "whoever takes upon himself the yoke of torah, etc." For if he accepts upon himself the yoke of torah, he has discharged his duty (yatza yedei chovato) of bearing the yoke of G-d..

And if he does not accept on himself the yoke of torah, then the yoke of the government, etc. is placed on him. For in truth, the entire creation is nothing but the yoke of G-d. And in this world, it is only a yoke, either the yoke of torah or the yoke of the government, work, etc. According to the level a man carries the yoke of the Holy One, blessed be He, so too will be the corresponding lightening of the yoke of work, etc.

Fortunate is he who merits that his toil is in torah. But one who did not merit that his toil be in torah should know with certainty that he will not remain without a yoke. Rather, immediately other loads will be saddled on his shoulders. For "whoever removes from himself the yoke of torah, has the yoke of the government and the yoke of livelihood placed upon him".

(translator: and even one who is rich and has no yoke receives the yoke of bad thoughts, sleeplessness, melancholy, honor seeking, etc. etc.)

Level 3

Rosh Avot

Rosh Avot - "whoever removes from himself the yoke of torah" - he removes from himself the yoke of torah like one who wants to remove something which burdens him, as in "they removed (vayitparku)" (Shemot 32, Rashi there: "like one who removes a burden"). Then he receives a heavy yoke of malchut (government) and derech eretz (livelihood) so that he will have no time for idleness. Thus he wrote "placed upon him" and not "he is given" or the like. For idleness leads to shiamum (mental instability) and shiamum leads to sin.

But for the Tannaim (mishnaic sages), even though some of them were wood choppers, water carriers, cobblers, etc. and certainly they did not remove from themselves the yoke of torah but nevertheless most of their time was spent toiling in torah and mitzvot and they were not obstructed by this yoke of work and livelihood. Rather "it is good the study of torah with the way of the world (Derech Eretz, i.e. work), for exertion in both causes sin to be forgotten" (Avot 2::2). And this is not considered "placed upon him".

Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - through the torah, a man clings to G-d, blessed be He. Due to this, "whoever takes upon himself the yoke of torah has the yoke of the government and the yoke of livelihood removed from him".

You should know that there are three orders of conduct (hanhagot) in the world.

One, a man must conduct himself according to the conduct of the natural order, to plow, sow, and other needs according to the order of nature. Man is subjugated (meshubad) to the conduct (laws) of nature.

Two, there is also an order outside the conduct (laws) of nature. Namely, the conduct of human beings which stems from free will. Through this comes the conduct of society and the government according to what it wants or does not want, decreeing decrees on man. This is the societal conduct. Man is likewise subjugated to this conduct. He is subjugated to the king (ruling power) whose hand directs this conduct.

(Rabbi Hartman: this is more difficult than the first (nature). For nature is machine-like and does the same thing all the time. Thus man can plan around it. But human beings have free will and adapt. Thus it is more difficult to get around them than for nature.)

Three, the Divine conduct which G-d ordained in the world. This conduct is above nature and above [human] free will..

He taught that when man takes upon himself the yoke of torah, then he is with G-d and the yokes of livelihood and government are removed from him. He comes out from these yokes. For both of them are from the aspect of this world.

When he is subjugated to G-d, it is impossible for him to be subjugated to the government or nature.

This is what our sages said (Avodah Zara 5a): "the Jewish people accepted the Torah only in order that no nation or tongue would rule over them... and the Angel of Death would not rule over them".

Corresponding to the conduct of nature, he said: "the Angel of Death would not rule over them". Namely, that they won't be subjugated under nature. for the angel of death rules over people according to nature.

Corresponding to the conduct of people (free will) which is above nature, he said: "and no nation or tongue would rule over them".

The general principle is that one who takes upon himself the yoke of torah, which is divine, comes out of the decree of nature and out of the decree of society which is of human beings and not nature.

This is as our sages said (Avot 6:3):

"And the tablets were the work of G-d, and the writing was the writing of G-d, graven upon the tablets" (Exodus 32:16). Read not haruth ['graven'] but heruth ['freedom']. For there is no free man but one that occupies himself with the study of the Torah. And whoever occupies himself with the study of the Torah becomes elevated.."

Thus one who toils in torah rises up and thus his level is above the level of nature, the natural order, and above the level of society, the human order. Thus he becomes emancipated from these two kingdoms we mentioned.

The reason one who toils in torah rises above the physical world is because the Intellect (sechel) is elevated above the physical world.

Due to this, he is free from the order of the conduct of nature and from the governments. For their level is from the aspect of this world. But one who toils in torah comes out of the level of this world. Therefore, he said here that the yoke of the government and livelihood is removed from him. For even though man cannot live without a livelihood (parnasa) and he needs to work (melachah) in order to toil in torah. But nevertheless, he does not have the yoke of livelihood (derech erez). Because his livelihood (parnasa) comes easily when he takes upon himself the yoke of torah. For then he is completely to G-d and is elevated above this world.

But if he removes from himself the yoke of torah, he turns to this physical world in removing the yoke of torah which is above this world. And all the while he removes himself from the level which is above nature and he instead turns to the physical world, then these two things rule over him, namely, the yoke of government and the yoke of livelihood..

In the temple, the Shulchan (table) was in the north. The Shulchan represents malchut (kingship, government), corresponding to the conduct of the malchut (government).

The menorah (candelabrum) was in the south. It had seven branches corresponding to the seven days of nature as known to the wise.

But the torah was on a higher level. For these two were in the Heichal (inner hall) which corresponds to this world. But the torah was in the ark in the holy of holies which corresponds to the level of the Upper Worlds (Olam HaElyon). These things are clear to one who understands deep wisdom... Through torah a man goes out free from their dominion and level. This is enough for the understanding person.

Level 4

☆ Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "the yoke of the government (Malchut)" - (kabalistic - the trait of Malchut, namely, the Shechina which governs the world and decrees good or bad. But he who accepts the yoke of torah can annul the decrees of the Malchut Shamayim. He can even annul the yoke of nature whenever he wants, namely, the physical laws of nature since the six days of creation. This is similar to: "He who decreed that oil should burn can decree that vinegar should burn" (Taanit 25a). So too for many other righteous men who could change nature.

Chapter 3 Mishna 7 - Ten Learning

Rabbi Chalafta ben Dosa of Kfar Chanania would say: ten people who are sitting and occupied in torah [study] - the Shechina (Divine Presence) resides amongst them, as it is written: "the Almighty stands in the congregation of G-d" (Tehilim 82:1). How do we know this applies even for five? - For it is written: "He has established the foundation of His group on the land" (Amos 9:6). How do we know this applies even for three? As written: "in the midst of the judges He will judge" (Psalms 82:1). How do we know this even for two? As written: "then they that fear G-d spoke to each other; and G-d listened and heard, etc." (Malachi 3:16). How do we know this applies even for one? As written: "Every place where I have My name mentioned, I will come to you and bless you" (Exodus 20:21).

רבי חֲלַפְתָּא בֶן דוֹסָא אִישׁ כֹּפֵר חֲנֻנְיָה אֹמֵר, עֲשֶׂרָה שְׂיוֹשְׁבֵינָא וְעוֹסְקִין בִּתְוֵרָה, שְׂכִינָה שְׂרוּיָה בֵּינֵיהֶם, שְׁנַאֲמַר (תהלים פב) אֱלֹהִים נֹצֵב בְּעֵדֶת אֵל. וּמִנִּין אֶפְלוּ חֲמִשָּׁה, שְׁנַאֲמַר (עמוס ט) וְאֶגְדָּתוֹ עַל אֶרֶץ יִסְדָּהּ. וּמִנִּין אֶפְלוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה, שְׁנַאֲמַר (תהלים פב) בְּקֶרֶב אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁפֹּט. וּמִנִּין אֶפְלוּ שְׁנַיִם, שְׁנַאֲמַר (מלאכי ג) אֲזַ נְדַבְרוּ יְרָאִי ה' אִישׁ אֶל רֵעֵהוּ וַיִּקְשַׁב ה' וַיִּשְׁמַע וְגו'. וּמִנִּין אֶפְלוּ אֶחָד, שְׁנַאֲמַר (שמות כ) בְּכֹל הַמְּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֲזַכִּיר אֶת שְׁמִי אָבָא אֵלֶיךָ וּבֵרַכְתִּיךָ:

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "the Shechina resides amongst them" - this is the Divine flow to enlighten their eyes in wisdom (hu hashpah Elokit l'ha-ir einhem b'chachma).

"the Al-mighty stands in the congregation (eida) of G-d" - "congregation" (eida) is not less than 10. And when they are toiling in torah, it is called a "congregation of G-d". And even though by five, three and two it is also so as he continues. But nevertheless, the more they are, the greater the hashpah (divine flow).

Q Level 1

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - if even one person has much reward, then it is obvious that from two to ten there is much reward. Rather [from two to ten] each one receives [additional] reward because they are many.

Q Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - earlier in mishna 2, it was referring to people speaking in their matters and there are [also] words of torah mixed in them. On that he said the Shechina is among them (beinehem). But here he speaks on those actually toiling in torah. Here it says the Shechina rests (sheruyah) there (a higher intensity than the Shechina is among them).

Our sages already said (Berachot 6a): "two people [who toil in torah] have their words inscribed in the book of remembrance, three even if they toil in judgment it is considered as if they are toiling in torah. For judgment (din) is also torah. For ten people, the Shechina comes before they arrive. For three, the Shechina comes only after they sit down.."

For one person [who toils in torah], he brought a proof on his reward. Namely, that his reward is greater than those who have torah among them (mixed in their words as in mishna 2). Thus he brought a proof that the Shechina rests with him when he toils in torah, as written: "I will come to you and bless you".

Q Level 2

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "Every place where I have My name mentioned" - it seems he should have said: "Every place where you mention My Name (asher tazkir)". The explanation is as the midrash on the verse: "who preceded Me that I should pay him back?" (Iyov 41:3). For in truth, the Holy One,

blessed be He, is the one who gives a man strength to learn and think in torah or to do some mitzvah, as written (Nishmat prayer): "the limbs you formed for us, and the spirit and soul You breathed into us and the tongue you placed in our mouths, they will praise..". It is not from our own power.

This is the meaning of "every place where I have My name mentioned". That is to say, even though I am the one who gives you strength to do valor (chayil) in torah and mitzvot. And according to justice I am not obligated to pay back any reward. But nevertheless, it is considered before Me as if you did it with your own power and I will come to you and bless you.

Alternatively, sometimes man learns in order to obtain honor or the like. thus the cause to learn is the desire for honor. But when he learns for G-d, the cause (mazkir) to learn is G-d. This is what he said, when he learns such that I (G-d) am the cause (mazkir), then I will come to you and bless you...

🔍 Level 3

☆ Siftef Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftef Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - "the Shechina rests among them" - for the essence (mahuta) of torah is clinging and connecting (medubakim u'mechubarim) of a man with the blessed Creator. For "the Holy One, blessed be He, the torah, and Yisrael are one" (Zohar), clinging and connecting until they are one. (Daat Chochma u'Mussar 1:61).

The matter is that the secret (Sod) of torah is: "I have created the Evil Inclination, and I created the torah as its antidote" (Kidushin 30b) - torah annuls the evil absolutely, that the evil has no foothold and dominion. Thus perforce, immediately the Shechina comes and rests. (Daat Torah pg.227).

See the commentary of the Yaavetz later on chapter 3 mishna 14. Here is a quote: "we find individuals inherit Olam Haba in being individuals. For the level of each individual [in Olam Haba] is according to the level of torah he learned and fulfilled. If some of our people realized this, they would stop "pleasing themselves with foreign children" (Isaiah 2:6, ie wasting their time). end quote. (Daat Chochma u'Mussar vol.3 pg.20).

"Every place where I have My Name mentioned" - the explanation is that the whole torah is Names of the Holy One, blessed be He. See the Ramban's introduction in his commentary on the torah.

🔍 Level 2



Merkavat haMishna - "the Shechina resides among them" - ie they cling to G-d.. For the torah itself is the Shechina. And when they toil in it - the torah resides among them, they become one with it.. For the torah is all G-dliness.

🔍 Level 3

☆ Ohr HaChaim

Ohr Hachaim, Vayigash - the levels of the "light of the Shechina" are many. Our sages taught that for ten who toil in torah, the Shechina resides among them. And even for two or one person, the Shechina is found.

The midrash says (Tanchuma Tetzave): "the Shechina did not descend among the Jewish people until they built the Tabernacle (mishkan)", and this was after many preparations mentioned there. When the Shechina descended, they saw the "glory of G-d" fill the Tabernacle (Shemot 40:34). This is something not perceived when people toil in torah, not even for a thousand people.

Thus, without a doubt, there are countless level of residing of the Shechina.. The intensity of the light which resides varies according to the level of the cause of this. Go and learn about the level of the residing of the Shechina which occurred at mount Sinai. Below this, the level at the Temple of Jerusalem. Below this, the level of residing of the Shechina on a prophet, synagogue, Beit

Midrash, ten people who learn torah, and below this in number.

 **Level 3**

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - there are many questions on this mishna.

1. What is the sage coming to teach us with this that the Shechina resides with 10, 5, 3, 2, and 1?..
2. Why did the sage toil to bring so many verses that the Shechina resides among those who learn torah? Let him say simply: "whoever learns torah, the Shechina resides with him, whether for an individual or for many."
3. We already learned earlier in mishna 3 that the Shechina resides with 2 or 1 person who learns torah.

We must say that the sage is coming to teach that there are many levels of resting of the Shechina. The Shechina of one person is not like the Shechina of two people. And likewise for two versus three and three versus five and five versus ten.

Why was it so important for the sage to teach us this? For if we did not know this, then every righteous person who wants to learn torah diligently would learn only by himself. Likewise, he would not make any efforts to teach torah to others who are on a lower level.

For he would be certain that this would cause him to lose out learning torah at a higher level.

Thus, the sage tells us: even though it appears to you that you will learn less good if you teach others, but nevertheless it is worth it for you. For you will have a much greater level of resting of the Shechina. Through this, your torah will be much better guarded and blessed than if you learned alone..

"ten who sit.. as written: 'the Al-mighty stands in the congregation of G-d'" - One who stands up is much more visible and sticks out much more than one who sits down. So too for G-d, so to speak. Wherever it is written that G-d "stands", the intent is that the resting of the Shechina is much stronger than when it says G-d "sits".. This also hints that the shefa (divine flow) comes from a much higher place... (see there for an explanation on the other verses).

"Every place where I have My Name mentioned" - G-d listens to him and learns opposite him. Thus the verse says "where I have My Name mentioned" and not "where you mention My Name". This implies that G-d also learns and repeats what this Jew learns...

This is not to denigrate those who learn alone or with a study partner. For even one who learns by himself has the enormous merit that the Holy One, blessed be He, learns opposite him. Is it light in our eyes that the Holy One, blessed be He, learns chavruta with every Jew who studies torah. And furthermore, he deserves to be blessed???

As known, even the lowest level in the spiritual is incomparably valuable. For example, if a meeting were made for all the billionaires in the world. Even if one were to say on one of them that he is the poorest of them. But nevertheless, this billionaire is considered one of the richest people in the world.

So too for the spiritual relative to the physical. But certainly the more learners, the more residing of the Shechina until the previous level is considered poor compared to it. And our sages said: "there is no comparison between a few who fulfill the Torah and many who fulfill the Torah.." (Vayikra 26:8, Rashi).

 **Level 4**

☆ **Mishnat Rebbi Aharon**

Mishnat Rebbi Aharon - the matter of "resting (hashra) of the Shechina" on one who learns torah is not a kind of reward for the mitzvah. Rather this is how the mitzvah of torah study is fulfilled. For it is impossible to receive torah like one receives other physical matters. Even though everything is from G-d, but the process of receiving other matters is through a system of intermediaries.

On the other hand, receiving torah is not through anything else. Rather, "G-d grants wisdom, from His mouth comes wisdom and understanding" (Mishlei 2:6).

Our sages call this: "the Shechina resides opposite him" (Shechina shruya kenegdo). Thus the blessing on the torah ends off "who teaches torah to His people Israel" - in the present, not just in the past.

Due to this one who learns torah to mock (lekanter), his torah is not proper. The Creator is not pleased with him and it is better for him if he were not born. He is like a servant whose master does not want to see his face.

On this foundation, Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin built his foundation (Nefesh Hachaim shaar 4, perek 6). Namely, that torah study itself is devekut (clinging to G-d), and there is no need for one's thoughts to be occupied in devekut at that time. For the torah study itself, its essence is clinging to G-d. For He and His will are one.

 **Level 4**

☆ **Maharal Tzintz**

Maharal Tzintz - "ten people...even for one.. - although the Shechina rests on ten, but certainly not every ten are equal. For everything is according to the preparation.

Ten people in the generation of Moshe Rabeinu are not like ten people in the generations afterwards. Everything is according to the preparation of the receivers. For the shefa (divine flow) of holiness from the side of G-d is infinite. Only that each person receives according to his preparation. Therefore, Moshe Rabeinu who was the master of the prophets would receive greater and more powerful Shefa. So too for every person - every person according to his preparation... It is like one whose eyes are weak and he cannot see in the bright light of the sun. But "G-d does not withhold good from those who walk wholeheartedly" (Tehilim 84:11). The obstruction is not from G-d's side but rather from the side of the receiver.

Although there is a bestowing of shefa of the Shechina for one who toils in torah but nevertheless one person is not like two or three as Rashi brought on the verse: "five of you will drive away 100, etc." (Vayikra 26:8) - [Rashi-] "many who toil in torah is not the same as few".

But as before there is also a limitless difference from the aspect of the preparation of the person learning.

For the holiness of toil in torah of Moshe Rabeinu was not the same as that of Yehoshua and that of Yehoshua, etc. Each according to his preparation.

And (today) one's holiness and torah is certainly far without limit from that of the Rishonim.

But nevertheless, what our sages said is true. The Shechina is with those who toil in torah. But the increase or decrease of the shefa of holiness is according to the level of the person. Some are able to receive much light from the sun while others can receive only a tiny spark for they are not prepared to receive the light more than a tiny crack of a needle.

Chapter 3 Mishna 8 - You Are His

Rabbi Elazar of Birtotah would say: "give to Him from what is His, for you and what is yours is His". And likewise, by David it is written: "for everything is from You and from Your own we have given to You" (Divrei HaYamim I 29).

Q Level 1

☆ **Bartenura**

Bartenura - do not refrain from occupying in things G-d desires, whether with your body or with your money. For you and your money belong to him.

Q Level 1

☆ **Tiferet Yisrael**

Tiferet Yisrael - it seems to me that this is not only for tzedaka (charity). Rather, it means as follows: if G-d graced you with some quality or power, like wealth, courage (gevurah), wisdom, memory, pleasant voice, or the like - offer it up to G-d by using it for holy purposes.

Q Level 2

☆ **Rabeinu Yonah**

Rabeinu Yonah - for man's money is only a deposit in his hands from the Holy One, blessed be He. Only that he has an advantage over other deposits. Namely, that he can use the money to buy all his needs. But for the rest of the money, he should give it as the wish of the deposit Owner, namely, the Holy One, blessed be He, who commanded him to give to the poor. He should be very joyful for being able to sustain himself honorably from the deposit and when he does the will of its Owner from the rest, he should not boast to himself (yachzik tovah l'atzmo).

For it was given to him for this purpose. This is like the case of a flesh and blood king who gave his servant a thousand zuz. The king told him "take one hundred for yourself and give the remaining 900 to nine different people." Will he not rejoice in this?

Q Level 3

☆ **Binyan Avot**

Binyan Avot - in the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 267:22) "all that a slave acquires belongs to his master. This is so whether he found a lost object or it was given to him as a gift. And likewise whether it was given to him by his master or by someone else - the slave does not acquire it. Rather, everything belongs to his master. Even if the giver stipulates a condition: "on condition that your master does not have any ownership in it" - it does not avail. Only if the master gives to him on condition that he goes out to freedom" end quote. With this the words of our mishna are explained.

A man should not say: "even though it is written: 'the earth and all that is in it belongs to G-d' (Tehilim 24:1) and 'the Heavens belong to G-d while the earth was given to human beings' (Tehilim 115:16), and thus the person has acquired his belongings and the Giver no longer has any merit in this gift".

On this, the sage said: "give to Him from what is His, for you and what is yours is His". Even though you think G-d has given it to you as a gift. But the money did not yet go out of His domain. For you yourself are acquired to Him a kinyan guf (like a slave) and whoever gives to a slave, whether the master or someone else - it all belongs to his master.

Chapter 3 Mishna 9 - Tree On Road

Rabbi Shimon would say: one who walks on the road while reviewing (his torah study) and then stops his study and says: "how beautiful is this tree" or "how beautiful is this plowed field", scripture regards him as if he is liable for his soul".

רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן אוֹמֵר, הַמְהִילָךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ וְשׁוֹנֶה, וּמְפַסֵּיק מִמְשַׁנְתּוֹ וְאוֹמֵר, מֵה נָאָה אֵילָן זֶה וְיִמָּה נָאָה נִיר זֶה, מִעֵלָה עָלָיו הַכְּתוּב, כְּאִלּוּ מִתְחַיֵּב בְּנַפְשׁוֹ:

Level 1

☆ Rashi

Rashi - "liable for his soul" - ie he puts himself in danger. For when he is occupied in torah, the Satan does not have permission to harm him. But once he interrupts for idle talk, the Satan is granted permission.

Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - "as if he is liable for his soul" - some explain (Rashi) because on the road mazikim (damaging agents) are common and the weapon to save oneself from them is torah, to study it on the road. But if he interrupts his study, he is left without a weapon such that the mazikim are able to harm him. Therefore, he said: "as if he is liable for his life". For his blood is on his head for giving himself over to the mazikim with this interruption. He did not say: "he is liable for his life", but rather "scripture regards him as if he is liable for his life". For it is only possible that the mazikim will hurt him and not a certainty.

Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "how beautiful is this tree" - so too for all idle talk (sicha beteila). He is speaking on the common. For it is common for travellers on the road to speak on what their eyes see..

Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - R. Yonah for while a man studies, he should not talk idle speech. For one must stand in awe and fear before the torah. This is as our sages said: "any scholar who sits before his teacher and his lips do not drip bitterness, they shall be burnt" (Shab.30b). For since he is using the crown of torah, he must stand in awe, fear, and fright, not to speak idle words. And if he becomes lightheaded to interrupt his learning - he is liable for his life..

Level 2

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel - this wise man came to strengthen the greatness of torah for all those who hold on to it. So that their eyes and hearts will be on it constantly and they will not abandon it to speak and think on other things all the time they are toiling in it. For that would demonstrate that it is not important in the eyes of he who toils in it. For he turns his heart to other things [in the middle]. This teaching is also to strengthen and support the previous mishna of Rabbi Chaninah ben Chachinai who said: "one who walks on the road alone, etc..".

Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "one who walks on the road.." - even though it is forbidden to delve [deeply] into torah on the road, nevertheless, he is under obligation to learn simple things which won't distract him so much, as stated in the torah: "and when you walk on the road" (Shema). He chose "road" because all roads are dangerous. But so too for one in his home. When he pauses in the middle of his learning, there is nevertheless a prohibition..

"how beautiful is this tree" - so too for other idle talk, only that he taught these (tree, etc.) to teach that it is so even though they are the praise of G-d, blessed be He (who created them).

Even though in truth, he is not liable for his life since he is praising the Holy One, blessed be He.

But nevertheless he demonstrates that his eyes and heart are not bound with the words of the living G-d (torah).

 **Level 2**

Misgeret Zahav

Misgeret Zahav - he exchanges gold for copper in turning from the wisdom of torah to the wisdom of nature..

 **Level 3**



Emunat Yisrael, Grodzisk - it seems just the opposite [ie it is a mitzvah to look at the tree]. For our sages instituted an extra blessing when one sees beautiful trees (ilanot tovot). Rather, the intent is that he interrupts from his divine learning (torah), and looks only at the physicality (gashmiut) of the tree, and on its external beauty, not on the divine power within the tree which maintains its existence. In this he is liable for his intellectual soul which longs always to look at the inner aspect of the matter.

 **Level 3**

☆ **Maharal**

Maharal - since he said previously that G-d is with man when he learns (torah).. and he spoke of the greatness of the connection of G-d with man when he learns, thus: "one who walks on the road..how beautiful is this tree..". That is to say, when man separates from torah, he separates from He who is with him when he learns torah.

For when a man stands before a king and speaks to the king and then a person passes and he interrupts his conversation with the king and speaks to the other person, this is separating from the king, to not want to be with him. Without a doubt, this is [an affront] against the king.

Similarly for our case and due to this "scriptures considers it as if he is liable for his soul". For one who commits something against the king is liable for his life. This is the matter of "rebelling against the king" (mored b'malchut) which is a capital offense.

Furthermore, when a person learns torah, he is on the level of Intellect (sichlit). And when he separates from this, he brings death on himself.. And the opposite of this, one who toils in torah, due to the greatness of the level of Intellect he clings to, inexistence (death) does not rule over him. This is as our sages said in many places that the angel of death is unable to rule over a person who does not pause from torah study, such as by David (Shab.30b), Rabba bar Nachmani (Bava Metziah 86a), and other places.

All this is because the Intellect has a complete existence. If he clings to this level, the inexistence which clings to the physical does not cling to him. And the opposite of this for one who separates from this (torah), his existence is pushed away...

"liable for his soul" - certainly the explanation is as we explained. For whoever separates from something is against and antagonistic to the thing he separates from. If he were not against it, he would not have separated from it. For things which are connected do not separate. On the contrary, the similar loves that which is similar to it.

And since the torah is Intellect (sichlit) and the Intellect has complete existence, inexistence (he'eder) does not cling to it, therefore, the torah is called: "your life and the length of your days". And one who separates from torah is against life and one who is against life is certainly liable for his soul. Therefore, "scripture considers it as if he is liable for his soul".

 **Level 4**

☆ **Matanat Avot**

Matanat Avot - we are not speaking here about a man who does not learn at all. But rather on a very diligent scholar such that even when he walks on the road, he utilizes the time to learn

mishnayot by heart.. Only to such a diligent person who appreciates the value of each second of life, is it possible to give the lesson in this mishna. For a man who does not learn at all and wastes most of his days and years in vanity and worthlessness, there is no way to begin to explain to him the important foundation here.

Thus, the Tanna began: "one who walks on the road and reviews..". For only such a person can understand why if he interrupts his learning in order to say: "how beautiful is this tree", does he enter the category of "liable for his soul".

Our sages famously concluded: "man was created to toil in torah" (Sanhedrin 99). Thus, if he was created for this, then this is his primary purpose and duty in his world. And even if a person needs to toil in his physical needs, livelihood, family, and many other matters he needs, but nevertheless, every free moment, when there is nothing pressing to do now, he is under duty to toil in torah. For this is the purpose for which he was sent to this world.. And since his time in this world is limited, then even if he interrupts this learning time for a few seconds, this is an eternal loss which he can never pay back or make up the time. For the fixed time allotted to him to learn torah includes the time he wasted and he cannot make it up since the future time is already a new obligation on him.

Thus it seems the Tanna used the term "liable for his soul". For there is indeed an obligation here and since it is an obligation, it is a debt he can never pay back. This debt will remain engraved in his soul forever.

I am sure dear reader you are thinking: "if so, you have not left any life to any creature". For who can possibly use every second without interruption!? Can we say that a person who spoke once to his friend is already "liable for his soul"??..

You're right. It's not for nothing that I wrote earlier that I am not worthy to give you mussar in this. For I am also a big batlan (lazy) and very much afflicted with this problem.

But I will explain to you an important foundation regarding the mitzvah of talmud torah and guarding one's time for this. Regarding the mitzvah of torah study, we were not given a clear amount for every person. We find in the talmud (Menachot 98b): "Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai says: 'even if a person read the shema morning and evening, he already fulfilled the mitvah of 'you shall contemplate in it day and night' (Yehoshua 1:8)".

On the other hand, we find Rabbi Yishmael said to his nephew who wanted to study greek: "go and find a time which is neither day nor night, as written: 'you shall contemplate in it day and night' (Yehoshua 1:8)".

Many pens have been broken to try to explain this argument between Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and Rabbi Yishmael. What appears to me in my humble opinion is that the matter is as we said. Namely, each person is obligated to toil in torah every free second of his life besides the time he needs for his physical needs and matters.

How much time is needed for this? This varies from person to person. Certainly, it is not the same for a yeshiva bachur (unmarried yeshiva student) who has no distractions and has abundant free time versus a married man with a family and many pressing needs he must take care of.

Likewise, the Rambam wrote in Hilchot Talmud Torah (1:8): "every Jewish person is obligated in talmud torah, whether poor or rich, healthy or suffering, young or very old... even one who has a wife and family - is obligated to fix times for talmud torah day and night".

According to this, one who merits to reach the level where he uses his time properly, and loves to learn, and nothing prevents him from learning torah always, then he is in truth under great obligation to learn torah every free moment such that if he interrupts his study for one moment and says: "how beautiful is this tree, etc." this is already considered a lacking he cannot rectify. For he will have new obligations every second.

But one who did not yet merit to reach this amazing level, and he does not yet have the strength to utilize every moment of his time, and he must at times "get some air" in the middle of his learning, and if he forces himself to learn long hours without interruption, he will go crazy from the pressure, then without a doubt, he has no obligation to learn every second like the exalted man we mentioned earlier.

For he has other needs he must tend to and at those times he is exempt from talmud torah. For he is obligated to toil in "getting air" for his physical and mental health. Thus, for this person, the exalted level mentioned in this mishna does not apply to him.

The summary of all this is that all that a man needs to interrupt his learning for his physical or mental health - this is not considered bitul torah (wasting time from torah). Rather, it is like all other daily needs of a person which he has throughout his life, whereby when he is occupied with them, it is impossible for him to learn. Thus, it is not included in the time allotted to him to learn torah.

However and this is a big "however", the moment he has "aired out" sufficiently for his mental peace, certainly the obligation to learn torah as much as he can is upon him. And he should not say: "wonderful, I am not able to learn and thus it is permitted for me to 'air out' as much as I want".

For certainly, every intelligent person understands that the reward for learning torah is far greater than the reward for that "airing out" he needs. Who is so foolish to think it is worth increasing the time for "airing out" during which he loses the infinite reward of torah study itself?

Thus, it is proper for every person to strive with all his strength and also pray to G-d to grant him strength to utilize all his time as much as possible for torah study. So that he will not need to go out more than necessary between every few minutes of torah study so that he merits as much as possible the unimaginably immense reward of torah study.

Level 4

B'Tov Yerushalayim, Rav Ben Tzion Yadler, ch.6 - I went to Rabeinu Yehoshua Leib Diskin of Brisk and asked him: "Rabeinu teach us what things are defined as idle talk and how far does bitul torah extend?" (ma hen hadevarim asher yugderu k'sicha beteila v'ad heichen shiuro shel bitul torah).

The Rav asked me: "what times are you asking on? Your talk in the yeshiva or outside of it?"

I answered him: "I am asking generally".

Immediately, he got up from his chair and went to the bookshelf and pulled out a book of mishna Nezikim. He showed me with his finger in tractate Avot the words of our sages: "one who walks on the road while reviewing (his torah study) and then stops his study and says: 'how beautiful is this tree', etc. scripture regards him as if he is liable for his soul", and in the Bartenura commentary he writes: "even though through this, he blesses 'shekacha lo bolamo', even so, 'scripture regards him as if he is liable for his soul' since he interrupted his learning".

The Rav of Brisk ended off: "it is a kol v'chomer (logical inference) - if for one who is going on the roadway whose learning is not fixed, if he turns his heart even for a mitzva he is liable for his soul, one who sits in yeshiva whose entire time is fixed for torah study, how much more so is he liable for his soul if he interrupts his study. (see previous Matanat Avot commentary).

Level 4

Translator - why such a big deal for a little interruption? Perhaps the answer is that he did not do all that is in his power to do and then as the Vilna Gaon wrote (Orot HaGra sec. Avodah):

Says Rabbi Shimon ben Lekesh (Talmud Sukah 52 quoting the verse in Tehilim 37:32) "man's evil inclination strengthens on him each day...and if not for the Holy One blessed be who aids the man, the evil inclination would overpower him."

(Vilna Gaon explains:) Our sages had intent with this to a great and important fundamental principle (ikar gadol v'nichbad) in which all the success of a man depends on (kol osher hatzlachas haenoshi tolei alav). And the matter is as follows: Even though the Creator gave a man the power to vanquish his evil inclination through the (holy) spirit which dwells within him (his soul), nevertheless, the act cannot be completed through man's hands. And it is very difficult for a man to come to its tachlisa (full purpose), and the only thing in his hand to do is to start the work and to do everything that it is in his power to do. And the completion of the work is through the help from the Al-mighty who accompanies the man to bring him to the completed work.

And G-d yisborach examines the heart, etc. and determines when a man has done his part and what is he capable of doing. And when He sees that the man has done all that he is capable of doing and that he is not capable of doing more, and all his desire is to the good (has pure intentions), then the Al-mighty's help from on high will accompany him and will finish for him and complete what he lacked from it.

And without this, the Al-mighty will not send help from holiness (i.e. some help may come but very little and from a lower place).

And this is the intent of the Sages saying 'if not for the Holy One blessed be who aids the man, the Yetzer would overpower him'. - that when does the Holy One help him? Only when a man has done all that is in his power to do, to vanquish his inclination, and he has reached the level now where 'if G-d did not help him, he will not be able to do more' because he has already come to the end of the limits of his capability in his actions - then G-d will send His help from holiness, and G-d will not abandon the man to his clutches. However, if there is still a capacity for the man to do more than he did and he does not do more, so too G-d will not help him. (from Kovetz Eliyahu sukka 52, Oros HaGra sec. Avodah)

Chapter 3 Mishna 10 - Whoever Forgets

Rabbi Dostai ben Rabbi Yannai would say in the name of Rabbi Meir: "whoever forgets [even] one thing of his Torah learning, is considered by scripture as if he is liable for his soul (life), as written: 'guard yourself and guard your soul very much, lest you forget the things which your eyes saw [at Sinai]' (Devarim 4:9). It could be assumed that this includes also one who forgot due his studies being too difficult for him, thus scriptures continues: 'lest you remove them from your heart all the days of your life' - this teaches that one is not liable for his life unless he sits [idle] and removes them from his heart".

רַבִּי דוֹסְתַי בֶּן רַבִּי יַנַּי בְּרַבִּי יְנָאי מְשׁוּם רַבִּי מֵאִיר אֹמֵר, כָּל הַשּׁוֹכֵחַ דְּבַר אֶחָד מִמִּשְׁנֵתוֹ, מַעֲלָה עָלָיו הַכֶּתוּב כְּאִלּוּ מִתְחַיֵּב בְּנַפְשׁוֹ, שְׁנֹאמֵר (דְּבָרִים ד) רַק הַשְּׂמֵר לָךְ וְשִׁמֵּר נַפְשְׁךָ מֵאֵד פֶּן תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ. יְכוּל אֶפְלוּ תִקְפָּה עָלָיו מִשְׁנֵתוֹ, תִּלְמוּד לּוֹמֵר (שם) וְפֶן יִסּוּרוּ מִלְכַבֵּךְ כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ, הָא אֵינּוּ מִתְחַיֵּב בְּנַפְשׁוֹ עַד שֶׁיִּשָּׁב וְיִסִּירֵם מִלְּבוֹ.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "whoever forgets.." - due to not reviewing it.. For due to his forgetting, he permits the forbidden and thus a calamity goes out through his hands..

Alternatively, it is as if he is liable for his soul. Because this mishna would have guarded over him. But now that he has forgotten it, it no longer guards over him.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "whoever forgets.." - he did not put to heart that forgetfulness is prevalent in people and he should have reviewed the halacha many times and thought about it all day and all night until it cannot be removed from his heart. If he did not do so, he is liable for his soul. For he will come to instruct by memory and permit the forbidden thus bringing a calamity through his hands. He is called a poshea (sinner) for "unintentional talmud is considered intentional".

But if he forgot due to old age or some other accident (oness), then he is exempt.

Q Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "whoever forgets.." - i.e. he does not reviewing it always due to laziness.

"as if he is liable for his soul" - even though in truth, he is not liable for his soul. For he is learning just that he does not review his learning. But nevertheless, since he was lazy on reviewing his learning, he reveals that he does not care if he forgets them.

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "too difficult for him" - i.e. it was difficult for him (to understand it) and due to the difficulty in it, he forgot it.

Q Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - "whoever (all) forgets [even] one thing of his Torah learning.." - some say "all" comes to include even one who forgets due to laziness or due to being forced to find a livelihood for his home, nevertheless - "it is as if he is liable for his life". And one is not exempt from this punishment except for one whose "studies are too difficult for him".

Q Level 2

Meorei Ohr

Meorei Ohr - in the book Keter Rosh (end of siddur haG"ra, ot 67) in the name of R. Chaim of Volozhin: "regarding 'one who forgets one thing of his learning' - this refers to the early generations who learned by heart". end quote. However in the Shulchan Aruch of Rabbi Zalman (Hilchot Talmud Torah 2:4) it says that this prohibition applies even today despite that the oral law was

written down. see there.

Q Level 3



Hitorerut Teshuva chelek dalet, 130 - it seems to me that one who does the things which bring forgetfulness in torah (see Horayot 13b) transgresses this prohibition. For he causes words of torah to be removed from his heart.

Q Level 2



Nofet Tzufim Koritz 58 - through extended learning without much desire and life (cheshek v'chiyut), the memory becomes defective. But this is not a sin if his level is not higher than this. However it is good to elevate oneself in one's learning, namely, to learn with desire and fervor (chafeitza v'chasheika) and taste the sweet taste of torah. For it is good. And not that his learning overpowers him (and it becomes too heavy).

Q Level 4



Imrot Tehorot - the Arizal explains that forgetfulness comes through blemish of the soul and sin. For this "whoever forgets, etc." - know that he is liable for his life and is a sinner.

Q Level 4

Tosfot Yom Tov

Tosfot Yom Tov - It seems to me, there are three categories in the matter:

One, that he intends to remove words of torah from his heart. Our mishna is not talking about this category and neither is Rabbi Chanina ben Chachinai (who said earlier: "one who is awake at night.. and turns his heart to idleness is liable for his soul"). Rather, if he intends to remove words of torah from his heart, this is in the category of "whoever removes from himself the yoke of torah.." of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa earlier.

The second category is one who does not intend nor seek that the words of torah be removed from his heart and forgotten. If he did not forget them, he would be happy. But he desires idleness (batala) more than toil in torah and he seeks and goes after the idleness (batala. This category is "one who turns his heart to idleness" of Rabbi Chanina ben Chachinai who said he is liable for his soul.

The third category is one who does not want idleness (batala) more than words of torah. But when a matter of idleness comes to his hand, he sits and becomes idle and lax from reviewing his learning. This category is the one of our mishna. Namely, that he sits and removes them from his heart. For by sitting idly, the matters become removed from his heart [automatically].

Chapter 3 Mishna 11 - Fear Before Wisdom

Rabbi Chanina ben Dossa would say: "one whose fear of sin precedes his wisdom (knowledge) - his wisdom endures, but one whose wisdom precedes his fear of sin - his wisdom does not endure".

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

He would also say: "one whose [good] deeds exceeds his wisdom - his wisdom will endure. But one whose wisdom exceeds his [good] deeds, his wisdom will not endure".

הוא היה אומר, כל שמעשיו מרביין מחכמתו, חכמתו מתקיימת. וכל שחכמתו מרבה ממעשיו, אין חכמתו מתקיימת.

Level 1

☆ Rashi

Rashi - "fear of sin precedes his wisdom" - in all his deeds and matters, fear of sin precedes and comes before him. He remembers it in all that he does.

"his wisdom endures" - his deeds are fulfilled and he succeeds in all that he turns. For since fear of Heaven stands before his eyes every hour, he does not stumble in his deeds..

Level 2



Mahari - in every thing that a person comes to weigh in his mind and decide whether or not it is proper and correct to do, he needs to precede fear of G-d to this contemplation. Namely, to weigh carefully whether this action contains a trace of sin or of the forbidden. And if he sees that this deed has some aspect which is against the torah, he should pull back his hand and refrain from doing it. If he does thus to place everything on the examination of fear of sin - then his wisdom will endure. For the foundation and beginning of wisdom is fear of G-d. Otherwise, his wisdom will not endure. Understand this.

Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "fear of sin precedes his wisdom" - I heard that it means that he precedes thoughts of fear of sin to his wisdom. Namely, that he thinks in his heart: "I will learn [torah] in order to become one who fears sin". This is as our sages said: "the beginning of thought is the end of the action".

"his wisdom endures" - the wisdom brings him to what his heart desires and he benefits from it.

Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "fear of sin precedes his wisdom, his wisdom endures" - he guards from sinning. For whoever sins, a spirit of folly enters him (Sotah 3a).

Level 1

☆ Ohr Yisrael

Ohr Yisrael (41:11) - for without fear, all the torah and the service is only rote practice (mitzvah anashim melumada) whereby a light wind will blow it away.

Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "but one whose wisdom precedes his fear of sin, his wisdom does not endure" - he does not learn [torah] in order to do. Since his heart does not turn towards becoming one who fears sin, his wisdom does not endure. For since his wisdom obstructs him from following the whims of his heart, he despises it and is disgusted by it and abandons it.

Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "his wisdom does not endure" - he did not strive from the beginning to know wisdom in order to fulfill it. But rather, just to think and reason (I'havin ule'haskil, i.e. just for intellectual stimulation).

Alternatively, when his fear of sin precedes his wisdom, his learning exhorts him and encourages him to continue in the way he is habituated in to fear sin. But if his wisdom precedes his fear of sin, this means his wisdom does not restrain him from sins he is used to committing. Thus, eventually, he will kick at it because the wisdom feels like a burden to him.

 **Level 2**

Chasdei David

Chasdei David - the primary purpose of his learning is to know wisdom, not for the purpose of torah which is teshuva (repentance) and good deeds. Then, his wisdom does not endure.

 **Level 2**

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "whose wisdom precedes his fear of sin" - he tells himself: "I will read the books of the heretics, which is human wisdom, and I will not sin. Thus, he considers those wisdoms more important than the fear that perhaps he will sin.

"his wisdom does not endure" - he comes to err. For he was not concerned that perhaps he will lose his world and scripture screams: "distance from her ways (of heresy), and do not draw near to the entrance of her house" (Proverbs 5:8, Avodah Zara 16).

However, after he has become firmly rooted in the holiness of torah and fear of sin, it is permitted and even a mitzvah to examine their books, as our sages exhorted us: "know what to answer a heretic". Perhaps this is also the intent of our mishna.

 **Level 1**

☆ **Bartenura**

PART 2 - One Whose [Good] Deeds..

Bartenura - "one whose [good] deeds exceeds his wisdom" - here he is referring to one who is zealous in the positive commandments. Before this when he said: "one whose fear of sin precedes his wisdom..", this was referring to one who guards the negative commandments.

 **Level 2**

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "one whose [good] deeds exceeds his wisdom" - he is an upright tzadik (righteous man) but not so much a lamdan (sharp scholar). Do not look down on him on his little wisdom. For since he learns to fulfill, "one who comes to purify himself is helped from Above", and the gates of the light of wisdom will be opened for him.

"but one whose wisdom exceeds his [good] deeds, his wisdom will not endure" - all his learning is only to show off. And since the bodily desires overcame him like an animal, eventually his wisdom will become coarse and uprooted. For the root of his wisdom rotted from inside.

 **Level 2**

☆ **Rabeinu Yonah**

Rabeinu Yonah - "whoever's deeds is greater than his wisdom" - there is [room] to ask: "how is it possible for his deeds to be greater than his wisdom? If he does not know torah and mitzvot, what deeds can he possibly do? Rather, this mishna is coming to teach a useful and good advice. Namely, for he who does not know, then, lest he lose his soul, let him take upon himself to do all the things the sages of his generation tell him. He should not veer from their words right or left when he will know them. And he should strive to guard and do according to the torah they will instruct him. When he accepts this on himself wholeheartedly and with a willing soul, it is considered as if he fulfilled all the mitzvot..

Likewise in Avot d'Rabbi Nathan (22:1) "whoever's deeds is greater than his wisdom, his wisdom endures, as written: 'we will do and we will listen' (Shemot 24:7)..". Namely, they accepted upon themselves to do all that G-d will command them.. Thus immediately they received reward as if

they fulfilled them [all]..

Q Level 3

☆ Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - some explain, "whoever's deeds is greater than his wisdom", namely, he practices more than what he preaches - such a person is certainly fitting and worthy to teach others and his words will be heard. This is the meaning of "his wisdom endures", i.e. in other people. For he teaches and succeeds.

But he who preaches nicely but does not practice, i.e. his wisdom is greater than his deeds - his wisdom does not endure in others and he does not succeed. For everyone says that his words are like the chirping of birds since he himself does not believe them.

Q Level 3

Chida

Chida - Zeroah Yamin - i.e. if he does not have fear of Heaven, his wisdom departs from him. For example, if he has arrogance, his wisdom departs, as written: "one who becomes proud, his wisdom departs". If he does evil, his torah goes to the Sitra Achra (forces of evil) and also scripture says of him: "But to the wicked man God said, "For what reason do you recount My statutes, and bring up My covenant on Your mouth?" (Tehilim 50:16).

Also when he does not have fear of Heaven, if he exhorts and preaches to the people, they will not listen to him. For everyone knows that he does not fulfill. Thus his wisdom does not endure. For others don't listen to him. If he learns to do bad (le'kanter), his torah becomes a death potion. But if he precedes fear and learns lishma, in order to fulfill - his wisdom endures and stays with him always and it endures in that others will learn from him.

Q Level 3

☆ Michtav M'Eliyahu

Michtav M'Eliyahu ch.2 - wisdom is what is found in the intellect (sechel), while deeds are on the level of the heart. A man's deeds are those which he does in his inner chambers, when there is no external influence. Then his deeds show his true inner level which conflicts with his wisdom. For it is possible for a man to know many levels of wisdom and divine service without this bringing him to manifest any action whatsoever.

The primary path of a person's ascent is in that which he puts his wisdom to heart. Namely, that his wisdom drills down to his inner being until it becomes an inner truth and brings him to true deeds.

But if the wisdom is greater than the deeds, then it remains outside, namely, only in the intellect. And the intellect is a kli (vessel) to bring it down to the heart. This is the work asked of man. Therefore, if the wisdom in the intellect is on a higher level than the level in the heart, which is the level of the man himself, then already there are desecrations and accusations formed. For since the man knows the truth but he does not put his heart to this, then according to justice, such a situation warrants that this man deserves to be removed from this world. For he should have ascended to the level he was capable of but did not do so. But instead of this, He in His mercy removes the wisdom from the man. And then the accusations against him are removed and the man is saved. Thus, according to this, that which his wisdom departs from him is not a kind of punishment, but rather an actual kindness.

Q Level 3

Ruach Chaim

Nefesh HaChaim (Shaar 4, ch.5) - according to the greatness of the storehouse of fear [of sin] which a man prepared, so too correspondingly will he be able to store, guard, and fulfill the produce of torah. Namely, according to what his storehouse can hold. For a father who distributes produce to his sons will give to each son according to the amount his storehouse can hold.

Even if the father wants to give and his hand is open to give much, but since the son is unable to receive more because the storehouse is unable to hold so much, then so too the father cannot currently give him more. And if the son did not prepare even a small storehouse, so too the father will not give him anything. For he does not have a place to guard it so that it will stay by him.

So too by G-d, blessed be He, His hand is always open, so to speak, to bestow to each Jew great wisdom and understanding. Likewise that the wisdom remain by them and be chiseled in their hearts, to delight in them when they come to the world of tranquility with their [torah] learning in their hand. But the matter depends on the storehouse of fear that a man has prepared. If the man has prepared a large storehouse of pure fear of G-d, so too G-d will bestow on him abundant wisdom and understanding according to what his storehouse can hold. Everything depends on the greatness of the storehouse.

With this we can clarify the saying of our sages: "the Holy One, blessed be He, does not bestow wisdom except to one who has wisdom, as written: 'and in the heart of every wise of heart I have given wisdom' (Shemot/Exodus 36:2), and 'He grants wisdom to the wise' (Daniel 2:21)".

This seems to be a wonder. For if so, where will a man find the initial wisdom? The answer is that it is written explicitly that also fear is called wisdom, as written: "indeed (hen), fear of sin this is wisdom" (Iyov 28:28).

The reason is as before. Namely, fear of G-d is the good storehouse to guard and preserve it.. Thus it is necessary for a man to precede fear. For if he did not prepare even a small storehouse and he has no fear at all, then so too G-d will not bestow on him any wisdom at all. For it will not remain by him. Because his torah is repulsive, ch'v to G-d and also to the public. On this it is written: "the beginning of wisdom is the fear of G-d" (Mishlei/Proverbs 9:10).. Therefore, a man needs to precede fear before he toils in torah..

Q Level 3

Shaarei Ohr

Shaarei Ohr (R. Yitzchak Blazer) - in an old commentary from around the time of the Rambam, the author writes:

We find in the torah two verses. One teaches that fear brings to fulfilling all the mitzvot, as written: "what does the L-ord, your G-d, demand of you? Only to fear the L-ord, your G-d" (Devarim 10:12). The other verse teaches that we were commanded in all the mitzvot only in order to reach fear, as written: "And the L-ord commanded us to perform all these statutes, to fear the L-ord, our G-d" (Devarim 6:24). The explanation is that fear has many sides. The first end which is its beginning and which precedes all the mitzvot is that one who fears a king will not transgress his word (fear of punishment). On this he said: "one whose fear of sin precedes his wisdom (knowledge) - his wisdom endures".

The second part which is the end (highest level) of fear is the true fear (fear of G-d's greatness). A man will not reach this until after he fulfills all the mitzvot and attains knowledge of the Creator's ways..

Q Level 3

☆ Daas Chachma u'Mussar

Daat Chachma u'Mussar 2:19 - it is clear from our mishna that wisdom does not endure except when it is drawn and sources (menika) from fear which precedes it. Through this, how wonderful are the words of the Nefesh hachaim brought in the book *Shaarei Ohr* (12b). Here is an excerpt:

"It is proper for every person to prepare himself every time before he begins to learn, to think a bit with his Maker, blessed be He, with purity of heart and fear of G-d, and to purify from his sins with thoughts of repentance, etc. and likewise in the middle of learning, he has permission to interrupt a short time before the fear of G-d he accepted upon himself before the learning extinguishes from

his heart, to think anew a bit on fear of G-d..." end quote

Level 4

Daas Chachma u'Mussar

Daat Chachma u'Mussar ch. 1:33,34 - our sages said: "any man who has torah but not fear of Heaven is like a treasurer who was given the keys to the inner courtyard but was not given the keys to the outer courtyard. How can he enter?" (Shab.31).

Rashi explains that fear of Heaven is like the outer gates through which one enters through to the inner gates. So too if one has fear of Heaven, he becomes afraid (chared) to guard and do [the torah]. Otherwise, he is not concerned for his torah.

"How can he enter" - Rashi explains: "through which door can he enter to open the inner [courtyards]?"

This matter of outer and inner appears in the whole creation. And even in wisdom itself, there is a concept of outer and inner. For the first understanding (muskal rishon) relative to the second understanding (muskal sheni) is the secret of "outer" (chitzon) which acts like a vessel (kli) to the second understanding (muskal sheni). So too for the second [understanding] regarding the third, etc. until the final level. - But the foremost understanding is the primary one (hamuskal hakodem hu haikar). It is the maker (yotzer) which gives birth to the inner (hayotzer hamolid hapenim).

So too regarding the matter of fear and wisdom. Fear is outside (chitzon) relative to wisdom (chachma) which is inside (penim). Thus, fear which is external - it itself is primary. For it is what creates and gives birth to the inner. Because through fear one becomes fearful (chared) to guard and do and he is concerned for his torah. Therefore, "one whose fear of sin precedes his wisdom (knowledge) - his wisdom endures". For without the outer keys, how can he enter?

For the outer (chitzon) is always before the inner. Without the outer, the inner cannot exist. For the inner was created to serve the outer (hapnim nivra kedai leshamesh lehachitzon).

For the outer is the primary intent and purpose, as written: "what does the L-ord, your G-d, demand of you? Only to fear the L-ord, your G-d" (Devarim 10:12). This is what our sages said: "the purpose of wisdom is repentance and good deeds" (Berachot 17a). For the deed which is the external is the purpose (tachlit).

This is what our sages continue there (Shab.31): "Woe unto one who does not have a courtyard, and who makes a fence for the courtyard"..

For the torah is nothing but a gate to enter through it to fear of Heaven.

Therefore one must precede fear of Heaven to it. For the fear which is external is the dwelling place (dirah), since it is primary. While the wisdom which is the inside is only a gate to the dwelling place. It is a gate to enter through it to fear of Heaven.

Therefore one must precede fear of Heaven to wisdom. For fear is the primary intent and purpose. Through it one becomes fearful (chared) to guard and do.

Level 3

Rabbi Moshe Shternbach maamar shavua, Shmot 5780 - "The midwives, however, feared G-d.." (*Shemot 1:17*) - I remember hearing from the mouth of Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian zt'l that one can learn from here a fundamental principle (yesod). Namely, the importance of every act of mitzvah is not measured according to the act itself. But rather, according to the fear of Heaven it contains. Thus,

if the midwives did not act out of fear of Heaven, but rather only for the sake of saving life (hatzala), out of feeling pity, then the Torah would not have praised them. It was specifically because the act was done out of fear of Heaven that the torah praised them for the fear of heaven in their deeds.

We find similarly by Avraham in the binding of Yitzchak. Namely, even though he was ready to sacrifice the life of his only son, but nevertheless, the main praise G-d praised him was on the fear of Heaven contained in his deeds, as written: "now I know that you fear G-d.." (Ber.22:12).

On the other hand regarding Amalek, even though they were completely wicked to the extreme of wickedness and cruelty, nevertheless, the torah did not repudiate them on their deeds themselves, but rather in that they did not have fear of Heaven. As written: "*they did not fear G-d*" (Devarim 25:18).

This implies that this is the primary virtue of man, and "fortunate is the man who fears always" - that every act he does, he says: "thus is His will, blessed be He" (kach retzono yitbarach Shemo).

Every day we say in the prayer: "He will open our hearts in His torah and put in our hearts love and fear of Him".

The language implies that the primary purpose is fear of Heaven and the torah opens the heart so that a man become one who fears Heaven. Through this, when we learn torah out of fear of Heaven, we will reach the purpose of our existence and service in this world.

My master and teacher, Rabbi Moshe Schneider zt'l would emphasize in his speeches that the main thing is fear of Heaven and fear of sin. He would say that a yeshiva bachur (young student) who learns torah and succeeds in learning but does not learn out of fear of Heaven and the torah is as the study of a trade - such a person has never tasted the holiness of the light of torah at all. He would emphasize in his speeches that he is used to praying that his talmidim (disciples) will not be "students of torah" who learn without fear of Heaven. But rather that they should be "bnei torah" (sons of torah) who are tied to the torah like a father is tied to his son.

Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - the explanation is that [torah] wisdom cannot exist (kiyum) except through G-d who is the Cause. For due to the greatness of the level of wisdom, it cannot exist by a man who is of [physical] body except through G-d, the Cause.. But when man has fear of Heaven, then man is completely an effect towards G-d, the Cause, and then man, the effect, has existence (kiyum) through G-d, his Cause and thus man's wisdom endures through his Cause, namely, G-d who sustains everything.

This is the meaning of "the beginning of wisdom is the fear of G-d" (Tehilim 111:10). But this is not so when he does not have fear of Heaven as we will explain further. For [torah] wisdom cannot endure except through the connection between the effect and the cause.

Furthermore, it is impossible for wisdom to endure except through G-d. We have explained this already in many places. For through [torah] wisdom, man has a cleaving to G-d, blessed be He.

Wisdom, specifically torah [wisdom], is like an intermediary between G-d and man. This is such that man's cleaving to G-d is through the torah.

And our sages explained: "but is it possible to cleave to the Shechina (G-d)? Is the Shechina not as an all consuming fire? Rather, cleave to the torah sages and scripture regards it as if you are

cleaving to the Shechina (Divine Presence)" (Sifri Devarim 11:22).

We explained this earlier (Avot 1:5). Thus we see that wisdom is by G-d, blessed be He, until G-d is considered the foundation and root of wisdom. He is the "house" of wisdom. And just like the foundation receives the building, so too G-d is the root and foundation which receives the wisdom. For there is its house. This occurs through fear of Heaven of man towards G-d.

We have clarified clearly what our sages said here: "one whose fear of sin precedes his wisdom (knowledge) - his wisdom endures". For when fear of sin precedes [wisdom], then it is primary and fear of G-d is the foundation upon which wisdom endures, as we explained. Because fear of sin is the foundation and continuation. For when there is fear of Heaven, man is an effect of G-d who is man's Cause and through the Cause everything endures, especially wisdom, when wisdom returns to G-d to cling to Him. For there (by G-d) is its place and there it returns, just like all things return to their place, namely, to their foundation. And wisdom has no standing (amidah) except through G-d, and when the primary is there, namely, fear of Heaven, then wisdom can be built upon it.

But when wisdom precedes his fear, then wisdom is the foundation of fear, since wisdom is first and the wisdom brings him to fear.

Then although the wisdom brought him to the fear, since it is impossible for one to have wisdom and not fear G-d, blessed be He..

(Rabbi Hartman - as he wrote in Netiv Anava (ch.1) for through wisdom one attains fear of Heaven, as our sages said: "a boor cannot fear sin".. For through wisdom, man recognizes his Cause and fears Him..)

But there is not complete fear which can be called fear of Heaven. And since wisdom is the cause of fear, then wisdom is the foundation upon which fear is built on.

But it is proper for fear to be a foundation to wisdom. For then he is like one who builds the foundation first and afterwards builds on the foundation. This is the proper way to build and the building endures. But if his wisdom precedes, then he is like one who builds a building without a foundation. This does not endure at all. Therefore, he said: "his wisdom does not endure". This is clear to one who has wisdom.

Part 2

Maharal - He would also say: "one whose [good] deeds exceeds his wisdom - his wisdom will endure. But one whose wisdom exceeds his [good] deeds, his wisdom will not endure" - know that this teaching is similar and equal to the previous: "one whose fear of sin precedes his wisdom.."

He also came here to say that wisdom needs a foundation to endure. For the wisdom he acquires until he knows the things as they [truly] are - certainly this is like a building. For wisdom is not the man itself. Rather, it is only a building. And all the more so when man is of physical body, the intellect is not considered the man himself. Wisdom is completely like a building.

Just like a building can collapse, so too for wisdom. For wisdom is added on a man just like a building is added on the ground which receives the building.

Previously, he said that fear of sin is the foundation of wisdom. This is as we explained. Namely, G-d sustains everything from the aspect that the Cause sustains the effect. And through fear of sin, G-d who is the foundation of everything, supports and sustains the effect, namely, the man.

Through this the wisdom can endure.

Furthermore, G-d is the foundation of wisdom. For wisdom returns to Him since there is its home. As we said, wisdom is the intermediary between G-d and man. For through wisdom man has a cleaving to G-d.

Thus, wisdom is built on two things. One, on G-d. For this wisdom is by Him and He is the root and foundation of wisdom.

Two, the second foundation is the soul (nefesh). It carries and receives the wisdom.. The wisdom in man also needs a foundation. For there needs to be a foundation to wisdom from the aspect of the receiver, namely, the soul of man which is the foundation to receive this building just like the ground is a foundation to the building built upon it.

We already said that wisdom is like the intermediary between man and G-d. Thus it needs [a foundation] from G-d AND from man (i.e. man needs two foundations, one from G-d and one from man as he explains..).

Thus, he said previously *"one whose [good] deeds exceeds his wisdom - his wisdom will endure"*. Then the wisdom endures from the aspect of G-d the Cause, namely, that man fears G-d and is an effect to the Cause, as before.

Now he says *"one whose [good] deeds exceeds his wisdom - his wisdom will endure"*. For the deeds apply to the soul of man, namely, purifying and refining the soul of man. And when man has purity and refining of the soul from the aspect of his deeds, then man is a proper foundation to wisdom. But when his wisdom is greater than his deeds, he builds on the foundation, namely, the soul, more than is proper. Therefore, his wisdom does not endure.

From this you should know and understand that the Sechel (intellect) which man receives is similar to a building built on something. If this building (of the intellect) lacks strength and support from the side of the receiver, namely, the soul (nefesh) of man, and also from the side of G-d who sustains the building itself, then this building will not endure.

This is the explanation of *"one whose [good] deeds exceeds his wisdom - his wisdom will endure"*

Some ask: we find among the gentiles very many people whose wisdom exceeds his deeds and nevertheless, his wisdom endures?

Certainly this is not a [valid] question.

For one, perhaps he has such great preparation for wisdom that his wisdom endures (i.e. very smart, focused, calm, etc.). Despite that they don't have mitzvot and deeds, but the tremendous preparation tips the scale. While that which our sages said: "whoever's deeds are greater than his wisdom, etc. refers to ordinary people".

Secondly, that which was said "he whose fear of sin precedes his wisdom..", this refers specifically to the wisdom of torah which needs much more of a foundation. This is due to the greatness of torah. For it is divine and far from man.

(Rabbi Hartman: and in Netiv HaTorah (ch.2) he writes: For the torah is the supernal intellect (sechel elyon) and thus it is difficult to acquire it. Hence man needs preparation to receive the

torah, without which he will not receive it. The preparation required for torah is very many things until one is fit to the torah. For man is of physical body and the torah is divine intellect. Therefore man needs to be far from the traits which are physical (midot gashmiim) and he needs to cling to the trait which is intellect (sichlit). end quote

We already explained that the primary reason which his wisdom does not endure is due to the distance between wisdom and man himself such that wisdom is considered like an additional building.

This applies especially more to torah. For it is divine wisdom and not human wisdom. Thus, an extremely strong foundation is needed for the torah. Otherwise, the torah does not endure due to its lofty level.

Likewise for the soul. It too needs very great preparations in order to receive the divine wisdom of torah. But for human wisdom like the wisdom of the nations, all this [preparation] does not apply. And all the more so that these human wisdoms do not touch on G-d in the sense that there is their home and foundation. For that applies only on the torah. These things are clear.

Chapter 3 Mishna 12 - G-d Pleased

He would say: "one with whom people are pleased, הוא ה'ה אומר, כל שרוח הבריות נוחה הימנו, רוח G-d is pleased; but one from whom people are המקום נוחה הימנו. וכל שאין רוח הבריות נוחה displeased, G-d is displeased". אין רוח המקום נוחה הימנו.

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "one with whom people are pleased, G-d is pleased with him" - whoever is beloved below, then it is known that he is beloved above.

Q Level 1

Tosfot Yom Tov

Tosfot Yom Tov - "G-d is pleased with him" - as written: "But the mercy of the L-ord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him" (Tehilim 103:17). Namely, that whoever has a "string of kindness" drawn after him, it is known that he has fear of Heaven..

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "one with whom people are pleased" - he also observes the duties towards other people to do good to them and all the more so to not do bad to them. Through this, they are pleased with him and they will love him.

"G-d is pleased" - the Holy One, blessed be He, loves him.

"but one from whom people are displeased" - he does not guard his obligations towards them, even though he keeps the commandments between man and G-d and learns torah.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "G-d is displeased with him" - as we learned: (Yomah 86a):

" 'And you shall love the L-ord your G-d' (Deut.6:5), i.e., that the Name of Heaven be beloved because of you. if someone studies Scripture and Mishnah, and attends on the disciples of the wise, is honest in business, and speaks pleasantly to others, what do people then say concerning him? 'Fortunate is the father who taught him Torah, fortunate is the teacher who taught him Torah; woe unto people who have not studied the Torah; for this man has studied the Torah look how fine his ways are, how righteous his deeds! Of him does Scripture say: 'And He (G-d) said unto me: you are My servant, Israel, in, whom I will be glorified'. But if someone studies Scripture and Mishnah, attends on the disciples of the wise, but is dishonest in business, and discourteous in his relations with people, what do people say about him? 'Woe unto him who studied the Torah, woe unto his father who taught him Torah; woe unto his teacher who taught him Torah!' This man studied the Torah: Look, how corrupt are his deeds, how ugly his ways; of him Scripture says: 'In that men said of them: These are the people of the L-rd, who have been expelled from His land'"

Q Level 3

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - some explain "one with whom people are pleased..", that people say: "praiseworthy is he who bore such a person..", then "G-d is pleased with him". For the torah is praised through him and the Name of Heaven is sanctified through him.

Some explain "one with whom people are pleased..", i.e. they have contentment in Olam Haba (the afterlife) due to him because he brought merit to them, then "G-d is pleased with him..".

And "but one from whom people are displeased.." - that is to say: one who says: "peace be unto my soul. I and my family will serve G-d. But what do I need to guide and bring merit to others for?"

And no creature ever received merit due to him, i.e. he never brought contentment (nachat Ruach) to G-d. For G-d desires only in he who brings merit to others...

Some explain: since there are commandments between man and G-d and also commandments between man and his fellow man. And in order that one not think to say that the Holy One, blessed be He, desires more in one who fulfills the commandments between man and G-d.. [Thus, "one with whom people are pleased, G-d is pleased..."]

Alternatively, one who is whole in fulfilling the commandments between man and his fellow man, all the more so will he fulfill the commandments between man and G-d. For it is more difficult for a man to do the will of each person, since each person's will is different.

🔍 Level 3



Avot d'Rebbi Eliezer - "ruach habriot nocha mimenu" - he did not say "people are pleased from him" (nochim, i.e. plural tense). But rather "*people are pleased* (nocha, i.e. singular tense) from him". (for it hints not to people but to the ruach - the spirit)

For in truth, a man can be pleasing to others but not pleasing to G-d. Thus, the mishna specifically writes "ruach (the spirit)" of others. The "ruach" is the Neshama (soul), as written: "and the ruach will return to G-d" (Kohelet 12:7). This is the intent of the mishna in saying "the ruach of others is pleased from him". Namely, one who teaches torah to his fellow, or some good trait, or good deed - ruach haMakom (G-d) is pleased with him.

Every person can fulfill this. For example to advise his fellow not to do something which is against the advice of the torah.

🔍 Level 4

Chachma u'Mussar

Chachma U'Mussar chelek beit, 110 - "people are pleased" - in the Sefer Chasidim (siman 224): " 'He fulfills the word of His servant, and the advice of His angels He fulfills' (Isaiah 44:26) - the upper ones accept the view of the lower ones (elyonim maskimim l'daat tachtonim) (the upper ones. When the upper ones say: 'these people deserve such and such a punishment or reward, the Holy One, blessed be He says: 'wait until the tzadikim say thus'. Hence, the Holy One, blessed be He, did not say a teaching of R.Meir (since he learned from Acher) until an Amora (talmudic sage) said: 'R.Meir found a pomegranate. He ate the fruit and discarded the peel' (i.e. he took the good and discarded the bad from Acher). Then G-d said: 'My son Meir said..' (i.e. G-d began to say the teachings of R.Meir). For He wanted the upper ones and lower ones to agree on His trait of justice." end quote.

This is a wonder. For after the torah was given to the sages of the yeshiva below, as written: "it is not in the Heaven" (Devarim 30:12), and the opinion was given to them, thus perforce all the time the sages of the generation do not accept a person's torah, deeds, and conduct, it will likewise not be accepted in Heaven, even if the person is right, until his words have been clarified to the sages of the yeshiva below.

With this we will explain our mishna. When is "G-d pleased with him"? When the people begin to be pleased with him, here below. But all the while this is not the case, then even if above, it is known that his conduct is praiseworthy, but nevertheless "G-d is not pleased with him". For the knowledge is given to the great sages of the generation, and as they judge here in this world so too thus it will be accepted above.

According to this, a man must examine whether his torah and deeds are according to the depths of the true halacha to fulfill his obligation to above and afterwards, he also needs to clarify whether the understanding sages [below] also approve of his torah, deeds and conduct. For without this, it

will not be accepted above. This is the meaning of "you shall be clean of G-d and Israel" (Bamidbar 32:22)...

Chapter 3 Mishna 13 - Morning Sleep

Rabbi Dossah ben Horkinas would say: "[late] morning sleep, mid-day wine, children's chatter, and sitting in the assemblies of the amei haaretz (unlearned) removes a person from the world".

רַבִּי דוֹסָא בֶן הוֹרְקִינָס אָמַר, שְׁנֵה שֵׁל שְׁחָרִית, וְיָן שֵׁל צָהָרִים, וְשִׁחַת הַיְלָדִים, וְיִשִּׁיבַת בְּתֵי כְנִסְיֹת שֵׁל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ, מוֹצִיאִין אֶת הָאָדָם מִן הָעוֹלָם

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "morning sleep" - he sleeps until the time of reciting the Shema passes

"mid-day wine" - it draws a person's heart as written: "I searched in my heart to draw my flesh with wine" (Kohelet 2), and brings him to drunkenness.

"children's chatter" - they annul their father from toiling in torah.

"sitting in the assemblies of the unlearned" - they come together and speak useless talk.

Q Level 3

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - he mentioned four things very needed for one's health and wholeness but if he is not careful in them, he will lose his world due to them.

"[late] morning sleep" - i.e. the heaviness of laziness. Sleep is necessary for one's health.. but after he had a night's sleep, there is no excuse (for not waking up).

This refers to running after pleasures which are not necessary to strengthen the body.. excessive wine (pleasures) will confound his mind, make his body feel heavy, etc. and cause that for the rest of the day, he will have no desire for torah and wisdom.

"children's chatter" - i.e. laughter and joking. A little bit is good to calm and bring joy to the soul. But only with adults. For their joking has things of [sound] mind. But talk with children is most likely joking and laughter of things devoid of knowledge and understanding and it will not bring joy to the soul. On the contrary, it will confound the ways of the mind.

"sitting in the assemblies of the unlearned" - i.e. useless talk. Here too a little is good after a person has toiled in wisdom. It is proper for him to mingle a bit with friends to calm the mind just like the body rests with sleep. But with the ignorant, they will speak slander and profanities or the like, things devoid of intellect, fear of Heaven, or any other benefit of mussar or wisdom. There the soul will not rest. Rather a strange fire will burn it.

On these four things, the Tanna well said that they remove a person from his world and eternity, i.e. even if he is already there (on the good path).

Q Level 3

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "removes a person from the world" - for why was man created? Only to toil in torah. It is "his years and the length of his days". But if he goes after these other things, why should he have life? It is proper to remove him from the world. For he is vanity and his days are vanity. After he lived some days and toiled in useless things and annulled the torah, why should he be given additional days? It is analogous to a king who gives his servant 100 silver coins and the servant casts them into the sea and afterwards asks the king for more - it is proper for the king to not give him any more! So too for one who does not toil in torah.

 **Level 3**

☆ **Ahava b'Taanugim**

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "morning sleep" - as known, there is no better time where one is ready for the service of G-d like the morning. For the stomach is empty of food and the mind is settled for the service, and all the more so since it is the time of reciting the Shema and the prayer of the congregation is accepted. Then it is a favorable time for his prayer to be accepted to annul all bad decrees from himself.

But he who sleeps at this time demonstrates his laxness in seeking his wholeness and rectification and that he goes after the advice of his evil inclination. He cannot conquer his evil inclination to get up from his bed. Rather, he desires (chafetz) the advice of his evil inclination. Certainly, he is liable for his life and he wants to slay his soul with his own hands. His blood is on his head.

This itself is the reason for "wine".. That he goes after the superfluous for no avail.. and likewise for children's chatter. For the mind of a whole man cannot bear to waste his time in useless words (divrei havai) like children's chatter which has no benefit for the soul. And all the more so when they jest and he abandons the torah and sits in a sitting of jesters. This certainly demonstrates on his evil intent in all his deeds - he does not seek the wholeness of his soul and he slays himself and is liable for his life.

This itself is the reason for sitting in the assemblies of the amei haaretz (ignoramuses). Certainly there are no words of torah between them. Rather, only lashon hara (slander) and leitzanut (jesting), and to learn bad character traits from them.. All these four things are bad beginnings which the yetzer entices a man towards and tells him that there is no torah prohibition, etc. But they are a poisonous root to lose one's wholeness and become liable for his life.

 **Level 4**

Maharal

Maharal - "removes a person from the world" - for all these things are pursuit of the bodily matters which is removing oneself from Torah. Therefore, they remove a person from the world. For the torah is man's life (chiyuto). And when a man turns to things like these - it is removing oneself from life.

Earlier, he said "one who forgets one thing from his [torah] studies..", i.e. even if he does not do a thing, but just sits idle, it is considered as if he is liable for his life. For he removes words of Torah from his heart. But if he actively does an act like these four things mentioned, namely, morning sleep, afternoon wine, etc., then even if he does not forget his learning, nevertheless, because these things are complete removal from the Torah through turning after lusts and the vanities of the world, it is considered complete removal from the Torah which is man's life. Thus, he is removed from the world...

"morning sleep" - this when a man is drawn after morning sleep, he is drawn excessively after the body. For when a man sleeps, he is completely physical and all his powers of the soul are annulled and nothing is left except his body. Thus, he becomes completely physical.. And turns after the body and the inexistence..

"mid-day wine" - he sins in the second part of man, the nefesh (soul). For "wine rejoices the heart" which refers to the soul in man. And "mid-day wine" rejoices excessively.. until he is completely merry.. And this is certainly a lacking and inexistence. For all excess is like lacking and inexistence. Therefore, this removes a person from the world.

"children's chatter" - this corresponds to man's third part, namely, his intellect. For children's chatter is the opposite of the talk of elders in wisdom. Children's talk is of vanity, laughter, and

confusion. Therefore, "children's chatter" is a departure from wisdom. This is certainly a complete lacking and inexistence...

"sitting in the assemblies of the unlearned" - this corresponds to the fourth part we mentioned. Namely, that man is part of a congregation.. The assembly of the unlearned is the opposite of an assembly in a synagogue in matters of holiness. For it is of useless matters and not considered of real matters... (see there for more).

Chapter 3 Mishna 14 - Pales In Public

Rabbi Elazar of Moda'ih would say: "one who profanes the Kodashim ("holy things"), one who dishonors the Holidays, one who pales (humiliates) the face of his fellow in public, one who annuls the Brit (covenant) of Avraham our forefather, and one who reveals facets of Torah not in line with Halacha (distorts torah) - even though he possesses torah and good deeds - he has no share in the World-to-Come.

רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר הַמּוֹדְעִי אוֹמֵר, הַמְחַלֵּל אֶת הַקֹּדֶשִׁים, וְהַמְבַזֶּה אֶת הַמוֹעֲדוֹת, וְהַמְלַבֵּין פְּנֵי חֲבֵרוֹ בְּרַבִּים, וְהַמְפַרֵּ בְרִיתוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ עָלֵינוּ הַשְּׁלוֹם, וְהַמְגַלֵּה פְּנִים בְּתוֹרָה שְׁלֹא כְהִלְכָהּ, אֵף עַל פִּי טוֹבִים, אֵין לוֹ חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "one who profanes the Kodashim" - one who profanes the temple offerings for the altar (brings the kodshei mizbeach to pigul, noter or tamei) or derives benefit (me'ilah) from the non-altar temple offerings (kodshei bedek habayit).

"who dishonors the Holidays" - he does [non-permitted] work on the days of chol hamoed or treats them as profane through eating and drinking.

"who humiliates his fellow publicly" - the face of an embarrassed person becomes first red and then white. For the soul (nefesh which resides in the blood) has two movements. One towards outside and one towards inside. When one is embarrassed, at first the spirit (ruach) moves towards outside like one filled with rage and his face becomes red.

Then when he cannot find an escape of how to remove this shame from himself, he becomes anguished and his spirit (ruach) returns inside due to the pain and thus his face pales and whitens. This is what our sages said on this: "the red leaves and the white enters" (Bava Metziah 58b).

"who annuls the Brit (covenant)" - he did not circumsize. Alternatively, he circumsize but pulled his foreskin over to appear uncircumsize.

"distorts torah" - he conjures up erroneous explanations of the torah not in line with Halacha (true meaning) .. Alternatively, he brazens his face to transgress the commands of the torah publicly with a high hand and without shame.

"even though he possesses torah and good deeds" - and he did not repent from one of these sins in his hand, even though he received sufferings and he died in sufferings - he has no share in the world to come. But if he repented before death, there is nothing which stands before repentance.

Q Level 2

Rambam

Rambam - the sins which our sages said "he has no share in the World-to-Come" is more severe than other sins. For in these sin, sufferings and death do not atone for them.

Q Level 1

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - one who profanes..dishonors.. pales.. - every case is said in present tense. "profanes", "dishonors", etc. This is to emphasize that we are talking about a person who continues in his wickedness. But one who did this in the past and regretted it and repented - he escaped from this accusation (kitrug) of "he has no share in the World-to-Come"

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - he brought five types of heretics:

"one who profanes the Kodashim" - this group is the worst in the world. These people deny the existence of G-d and therefore profane the holy. For according to their rotten view, there is no holiness in the world. Everything is completely mundane (chulin gemurim). Even the holiest things in the world are considered as nothing by them.. For their corrupt view is that there is no G-d, no service [of G-d], no korbanot (temple sacrifices) and no torah because there is no Master of the house. Thus, all the kodashim are completely mundane (chulin gemurim).

"who dishonors the festivals" - this is the second group. These people admit to the existence of G-d but they deny that the world was created. Rather, they believe the world always existed just like G-d always existed. Therefore, they "dishonor the holidays". For all of them were given only as a sign that G-d created the world. For the Sabbath, this is stated explicitly: "for in six days G-d made the Heavens and the Earth.." (Ex.20:11). The other holidays were given to remember the Exodus from Egypt and the miracles G-d made in the desert. This depends on the other. For one who believes He created the world from nothing must also believe that He has the ability to change nature as He wishes.

One who denies one also denies the other, and thus he dishonors the holidays. For he maintains that it is a disgrace for the Supernal Being to watch over our lowly world. Thus he used the term "dishonors" here instead of "profane" as the previous case.

"who humiliates his fellow publicly" - this is the third group. They believe the world was created by G-d but they deny that man was created "in the image of G-d" (Gen.1:27) and that his soul continues existing (after death). Rather, they maintain the soul exists through the body and dies with the body. Thus they don't care about the honor of others and they embarrass others even publicly. For in their view man and animal have the same end.

"who annuls the Brit (covenant)" - this is the fourth group. They believe additionally that G-d created man in His image and that there is reward and punishment (in the afterlife). But they deny and annul the covenant of Avraham. Namely, they deny that G-d made a covenant with Avraham to be a G-d to his seed, to watch over them more than all other people and to give them the torah publicly with its laws and statutes which began already in the time of Avraham and were completed in the days of Moses. Likewise, that the seed of Avraham, our forefather, was chosen to be a holy nation of priests in the world and to teach humanity like their forefather Avraham to recognize their Maker, blessed be He.

Rather, the view of this group is to deny the Torah came from Heaven and to maintain that only the natural rational precepts (mitzvot hativiot) can perfect the soul. Therefore, there is no difference between the Jewish people and the other nations, a peasant and a kohen, a man and a women - for everyone, the commandment is the same and likewise, the reward and punishment.

"distorts torah" - this is the fifth group. They additionally believe the torah is from Heaven. But they "reveal facets of Torah not in line with Halacha". They deny the Oral Tradition, namely, the explanation [of the torah] transmitted to us orally by Moshe Rabeinu. These people conjure up other explanations not in line with the Halacha we received.

🔍 Level 1

☆ Sforno

Sforno - "even though he possesses torah and good deeds" - for without a doubt his deeds are not directed to the will of his Maker and his torah is just external lip service.

🔍 Level 3

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - some explain that each one of these things mentioned includes the whole torah. Therefore, one who annuls [any of] them has no share in the

world to come, as if he annulled the whole torah.

"one who profanes the Kodashim" - any thing of holiness, namely, that he dishonors holiness and does not deem it important (mevaze hakedusha v'eino machshiv ota). Included in this is the holiness of the malachim (angels), and the holiness of the Holy One, blessed be He. Also included in this is one who abstains himself from being holy. If so, it is proper for such a man to not have a portion in the world to come.

Some explain, that he brings holy offerings of the altar to pigul, notar, or tamei (i.e. invalidates them). Thus, he gave the portion of holiness to the klipot (forces of evil), and mixed the holy with the mundane. For this he has no portion in the world to come, in the hidden light which the Holy One, blessed be He, separated from the mundane (hivdil min hachol) for the righteous in the world to come.

"who dishonors the Holidays" - this too is like denying the whole torah. For he disrespects all the miracles and wonders G-d did for us, since the holidays teach remembrance of the miracles G-d did for us and are a sign of them, as known (see Rashi on Tehilim 111:4). And he disrespects them thinking that it is impossible to go against the laws of nature.

"who humiliates his fellow publicly" - since whoever fulfills "love your fellow as yourself" (Vayikra 19:18), it is as if he fulfilled the whole torah (see Shab.31a). One needs to strive to benefit his fellow and all the more so, to not cause him pain. But this person who "pales the face of his fellow", besides that he did not benefit him, he hurt him and pained him. All the more so, if he whitened (humiliated) his face in public, spilling his blood - it is as if he transgressed the whole torah and thus has no share in the world to come.

Some explain "pales the face of his fellow" that due to the great shame his soul flies [away] as if it wants to leave his body. Therefore, all the blood in his body goes out towards his face and thus his face becomes red. Afterwards, the blood returns to its place and his face whitens like a man who dies. Namely, at the time of death when the soul leaves the body, the dead man's face turns white. Thus it is as if he murdered him and measure for measure his blood will be shed and he has no portion in Olam Haba.

🔍 Level 3

☆ Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) (quoting "Daas Chochma u'Mussar chelek 2 part 12, chelek 3 part 32-33") - "one who profanes the Kodashim" - the talmud (Sanhedrin 99a) says that we learn this from the verse: "for he treated the L-rds' word with contempt.. (ki devar H' baza)" (Bamidbar 15:31), etc. This [mishna] reveals to us a new insight (gilui chadash).

For it seems to require great investigation (tzarich iyun gadol). After all, profaning the kodashim and dishonoring the Holidays are not among the severe sins. For one does not incur death by Beit Din nor karet (excision) for these sins.

Furthermore, for those capital sins which incur the most severe death penalty - death by stoning, such as desecrating the Sabbath, nevertheless, the person still has a share in the World to Come. But these five don't have a share in the world to come??

Likewise, for one who "pales the face of his fellow", this is nothing but the "dust" of murder (i.e. a very faint form of murder). How can this possibly be more severe than actual murder? For a murderer does have a share in the world to Come. This is a great wonder!

It seems the answer is that the verse *"for he treated the G-d's word with contempt.. (ki devar H'*

baza)" (Bamidbar 15:31)" teaches us a special prohibition on disrespecting the word of G-d. For through this, one disrespects G-d and His honor and the main [pillar] of the entire creation was: "all that is called by My name, whom I created for My glory, I formed and made" (Isaiah 43:7).

Thus for one who disrespects the word of G-d and His honor, this is a sin more severe than all other sins in the torah. For all other sins in the torah, even the most severe ones whereby one transgresses them because his evil inclination overpowered him, even rebelliously, but nevertheless, in this he did not strike (pogeah) [directly] at G-d's honor.

But for one who profanes the Kodashim (temple offerings) or disrespects the holidays, even though the sin itself is not so severe, but "he treated G-d's word with contempt" and this is striking at the honor of G-d. Thus, this is a sin by itself which is more severe than all other sins and weighs like the whole torah. Due to this he has no share in the world to come.

Just as we explained the matter between man and G-d, so too is the matter between man and his fellow. For in the Talmud Yerushalmi (Nedarim 9:4):

" 'Love your fellow as yourself' (Lev.19:18) - Rabbi Akiva said: 'this is the great general principle of the torah'. Ben Azai said the verse: 'This is the book of the generations of man [on the day that G-d created man, in the likeness of G-d He created him]..' (Genesis 5:1) - this is an even greater general principle of the torah"

Furthermore, our sages taught: "know whom you are disrespecting. For He made man in the image of G-d" (Ber.Rabba 24:8).

According to Ben Azai, "*this is the book of the generations of man*" is a greater general principle [than love your fellow]. For a man is obligated to honor his fellow more than himself. This is as our sages said: "a man is asked at the time of judgment: 'did you coronate your fellow pleasantly'" (brought in Reishit Chachma, Shaar Yirah ch.12) - i.e. to honor him the honor of a king. For he is an image of G-d. This is a duty by itself - to be careful of the honor of your fellow to the extent of coronating him [as a king]. This is besides the other laws between man and his fellow.

According to this, it is well understood that which we learned: "*one who pales the face of his fellow.. has no share in the World-to-Come*". For even though "paling someone's face" is only the dust (avak) of murder (i.e. much less). But nevertheless, one who dishonors (mevaze) the honor of his fellow who was created in the image of G-d, this is the most severe sin between man and man. Due to this, he has no portion in the world to come.

We can understand from here how great is the reward for one who honors other people. For G-d's trait of good (reward) is greater [than the trait of punishment].

This (honoring others) is the general principle of the entire torah. And according to Ben Azai, it is an even greater general principle than "love your fellow as yourself". The matter is awesome and wondrous.

When we contemplate this, we will see that the whole torah is but laws of honor (hilchot kavod). The foundation of the whole torah is nothing but the matter of "honor". This is the central matter which encompasses the whole torah. Honor of G-d and honor of the image of G-d. The entire torah is divided into these two types of honor - honor of Heaven, which is called the torah "laws between man and G-d", and honor of others from which branches out the torah (laws) between man and his fellow.

Thus according to our words, the structure of the torah in a nutshell is honor of G-d and honor of

the image of G-d. The rest is just an explanation. Go and learn.

Q Level 3

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daas on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz), from Daas Torah chelek 4 pg.47 - regarding the mishna of one who profanes the kodashim or dishonors the holidays has no share in the world to come. For all other sins, even the most severe which a man commits, nevertheless, this was due to his evil inclination strengthening over him enticing and drawing him until he stumbled in his sin. And even if it were committed rebelliously and treacherously but nevertheless, his act was due to some cause which led him to this. Thus it is not called that the man himself is evil in his core and essence (atzmo v'ikaro)

But one who profanes the kodashim, etc. namely, that there was nothing pushing him to this. Rather he profanes the kodashim and dishonors the holidays brazenly saying this is nothing and the word of G-d is not worth anything in his eyes. Without a doubt, such a person's deeds testify on him that he himself is evil. The evil is in his essence and not as secondary (tafel).

And one whose evil is primary and not secondary, there is none worse than him and thus perforce he has no share in the world to come.

Q Level 3

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "one who pales the face of his fellow in public" - what was said on one who publicly embarrasses is more severe than what was said on a murderer. We see this from our mishna which brings specifically the embarrasser as one who does not have a share in the world to come. We don't find such a statement said on the murderer.

Likewise, in the Talmud: "all those who descend to Gehinom ascend up from there after they have paid [their punishment] except for three who descend and do not ascend.." (Bava Metzia 58b).

Two of the three mentioned there are: "one who embarrasses his fellow publicly and one who calls his fellow by a derogatory name. In essence these two are the same thing. They were said separately to teach that even if the person was already habituated in the embarrassing nickname, nevertheless, one who continues to call him by that name is included in the category of "one who pales (embarrasses) the face of his fellow in public".

Why is embarrassing someone worse than murder?

Firstly, a person does not sense that he did a big evil. "the bottom line is that I merely uttered a few words and did not damage him physically or monetarily. What is so bad about some sharp word on someone's account?" These kinds of thoughts prevent one from repenting of his evil deeds and clings him to his bad ways (Shaarei Teshuva shaar 3, 142).

Likewise, one who embarrasses other people, demonstrates through his deeds that he does not value a human being as an "image of G-d" which one must be careful of his honor. This is unlike the murderer who is pulled after his evil inclination. He is dominated by his anger and other powerful drives. But the embarrasser does this because he has a crooked outlook on people. They are worth nothing in his eyes.

Several commentators point out that the mishna said "one who whitens the face of his friend (chavero)" and not "the face of another person" or "the face of his enemy". This is to emphasize that it is talking about a person who does not do this out of revenge or hatred but rather out of denial (kefira) of the need to guard the honor of his fellow.

This concern for the honor of others appears countless times in the deeds and teachings of the great men and women of our people, often at a heavy price.

One example that sticks out is the matriarch Rachel. She forewent on her entire future in order to not cause embarrassment to her sister Leah.

When Yaakov wanted to marry her, he recognized the trickery of Lavan and gave to Rachel secret signs to ensure it was her. His concern was not in vain for Lavan the swindler indeed switched Leah for Rachel.

When Rachel saw what her father did she told herself "now my sister will be humiliated when the fraud will be revealed publicly". Immediately, she revealed the secret signs to her sister so that Yaakov will not sense the switch.

Rachel preferred to forego on the great husband Yaakov, on the merit to be the mother of the Jewish people. She forewent on her entire future - in order that her sister won't become humiliated! And this is even though the embarrassment to her sister would not have been caused by herself..

Q Level 3

Chasdei David

Chasdei David - and likewise for Tamar who was ready to be executed rather than embarrass Yehuda. She left the choice to him whether to admit the truth and she be saved or hide it and she would be burnt to death... On this the talmud says "it is better for one to be thrown in a furnace rather than embarrass someone publicly". See the Meiri on Berachot 43b who deduces that "it is better" and proper but not that one is obligated in this.

Q Level 3

☆ Matanat Avot

Matnat Avot - for each Jew was created with a tzelem Elokim (image of G-d) and the whole structure of man's body includes the structure of all the mystical worlds and all their powers (see Nefesh Hachaim ch.1). And every Jew has a divine soul within him which is a "part of G-d" (Chelek Eloka) and there is no Jew which is not very precious and important in G-d's eyes. For G-d permitted one to transgress the whole torah (except three sins) in order to save the life of a Jew, regardless of how much righteousness or fear of Heaven he has (except for heretics who excluded themselves from the Jewish people and have no portion in the G-d of Israel).

Thus, according to this, one who pales (humiliates) his fellow publicly (which is a form of murder), he murders, so to speak, a piece of the Holy One, blessed be He, ch'v.

For this Jew which you humiliated is also a son of the Holy One, blessed be He and an attack on him is an attack on the Holy One, blessed be He, as our sages said: "one who slaps the cheek of a Jew is as if he slapped the cheek of the Shechina (G-d)" (Sanhedrin 58b).

There is no coincidence in the world! This chidush (insight) was written eve of the fourth day of the week of Parsha Vayeshev 5778. And exactly on the fourth aliyah is the story of Tamar from which our sages deduced that it is better to throw oneself in a furnace rather than humiliate someone publicly.

Q Level 4

☆ Daas Chachma u'Mussar

Daas Chachma u'Mussar, chelek 3, p.36 - the pious Yavetz wrote:

For their sin is similar to heresy which uproots the whole torah. For the great foundation upon which the whole torah revolves around is that man has tremendous powers to demolish and destroy. This is to such an extent that by merely uttering one small word, he can make hekdesch (holy) a thousand, thousand portions, etc.

On this he said: "one who profanes the kodashim.." He tells himself "they were chulin (non-holy) before this".

And likewise, one who dishonors the holidays, etc, and so too for the others, it is as if he has uprooted this foundation. Due to this, his punishment is as severe as one who denies the whole torah". end quote

We learn from his holy words that it is in this that he does not believe and recognize the power of man.

For if he recognized this matter, he would realize that there are no small things. Because one who understands the root of man, just how far is his portion, for man is a "sapling planted" (netzer matai) in the World to Come, then he would realize that all his deeds have lofty and supernal effects according to their roots in Olam Haba.

This is a sign that he has no portion and no connection with spiritual matters in Olam Haba and he is cut off from his root and separated from there. His residence is only in this world.

This explanation applies to all other cases which our sages stated the punishment of "has no portion in the world to come" such as embarrassing someone publicly, or honoring oneself through putting others down, etc. etc.

They are light in his eyes because he has no portion there in the world to come...

We learn from this that all of a man's toil is to be always cleaving to spiritual concepts (iyunim). Through this he will distance from the murgash (physical appearance which deceives).

And in Daat Chochma u'Mussar chelek beit, 71:

For why in truth does he not understand the greatness of man (haAdam biyakar)? Certainly it is because he does not recognize the greatness of the matters. "the severe matters appear light to him" (chamurot domot alav k'kalot). This is because his portion is only in the physical world. And from the physical world perspective, man's speech has no importance. For in the physical world, there is no (spiritual) greatness or importance. Thus everything is light and lowly by him.

But in the spiritual world, it is the opposite. Light things look important. There it is certainly already understood that man's speech literally splits Heavens (bokeah reki'im).

This is what our sages said: *"Eighteen curses did Isaiah pronounce upon Israel, yet he was not pacified until he pronounced upon them this verse: The youth shall behave insolently against the older, and the lowly against the honorable"* (Chagigah 14a). For the final curse which Isaiah cursed the Jews was: "the lowly against the honorable" - "Let one come of whom the severe appears light and act insolently on one of whom the light appears severe".

This is the main point which encompasses our generation of the "footsteps of the Messiah" (ikvatei d'mashichei). For in our times all greatness and severity of matters has been lost.

Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - he brought five things here. For G-d created the world with the Name: Yud-Heh (see Isaiah 26:4). The Olam Haba was created with the Yud and this world was created with the Heh of G-d's great Name (Menachot 29b, i.e. the Tetragramaton).

Therefore, there are five things whose level is above this whole world, corresponding to this Heh of G-d's Holy Name. From it comes five holy divine things, namely, these five things [in our mishna]..

Thus, one who sins in these five holy things of this world, sins in the "Heh", and then the Heh is separated and lost from the Yud, the letter from which Olam Haba was created. For when there is no Heh of the great Name, then the Yud loses its use. This is known to the men of understanding.

One should understand that these five things are the five qualities (maalot) in the world.

One, the Kodashim (sacrifices). For since holiness can be on an animal which exists in this lower world, then this [holiness] is attributed to this lower world.

The holidays which are counted by the luminaries (sun, moon) are attributed to the world of the Galgalim (upper spheres).

The milah (circumcision) is on man's body. For man is composed of two parts. G-d gave the milah on his flesh and it is called "the covenant of flesh" (Sanhedrin 99a), as we say "on Your covenant which You sealed on our flesh" (Grace after Meals). This is the part from the aspect of man's being from the lower creations.

"pales the face of his fellow" - this is from the aspect of the second part of man. Namely, that of his being from the upper [realms]. And man has a special quality over all the upper realms, namely, this "image of G-d" (Tzelem Elokim). For man was created in the "image of G-d" (Gen.1:26).. And this quality and holiness is not in all the creations, not even in the supernal angels, as will be explained with G-d's help (in mishna 14). Thus, this is the highest level in the world. Only the torah [is higher].

On this, he said: *"one who pales the face of his fellow"*. For the Tzelem (image of G-d) is in the face. This is the second part of man.

"one who distorts torah" - the torah and the commandments were given from the [higher] world which is completely above (elyon l'gamrei).

Thus, these five things are all the divisions of the world which are also five. For the world is comprised of the lower, middle, upper and man who is a world by himself. Man has two parts. For he is of the lower and of the higher.

Each of these five parts has holiness from on high. For they receive from the letter "Heh" which the world was created with. Thus, one who sins in these five things is lost from the world... (see there for more).

Chapter 3 Mishna 15 - Light To A Head

Rabbi Yishmael would say: "be light (submissive) to a head (elder), courteous to the young, and receive every person with joy".

רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל אָמַר, הָיִי קָל לְרֹאשׁ, וְנוֹחַ לְתַשְׁחֶרֶת, וְהָיִי מְקַבֵּל אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם בְּשִׂמְחָה.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "be light to an elder" - i.e. before a great man, an elder who sits as head of the yeshiva, be light (swift) to serve him and minister before him.

"courteous to the young (*tishchoret=black*)" - but for a young man whose hairs are black, you don't need to be so light (swift). Rather stand before him calmly and composedly (*bnachat u'byishuv*).

"receive every person with joy" - for everyone, whether a head (of yeshiva) or a "black" (young) receive with joy.

Alternatively, "be light to a Head", at your beginning, when you are young, be light (swift) to the will of your Creator. And in your old age, when your face has blackened due to old age, be pleasing to him (*noach lo*).

Q Level 2

☆ Rambam

Rambam - "be light to an elder" - when you stand before a great man, make yourself light (small) towards him and serve him and stand before him when he wants and do not honor yourself before him (*al tokir nafshecha bo*).

And when you are with those of black hair, namely, the young, do not act like this. Rather, honor yourself with him and do not laugh and be too friendly (*al titgaga*) with him.

Afterwards, he said do not think that which I exhorted you not to be too friendly with the young man, I meant to receive him with a stern and harsh face. This is not the intent. Rather, you need to receive every human being, big or small, free or slave, every member of the human race - with joy. This is more than what Shammai said "receive every person with a pleasant countenance" (*Avot 1:15*).

Q Level 3

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - a man may encounter someone above his level, below his level, or equal in level. One needs to maintain peace with everyone if he wants to attain the greatest success in the world, namely, to be loved by everyone.

Therefore, the Tanna wrote that if you encounter someone who is a head and above you, do not consider yourself as great like him. Rather consider yourself as light dust towards him and humble yourself before him and he will love you like a son.

And if you encounter one who is below you, even if he is so much below you that he must give you a *tishchoret*, i.e. a fee (*ex.honor*), nevertheless, don't feel like you are his master. Rather, be nice (*noach*) and humble with him and he will love you like a father.

And if you encounter people equal to you, receive them with honor and joy so that they will love you like a brother.

 **Level 4**

Maharal

Maharal - this teaches on man's conduct, namely, that people are noche (benefit/pleased) from him.. and thus it follows the previous mishna "one with whom people are pleased, G-d is pleased". For both depend on each other..

One should know that the conduct one needs to be just and good with others divides into three categories:

One, how he should conduct himself towards those of greater level than himself.

Two, how he should conduct himself towards those less than himself.

Three, how he should conduct himself towards his peers who are equal or similar to him...

He said to be pleasant (noach) to them and to not speak to them in a high manner (gavhut). Rather only pleasantly (b'noach). And if one of the black-haired (young) people ask him something, he should be pleasant with him and not be hard on him.

And corresponding to people who are his peers and are on his level, he said: "receive every person with joy". Namely, to give honor to every person. Through this he discharges [his duty] towards all people, whether those bigger and more important than him, those smaller than him, and those equal to him...

"*receive every person with joy*" - earlier Shammai said: "receive every person with a pleasant countenance" (Avot 1:15).

Each according to his matter. For earlier Shammai came to say that if one does not receive him with a pleasant countenance, then it would appear his fellow is not benefiting from him. And this causes pain to a man when he feels his fellow does not benefit from him.

(Rabbi Hartman - i.e. a person is pained when his fellow who receives him does not enjoy receiving him).

Therefore, he said to receive him with a pleasant countenance. For that is great honor. (i.e. to prevent him from feeling pain and shame - RH).

And even if one knows for sure that the person is benefiting him such as when the person comes for one's benefit, or one asked him to come, nevertheless, one should receive him with joy, as if a great man came to visit, whereby one would be joyous to receive him.

(Rabbi Hartman - Thus Shammai was in the category of "turn from evil", to refrain from causing him pain. While here it is in the category of "do good" - to show him great honor and importance)

 **Level 3**

Meorei Ohr

Meorei Ohr - "*receive every person with joy*" - this is more than what Shammai said "receive every person with a pleasant countenance" (Avot 1:13). For a person can show a nice face but in his heart it is the opposite. On the other hand, for joy he must conduct his soul (nefesh) with joy until the joy is part of his nature.

 **Level 4**

☆ **Chida**

Chida Petach Einayim - "*be light to a head*" - as the commentaries explain on the verse: "he will crush your head, and you will bite his heel" (Gen.3:15). For man submits the yetzer hara when he does not listen to him from the beginning and strengthens himself at the head (outset). This is "be light" to strengthen yourself "I'rosh" at the beginning of the enticement of the yetzer hara. And once

the majority of one's years have passed, he will not sin. Thus, "v'noach l'tishchoret", i.e. in old age as the second explanation of the Bartenura.

Chapter 3 Mishna 16 - Fence To Wisdom

Rabbi Akiva would say: "laughter and light-headedness habituates a person to lewdness (ervah). [The Oral] Tradition is a fence (safeguard) to the Torah, Maasrot (tithes) a fence to wealth, Nedarim (vows) a fence to Perishut (abstinence from the worldly). The fence for wisdom is silence.

רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אָמַר, שְׂחֹק וְקִלּוּת רַאשׁ, מְרַגְלִין לְעֵרְוָה. מַסֵּרְתָּ, סִיג לְתוֹרָה. מַעֲשָׂרוֹת, סִיג לְעֵשֶׂר. נְדָרִים, סִיג לְפְרִישוּת. סִיג לְחֻמָּה, שְׁתִּיקָה.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "vows" - when a man begins in Perishut (separation) and he fears that he will transgress (his resolution in Prishut), he can take it on himself as a vow (neder) to not do such and such and through this, he conquers his yetzer (evil inclination).

"silence" - what are we referring to? If from words of torah, scripture already said: "you shall meditate on it day and night" (Yehoshua 1:1). If from words of slander or curses, these are already torah prohibitions. Rather, it must be referring to permitted words between man and his fellow. Namely, that one should minimize these as much as possible. On those Shlomo said: "in a multitude of words, transgression will not be avoided" (Mishlei 10:19).

Q Level 1

☆ Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan - great heaviness (seriousness) with women is a very big fence against sin. And due to mentioning this fence, he brought the other fences.

Q Level 1

Rashi

Rashi - "habituates" - i.e. draws a person to sin

"fence" - a fence and strengthening

"separation" (*perishut*) - when a person begins in separation (Perishut) and fears (transgressing his resolutions), let him take it upon himself as a neder (vow) to not do such and such and through this he will conquer his yetzer (evil inclination).

Q Level 3

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "*nedarim*.." - one who draws close to the nature of the physical and is drawn after his lusts and pleasures, then even if he does nothing forbidden, but nevertheless, he distances from the root and foundation of the soul. Further still, he also causes the soul to be drawn after the body and the physical and to detach (*mesayef ota bemaaratza*) it from its root and foundation, as written: "Lewdness and wine take away the heart" (Hosheah 4:11).

This refers to Daat (inner knowledge), as written: "he who hearkens to reproof acquires heart" (Mishlei 15:32). Therefore, the sages gave an advice to one who is not able to rule over his spirit and is drawn after the pleasures. Namely, to make a neder (vow) for some time such as saying: "I will only eat and drink such and such". Or to forbid on oneself something permitted until one habituates in this and rules over it. Thus, he conducts himself to conquer his inclination.. as Rabbi Pinchas said: "if you cannot eat chulin with Tahara (purity) all year, eat thus for seven days" (Yerushalmi Shabbat 1:3)..

However, it is not proper to fence oneself with fences unless one's yetzer overpowers him. Namely, that he makes neders in the way of healing. But one who already rules over his spirit and is capable of attaining the trait of Separation (Perishut) without a neder - he should not make a neder, as written: "is it not enough what the torah forbade you that you forbid on yourself permitted things?" (Yerushalmi Nedarim 9:1).

But certainly if a person sees that his yetzer overpowers him, he must make a great fence according to what he needs to conquer his yetzer.

And after he conquers his yetzer, he can return to the middle way. This is analogous to a doctor who sees a patient with a minor illness which is easy to heal. He thus prescribes a light healing medication. But when he sees the illness has become severe and intense, he chooses a strong medication until the patient heals and afterwards the doctor switches to light medications which maintain the body's health.

As to why they said a "neder" and not a "shavua" (oath), this is because an oath separates immediately and he cannot transgress it. But a neder is when he says something like: "If I eat more than this amount until some day, all fruits are forbidden to me for x days".

This is called a fence since it is something he can transgress (unlike an oath).

But nevertheless, for one whose heart's intent is to Heaven and he cannot control himself, it is better to make this fence somehow without resorting to using a vow (Neder).

🔍 Level 2

Bartenura

Ohr Pnei Moshe - here is referring not to human wisdom but to torah wisdom. For it is known what scripture says: "In a multitude of words, transgression will not be avoided, etc." (Mishlei 10:19). And it is written in many books that the "prosecutors" (bad angels) created from man's sins confound his thoughts when he learns torah. This is what our sages said: "the fence of wisdom is silence", i.e. the wisdom of torah - to silence from worldly matters. Understand this.

🔍 Level 3

☆ **Ahava b'Taanugim**

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - some explain that most people fear sin like a person fears a physical danger. But the yetzer hara habituates a person in sin and reassures him from the danger he is afraid of. On this he said that through laughter and levity which a person habituates in and especially with women - he habituates in ervah (lewdness). Through this, the erava becomes as permitted in his eyes, despite that it was previously a very severe [sin] in his eyes.

"maasrot" (tithes) - although according to human logic, one who takes maaser should have less and he may come to poverty.. But nevertheless, the truth is the opposite. For the maasrot are a fence and guard to guard one's wealth.

"nedarim" - although according to human logic, it would seem that when a man makes an oath to not do something, then the yetzer would seize him to transgress it. But it would not be so much if he did not make an oath. On this Rabbi Akiva said that it is not so. Rather, nedarim are a fence to perishut, i.e. to separate from all sins in the world, like those tzadikim who swore against their yetzer.

"silence" - although according to human logic, wisdom is attained primarily through speech. Namely, that one debates and argues. But the truth is not so. Rather, the fence of wisdom, i.e the way to attain wisdom is through silence.

And that which he said the word "fence" first, before the word "wisdom" (fence of wisdom) while in all the other cases he did not say the word "fence" first, but rather said it afterwards (ex.nedarim is a fence to separation), this is because the other cases have other fences also. For example wealth may have other fences besides maaser. But for wisdom, the fence is silence and nothing else.

🔍 Level 3

☆ **Chida**

Chida - Marit Ayin - perhaps he said both "laughter" and "lightheadedness" are not proper. But

laughter alone may be good and a mitzvah, as Rabbi Porat Yosef wrote (daf 38) on the Talmud (Taanit 22a) regarding the men who would cheer up others with humor. For through joy one ascends from the level of katnut (smallness) to the level of gadlut. And these two men of humor would alleviate people's pain and raise (cheer) them up. This is hinted by Yitzchak "raise him up" (vehaalehu as an Olah offering).

For through laughter l'Shem Shamayim one raises up the laughter of youth. "and he took the two (shnei) lads", i.e. the years (shanim) of youth..

Thus we learn there is a laughter which is mitzvah and makes tikunim (rectifications). Thus Rabbi Akiva said "laughter and lightheadedness", i.e. the two from the Sitra Achra (side of evil), and a sin leads to more sin - [these two] habituate a person (marginim et haAdam l'erva) roshei teivot "Amah" (male organ), Sitra Achra due to the hand sent there and it becomes as permitted r"l. For this is already from the Sitra Achra.

Q Level 3

Chida

Chida, Kikar l'Eden - "be light to a head" (previous mishna) - Rabbi Hagiz explained in Etz Chaim that Rabbi Yishmael said (previous mishna) "be light to a head", i.e. sometimes one should do a bit of light-headedness and words of humor, and have his mind mixed even with children. Thus, when depression (marah shechora) comes, it will be easy to remove it.

On this Rabbi Akiva said that if one needs temporarily some laughter and lightheadedness, he should be careful to not be drawn after them. This is a summary of his words.

Thus, according to him, Rabbi Yishmael did not at all permit laughter and lightheadedness, ch'v. But rather, a little lightheadedness. Thus he said "kal l'rosh" (be light of head) to hint that he should not be kalut rosh mamash (fully lightheaded). But rather "light of head", i.e. a little bit. And this is specifically for healing. "v'noach l'tishchoret", for marah shechora (depression).

And receive every person with joy. Through this, you will detach the marah shechora in having joy and words of humor. His intent was for healing.

Afterwards, Rabbi Akiva came and said that [full] laughter and lightheadedness, these two are forbidden even temporarily and for healing. For Rabbi Yishmael only permitted a little of these and only temporarily.

Q Level 3

☆ Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - in Daas Torah 3:116-117 - See the Path of the Just (ch.7):

This was said by King Shlomo, peace be unto him: *"I said of laughter, it is silly; and of merriment, what use is it?"* (Ecc. 2:2). And the Sages of blessed of memory, said: *"laughter and lightheadedness habituate a person to illicit relations"* (Avot 3:13).

For even though sexual immorality is regarded as severe by every man of faith, and his heart fears approaching it, due to the vivid picture that has been imprinted in his mind of the enormity of the sin and the severe punishment it incurs, nevertheless, laughter and light-headedness draw him on little by little, advancing him nearer till the fear of sin leaves him bit by bit, degree after degree, until he reaches the sin itself and commits it.

And in the book Orchot Chaim (Ot 40) by Rabeinu Asher (Rosh): *"do not conduct yourself with light-headedness and may the fear of Heaven be upon you"*.

It is clear from his words that light-headedness and fear of Heaven are two opposites and the prerequisite to fear of Heaven is heavy-headedness (koved rosh, seriousness).

For light-headedness is a state of removing the yoke of Heaven. It is removing from one's heart thoughts of uprightness and examination (machshavot haysharot vehaiyunim), until thoughts of fear [of sin] do not enter his heart at all and he loses sense of the severity of matters. Thus even severe sins like ervah (lewdness) which he knows and realizes the greatness of the sin and its punishment, but nevertheless, there is nothing to hold back and restrain his spirit from doing it.

The Saba of Kelm explained beautifully the words "light-headedness" and "heavy-headedness".

He said that their explanation is literal - a "light head" or a "heavy head". That is to say, as an analogy, when a fruit tree is laden heavily with fruit, the wind will not move it so easily.

But when the tree is without fruit, every light wind will already sway it in all directions.

So too, a light-headed person is a fruitless tree. He is empty of all growth and content. Thus, for every light wind of tumah (impurity) and lust which blows on him, already he talks and yields to it.

But a man of heavy-headedness is completely full on all sides with thoughts of torah and fear. For such a person, even powerful winds will not easily budge him. Rather, he will stand at his place and fear G-d.

If you want to know a man and his deeds examine his movements. He whose head is heavy, full of sarafei torah and fear within him, you will see this in his movements. For his head is fixed and does not move and he does not laugh easily.

But if you look at a man who sits on street corners, whose head is light, you will notice immediately that there is nothing within him. He will already sway at every heard thing and the slightest sound, like a free bird which sways its head constantly in all directions and certainly *"he cannot be quiet"* (Isaiah 57:20).

Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - in the previous mishna, he said: *"receive every person with joy"*. Thus it seems joy is good. On this he wrote here that even though joy is good, namely, that one shows joy to others. For through this people benefit from him (ruach habriot noche hemenu), and one honors them as is fitting to do. But as for joy itself *"what does it do?"* (Kohelet 2:2).

Thus he said: *"laughter and light-headedness, etc."* For laughter is excess joy. Thus, even though one should not distance from joy, but as for laughter which is excess joy - it is proper to distance from.

(R. Hartman: later in chapter 6 mishna 7, he writes: "laughter is not the same as joy. For joy is primarily in the heart, but laughter is not only in the heart. It is also in action (maase)... and in the Talmud (Berachot 31a): "it is forbidden to fill one's mouth with laughter in this world"...))

"laughter habituates a person to lewdness (erva)" - for erva is itself called laughter, as written: "he brought us a Hebrew man to laugh at us" (Ber.39:14), which refers to lewdness (ervah). Similarly, we find in several places in scripture that ervah is called laughter. And even marital relations in holiness is called "laughter" as written: "he saw Yitzchak laughing with his wife, Rivka" (Ber.26:8).

Thus he said that laughter and light-headedness habituate and lead completely to ervah. For

laughter brings to other laughter, namely ervah.

You should know further how laughter and light headedness habituate a person to erva.

This is because "ervah" is the withdrawal of G-d from man. You can see this for even when this act is not sin, nevertheless it is written: "He should not see anything lewd (ervah davar) among you and turn away from you" (Devarim 23:15).

(RH - it seems he is referring to the sending out of the Baal Keri (man who had a seminal emission) outside the (tabernacle area) and the commandment to cover excrement (Devarim 23:14). Scripture calls this a "lewd thing" (ervat davar)". Thus, "a lewd thing" causes "turn away from you")

All the more so, that when it is a devar ervah of complete sin that it is a withdrawing of the Shechina (Divine Presence). For it is a physical (coarse) matter and G-d's holiness is not there. This is because G-d's holiness and this act are complete opposites. For He is holy and this act is animalistic and physical (behemi v'chomri) as we explained many times.

Therefore, this act is far from G-d, blessed be He. And when a man stands in fear, without laughter or lightheadedness, for all fear is from G-d Who is opposite him - then he will not come to this. Because through it man distances from G-d.

But when man stands with laughter and lightheadedness, and he is removed from the fear - this is the beginning of removing and distancing oneself from G-d, blessed be He. And this habituates and brings him to the act which is far from G-d until he comes to the sin of ervah completely...

You should know that man is not like other creations. For other creations do not acquire anything more than what it was created with. But man was created lacking, "*man was born as a wild donkey*" (Iyov 11:12). And afterwards, man acquires wholeness and becomes whole. There are three things man acquires:

One, intellect and wisdom. For he was created devoid of knowledge (daat) and he [must] acquire it.

Two, good and just deeds which are an acquisition (kinyan). For these were not born with him. Thus, they are considered an acquisition of man.

Three, his wealth and money. For man "emerges naked from his mother's womb" (Iyov 1:21) - naked of intellect, naked of deeds, and naked of wealth.

Thus these three things are acquisitions of man and are not born with him.

And for everything which is acquired, just like it can be acquired, so too it can be removed and lost. Due to this, man needs specifically to make a fence and guard these three things so that he does not come to loss.

And that which can be most called an acquisition for man is the divine torah. For due to its loftiness and exaltedness to the extent that it is called the "Torah of G-d", it is not near to man and it is not like the previous three things mentioned earlier.

For since they (other acquisitions) are near to man and associated with him, although they are

also "acquisitions" but nevertheless the acquisition merges with the acquirer until they are like one. For that which is near man himself, who is the acquirer - becomes one with him. Thus it does not part without difficulty and is not easily removed.

But these three things (wealth, perishut, etc.) are not so close to man. Thus they have "removal". And all the more so for the divine Torah which is completely divine while man is physical - it is easily removed from man.

We explained this earlier in the mishna: "he whose fear of sin precedes his wisdom".

This is what our sages said:

"Acher asked R. Meir: What is the meaning of the verse: 'Gold and glass cannot equal it; neither shall the exchange thereof be vessels of fine gold?' (Job 28:17) He answered: 'This refers to the words of the Torah, which are hard to acquire like vessels of fine gold, but are easily destroyed like vessels of glass'" (Chagigah 15a).

Thus, due to the torah's lofty and sublime level, for it is divine wisdom - it is difficult to acquire like gold vessels. For these are not with man and not easily found. So too for words of torah - it is difficult to reach and acquire them. For the torah is divine transcendent intellect on high (sechel elyon Eloki)....

(RH - and in Netiv Hatorah (ch.4) he writes: for the Sechel (divine intellect) is separate from man. Due to this, man needs great strain and labor to acquire the divine intellect..)

"maasrot is a fence for wealth" - for wealth, which is an acquisition of man, is prone to being removed from him. This is so more than the other acquisitions mentioned earlier. For wealth does not at all join to a man.

It is not like wisdom which stands with him and joins with him. Rather, wealth is completely separate from man. Therefore, wealth needs more fencing than the others. For they have some aspect of joining and attaching to man.

"maasrot (tithes) is a fence for wealth" - for when man gives his money to G-d, a blessing from G-d will come on his money. Therefore, G-d commanded to give a tenth to Him. Through this one offers of his money to the domain of G-d (reshut Hash-em).

And specifically "the tenth is holy to G-d" (Vayikra 27:32). For the specific numbers are until nine. Ten is considered a group and congregation (eidah v'klal). Because numbers go only until ten. After that it is "one and ten" (echad esrei in Hebrew), "two and ten", etc.

Thus things increase (in name) only until ten.

This is because there is no increase on a klal (group). Ten and a thousand are considered equivalent. Our rabbis learned this from the verse: *"how much longer will this evil congregation ('Eidah Rah' of the 10 spies).."* (Bamidbar 14:17). We explained this earlier. For the tenth completes to ten which is the klal (group).

Thus the tenth has a special segula (property) that it is fitting for Above, since G-d, blessed be He, includes everything. Therefore the tenth which completes the number until it is everything is fitting for G-d who is everything.

Through this you will understand further what our sages said: " 'aasser taasser' take a tenth so you

will become wealthy". For the specifics are only parts and every part is subject to loss because it is only a part. But for the tenth which completes the count to 10, it is not a specific and thus not subject to parts. Thus it does not come to loss.

And therefore, when one gives a tenth to G-d, through this G-d clings there in that He includes everything.

It is for this that one gives the tenth which perfects to 10, the number of everything, to G-d who includes everything. Then there is blessing and increase. For the klal is blessing since there is no loss to a klal, only wealth (a klal has permanence and increase)..

Due to this the word ten "esser" is like "osher" (wealth). For the tenth is wealth, it completes to the number which has everything. Thus "take a tenth in order to become wealthy".

"nedarim (vows) are a fence to separation" - this corresponds to man's deeds. For man's deeds are also his acquisitions. For the evil inclination is in man by nature since his youth, as written: "for the inclination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Bereishit 8:21).

Man was born with this nature and thus evil deeds are not called his acquisitions. For it is not proper to call an acquisition that which is born with man by nature as soon as he emerges out of the womb of his mother.

Rather only good deeds specifically are acquisitions. For if man goes after his nature, he will not have any good deeds at all.

Therefore, they said: "nedarim (vows) are a fence to separation". For when a man's yetzer (evil inclination) overpowers him, dragging him after the evil inclination he was born with, man must make nedarim (vows).

This is as our sages: "Shimon Hatzadik said: all my days I never ate from the offering of a nazir tamei except once..." (Nedarim 9b, see there).

Shimon HaTzadik said: all my days I never ate from the sin-offering of a nazir tamei (defiled) except once. On one occasion a nazir came from the South country, and I saw that he had beautiful eyes, was of handsome appearance, and with thick locks of hair symmetrically arranged. Said I to him: 'My son, what [reason] did you see to destroy this beautiful hair of yours?' He replied: 'I was a shepherd for my father in my town. [Once] I went to draw water from a well, gazed upon my reflection in the water, whereupon my evil desires rushed upon me and sought to drive me from the world [through sin]. But I said unto it [my lust]: "Wretch! why do you vaunt yourself in a world that is not yours, with one who is destined to become worms and dust? I swear that I will shave you off [his beautiful hair] for the sake of Heaven.'" I immediately arose and kissed his head, saying: 'My son, may there be many nazirites such as you in Israel! Of you the Torah says: "when either a man or a woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a nazirite, to separate themselves to Hash-em"

Thus Nezirut which is a "Nazir to Hash-em" causes Separation (Perishut) - that a man not be drawn after the yetzer hara (evil inclination) he was born with. Therefore, Nedarim are a fence to Perishut (separation) from sin.

"the fence of wisdom is silence" - as explained, for man is of physicality, not of intellect (eino sichli). For he was born without intellect. Therefore, he said: "the fence of wisdom", namely, that a man be of intellect (sichli), is that he be a silent person (baal shtika). And through silence he will acquire the Intellect.

We explained this earlier in the mishna: *"I have not found anything as good for the body as silence"* (Avot 1:17), how silence is a fence to wisdom. For there we explained that the intellect and the power of speech are separate powers. For the power of speech is a physical power and when one strengthens, the other weakens. The great proof of this is at the time of old age. For then the powers of the body weaken and consequently, the powers of the intellect strengthen. Thus, you can see that the intellect and the powers of the body are separate and inverses of each other.

(Rabbi Hartman - as our sages said: "the older torah scholars get, the wiser they become" (Shab.152a)...

If you ask: "but it also says later there: 'for amei haretz (unlearned), the older they get the more foolish they become'. Hence instead of bringing a proof from the torah scholars that old age is a time of strengthening of the intellect, bring a proof from the amei haaretz for the opposite".

The Maharal explains there: "it is the opposite for the elders of the amei haaretz, for their whole matter and intellect is corporeal (gufani, physical), and they don't have a separate intellect (sechel nivdal). Therefore, the older they get, the weaker their physical powers become, and likewise their intellect which is corporeal also weakens. For their intellect is of physicality as known to those who understand this..")

Thus, it is proper for the intellect to strengthen when the faculties of the body (speech) do not operate. And when the power of speech operates, the intellect is not in its power. For two opposites cannot co-exist.

We have explained the four things.. These four things include all the things which need a fence.

Chapter 3 Mishna 17 - Beloved Is Man

He would say: beloved is man for he was created in the Image [of G-d]. It is an extra affection that man was informed that he was created in the Image [of G-d], as written: *"for in the Image of G-d, He made man"* (Gen.9:6).

הוא היה אומר, חביב אדם שנברא בצלם. חבה יתרה נודעת לו שנברא בצלם, שנאמר (בראשית ט) כי בצלם אלהים עשה את האדם.

Beloved is Yisrael for they are called "sons of G-d". It is an extra love that they were informed that they are called "sons of G-d", as written: *"you are sons to the L-ord your G-d"* (Devarim 14:1)

חביבין ישראל שנקראו בנים למקום. חבה יתרה נודעת להם שנקראו בנים למקום, שנאמר (דברים יד) בנים אתם לה' אלהיכם.

Beloved is Yisrael for they were given a precious vessel. It is an extra love that they were informed that they were given a precious vessel with which the world was created, as written: *"For I have given to you a good possession, do not forsake My torah"* (Prov.4:2).

חביבין ישראל שנתן להם כלי חמדה. חבה יתרה נודעת להם שנתן להם כלי חמדה שבו נברא העולם, שנאמר (משלי ד) כי לקח טוב נתתי לכם, תורת אל תעזבו:

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "it is an extra affection that man was informed.." - the Rambam explains that G-d showed great affection to Adam, saying to him: "see that I created you in the Divine Image". For one who bestows good to his fellow and also informs him of this good - this is a greater display of affection than if he had bestowed good to him without informing him of the good.. (for example, sometimes one does a favor for a poor man out of pity and does not inform the poor man of what he did for him due to the poor man being lowly in his eyes - Rambam)

Alternatively, "extra affection" - i.e. an open and public affection which G-d has for man. For not only does He cherish man secretly, but even publicly and openly and made known to all.

Q Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "image of G-d" - i.e. intellectual power (koach sichli) and free will - this is the image of G-d. For man has the power to act as he wishes. This is unlike other creations above or below the level of man like angels (spiritual beings) or animals - all of them are forced in their deeds.

Q Level 2

Binyan Avot

Binyan Avot - "you are sons" - he did not bring a proof from the earlier verse "And you shall say to Pharaoh, 'So said the L-ord: My son, My first born, Yisrael'" (Shemot 4:22). For one may interpret that verse to be referring only to the generation of the Exodus. i.e. only they were cherished but how do we know for future generations? Thus, he brought a proof from this verse which refers to a mitzvah for all generations.. "you are sons to the L-ord your G-d [you shall neither cut yourselves..]" (Devarim 14:1)

Q Level 3

☆ Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan - "beloved is man for he was created in the Image" - this is to rouse a man to regard himself as an important and beloved creature before He who spoke and created the world. He should be embarrassed and abashed of a small mistake, and not fulfill on himself the verse: "It is as a joke to a fool to do wickedness" (Mishlei 10:23).

Rather, he should be exceedingly careful to guard his own dignity. For his honor is his Master's

honor, since his Master created him in His semblance and form. Thus, he should not profane his honor and not disrespect His throne, as the prophet said: "and on the likeness of the throne, was a likeness like the appearance of a man upon it above" (Yechezkel 1:26).

After saying that man is beloved and important before his Creator, he exhorted that one who is beloved to G-d is held meticulously accountable for his deeds, similar to the verse: "you only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2) and likewise David said: "around Him it storms furiously" (Tehilim 50:3), which our sages expounded: "this teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, is meticulous with the righteous even to a hair's breadth.

Q Level 4

Shaarei Ramchal, Hakdama l'Maamar HaVikuch - The primary will of G-d in His world is that all matters of the world be Tikunim Mamash (rectifications) and matters of holiness. This is the root of all that was, is, and will be in this world. For the divine will desired (chashak) to draw man close, to imbue man and cling to him. G-d specifically chose man for he is the most cherished [creation]. The reason is clear, since man alone truly serves G-d. He fights a war with the evil inclination and honors G-d more than all other creations. For since they don't have an evil inclination, the honor of G-d does not elevate so much from their service as it does from the service of man.

Because man must stand up against all the difficult wars which his evil inclination wages against him, and all this for the service of G-d and for the honor of His Name, and all out of his own free will. Unlike the other creations which don't have free will. Thus the divine will created this being and gave him this service. Due to this, G-d cherishes him and loves him very much. Therefore, G-d placed great ways and wondrous laws for this man, so that he rectifies himself and his place, namely, this world. Thus the Shechina (Divine presence) conducts this man and all that depends on him with an exceedingly great and deep providence. G-d's intent is to sanctify him and all that depends on him, and to remove the obstruction, namely, the evil which weighed on him, and which caused him all this great effort and heavy war...

Q Level 2



Ohr Yechezkel chelek 5 - "precious vessel (kli chemda)" - the vessel (kli) through which it is possible to merit all the precious things (chemdot) of the world.

Q Level 2



Einei Kol Chai - "given a precious vessel" - love has two facets: One, desire to do the will of your fellow. Two, love in essence, such as a father's love to his son. The latter entails even to force him with all sorts of sufferings for his benefit. Therefore, the Holy One, blessed be He, lifted the mountain over their heads.. This is "beloved is Yisrael.." and then "an extra love.. that they were given (nitan)" - "given" specifically (nitan davka in passive form), i.e. by force, like a father who forces his son [for his benefit].

Q Level 3

☆ Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot - "with which the world was created" - this is not a story of the greatness of torah. Rather, the sage is coming to teach us how greatly beloved is Yisrael [by G-d] in giving us the "precious vessel" (kli chemda) used to create the world and through it, the ability to change nature. For since the world was created through it, then it follows that the Torah has a special segulah (power) to change nature, since there is no greater changing of nature than creating the world. Therefore, it is in man's hands to change his natures and come to his wholeness/perfection (Shlemut) through torah study, which is the purpose of man's divine service.

On this Rabbi Yisrael Salanter wrote in his Igeret Hamussar that the primary healing of man is through the in-depth study of the laws (Halachot) which pertain to his matter (that he is working to

change, ex. anger) - and especially, "on condition to fulfill". That is to say, while he learns, he should know and have intent in his thoughts that through this, he is going to change his nature. For changing man's nature is impossible except through a miracle and this is an even greater miracle than changing the physical laws of nature.

And among the requirements for creating the miracle is the knowledge and intent in the performing of the miracle. (Daat Chochma U'Mussar 1:2, Daat Torah 3 pg.59)

Q Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - "beloved is man for he was created in the Image [of G-d].." - since he said in the previous mishna "vows are a fence to separation (from damaging things)", on this he said it is proper for a man to make fences and protections. This is analogous to one who has a cherished vineyard. According to the quality of his vineyard will be the corresponding fence. If he has merely a field of vegetables, he will not make much fence and protection around it.

For what does he make a fence? Specifically for a vineyard he cherishes. On this he wrote: "cherished is man etc."

And since man is cherished, and he has a very exalted level, G-d gave him the parsha (teachings) on vows (Nedarim 78b) so that man can make fences and protections to not corrupt his level of being created in the Image of G-d...

Q Level 4

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "Image of G-d" - the explanation is not that G-d has an image or form. For that is not at all so. Rather, the verse is using the physical form (of man) to hint at what exists in the Holy One, blessed be He, in a non-physical manner. For certainly a man can picture using physical matters that which is devoid of physicality.

For example, when one wants to picture G-d who is King over all and nothing is above Him, he will picture an upright figure.

Although certainly one should not attribute any picture to G-d. For this is definitely forbidden according to man's intellect which [tries to] grasps things as they are.

But nevertheless, that which exists in G-d is pictured in physical man.

For man was created upright unlike other living creatures which walk bent over. For one who walks bent over indicates he has a master over him, like a slave who walks slouching before his master.

G-d has no master over him. Thus on man's upright posture, it is said that he is in the "image of G-d".

Namely, when one comes to give a physical picture of what exists in G-d who is devoid of physicality - then one says man is in the image of G-d. For man is in the lower (physical) world and from the aspect of the physical, man is in the image of G-d.

For here in the physical world, one would picture G-d according to what is fitting to this physical world...

Thus, when G-d appeared to the prophets, He appeared in the form of a man. For the prophets did not look with a "clear window" (asplakya hameira) like Moshe Rabeinu. For their prophecy was not completely divested of the physical.. Thus it is written: "and on the throne a figure in the form of

man" (Yechezkel 1:26). For thus G-d relates to this physical world...

It is known that this physical world is like a garment to the divested world. And just like a garment is in the form of its wearer, even though it is not truly the wearer, so too G-d is described in the physical world in terms of physical terms. Thus, it is said on man that he was created in the Image of G-d.

Namely, from the aspect that man walks upright as explained and the other creatures walk bent down. For they are subjugated to man who is king over all and below there is nothing above him.

Thus, he walks upright according to his level.. And likewise, that which G-d sees and watches over this world, the good and the evil, the picture of this is that G-d has two eyes.. As our sages said on "the eyes of G-d are upon the land (of Israel) from the beginning of the year till its end" (Devarim 11:12) - " 'eyes of G-d' - this was said in plural, sometimes for good and sometimes for bad (punishment)" (Rosh Hashana 17b).

On this Iyov said: "from my flesh I see G-d" (Iyov 19:26)..

Deeper Explanation

If you want to explain the term "image (of G-d)" according to the "image" (Tzelem) which G-d truly has, then explain the verse "let us make man in our image and form" (Gen.1:26) as follows.

Although certainly the term "Image and Form" (Tzelem v'Temunah) normally apply to an appearance and picture, but here it refers only to the primary image and picture. For anything which has an image and (spiritual) form (Tzelem v'Temunah), also has a radiance (ziv). For this (radiance) is the primary image and form. Namely, the light and radiance of the image (Tzelem).

This is as scripture writes: "the image (tzelem) of his face changed" (Daniel 3:19). And without a doubt the physical form (of his face) did not change.

Rather, it is like when something happens to a man and the "radiance" and "light" of his face changes.

This is the explanation of the verse: "let us make man in our image and form". For a certain radiance and supernal spark (nitzutz elyon) attaches to his face. This is the image of G-d. And with this man is distinguished from all the creations - through this radiance and light of the Tzelem (divine image).

This light is not at all a physical light. Rather, it is a spiritual light and divine radiance which attaches to man.

On this it is written: "in the image of G-d, He created man".

For G-d is called "light" because the term "light" is used everywhere to represent something separate (nivdal) and non-physical. For light is not physical at all (translator: there is still much mystery on light).

We explained this in the introduction on the verse "a mitzvah is a candle and torah is light" (Mishlei 6::23).

For light teaches on that which is separate and non-physical. This is the matter of the Tzelem

(image of G-d). Namely, this physical man has something separate and non-physical attached to him - the radiance of His Tzelem.

Just like man receives the supernal soul with the physical, so too (this) physical man receives this supernal radiance and light. And from the aspect of this special light which attaches to man, when he is divested of the physical - it is an image of G-d completely.

For this is the difference between a man and an angel. An angel is separated from the physical by essence. From this aspect, he is on a higher level than man. But physical man receives a separated power, namely, this Tzelem, which is a non-physical light radiance that attaches to him.

We will explain this further in chapter 6 by "all that is called by My Name.." (Avot 6). For all creations have this. Namely, a non-physical radiance attached to them.

But it is called an image of G-d only by man. For it is more G-dly (Eloki) in him.

This matter is clear. For regarding the angels, although they are separate from physicality, but they are not completely separate. But regarding man, that which he receives is a power completely separate (from the physical).

Although it has a (physical) carrier (the body) and needs a carrier but nevertheless that which man receives is more separate from the physical (peshitut yoter) [than the angels].

This is something you should understand in the Sod (secret) of wisdom. It is written on the angels that they have wings like living things (birds). This matter is in their essence and hints that in their essence, the angels are not completely separate from the physical and they have a leaning towards the physical animals.

Only G-d is completely and absolutely separate from the physical and man receives a separate power which resides in a carrier. Namely, this supernal radiance which shines on him and man receives this spark... On this it is written: "in the image of G-d, He created man". For this radiance and light which he receives is completely separate. Understand these things.

You should also come to know to understand regarding the light of this Tzelem. For we already explained that light and radiance (ohr v'ziv) has a great degree of existence (metziut) because light is the complete existence. For a thing which has light exists and is visible, such that everything exists through light.

(Translator: interestingly, according to quantum mechanics, things don't fully exist in a definite state until they are observable).

Level 4

Maharal

Maharal (continued) - We already explained that darkness (choshech) is called by this name because darkness is the opposite of light. For light grants existence to other things while darkness is the opposite of this. Anything that is in darkness does not exist and is not visible.

Thus, darkness which is the opposite of light, is called "choshech" a term connoting inexistence, the opposite of existence, such as: "you did not withhold (chasachta) your son" (Gen.22:12) which is from "I withheld also" (Gen.20:6).

And in the Midrash on the verse "*behold man has become like one of us, having the ability of knowing good and evil*" (Gen.3:22) - Midrash: " 'like one of us' - i.e. like the Singular One of the world (Yechido shel Olam, i.e. G-d)" (Midrash Rabba 21:5).

The explanation of this is that which man knows good and evil, this is due to his being singular in this lower world similar to G-d in the upper worlds.

Due to this aspect, man is capable of knowing good and evil, unlike before the sin.

Afterwards, G-d said: *"lest he eat from the tree of life and live forever.."* (Gen.3:22). For after man has attained this level of grasping good and evil, he may cleave to the tree of life which is the torah, "and eat from it and live forever".

This is because acquiring the knowledge brings a man to cleave to life, as written: "it is a tree of life to those who hold on to it" (Mishlei 3:18).

We find in the words of our sages, many who wanted and tried to hold tight to the tree of life, namely, the torah, to repel death from themselves, such as in Shabbat 30b (regarding king David) and many sages of the talmud such as Rabbah bar Nachmani (Bava Metziah 86a).

For when death is decreed on man due to his being separated from the Cause, blessed be He, and he seeks that the eating from the tree of life be as a city of refuge (to escape death).

The explanation of this "eating" from the tree of life, is that of complete eating from the tree of life, namely, to become one in essence (mitatzem) with the torah. For that which one eats becomes one in essence (mitatzem) with the one eating until he becomes completely nourished from it.

And certainly through this, he (Adam) would have lived forever when he was nourished by it (the tree of life). But this was only possible when he was close to the Tree of Life, namely, when he was on a high level. Then, he was capable of eating from the Tree of Life and become completely nourished by it, to grasp all the secrets of torah and live forever.

This is what he said: "lest he send out his hand and eats and lives forever" (Gen.3:22), i.e. when he is near the Tree of Life due to still being in Gan Eden.

Man was no longer worthy of this. For he already turned to the lowly when he ate from the Tree of Knowledge and knew good and evil. This was turning away from the Cause as explained earlier.

Thus, he was no longer fit for eternal life when he turned to the lowly. And when G-d banished him from his level in Gan Eden, he was no longer near the Tree of Life to eat from it. Understand this very well.

We have explained that he attained the knowledge of good and evil by being in his own domain. Namely, by not turning to his Cause which is the good. For there, there is no evil.

Likewise that which man has been given permission to choose of his own free will - this is due to man's being created in the Image of G-d and that he is singular in the lower world. This is what caused him to be like G-d, knowing good and evil.

For it is better for him to be in the domain of the Cause (in the good) rather than to have free will. For in the latter, it is possible for him to commit evil.

Thus, that which he is like G-d, knowing good and evil, this is not a quality of man. Rather, it is a consequence of man's being created in the image of G-d and thus man is like G-d knowing good

and evil. But for man, this is not a quality.

So too, that which man is in his own domain and has free will similar to his Cause, even though it is not for his good, this too is a consequence of the image of G-d. Understand these things...

According to this, what our sages said in Tractate Avodah Zarah 54b will not be difficult:

"The philosophers asked the torah sages in Rome: 'if your G-d does not want idolatry, why doesn't He destroy it?' The sages answered: 'if they worshipped something useless, he would destroy it, but since they worship the sun and the moon, should He destroy the world for these idolaters?!'"

The torah sages answered them nicely regarding not destroying the world but the question remains as to why doesn't He just destroy the idolaters?

The answer to that is that if He were to destroy the idolaters, man would not at all have free will. For man would fear utter destruction.

🔍 Level 4

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "the world is judged with goodness" - i.e. don't think that since G-d does not rebuke the sinners then He must not desire the good of the world.

For when a human father loves his son and the son seeks to do a sin, the father intervenes and does not allow his son to do it. But if the father hates his son, he lets the son do the sin, similar to: "feed it to the wicked and let him die" (Bava Kama 69a). Namely, he lets the son do as he desires so that the son destroys himself.

But is it conceivable that G-d allows man to sin because He seeks the bad of the world? For if G-d loves man and cherishes him, why doesn't He intervene? Rather, certainly it seems G-d must seek to incline man to the side of evil [and hates him].

On this he said that it is not so. For even when G-d judges the world, He does not seek its evil. Rather "the world is judged with goodness". He seeks to vindicate the world and bestow good to it and that there be only good in the world.

Thus, He judges the world with good, namely, G-d's attribute of good desires that there be good in the world. Therefore, He brings punishments to the world to pay those who commit evil and then the evil is removed from the world and the good remains.

This is the meaning of "the world is judged with goodness", namely, the world is judged with G-d's good. For since He is good, therefore, He desires good and does not want evil.

This is what our sages said: "a person is obligated to bless [G-d] on the bad just like on the good" (Berachot 54a). The talmud there asks:

"What should he bless? If you say: 'just like on the good, he blesses 'He who is good and bestows good', so too on the bad, he blesses 'He who is good and bestows good' - but this cannot be so, for we have learned: "on the good, he says 'He who is good and bestows good, but on the bad, he says: 'the true Judge'". Rather, Rava says it means 'to receive it (the bad) with joy'" end quote

Why would one think that he should bless: 'He who is good and does good' on the bad such that a verse is needed to say otherwise?

Rather, it is because one may think that since even the bad comes from the attribute of good, as

we mentioned.. For that which He brings punishments in the world, this is to pay back a man for his [bad] deeds. Through this, evil is removed and the good remains. For this itself, one is obligated to receive with joy G-d's attribute of judgment and bless "the true Judge". Man cannot bless "who is good and bestows good" because he did not receive good.

This is the meaning of "the world is judged with goodness", i.e. even the bad G-d brings to the world comes only from His goodness. This is not like when a man does bad to his fellow which stems from the bad in him. But for G-d, even the bad stems from the good...

Chapter 3 Mishna 18 - All Is Foreseen

All is foreseen, permission (free will) is granted; the world is judged with goodness and all is according to the majority of the deed[s] הַכֹּל צָפוּי, וְהָרְשׁוּת נְתוּנָה, וּבְטוֹב הָעוֹלָם נִדּוּן. וְהַכֹּל לְפִי רֵב הַמַּעֲשֵׂה

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "all is foreseen" - everything a person does [even] in his innermost chambers is revealed before G-d.

"permission is granted" - in man's hands to do good or evil, as written: "see, I place before you today life and death, good and evil, [and you shall choose life]" (Devarim 30).

Q Level 1

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "all is foreseen, permission is granted" - i.e. at the time of sin, the Holy One, blessed be He, sees him, but nevertheless, permission is granted.

Q Level 2

☆ Rambam

Rambam - this teaching encompasses very big concepts and it is proper to have been said by Rabbi Akiva. Here is a concise explanation, but be sure to know all that was said in previous chapters:

All that occurs in the world is known and perceived by G-d. This is the meaning of "all is foreseen". Afterwards, he said: "don't think that since He knows the deeds therefore everything is pre-determined". Namely, that a man is forced in his deeds. It is not so. Rather, permission is granted in man's hands in what he does. This is what he says: "permission is granted", i.e. every person is granted permission (free will)..

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "all is foreseen, permission is granted" - the Rambam explained just how wondrous is the matter. For even though permission is granted to a person to act according to his wish, and he is not forced to do good or evil. Rather, he acts according to the will in his heart. But nevertheless, G-d knows what the person will do before his thoughts and before his action. He knows beforehand his future will and for even the undecided deeds which could be this way or that way - He knows it all before it happens. This is a wonder!

(Translator: for to G-d, the future is just like the present. He sees everything all at once.)

Q Level 2

☆ Binyan Avot

Binyan Avot - "everything is foreseen" - he did not say (hakol tzofeh) "He sees everything" (present tense) but rather (hkol tzafui) "everything is foreseen" (past tense), as if it happened already before man's free choice. For G-d does not need to "look and see" to grasp the future. For to Him, the future is as the past.. It is beyond the powers and capacities of our minds to grasp this [kind of] knowledge.

Q Level 3

☆ Chachma u'Mussar

Chachma u'Mussar chelek 2, 85 - "permission is granted" - when we contemplate, we will see that the great quality of man is the quality of free will. The matter of free will is that G-d has granted man permission to choose with his own free choice and, so to speak, G-d does not have permission in this, as our sages said (Berachot 33b): "everything is in the hands of Heaven except fear of Heaven, as scripture states: 'and now Yisrael, what does the L-ord your G-d ask of you other than to fear [the L-ord your G-d..]'"

This is G-d's will - to grant man permission. And scripture states: "You have made man slightly less than Elokim (G-d) [and You have crowned him with glory and majesty]" (Tehilim 8:6). Namely, although "Elokim" is the "Master of all powers", but regarding "free will", it is as if G-d's power is diminished. For in free will, it is as if G-d has no permission, as written "what does the L-ord your G-d ask, etc" (Devarim 10:12) and "you have weakened the Rock who bore you" (Devarim 32:18). And as the famous Midrash there explains: "whenever I seek to benefit you, you weaken the power above [through sins]" (Yalkut Shimoni there).

Although it is true that if He wanted, G-d could remove from man the power of free will. But this is His will - to grant man free will. It is wondrous to contemplate the power of free will.

Level 3

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "everything is seen (known)" - i.e. a person has no excuse whatsoever on the day of judgment. He cannot say he did not know which path leads to light and thus did not know how to conduct himself. For "everything is seen (tzafui)", i.e. before man, as written: "see I place before you the life and the good and the death and the evil [and you shall choose life]" (Devarim 30:15). The torah teaches a man the proper path to go and the actions to do. For this he followed this mishna after "Beloved is Yisrael for they were given a precious vessel (Torah)", and did not interrupt with "he would say" as he normally does throughout this tractate. For this is the concluding words of the previous mishna, since through the torah everything is seen and likewise permission is granted to choose as the verse there ends off "and you shall choose life"...

Level 3

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "everything is seen (tzafui)" - the word "tzefiah" means seeing from a high, faraway place (a prophet is called a "tzofeh" for he gazes far out in the future. Likewise, a person observing from a watch tower or high place is called a "tzofeh").

In such a case, one sees all the details, small or large, simultaneously.

So too, G-d does not take interest only in the main deeds or only in the important people. Rather, "everything is seen" - from the actions of a king sitting on his throne to the actions of the last peasant - all of them are equally important in His eyes and all of them are observed in the same degree.

In this, G-d's conduct is different from that of a flesh and blood ruler. For the latter does not deal with small matters nor relate personally with every individual in his kingdom.

A flesh and blood ruler surrounds himself with powerful people and it is below his honor to take interest in the small day to day matters of every peasant.

But this is not the way of the Holy One, blessed be He, the King of kings. For He relates personally (mityaches) to every individual equally. Likewise, He Himself looks at and observes all the deeds, small or big. Even a casual word or a passing thought - "everything is seen".

According to this explanation, the teaching "everything is seen" is coming to remove from the hearts the view of those who think that due to the exaltedness of the Creator, it is not proper for Him to take interest in every detail and every act of human beings.

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan writes that it is proper to bring here what our sages taught: "wherever you find a reference to the might of the Holy One, blessed be He, you also find a reference to His

humility [adjacent to it]" (Megilah 31a). For although G-d is infinitely exalted, but nevertheless, "though the L-ord is exalted, yet He sees the lowly, and He chastises the haughty from afar" (Tehilim 138:6).

Q Level 3

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "everything is seen" - just like a watchman (tzofeh) [on a watchtower] sees things the second they occur, so too man's deeds are observed in the "time of truth" (zman emet). This watching does not occur sometimes, such as at a time of judgment or other specific times. Rather, it happens every instant and on every act.

This stems from the simple fact that man is unable to do anything without the Creator's giving him the ability to materialize his will. Indeed the entire universe cannot exist for one second without the Holy One, blessed be He, as we say in the morning prayer: "in His goodness, He renews every day, always the creation of the world (maaseh Bereisheit)" - every second the universe is created anew.

The creation was not a one time event which continues on its own power. Rather, G-d continues to sustain the universe all the time. Therefore, man too is unable to walk even one step without G-d granting him the power to do it.

Now it is clear that it is impossible to have a situation whereby any slightest act or thought can occur without G-d's knowledge. For He is the one who materializes it from potential to actual.

Contemplating this brings one to some grasp of the greatness of the Creator's mercy...

Q Level 3

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "all is foreseen" - this mishna comes to teach us a great fundamental principle - even though G-d knows all that will occur in the future, but nevertheless, this does not mean that He decrees who will be righteous or wicked.

The Rambam explains this at length in his monumental work, Mishneh Torah (Hilchot Teshuva ch.5):

Free will is granted to all men. If one desires to turn himself to the path of good and be righteous, the choice is his. Should he desire to turn to the path of evil and be wicked, the choice is his.

This is [the intent of] the Torah's statement (Genesis 3:22): "Behold, man has become unique as ourselves, knowing good and evil," i.e., the human species became singular in the world with no other species resembling it in the following quality: that man can, on his own initiative, with his knowledge and thought, know good and evil, and do what he desires. There is no one who can prevent him from doing good or bad...

A person should not entertain the view held by the fools among the gentiles and the majority of the undeveloped among Israel that, at the time of a man's creation, The Holy One, blessed be He, decrees whether he will be righteous or wicked.

This is untrue. Each person is fit to be righteous like Moses, our teacher, or wicked, like Jeroboam. [Similarly,] he may be wise or foolish, merciful or cruel, miserly or generous, or [acquire] any other character traits. There is no one who compels him, decrees on him, or leads him towards either of these two paths. Rather, he, on his own initiative and decision, tends to the path he chooses...

This principle is a fundamental concept and a pillar [on which rests the totality] of the Torah and

mitzvot...

Were G-d to decree that an individual would be righteous or wicked... how could He command us through [the words of] the prophets: "Do this," "Do not do this," "Improve your behavior," or "Do not follow after your wickedness?"... What place would there be for the entire Torah? (see there for more)

It is almost completely clear in my eyes that there is no other place in his book where the Rambam explains and repeats something over and over again so many times as this principle.

The Rambam went at length here so that one will not have any room for any doubt whatsoever that all his deeds are solely and exclusively in his own hands.

Why is it so important to insert this so strongly in the fundamentals? Because if a person does not believe with complete faith that his deeds are solely under his own free will, he will never want to repent and work very hard to change his evil ways.

For he will tell himself: "there's nothing to do. That's just the way I am and I cannot change. For G-d decided that I should be like this. Who am I to brazenly try to change His decisions?!"

Thus, the Rambam taught and repeated two, three, four times the fundamental principle that every person can change and the gates are never closed to him.. Rather a man can always change and repent from his ways and G-d never forces him to remain in his evil way.

Due to this, I very much tend to argue and contend all those who claim that there are many ways for parents to cause themselves to give birth to a wicked son and a heretic.

For if this son hears that he became like this because his parents acted a certain way, he will never think for a second that he is guilty in his deeds and needs to have remorse on them.

Rather, he will tell himself like Elisha ben Avuyah "it is not my fault. It is my parents' fault".

All the teachings in the talmud and zohar on all sorts of things which are a segulah for bearing proper or improper children such as the "sons of nine traits" in Nedarim, all these things are not complete promises. Rather, they are just segulah b'almah (general tendencies) and a lowering of the level of the child's free will (i.e. that it will be harder for him to do good, but G-d forbid they do not prevent him from choosing good).

Likewise, there is no obligation that every parent who prays on his children that they will certainly go in the good path.

Rather, all these things are in the category of general hishtadlut (making efforts) in order to raise the child's level of free will.

But in the end, free will is entirely in a man's hands and no one else besides himself.

The proof of this is in all the secular people who became baalei teshuva (observant). Even though it is almost certain that their parents were not careful on any of the segulahs for righteous children and they are probably also sons of niddah or one of the nine traits. and nevertheless they repented. For free will belongs solely to man..

Bartenura - "the world is judged with goodness..." - with the attribute of mercy, but even so, not everyone is equal in this attribute. For everything is "according to the majority of the deed[s]". One who increases good deeds is granted increased mercy, while one who decreases is granted decreased mercy.

Alternative explanation: "*all is according to the majority of the deeds*" - a man is judged according to the majority of his deeds. If he is mostly merits, he is meritorious. If he is mostly sins, he is guilty.

Q Level 2

Rambam

Rambam - "the world is judged with goodness..." - afterwards, he said G-d's judgment with people is with kindness and benevolence, not like the judgment they deserve, as He explained saying: "slow to anger, and abundant in kindness and truth" which our sages explained: "slow to anger for the righteous and also for the wicked" (Eiruvim 22a, Bava Kama 50a, see also Sanhedrin 111a). And likewise, the prophet said: "G-d is good to all" (Tehilim 145:9).

"*all is according to the majority of the deeds*" - afterwards, he said that a person will not attain the virtues according to the greatness of the deeds but rather according to the quantity of the deeds. Namely, by repeating [small] good deeds many times, one will acquire the virtues more strongly than if he did a big good deed only one time.

For example, if a person gives a thousand gold coins to one person in need and gives nothing to another. Then, he will not acquire the virtue of generosity through this single big act as much as a person who donated one gold coin a thousand times. For the latter repeated an act of generosity one thousand times and attained strongly this trait, while the former aroused himself strongly in one act to do good, but he stopped afterwards.

So too in torah, the reward of one who redeemed a prisoner for a hundred coins or gave charity and sustained one person for a hundred coins is not like one who redeemed 10 prisoners or gave charity and sustained 10 poor people for 10 coins each.

This is the matter of "according to the majority (rov) of the deed" as opposed to "according to the magnitude of the deed".

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "the world is judged with goodness" - i.e. even the punishments of the wicked in this world or the next is not in the way of revenge or punishment, G-d forbid. Rather, it is for their good, like a fire which forges or a detergent which cleans the stains of their souls which they brought with them. All this in order to ultimately bring them in the end to enlighten in the light of life.

"*according to the majority of the deed*" - i.e. according to how the deed is done rather than its greatness. The greatness of a deed is measured according to the nature of the person doing it. Namely, how much he should have conquered his yetzer (evil inclination) more. For a miser who gives charity receives more reward than a generous person.

Through this, we explained the verse: "to You, G-d, is kindness, for You pay each person according to his deeds", i.e. according to the deed itself and its nature, and according to the person's thoughts.

For example, one person gave charity to glorify himself while another gave with intent to G-d (I'Shem Shamayim).

Or according to the circumstances: for example, if a rich man gives much charity but not according to his wealth - he is punished (Ketuvot 67b).

While another person who is struggling financially gives a small coin (perutah) to a poor person - he is rewarded (Chagigah 5a).

Or according to the act: one who gives charity to a proper poor man versus one who gives to an improper poor man.

Likewise for many other similar matters whether in merits or sins. This [balance] can be weighed and judged only by the Holy One, blessed be He..

Q Level 3

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - "all is according to the majority of the deeds" - our sages said:

"The mitzvot were given only to refine human beings. Does G-d care whether one slaughters an animal from the throat or from the back of the neck? Rather the mitzvot were given only to refine human beings" (Bereisheit Rabba 44:1).

Similarly in the Talmud:

"The wicked Tornosropos asked Rabbi Akiva: 'if your G-d loves the poor, why doesn't He provide for them?' Rabbi Akiva replied: 'so that we will be saved through them from the judgment of Gehinom'" (Bava Batra 10a).

That is to say, the mitzvah of Tzedaka (charity) was not given for the purpose of benefiting the poor, but rather to elevate a man through the secret of the deed (Sod HaMaaseh) - to become a benevolent person, to be saved from the judgment of Gehinom.

For in the secret of the deeds, their intent is not for the purpose that results from them but rather the deed itself is the purpose. Therefore, perforce *"all is according to the majority of the deeds"*. For in repeating the good deeds many times, he will certainly attain a strong acquisition through them.

Q Level 3

☆ **Matanat Avot**

Matanat Avot - "all is according to the majority of the deeds" - G-d judges in the best way possible and seeks every possible way how to pay reward to a person. Thus, His divine wisdom deemed fit to judge in the manner of "all is according to the majority of the deeds". Namely, even though G-d is the epitome of absolute perfection and thus, justice warrants that one who has not made himself completely and absolutely perfect in all his ways should not be capable of clinging to the Holy One, blessed be He, and basking in the splendor of His Divine presence (nehene m'ziv Shechina) , even so, G-d does not do like this.

Rather, if the majority of man's deeds are good, even though he has many sins, G-d will worry to clean up his sins in this world through sufferings or in Gehinom in the afterlife. After a person has been cleaned up and atoned for all his sins, he will be deemed a perfect Tzadik who is fit to cling to the eternal good and ways before G-d in the land of the living. (as explained in the Ramchal's "the Way of G-d").

Q Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - it is proper to ask: what is the connection between "all is foreseen, etc." to what he said previously: "beloved is man for he was created in the Image [of G-d]"?

Know that due to the lofty level of man, that he is so much cherished [by G-d], it is proper that all

his deeds which are done for G-d's sake, to be seen and observed by G-d.

For man is close to G-d. Thus how could his deeds not be watched and observed before the Holy One, blessed be He?

All the more so according to the explanation we gave on "beloved is man for he was created in the Image [of G-d]". For this "Image of G-d" grants complete existence to man, and when man has complete existence, how could he not have his deeds seen and observed before G-d?

Everything stems from the quality of this "Image of G-d" which grants complete existence and that which has [complete] existence is known before G-d. But that whose existence is *tohu* (void, insignificant) has *hastarat panim* (concealed attention) from G-d. This matter is clear.

"permission is granted" - this too is due to man's being in the Image of G-d. Thus, man was granted permission to do what he wants and he is not forced in his deeds.

And if G-d sees that man wants to sin, He does not prevent man from committing it by blocking the sin. Rather, "permission is granted" to man. This is because man was created in the Image of G-d (Gen.1:27).

Through this, man has a similarity to G-d. For he was created in the image of G-d.

This matter is not found by the angels (spiritual beings). They do not have free will. Rather, they act according to what G-d appointed them to do without changing their appointed task. But man, who was created in the Image of G-d, he has this special *segulah* (quality) that he is in his own hands. Just like G-d who does what He wants, so too man has permission to do what he wants and he possesses free will.

This matter is hinted in the Torah in the verse: "[eat from the forbidden fruit and] you will be like G-d, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5).

It is proper to ask on this: "how does committing the sin [of eating from the forbidden fruit] make them (Adam and Eve) like G-d, knowing good and evil"?

One of the gentiles already posed this question to the Rambam z"l, and he elaborated to answer this question in his book (Guide for Perplexed 1:2).

The explanation is that before Adam sinned, he was not created fit to be like G-d, knowing good and evil. For G-d knows good and evil but not man. This is because man has a Cause over him and he needs to cleave to his Cause - which is the good. Then he is removed from knowledge of evil and knows only good, namely, his Cause. For his Cause is the good.

Then (before the sin), the effect (man) was constantly cleaving to his Cause which is itself the good.

Although man was certainly capable of knowing good and evil due to his being created in the Image of G-d, but since he was cleaving to his Cause which is the good, he knew only the good but not the evil.

When he did not turn to his Cause as happened after the sin, then he knew good and evil.

If you ask: "what virtue is there in knowing evil?"

Answer: certainly this is a virtue in wisdom when man's wisdom includes knowledge of both good and evil, as the verse says: "your eyes will be opened and you will be like G-d, knowing good and evil" (Gen.3:5).

But before the sin, since the lower creations (man) needed their Cause and were cleaving to their Cause without separating from the Cause, thus man would turn solely to the good, namely, his Cause, blessed be He. Due to this, he had no knowledge of evil.

And since man was created from the lower creations (physicality), thus he inherently has a tendency to turn away from his Cause, and thus the serpent with his rider Sama'el would entice man. Namely, when he eats from the Tree of Knowledge and transgresses the word of G-d who commanded him not to eat from it (Gen.2:17), through this, they will become separated from the Cause and will know good and evil, as we spoke.

For man has a similarity to G-d in being created in the image of G-d. Therefore, the serpent said: "you will be like G-d, knowing good and evil" (Gen.3:5). For when you turn from the Cause and become in your own domain.. you will know good and evil and become completely like G-d. For G-d has no Cause above Him whatsoever.

"all is according to the majority of the deeds" - i.e. G-d does not judge a person's act by itself. Rather, He judges the [totality of the] person himself, whether he is meritorious or not.

Thus, a person is considered righteous when he is of majority meritorious and he is guilty when his majority the opposite.

This is an exhortation to man to not commit even one sin. And like our sages taught: "Rabbi Shimon says: 'a person should always consider it as if the world is half meritorious and half guilty and the person himself is likewise half meritorious and half guilty. If he does one sin, woe to him! For he inclined himself and the entire world to the side of guilt. But if he did one mitzvah (good deed), fortunate is he, for he inclined himself and the entire world to the side of merit.

The explanation is not that everything is according to the majority of deeds. Namely if the evil deeds are only a minority, G-d overlooks the evil he committed. And likewise for the opposite - if he is of majority evil, he is judged by majority and G-d does not pay him for the few good deeds he did.

It is not so. Rather, G-d pays him for every good deed he did. Even if he is completely wicked and does a good deed, G-d will pay him back [for the good deed].

And likewise, even if he is mostly meritorious and commits one sin, G-d pays him back the sin he committed.

If so, on what was it said: "all is according to the majority of the deeds"?

The difference between one who is mostly righteous and one who is mostly wicked is that the former merits the World to Come while for the wicked, it is proper for him to lose the World to Come.

Thus, "everything is according to the majority of the deeds" - to be considered a Tzadik (righteous man) or a Rasha (wicked man).

Namely, the Tzadik is paid for the few sins he did while the wicked man is paid for the few good deeds he did.

This is analogous to a king who has a friend. The king draws him close in many ways out of love for him. Afterwards, the friend committed something against the king. The king pays him back for the wrongdoing against him but the love of the king remains.

But if the king had an enemy which he hated. Then, when the enemy does some favor for the king, the king payed him back immediately for the favor.

So too, a person who is considered a Tzadik according to the "majority of the deeds" - he merits to what is proper for the Tzadik, only that he is payed for the few sins he did.

But he who is wicked (according to the majority), G-d deals with him as one who is wicked and an enemy and He pays him back the little good he did [in this world].

Our sages explained the difference as follows (Kidushin 40b). One who is righteous according to the majority - he is primarily righteous. Thus, it is proper to pay him for his deeds in the next world. For there is the primary payment. But for his sins which are not primary since they are the minority and thus his payment for them are in this world which is not primary.

On the other hand, one who is mostly wicked, is primarily wicked. Thus, it is proper for his payment to be in the primary world, namely, the next world. And for his minority of merits which is not primary, it is proper for their payment to be in this world which is not primary.

This is what our sages said (Kidushin 40b):

Rabbi Eliezar son of Rabbi Tzadok said: To what are the righteous compared in this world? To a tree standing wholly in a place of cleanness, but its foliage overhangs to a place of uncleanness; when the foliage is cut off, it stands entirely in a place of cleanness. Thus the Holy One, blessed be He, brings suffering upon the righteous in this world, in order that they may inherit the future world, as it is said, and "though your beginning is small, yet your latter end shall greatly increase" (Iyov 8:7). And to what are the wicked compared in this world? To a tree standing wholly in a place of uncleanness, but its foliage overhangs into a place of cleanness: when the foliage is cut off, it stands entirely in a place of uncleanness. Thus the Holy One, blessed be He, makes them prosper in this world, in order to destroy and consign them to the lowest depths of Gehinom.. for it is said: "There is a way which seems right unto man, But at the end thereof are the ways of death" (Mishlei 14:12)

Level 3

Chida

Chida - Zeroah Yamin - if you say: "why? Isn't it better to leave the few mitzvot the wicked has for the next world so that he at least merits a little?" On this he said: "all is according to the majority of the deeds" - we go by the majority (Rov).

Chapter 3 Mishna 19 - Shop Is Open

He would say, "everything is given on collateral and a net is spread out over all the living. The shop is open and the shopkeeper allows credit, but the ledger lies open and the hand writes, and whoever wishes to borrow may come and borrow; but the Gabaim (collectors) make their daily rounds and exact [payment] from a man with or without his consent. For they have what to rely upon [in their claims]. The judgment is a judgment of truth, and [ultimately] everything is prepared for the banquet.

הוא היה אומר, הכל נתון בערבון, ומצודה פרוסה על כל החיים. החנות פתוחה, והחנני מקיף, והפנקס פתוח, והיד פותבת, וכל הרוצה ללוות יבא וילוה, והגבאים מחזירים תדיר בכל יום, ונפרעין מן האדם מדעתו ושלא מדעתו, יש להם על מה שיסמכו, והדין דין אמת, והכל מתקן לסעודה.

Q Level 1



Birkat Avot - the good G-d gives man is a form of loan so that afterwards man pays it back to G-d through mitzvot and good deeds.

Q Level 1

Tosfot Yom Tov

Tosfot Yom Tov - this mishna is a further explanation of the previous mishna "everything is foreseen, permission is granted.."

G-d does not pay back a person for his wicked deeds immediately. For "everything is given on collateral", i.e. G-d has a guarantor such that the person cannot escape from His hand.

Q Level 1

Sforno

Sforno - even though free will is granted by G-d but it is "given on collateral". It is not forever but rather, for a fixed time. Afterwards, the meritorious or sinning soul will return to G-d for a judgment and accounting.

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "everything is given on collateral" - on everything a person takes from this world - he is an arev (a guarantor).. One who inherits money from his father or mother should not think: "this money is my inheritance, I will use it however I wish!" For nothing whatsoever is his. Everything belongs to G-d. Whatever one takes, he takes as a guarantor and the Lender will in the future collect payment from him.

This is like a man who enters a town and finds no one there. He enters inside a house and finds a table set with all sorts of good food and drink. He eats and drinks and tells himself: "I acquired everything and it is all mine, I will do whatever I wish with it!"

But he did not see the owner of the house watching him from a different place, and that he will need to pay for everything he ate and drank and will not be able to escape.

Q Level 3

Meorei Ohr

Meorei Ohr - "everything is given on collateral" - even though everything is seen and G-d is aware of those who commit evil, nevertheless, He does not pay them what they deserve immediately. For "everything is given on collateral", i.e. G-d has a guarantor so that man does not escape from His hand..

Rabeinu Yitzchak writes in the name of the Rashbam: "Man's soul is the guarantor of all his limbs. If they (the limbs) merit, his soul merits. If they (the limbs) do not merit, the soul is punished with

them, as written: "He shall call to the heavens above" (Tehilim 50:4) - this refers to man's soul which is from Heaven, "and to the earth to judge His people" (ibid) - this refers to man's body which was created from the earth" (end quote).

And in the Midrash (Devarim Rabba 4:4): "the soul and the torah are compared to a candle, the soul as written: "the candle of G-d is man's soul" (Mishlei 20), the Torah as written: "the mitzvah is a candle and torah is light" (Mishlei 20). says the Holy One, blessed be He, to man: "My candle (torah) is in your hand and your candle (soul) is in My hand. If you guard My candle, I will guard your candle. But if you extinguish My candle, I will extinguish your candle"..

 **Level 1**

☆ **Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel**

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel - "a net is spread out over all the living" - all of us are like fish or birds caught in a net of the Mashgiach (Supervisor), and perforce we must undergo troubles and be destroyed by death.

 **Level 2**

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "a net is spread out over all the living" - this refers to death which is decreed and no person can escape from it, like fish caught in a deadly net.

 **Level 2**

Sforno

Sforno - "a net is spread out over all the living" - in the eternal life (of the hereafter) or in the temporary life (of this world). No one can escape from the punishment he deserves in both worlds. Even though a person can choose to spare himself from some worldly damages, as written: "He who guards his soul stays far from them" (Mishlei 22:5). But nevertheless, he will not escape the [divine] punishments.

 **Level 1**

Bartenura

Bartenurah - "the shop is open" - and people come and buy on credit

"the shopkeeper allows credit" - he believes all who come to buy. So too, people sin all day and G-d waits until their time comes.

"but the ledger lies open" - to write the credit charges so that it will not be forgotten.

"the hand writes" - so that you don't say: "even though the credit book lies open, sometimes the shopkeeper is distracted and does not write down everything. Therefore, he said: "the hand writes".

"whoever wants to borrow.." - this is as said earlier: "permission is granted" - no person is forced to borrow against his will.

 **Level 1**

☆ **Rabeinu Yonah**

Rabeinu Yonah - "the shop is open" - a metaphor of this world. For human beings enter here and take all that they need now. But they don't see the future consequences nor consider whether or not they will have enough to pay when the due date arrives. For they find the shop open and can take all their needs - thus are human beings in this world..

 **Level 2**

☆ **Chida**

Chida - *Devarim Achadim, Derush 20* - The shop is open and the shopkeeper allows credit - for if one were punished immediately, there would not be [future] reward and punishment because everyone would be afraid of the immediate tangible punishment and G-d granted free will so that there would be reward..

 **Level 2**

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel - Afterwards, he said that "the shop is open", to teach further, that the power and potential (free will) is in man's hands to incline his actions to what he wishes. This is like an open shop which sells to whoever wants to buy, without any restrictions.. And everything one buys on credit is recorded by hand in the notebook..

🔍 **Level 2**

☆ **Sforno**

Sforno - "whoever wishes to borrow" - and become obligated to the King through his sin or sins, let him come and borrow. He does not exact payment immediately.

🔍 **Level 2**

☆ **Tiferet Yisrael**

Tiferet Yisrael - "whoever wishes to borrow may come and borrow" - even for a long time, the Holy One, blessed be He, delays His wrath. And even if he committed the worst and most severe sins, even so, he is not punished immediately, and no effect of his evil deed is felt swiftly as if no one is watching over his deeds.

🔍 **Level 1**

☆ **Bartenura**

Bartenurah - "the Gabaim (collectors).. exact [payment] from a man" - bad sufferings and mishaps.

"with his consent" - sometimes he remembers his debt and acknowledges "You have judged me well".

"without his consent" - sometimes he forgot and complains on the judgment of the Almighty, blessed be He.

"they have what to rely upon [in their claims]" - on the ledger and on the shopkeeper. For he is believed on [what is written in] his notebook. So too these sufferings are due to man's deeds whether or not he remembers them.

"The judgment is a judgment of truth" - the Holy One, blessed be He, does not come with unreasonable claims on His creations (eino ba bitronia im beriyotav) (Avodah Zara 3a).

🔍 **Level 2**

☆ **Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel**

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel - One should understand and be aware that the Gabbaim are from G-d. Namely, the troubles that arise in people. These come every day to collect from a person with or without his knowledge.. They have support from G-d who sends them, lest the smitten person think it is but an accident or coincidence.

"the judgment is a judgment of truth" - so that one does not yell and complain to G-d: "why have You done this to me?! And why this great wrath?!"

And regarding why the righteous suffers in this world for his sins all his days, he said: "everything is prepared for the banquet". Namely, if one does not pay for his sins in this world or receive reward for his merits in this world, then it will all be waiting for him in the spiritual world.

🔍 **Level 3**

Chida

Chida - *Chasdei Avot* - "the Gabaim (collectors) make their daily rounds" - we can explain as written in the Talmud on the verse: "only you have I known..therefore I will pay, etc." (Avodah Zara 4a) in the analogy of one who pays his beloved slowly, slowly. And in tractate Bava Kamma (3a): "whoever claims the Holy One, blessed be He, overlooks, will overlook his innards". The commentaries ask on this: "but we find that G-d is merciful as written: 'I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy' which our sages expounded: 'even though he does not deserve it'".

The answer is that G-d does not forego. Rather, the mercy is that He pays back slowly slowly or

the like. He witholds the wrath. Or if the person will in the future do a mitzvah or have a righteous son or the like - but everything is with Din (justice). This is the meaning of "the Gabbaim make the daily rounds and exact payment". For it is a great mercy to pay slowly slowly..

 **Level 1**

☆ **Bartenura**

Bartenurah - "everything is prepared for the banquet" - both the righteous and the wicked have a share in the world to come after their debt has been collected.

 **Level 2**

☆ **Rabeinu Yonah**

Rabeinu Yonah - "everything is prepared for the banquet" - the intended purpose of all these things is for their ultimate final result of preparing for the feast, namely - life in the world to come.

 **Level 3**

☆ **Chida**

Chida - *Devarim Achadim, Derush 11* - "everything is prepared for the banquet" - all the punishments and sufferings are in order to cleanse the soul to purify it for the end of days (kol haonshim vehayisurim hu lenakot hanefesh lizchut b'acharit hayamim).

 **Level 3**

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai, Binyan Avot - "everything is prepared for the banquet" - the sufferings of the wicked are for his good and his merit in the next world. For if G-d did not punish the wicked, with what would they merit Oam Haba?

Alternatively, so that peoples' hearts would not turn sour in seeing the righteous and humble suffer all their days with bitter sufferings. On this, he said the judgment is a judgment of truth, i.e. why do you contend with the accountings of Heaven? G-d knows. Perhaps it is due to "there is no righteous man in the land without sin" and G-d is meticulous with His pious one to a hair's breadth or perhaps it is due to (sins) in a previous Gilgul (incarnation). The witness to this is Iyov (Job) who was a righteous man who turned from evil (Iyov 1:1). All this was to clean him up and increase his reward as our sages said in the Talmud (Bava Batra 15b).

 **Level 3**

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - this mishna comes to teach us a bit on the ways of the Heavenly Beit Din.. G-d created the world in the form of a shop. Thus, one can buy on credit and is not required to pay immediately. This is in order to give people a chance to repent on all their evil deeds lest they be taken away with all their sins. This is also the reason why the wicked are not punished immediately for their evil deeds. Even though they do not at all think on repenting, but since the world was created in the form of a shop which sells on credit - there is no distinction.

"whoever wishes to borrow may come and borrow" - for committing a sin is like lending from G-d. For He bestows on us infinite benevolence and kindness in all domains of life, including life itself, and He asks in return that we do His will, learn His torah and guard His commandments.

Thus, one who receives these benefits from G-d and does not guard His will, is like one who lends money or goods from a person and does not pay them back.

"the Gabaim (collectors) make their daily rounds" - even though in this world the primary way is to not collect payment immediately, but nevertheless, do not think that the credit is for many years or in the next world. For you should know that "the Gabaim make their daily rounds". It is possible that today your turn comes that the gabaim will come to you for an inspection and that they will collect a harsh punishment for your evil deeds.

This comes to exhort that sometimes a person is punished immediately after sinning.. Thus one should examine his ways now.

"exact [payment].. the judgment is a judgment of truth" - know also that the Gabaim employ different ways and what happens to a person is with precision and measured meticulously on scales. G-d forbid to say that He strikes a person without examination. Rather, you deserved everything that happened to you in place, time, and measure in the best way possible. There was no extra punishment above and beyond what was deserved.

Q Level 3

Yachel Yisrael

"*Yachel Yisrael*" - in the previous mishna, Rabbi Akiva mentioned some ways of the Creator's conduct in the world: constant providence, justice and mercy, reward and punishment.

In order to bring these things closer to us and make them more tangible, he now brings some analogies.

These analogies give us some perception on the ways of the Creator's conduct in the world. They also clarify to us how we should view our life in this world and how to explain the events which happen to us.

"*everything is given on collateral*" - all of a man's needs in this world - his soul, body, health, family, and possessions - all of them were given to him without his giving to the Creator anything whatsoever in return.

Already when a baby begins to breathe, he is supplied with all his needs without his needing to pay anything to he who gave him his life.

The baby then becomes a child who receives all he needs for his physical and spiritual growth and still he does not need to pay anything back to the Creator.

Even after he becomes Bar Mitzvah and obligated in the mitzvot, he is still unable to fulfill even one mitzva without G-d's first giving him all the means required to fulfill the mitzvah. In order to fulfill the will of G-d, man needs many things - life, health, food, etc. All these things are given to him by the Creator before he could fulfill the word of G-d.

This is what G-d told to Iyov: "Who preceded Me that I should pay? Everything under the heavens is Mine" (Iyov 41:3) and as our sages expounded: "who praised Me before I gave him a soul?.. Who made a mezuzah for Me before I gave him a house?.." (Vayikra Rabba 27:2).

From these things, it comes out that in every case it is man who is obligated to the Creator and not the opposite. Even if man fulfills all the mitzvot and guards the whole torah - all this is his duty like paying back all the good G-d did for him..

This was the intent of Rabbi Akiva when he said: "everything is given on collateral" - "collateral" (eravon) is a pledge given as a guarantee to payment of a debt..

G-d foresees what are man's abilities and what his challenges should be in life.

Q Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - "*everything is given on collateral*" - i.e. the soul is in G-d's hands, as written: "in Whose hand is the soul of all living and the soul of all human flesh" (Iyov 12:10).

Just like when a man gives a security pledge to his lender such that it is impossible for him to escape from the lender, so too everyone is in G-d's domain. Namely, every person's soul is in

G-d's hands.

He said further: "a net is spread out over all the living". "Net" refers to domain, i.e., everything is in G-d's domain. For one who is caught in a net is under the domain of another. Thus, all living things are in the domain of G-d.

Hence, created beings cannot escape from G-d due to two aspects:
One, from the aspect of the "collateral", i.e. the soul which is in G-d's domain..
Two, from the aspect of the "net" which is spread over all living things.

Sometimes, G-d collects from the pledge by him, namely, taking his soul. Sometimes, He does not want to collect from the pledge, i.e. He does not want to take his soul, but instead collects from the side. Namely, to afflict him with sufferings - and there is no escape.

Alternatively, it seems a better explanation is to say the opposite. Namely, "everything is given on collateral", i.e. all that exists in the world is in G-d's hand and there is nothing which exists on its own domain. Thus, the "pledge" is that everything (including inanimate objects) depends on G-d.

But for living things, there is another additional aspect by itself. This is what he said: "a net is spread over all the living", i.e. all the living are under (the net of) death, namely, inexistence (he'eder), which is called "an evil trap" (Kohelet 9:12). And when He wishes, they are caught in this trap spread over them. And unable to escape from this, they receive inexistence (mekablin he'eder). This explanation appears more correct. Thus, he wrote: "everything is given on collateral and a net is spread out over all the living" (two expressions).

"exact [payment] from a man" - the sufferings are payment for sin.

"with his consent" - The righteous man accepts them with love. This is called "payment with consent".

"without his consent" - when he does not want them nor cherish them.

"they have what to rely upon [in their claims]" - i.e. they are emissaries of the Holy One, blessed be He. For thus G-d ordered the world, namely, that there exist emissaries to collect payment from man.

Do not think that even though they collect payment from man but nevertheless, this thing is not from G-d and they are not His emissaries. It is not so. Rather, this thing comes from G-d, blessed be He.

Therefore, a man should not think that if he wants, he can guard himself from the gabaim who are making their rounds always, because they are not emissaries of G-d and act on their own.

If that were true, it would have been possible for man to guard himself from the bad things. But it is not so.

On this, he said: "they have what to rely upon [in their claims]". For they are emissaries of G-d and He whom they rely upon does everything and "there is no savior from His hand" (Devarim 32:39).

"The judgment is a judgment of truth" - i.e. they collect payment without adding and without subtracting, no more and no less, rather the judgment is true.

"everything is prepared for the banquet" - since Rabbi Akiva taught on the order of the world. Namely, man was given permission to sin and G-d afterwards collects payment from man and this is certainly a lacking in the world.

Thus, we cannot say that this is the purpose of creation. For G-d is absolutely perfect and thus it cannot be that He created the world for this since this purpose is not good. And from the Good, only good can come out.

On this, he wrote: "everything is prepared for the meal". This meal (seuda) is complete perfection. For when a man sits at a meal, he fills his lacking until he no longer has a lacking. Thus, he said "everything is prepared for the meal" which refers to completing (rectifying) the world until it becomes whole, without lacking.. This is certainly in Olam Haba (the next world).

There the world will be whole and without lacking. This is the explanation of "seudah" here.

This is what our sages said in the Talmud (Berachot 17a): "in the Olam Haba, there is no eating nor drinking nor having children nor business nor jealousy nor hatred. Only, the righteous sitting with their crowns on their head basking in the radiance of the Shechina (divine presence).."

That is to say, in Olam Haba, man does not need to complete himself. This is unlike in this world whereby a man needs to receive completion. For there, man will be whole in a more exalted state. Thus, he will not need eating and drinking to complete himself nor having children to complete himself with offsprings. For offsprings are a completion of man. Likewise, man will not need to engage in business to purchase what he needs. Nor will there be any jealousy or hatred. For it is a complete lacking when one hates or is jealous of another.

A whole soul is not jealous of another. Likewise for hatred, without a doubt it is considered a lacking.

But in Olam Haba, one will be whole and without lacking.

He said: "the righteous sit..", i.e. in Olam Haba, there is no movement like in this world. In Olam Haba, there is sitting and being at rest. This teaches that man is in actual wholeness/perfection (sheleimut) and does not move towards perfection. Rather, he is already whole/perfect and whatever is whole/perfect sits and is at rest.

"crowns on their heads" - i.e. they will reach the highest level possible of which there is none higher. This is the meaning of "crowns (atarah) on their heads". For a crown on one's head indicates that nothing will rule over them such as any angel or other creation. Rather one sits like a king with a crown which symbolizes the honor that no other person rules over him.

He did not use the word "keter" but instead "atarah". For the former would imply that even G-d would not be over him and he would be completely like a king.

It is not so. Rather, they will be free only of another who is not a King (i.e. except G-d)..

"basking in the radiance of the Shechina" - whereby man will become perfected through G-d's light.. This is the highest level possible... (see there for more).

Chapter 3 Mishna 20 - No Wisdom No Fear

Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria would say: if there is no torah, there is no derech erez (decency/good manners/livelihood). And if there is no derech erez, there is no torah.

רבי אלעזר בן עזריה אומר, אם אין תורה, אין דרך ארץ. אם אין דרך ארץ, אין תורה.

If there is no wisdom, there is no fear [of G-d], and if there is no fear [of G-d], there is no wisdom.

אם אין חכמה, אין יראָה. אם אין יראָה, אין חכמה.

If there is no binah (understanding), there is no daat (knowledge), and if there is no daat (knowledge), there is no binah (understanding).

אם אין בינה, אין דעת. אם אין דעת, אין בינה.

If there is no flour, there is no torah, and if there is no torah, there is no flour.

אם אין קמח, אין תורה. אם אין תורה, אין קמח.

One whose wisdom exceeds his deeds, to what may he be compared? To a tree with many branches and few roots, so that when the wind comes, it uproots it and overturns it, as written: "He shall be like a lone tree in the plain, and shall not see when good comes; he shall dwell on parched land in the desert, on salt-sodden soil without inhabitant" (Yirmiyahu 17:6).

הוא הִיָּה אומר, כל שחכמתו מרבה ממעשיו, למה הוא דומה, לאילן שענפיו מרובין ושרשיו מעטין, והרוח באה ועוקרתו והופכתו על פניו, שנאמר (ירמיה יז) והיה כערער בערבה ולא יראה כי יבוא טוב ושכן חררים במדבר ארץ מלחה ולא תשב

But one whose deeds exceeds his wisdom, to what may he be compared? To a tree with many branches and few roots, so that even if all the winds of the world come and blow upon it, they cannot move it out of its place, as written: "He shall be like a tree planted by the water, sending forth its roots by a stream, who fears not when comes heat, whose leaf is ever lush; who worries not in a year of drought, and ceases not to yield fruit" (Yirmiyahu 17:8).

אבל כל שמעשיו מרובין מחכמתו, למה הוא דומה, לאילן שענפיו מעטין ושרשיו מרובין, שאפלו כל הרוחות שבעולם באות ונושבות בו אין מזיזין אותו ממקומו, שנאמר (שם) 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

Level 1



(note: the term Derech Eretz, literally "the way of the land", is inherently ambiguous, with a wide range of meanings in torah literature. It refers to earning a livelihood, behaving appropriately, having good character traits, among others.)

Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenurah - "if there is no torah, there is no derech erez" - if there is no torah, his business dealings with the public is not nice.

"if there is no derech erez, there is no torah" - in the end, he will forget his torah.

Level 1

☆ Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan - "if there is no torah, there is no derech erez" - one who does not at all toil in torah, his toil in derech erez (earning a livelihood) does not receive blessing..

Level 1

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "if there is no derech erez, there is no torah" - one must first rectify his character

traits. Through this, the torah will rest on him. For the torah will never reside in a body that does not have good character traits. But he should not earn torah and afterwards acquire good character traits. For that is impossible..

Q Level 2



Chaim Sheyesh Bahem - "if there is no derech erez, there is no torah" - in kovetz shiurim: middot (character traits) are like the introduction of a book which reveals the content of the entire book. So too, derech erez and middot generally. They reveal how much torah a person contains.

Q Level 2

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "if there is no torah, there is no derech erez" - i.e. if he does not have torah, it is impossible to have derech erez. And if there is no derech erez, the torah will be of no avail and superfluous. So too for all of them. If there is no daat (knowledge), it is impossible to have binah (understanding), and if there is no binah, there is no daat. For since he is unable to deduce one thing from another, the daat he received from his Rabbis is superfluous since it is impossible to employ it without Binah. Likewise, without bread, man cannot survive.. But bread is superfluous without torah, for why should he be granted life?

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "if there is no torah, there is no derech erez" - torah refers to obligations between man and G-d. For we would not know these without the torah teaching us. Derech erez refers to obligations between man and man. Thus, one who is a heretic, i.e. who denies torah is from Heaven, then even his guarding and his obligations to other people is not wholehearted. Likewise, one whose fear of Heaven is fake and he is not careful of his obligations towards other people, so too "his inside is not like his outside". Both of these types will reveal their corrupt heart when a trial tests them in this or that.

Q Level 2

Chida

Chida - Petach Einayim - "if there is no torah, there is no derech erez" - he will stumble in many light and severe sins in his business dealings, will remove G-d from his thoughts, stumble in bitul torah which is more severe than idolatry, immorality, and murder, and will die with his sins.

"if there is no derech erez, there is no torah" - for his wife and sons will drive him crazy on food and clothing and he will quarrel with them and be idle from torah.

Q Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "if there is no torah, there is no derech erez" - some explain that torah and derech erez cannot exist without each other. Namely, if a person acquired good character traits and derech erez (decent conduct), but he did not learn torah, all that derech erez will disappear from him since there was no torah with it. For torah is what allows it to remain in his hand. On this, our sages said: "for the elders of the amai haaretz (torah ignorant), the older they get, the more foolish they become."

Likewise, if there is no derech erez, there is no torah. For even if he learned torah, the torah will become forgotten by him.

Some explain "derech [erez]" to be referring to work. Namely, one who does not toil in torah at all, but instead works all day - there is no derech erez, i.e. he will not see a sign of blessing in that work and it is as if he did not do it.

Likewise, if day and night he does not interrupt his torah study and does not want to toil in work, this too is an evil sickness. For "torah without work will eventually disappear" (Avot 2:2). Therefore, both together are good..

Some explain, if there is no torah, there is no derech erez, i.e. when you see a man without torah, don't ask if he has derech erez. For certainly he does not. And likewise, if he does not have derech erez, do not ask if he has torah, for certainly he does not have torah. Because torah and good character traits exist hand in hand and are inseparable.

Q Level 3

☆ Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot - "if there is no torah, there is no derech erez" - the secret of the matter is that which torah emerges out of is powers implanted in man, as we find our sages taught: "Avraham our forefather learned (deduced) torah from himself (on his own)" (Bereisheit Rabba 95:3). For the root (shoresh) of torah and its sprouting (tzemichata) is from "derech erez". Namely, "from himself", from the powers implanted in him, and derech erez is the foundation stone upon which the torah is built. Thus, perforce "if there is no derech erez", then certainly, "there is no torah".

And likewise, "if there is no torah, there is no derech erez". That is to say, if torah does not sprout from derech erez, then certainly, even derech erez is not there. For man and his perfection are one indivisible thing. Thus, if there is "derech erez", then perforce torah will sprout from there.

In this way the rest of the mishna is explained.

"If there is no wisdom, there is no fear, if there is no fear, there is no wisdom" - for that which wisdom emerges out of is fear (of heaven), a natural innate power implanted in man. Wisdom sprouts and grows out of fear... (see there for more).

Q Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - "if there is no derech erez.." - for derech erez is the order of the maintenance of the world (hanhagat seder olam). It precedes the divine wisdom (torah). And if the former is not there, the higher one will also not be found. For derech erez is completely before Torah.

We find this also in the creation of the world. Namely, for 26 generations derech erez preceded the giving of the torah (Adam to Noach = 10 generations, another 10 until Avraham, and another 6 until Moshe, total=26)...

"if there is no torah, there is no derech erez" - as our sages taught, the creation of the world was pending and awaiting until Yisrael would receive the Torah (Shab.88a). Thus, "if there is no torah, there is no derech erez", i.e. there is no permanence to the derech erez he already acquired. For everything becomes completely null and void, even the derech erez he already acquired, Since without torah, the world would not have endured.

"if there is no fear, there is no wisdom" - for wisdom endures through fear of Heaven as we explained earlier. If there is no fear of Heaven which is the purpose, for the purpose of wisdom is fear of G-d. Wisdom is only in order to attain fear of Heaven and this is the primary thing, as our sages said: "the purpose of wisdom is fear of G-d, that a man should not learn wisdom (torah) and disrespect his father and superior" (Berachot 17a). Fear of Heaven is a completion of wisdom.. and wisdom is a ladder to fear of Heaven. Through wisdom, he will come to fear of Heaven, as we said on the mishna "a boor cannot fear sin". Namely, fear of a king comes when one is in close proximity to the king. But one who is far from the king does not fear him.

So too, a man who possesses wisdom is considered close to G-d and thus receives fear of him.. Thus fear of Heaven follows wisdom...

Q Level 4

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot, (*Daat Chachma U'Mussar 1:35*) - "if there is no derech erez, there is no torah" - for he is lacking the preliminary (hakdama), as our sages said: "derech erez precedes torah"

(Vayikra Rabba 9:3). This is as the Rambam wrote in Moreh Nevuchim that one of the causes which prevents the foolish from holding on to the ways of wisdom is their hatred for the preliminaries (hakdamot/preparations). And without the preliminary it is impossible to reach wisdom.

For even though derech erez is a rousing of the intellect, implanted in man's consciousness and formed in the root of his creation and growth. And the rousing of the intellect is completely "external" relative to the torah which is completely "internal". But nevertheless, derech erez precedes torah.

The secret of the matter is that the external is the primary and the purpose. And the more external something is, the more it is primary and purpose. Therefore, the rousing of the intellect (derech erez) precedes. And even if a man becomes exceedingly wise without limit, nevertheless, his "dwelling place" (dirahto) is in his "first thoughts" until our sages said: "any talmid chacham (torah scholar) who lacks "daat", i.e. lacks derech erez - a dead animal carcass is better than him" (Vayikra Rabba 1:15).

The middot are a root and foundation of the Torah. They are general principles (klalim) from which the torah emerges and they are the beginning of man's formation. Without them, man is not called Adam but rather just gross physical matter and the torah certainly does not reside by him.

The early sages already asked on why the middot (character traits) are not mentioned in the torah. According to what we said, the answer to this is that the reason the middot (character traits) are not mentioned in the torah is because they themselves are the general principles of the torah through which the torah branches out. As such they precede the torah, as our sages said: "derech erez precedes torah" and "if there is no derech erez, there is no torah".

Let us contemplate from this the greatness of the worth and essence of the middot. For they are a root and foundation of the torah, and the root and foundation of man.

Concerning one who does not have derech erez, our sages said: "whoever does not have scripture, mishna or derech erez is not from civilization (yishuv)" (Daat Chachma u'Mussar 1:29).

Another matter in this, our sages said: "the Holy One, blessed be He, did not find a vessel (kli) which can hold blessing except "peace" (Shalom), as written (Tehilim 29:11): 'the L-ord will give strength unto His people, the L-ord will bless His people with peace'" (end of Uktzin).

The secret of the matter is that there is nothing in the creation which does not require a vessel (kli). Each and every thing has a working vessel suited for it and the vessel needs to precede it. This is the secret of the formation/creation of everything (sod yetzirat hakol).

On this our sages said: "when the Holy One, blessed be He, came to give the torah to the Jewish people, He did not find a vessel which can hold blessing except peace.

For the vessel which holds torah is peace, the pinnacle of middot (good character traits). And with peace, it is proper to give the torah. For the secret of the matter is that the middot are the forming vessels of the torah (kelim hayotzrot latorah). (the word "middah" means measure, that one measures with it, i.e. a vessel).

This is what our sages said: "if he merits (zacha), the torah becomes an elixir of life, but if he does not merit, it becomes a death potion" (Yomah 72b).

The word "merit" (zacha) comes from the word "zach" (purity). For the purity of the middot is the vessel which holds torah. Thus perforce it certainly becomes an elixir of life. But if he is not of pure middot, then the torah itself becomes a death potion. Thus it is explicitly clear that the middot themselves are the vessel which holds the blessing through which it is possible for the torah to be given. (Daat Chochma u'Mussar 1:32-33).

Regarding what Rabeinu Yonah wrote: "the torah can never dwell in a body which does not possess good character traits". There is another reason for this. Namely, due to the holiness and purity of the torah, as written: "The words of the L-ord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Tehilim 12:6), forged and purified to absolute purity. Thus the torah cannot bear to rest itself in a body without good character traits and whoever wishes to approach it must make himself suitable to its holiness and purity, to purify and polish himself absolutely, as we learned: "prepare yourself to learn torah" (Avot 2:2). Rabeinu Yonah explained there: "prepare yourself with good character traits in order to learn the torah". (Daat Chochma u'Mussar 2:20).

Q Level 1

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "if there is no wisdom, there is no fear" - fear is not whole without wisdom. For wisdom strengthens it and lights up for him the straight path.

"if there is no fear, there is no wisdom" - one must precede fear before wisdom. For fear strengthens wisdom and illuminates the straight path.

if there is no fear, there is no wisdom. For without this, his wisdom will not endure. He will be annoyed by the wisdom and will abandon it..

Q Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "if there is no wisdom, there is no fear" - i.e. fear of G-d's greatness (Yirah Haromemut). To attain this level of fear, one must precede to learn the divine wisdom (Kabala). For through it one will recognize His greatness.

And if there is no fear, i.e. at least fear of punishment (the lower form of fear) - there is no wisdom. For fear must precede wisdom.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "if there is no wisdom, there is no fear" - when he lacks wisdom to grasp the greatness of the Creator, blessed be He, and to be abashed before Him, how could he possibly attain fear [of G-d] out of love? Although it is possible for him to attain fear [of G-d] as one afraid of someone stronger than him, but this is not the fear asked [of man].

"if there is no fear [of G-d], there is no wisdom" - when he does not have fear of G-d on his face, he will not be ashamed to devise cunning logic and spurious arguments against G-d's honor and will and he thinks bad of G-d and His torah. All the more so will he not have wisdom of the holy torah. For besides that his eyes are cloudy and do not want to delve deeply in it properly, but even the torah itself distances from such a filthy place in his brain.

Q Level 3

☆ Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot - "if there is no wisdom, there is no fear" - wisdom and fear are one. This is as scripture states: "fear of G-d is wisdom" (Iyov 28:28). Only that they are aspects in the torah itself. For wisdom is the outer side of torah while fear is the inner side. But both are one thing. If there isn't one, there isn't the other. (Daat Torah chelek beit, pg.247).

Another aspect: wisdom and fear are one. Only that when wisdom is separated and outside man,

before it has entered his inner being, it is called by the name "wisdom". But after the wisdom has penetrated man's limbs and entered in his body, then it is called by the name "fear". (Daat Chochma u'Mussar chelek aleph 23-24).

Q Level 3

☆ Siftef Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Daat Chachma U'Mussar 2:176 - in truth the thinking and understanding person can recognize and tangibly feel this secret. For when a man enters in his heart (mind) some words of Torah, he immediately feels inside himself a certain heaviness (kevedut), seriousness (koved rosh), maturity (enoshiut), he becomes a "man"... One can tangibly recognize that the words of Torah have a secret. For when words of Torah enter inside him, there also immediately enters "fear of Heaven".

This is a true explanation of what our sages said: "if there is no Torah there is no fear, and if there is no fear, there is no Torah" (Avot 3). People wonder on this "where does it start?", but according to our words it is very wondrous. For in truth, Torah and fear are one thing, literally (mamash) without any difference between them... Torah is fear and fear is Torah. Every thing of Torah, even a minor thing in it contains within it fear [of G-d]. It has the fire of Torah...

Q Level 3

☆ Siftef Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Daat Torah chelek beit, pg.231 - another aspect: the root of the word "fear" (Yirah) is from the word "seeing" (re'eh, same letters). For the entire matter of fear comes from one seeing G-d, blessed be He. For when one sees the Creator, blessed be He, automatically, he fears before Him. The secret of the whole torah is that through it the Holy One, blessed be He, immediately appears before Him. For the torah is called the "garment" (levusho) of the Holy One, blessed be He. In every letter and every tiny crown of the torah, G-d's existence is interwoven - "the Torah and the Holy One, blessed be He, are one" (oreita v'kudsha berich Hu chad hu) - inseparably. Thus, perforce "if there is no wisdom, there is no fear".

That is to say, if the wisdom does not bring to knowledge and seeing of G-d, from which stems fear of G-d, if so, certainly his wisdom is not wisdom. For torah and knowledge of G-d are inseparable. If one learns torah without knowing G-d, blessed be He, certainly he does not have torah either. Rather, he will remain an am haaretz and a complete boor (empty person).

Q Level 3

Baal Shem Tov on the Torah, Eikev - "if there is no wisdom, there is no fear" - the purpose of everything is fear (yirah). For if there is no fear, wisdom is not absorbed and is not at all important. The purpose of wisdom is fear. Although one needs to serve G-d out of fear and love, but nevertheless one needs to hold on only to fear and then love will come automatically. For "it is the way of man to wage war" (Kidushin 2b).

Through this one can test himself and examine if he has whole fear. We may understand this through an analogy. If a minister stands before his king and he comes across something which for him is the greatest lust. Namely, if he were not standing before the king, he would desire this lust. But nevertheless, when he stands before the king, the lust for that thing distances from him. The reason is because he feels so awed and abashed before the king that he does not appear in his usual [bad] character traits. All of them are annulled from existence against his fear of the king.

This is what our sages said: to what is a tzadik similar before G-d? As a candle before the sun. Just like a candle in broad daylight is useless and does not do its job at all, so too, their traits do not do their job in the lusts of the world. For they are always annulled from existence out of fear of the Holy One, blessed be He.

Q Level 4

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim - Rabeinu Yerucham wrote in his letters on the verse: "And G-d took us out of Egypt

with a strong hand and an outstretched arm and great fear (morah gadol)" (Devarim 26:8). On this our sages taught:

"Great fear (morah gadol)" - this refers to the revelation of the Shechinah (Gilui Shechinah)" (Hagadah of Pesach).

We learn from here a great principle. Namely, the foundation of "fear [of G-d]" is "revelation of the Shechinah (Gilui Shechinah)". For fear is [only] of one who is present before him. And even the tiniest spark of fear begins only from "gilui Shechina".

For even if a man were to recognize G-d's greatness and exaltedness, even so, if G-d is not before his eyes, the man will not attain even the beginning of fear. This is because fear is only from what is present.

And when it was said in the Exodus from Egypt *"with great fear"* (morah gadol). Namely, because there was absolute "gilui Shechina", through the Holy One, blessed be He, in His glory, completely nullifying the laws of nature.

Likewise, at the splitting of the sea, it is written: "and the people feared G-d" (Shemot 14:31). For He revealed Himself to them in His glory and they would point their fingers saying: "this is my G-d" (Shemot 15:2, and in Rashi), and "even a maidservant saw things on the red sea that Yechezkel and the other prophets did not see" (Mechilta Beshalach).

Behold, the way to acquire fear is to contemplate always with one's pure mind's eye on the greatness of G-d and on fear of Him. Namely, in the way Rabeinu Yonah wrote on the teaching: "whoever blesses on the new moon in its time is as one who receives (greet) the face of the Shechina" (Berachot end of ch.4).

On this Rabeinu Yonah wrote: "for even though the Holy One, blessed be He, is invisible to the eye, nevertheless, He is visible through His mighty deeds and wonders (gevurotav veniflaotav).

This is as written: "You are G-d Who conceals Himself, the G-d of Israel who saves" (Isaiah 45:11).

That is to say, even though you are concealed, you are the G-d of Israel. For You performed many wonders (miracles) for them, and You save them all the time, every hour. And through Your salvation, people see You and You reveal Yourself and they perceive You.

So too here, through renewing the months, G-d reveals Himself to human beings and it is as if they receive (greet) His face.

Thus, it is clear that through contemplation and proper recognition of His deeds, His mighty acts and wonders, one comes to seeing Him, blessed be He.

For it is through this that the Holy One, blessed be He, reveals Himself to human beings and from this is the secret of fear. Understand this... For lack of fear stems from being distant. Namely, in that which the Holy One, blessed be He, is not close and present before his eyes, for the foundation of fear is gilui Shechina (revelation of the Shechina).

Level 3

Yalkut Hagershoni - "if there is no wisdom, there is no fear" - in the end of Tamid (32b): "who is wise? He who sees what is born (the future)".

If a man has wisdom to see what will happen to him in the future, that his end is but worms and maggots. Due to this, he comes to fear. But if there is no wisdom, there is no fear [of the future].

He also said the opposite. Namely, "if there is no fear, there is no wisdom", i.e. it is as if there is no wisdom. For the wicked who do not have fear are not at all moved by the end of man. On the contrary, they say: "let us slay cattle and slaughter sheep, eating and drinking, for tomorrow we will die".

Q Level 3



Michtav M'Eliyahu part 3 - there is a fundamental matter which many people err on. Namely, that growing in torah and growing in fear of Heaven are two separate things. This is a mistake. Some even say they contradict each other and it is impossible to delve into both simultaneously without ruining both.

But our sages taught us the opposite (Shabbat 31a).

Namely, they said it is possible for one to learn the entire torah and even so, without a "kav chomtin" (measure) of fear of sin, better had you not carried it up, i.e. better had you not studied torah at all.

For in truth, wisdom and fear are one thing. One without the other is nothing.

We learned in Avot: "if there is no wisdom, there is no fear [and the opposite]" This needs explanation. How is it possible to ascend if acquiring one is a condition for acquiring the other? Where should we start?

But one who truly seeks both of them will find that they are really one thing and not two separate things.

One who learns with full energy slays himself over it. His full service will be in torah, mussar, and prayer all together. For without the rousing of mussar and without true prayer for divine help, how can he possibly merit to learn with full energy? Is the yetzer harah (evil inclination) annulled? Rather one who truly aspires to learn torah will also love to learn mussar. For he knows that only this is the source of his will. And the more he rouses himself in fear, the more he will cling with the torah. And through his prayer, G-d will help him. Through this he will reach the feeling of "for the torah is our life" (ki hem chayeinu)

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenurah - "If there is no binah (understanding), there is no daat (knowledge)" - daat (knowledge) is finding the reason for a thing while binah is understanding (deducing) one thing from another.

And if there is no daat (knowledge), to give a reason for something, then there is no understanding. Thus, since he does not know the reason for the matter, it is as if he does not know it. But nevertheless, Binah comes first. Therefore, if there is no binah, there is no daat.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "if there is no daat (knowledge), there is no binah (understanding)" - there are 3 matters (mochot):

chachma - what one learned from others.

tevuna (binah) - deducing one thing from another

daat - that which one grasps from his knowledge.

"if there is no daat, there is no binah" - for since he is unable to grasp and know the essence of the matter from his knowledge, how could he deduce one thing from another? For daat precedes binah and without daat it is impossible to have binah.

"if there is no binah, there is no daat" - if he does not have the power to understand a thing from what is similar to it, this is due to his daat not being whole (clear) to grasp the essence of the matter.

Level 3

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot - in the Amidah prayer we say: "who graces man with daat and teaches him binah" (atah chonen l'adam daat umelamed l'enosh binah). The sages of the great assembly instituted the term "graced" (chonen) regarding daat and the term "taught" (melamed) regarding binah.

For "daat" refers to "self evident knowledge" (muskalot rishonim) innately implanted in man's mind with his creation. It is given to man and implanted in his powers.

Binah, on the other hand, is above and external to man's innate powers. Thus, "if there is no daat, there is no binah". For daat is a power implanted in man. It is the foundation from which binah sprouts and grows out of.

With this, we will understand what our sages said: "any torah scholar who does not have daat - the carcass of a dead animal is better than him" (Vayikra Rabbah 1:15).

Go and learn from Moshe, the father of wise men, the father of the prophets. He took the Jewish people out of Egypt. He performed miracles in Egypt and at the Red Sea, etc. etc. and even so he did not enter inside the inner chambers until G-d called to him to enter, as written: "And G-d called to Moshe saying.."

The matter is awesome! Despite all his greatness that he took the Jews out of Egypt, etc., nevertheless he did not enter without being called. For that would be a lacking in daat, and then all his greatness and levels would become null and void until an animal carcass would be better than him. Is this not a wonder?

But according to what we explained, the words of our sages are well explained. For the secret of the matter is that "daat" which is implanted in the mind of man is the foundation of the building of man. For all levels of wisdom and understanding are but branches of daat. Thus, if there is lacking in the foundation and base of the building which is daat, then without a doubt the entire building will collapse and demolish. For without a foundation there can be no building. This is what our sages taught: "if you acquired daat, what are you lacking? And if you lack daat, what did you acquire?" (Nedarim 41a).

(Daat Chachma u'Mussar chelek aleph 24)

Level 3

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - binah is the stage after acquiring chachma-wisdom. Through binah, a man develops the wisdom he acquired and builds on it additional buildings. Binah comes from the word "Binyan" (building). It refers to the man who understands one thing from another. Thus scripture says: "the wisdom of the wise will be lost and the binah of the understanding will be demolished" (Isaiah 29:14) - when wisdom is lost, which is the foundation and base of everything, automatically binah, which is built upon wisdom, will be demolished.

Deah is the "personal wisdom" of a man, his ability to absorb wisdom, to connect it to the things he

heard, to propose reasons and to "feel" them..

Q Level 2

☆ **Rabeinu Yonah**

Rabeinu Yonah - "if there is no flour, there is no torah" - for one must make efforts to obtain his livelihood and thus he cannot toil in torah.

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "if there is no flour, there is no torah" - he who does not have what to eat, how can he toil in torah?

"if there is no torah, there is no flour" - what will the flour in his hand avail him? For since he has no torah, better had he not had any flour and that he died of starvation. (i.e. since he lives a life without purpose)

Q Level 2

Chaim Sheyesh Bahem - in kneset yisrael: a person should not seek the superfluous. For then he will not have enough time to learn torah. "if there is no flour" - if he is not satisfied with flour only and instead seeks the superfluous, "there is no torah" - he will not merit the crown of torah. For only one who is satisfied with little merits torah.

Q Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "if there is no flour, there is no torah" - for he needs to pursue his livelihood.

"if there is no torah, there is no flour" - this is to remove from people's heart [a mistaken claim]. For if asked "why don't you toil in torah?" They counter: "because we are busy pursuing flour and needs for our households and we don't have free time to toil in torah". This is the meaning of "if there is no flour, there is no torah", i.e. the whole world claims "if there is no flour, there is no torah", and think this excuse is justified. But the truth is the opposite. For bitul torah (lack of torah) is the cause for lack of flour.

This is the meaning of "if there is no torah, there is no flour". For bitul torah is the reason there is no flour.

Q Level 3

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "if there is no flour, there is no torah" - the Alshich explains in his book "Yarim Moshe" that it is the way of those who are immersed all their days in making money, not spending any time in torah study, to rationalize themselves "if there is no flour, there is no torah! A person cannot learn torah before all his physical needs are prepared"

They claim that if G-d were to provide all their needs quickly and abundantly, they would designate all their time to torah study. "But what can I do? My livelihood is tight and I don't have flour? Is it my fault that I don't have any time left to learn?"

Against this claim the Tanna (sage) writes: "you say: 'if there is no flour there is no torah' - first give us flour and afterwards we will learn torah".

But the truth is "this has come from your own hand" (Malachi 1:9). Bitul torah is what brings to lack of parnassa (livelihood), not the opposite".

The Ohr Hachaim writes similarly on the verse "Let my teaching fall like rain" (Devarim 32:1):

"teaching (lekach)" refers to torah, as written: "for a good teaching (lekach)..my torah.."

Says the Holy One, blessed be He, to Yisrael: "the rain, i.e. the shefah and parnassa (livelihood) comes according to the lekach (torah)"

If Yisrael chooses torah, the Holy One, blessed be He, immediately prepares the rain, as if it is written: "Let my teaching fall like rain". For the Holy One, blessed be He, does not ask a man to learn torah until he prepares his livelihood. Rather, if he merely wants to learn - immediately G-d rains down upon him shefa and blessings. The amount of rain will be according to the amount of torah.

But if a man does not choose the "good teaching (lekach tov)", the Holy One, blessed be He, does not give the rain in its time. Therefore, "if there is no flour", then it is known that "there is no torah".

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "One whose wisdom exceeds his deeds, to what may he be compared? To a tree with many branches and few roots" - in Tanach, man is compared to a tree. Wisdom is his splendor just like the branches are the splendor of a tree. Guarding the mitzvot of the torah is the roots of this tree of knowledge. But if he attains too much wisdom, it is like a tree which squandered all its powers in the branches. Through this, its roots lose their strength. As known, the nature of every tree is that when it spreads out its power above too much (building branches), so too its expenditure below to build [insufficient] roots is for nothing. And both will be the cause for the easy uprooting of the tree due to insufficient roots and the heavy inclining weight of the branches. So too for this man. Through the many branches of wisdom in the concealed ways of G-d, so too there will diminish and weaken the roots of fear of heaven from his heart. And both will cause his downfall when the wind of heresy will seize him in the end and uproot him completely from the field of his eternal success.

Q Level 3

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Daat Torah, chelek beit, pg.343-4 - "a tree with many roots.. even if all the winds of the world come and blow upon it, they cannot move it out of its place" - in this analogy he called deeds "roots". For deeds are the roots of man; they are his rectification and perfection (tikuno v'hashlamato).

Wisdom, on the other hand, is only on the level of "branches". For wisdom by itself is not the purpose. The purpose of wisdom is only in that it brings to deed (Berachot 17a).

How great is the distinction between branches and roots. This is the secret of the continuance (kiyum) of the Jewish people (knesset yisrael). For they are firmly rooted with strong roots. They are strongly established from the beginning like boulders and valleys through the deeds of their forefathers and foremothers (Rashi on Bamidbar 23:9).

And even if all the winds of the world blow on them, it will not move them from their place and they will not stop to produce fruit. Fortunate are we and how good is our portion!

But for the nations, even though they also had some exceedingly wise men, as known. But their wisdom was greater than their deeds. Thus, these sages did not merit to be called "roots". Winds came which uprooted them from the world. Their wisdom was lost and they did not grow to produce fruit (Daat Chachma u'Mussar chelek gimel, 53-54, 189).

More on this, for anyone whose wisdom exceeds his deeds, when a wind comes, it uproots him and turns him over on his face. For wisdom alone is on the level of "lachim hayu (wet)" (terms used by Rashi on Gen.1:6).

But for one whose deeds exceeds his wisdom, even if all the winds of the world blow on him, they do not move him from his place.

For might and strength (gevurah v'chizuk) spring specifically from deeds of the body, specifically from the darkness and black of night. Namely, this world which is compared to night (Bava Metziah 83b), the world of trials. From this world one reaches the secret of Gevurah (might).

Chapter 3 Mishna 21 - Gematrias

Rabbi Eliezer ben Chasma says: the laws of kinim (bird offerings) and pitchei niddah (order of menstrual periods) - they are the body (essentials) of the halachot. But astronomy and gematrias, they are but desserts of wisdom.

רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן חֲסִמָּא אָמַר, קִיְנִין וּפְתֵחֵי נִדָּה, הֵן הֵן גּוּפֵי הַלְכוֹת. תְּקוּפוֹת וְגִמְטְרִיאוֹת, פְּרָפְרָאוֹת לְחֻכְמָה:

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - the bird offerings are called "kinim", from the term "ken tzipor" (bird nest). These have complicated laws such as when an obligatory offering was mixed with a voluntary offering...

"they are [the body of the halachot]" - i.e. the primary oral law which one receives reward for [studying].

"astronomy (*Tekufot*)" - the paths of the constellations

"gematriot" - numerical calculations of the letters.

"desserts of wisdom" - like a dessert which one eats at the end of the meal, as a dessert for pleasure, so too these wisdoms grant honor in the eyes of the public.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - they are like the dessert at the end of a meal to the wisdom of torah. For the torah is as bread to the soul. The soul is nourished from the torah, similar to "come eat of my bread" (Mishlei 9:5). And when the bread is tastier, through adding flavorings such as butter, so too the torah will become sweeter when one adds other wisdoms (Rambam Yesodei Torah, end of ch.4). But if one eats butter without bread, he will be disgusted and not satiated. So too, one who makes other wisdoms primary, his soul will not be satiated by them and will not survive through them...

Q Level 2

Rashi

Rashi - "kinim.." - i.e. they should not be light in your eyes. Rather, put your heart to them. For they are very severe and you will find great depth in them.

"*Tekufot (astronomy) and Gematriot*" - the calculation of letters and acronyms (notrikon). One does not receive reward for them like other Halachot. For they are but parparot, i.e. [secondary] matters of wisdom. This is similar to "[the blessing on bread] exempts the parparot after the meal" (Berachot 42a).

"*Parparot*" - something that draws the heart, [an appetizer] brought before the meal which draws a man's heart to eating. So too one who toils in the constellations in the sky or expounds the numerical values of the torah - they draw a person to wisdom. For they contain great wisdom.

Q Level 3

☆ Maharal

Maharal - in the previous mishna, he said: "he whose wisdom exceeds his deeds is like a tree with many branches and few roots..etc." After he compared wisdom and deeds to a tree, and since the roots and the tree are together one thing, then what is the connection between wisdom and deeds, that we should consider them both as one thing?

If wisdom refers to human wisdom or the like (ex. math or science), which the nations also know,

then how could wisdom be considered like branches and the deeds like roots of the tree?

For the roots of a tree and its branches are one thing.

How then are the deeds related to this human "wisdom" which is not torah wisdom.

On this he said that the "wisdom" mentioned here is certainly [wisdom] of the deeds, namely, the Halachot (laws) of the mitzvot (torah commandments).

This kind of wisdom is one with the deed itself (unlike math and science), such that the deed is regarded as the root and the wisdom which is the Halachot of the mitzvot is considered like the branches. For the intellect (sechel) spreads out above like the branch from the root of the tree. And when man has deeds, he reaches wisdom. From this aspect, wisdom stems from deeds. (for torah wisdom resides according to purity of deeds and traits - see R.Hartman's commentary)

Therefore, he said "kinim and pitchei niddah.." He brought these two things. For in Tractate kinnim it was taught "ken stuma" (an unspecified pair of birds). Namely, the woman bought two birds without specifying which one is a Chatat (sin-offering) and which one is an Olah (burnt offering). Afterwards one escaped and flew away. The Halacha in that case is one may purchase another bird to complete the pair. In that chapter, the Tanna brings very many laws for when a doubt occurred and the birds got mixed up.

Likewise for "Pitchei Niddah". Namely, when a Niddah lost her petach, i.e. she has a doubt whether she is in the days of Zivah or the days of Niddah..

Both of these things, even though they are Halachot, but they refer to a doubt which arose. One needs to consider them even though they are only for doubts and thus not the Guf (main) Halacha. For only a matter which is certain can be considered a Guf (main) halacha. But for a doubt, who says it will arise? Furthermore, the person should not have entered in a doubt to let the bird escape and be lost.

Such a thing cannot be called intellect and wisdom, for it was only said on a doubt. It is proper for all wisdom to be only certainty. But something which is of doubt should not enter in the category of wisdom. For it is proper to talk only of things which are definite, not things which are maybes. The latter should not enter into the category of wisdom.

Therefore, one may think that this is not the primary of torah. For this, he said that this matter is "the body of Halacha".

The Tekufot refers to the trajectory of the constellations. Gematriot refers to geometry and math.

These two things are the opposite of kinim and pitchei niddah. For the latter are not primary halacha. They come only because of a doubt and mixup that arose.

On the other hand, these two wisdom, tekufot and gematriot (math), are definite and exact. Doubts do not at all apply.

Nevertheless, they are not complete wisdom. Rather, they are like parparot (appetizers) to wisdom. For an appetizer is only a preparation for eating and does not nourish (mefarnes) a man.

So too these two wisdoms, namely, Tekufot and Gematriot. Even though they are great wisdoms,

but nevertheless they do not nourish the soul. For wisdom is the sustenance of the soul, as we explained by "if there is no flour, there is no torah" (previous mishna).

But these wisdoms, namely, Tekufot and Gematriot, they do not nourish the soul and are like appetizers which are not the main course of a meal, but only as preparation for a meal..

This was the intent of the Sage in saying "kinim..halachot". He did not say they are "gufei torah" [but rather "gufei halachot"].

This is because the primary torah is halacha, as our sages said: "Tana d'Bei Eliyahu whoever learns Halachas is assured of being a ben Olam Haba.." (Megilah 28b).

The reason is that it is the torah which brings a man to the life of Olam Haba. And when the Halacha is Halacha pesuka (final law), it does not veer away from the point of truth, not to the right, nor to the left.

Therefore, it is called "Halacha". For one who walks (Holech), goes in the straight path, not veering right nor left. Thus, this road which does not veer right or left - it is the road which brings a man to Olam Haba completely.

But one who veers to the right or to the left - he veers to one end and he has a leaning towards death. Because an end has a limit and end. Thus, this does not bring to Olam Haba completely. Only the road which does not veer at all to the ends, it is fitting for the world which is eternal, without limit or end.

Our sages hinted to this saying: "if he reaches the crossroads, he is saved from all of them" (Sotah 21a).

The explanation is that "crossroads" refers to the path which is already differentiated from the other paths which veer to the right or to the left end. But this person walks in the straight and sure path, not veering until the path brings him to Olam Haba.

The talmud explains there: "what is 'crossroads'? Mar Zutra says: 'this refers to a talmid chacham who attains the teaching (Shmata) according to halacha"

That is to say, when one learns teaching (Shmata) according to Halacha, it is called that this path is differentiated from the other paths which veer to the right or left. But this path goes straight to where it is proper to go.

So too for a Talmid Chacham "who attains the teaching according to halacha". This path goes straight to the Olam Haba completely.

Therefore, one who learns halacha pesuka (clear halacha) - he does not veer from the truth right or left. This does not mean that one whose learning is not halacha pesuka, it will not bring him to Olam Haba. It is not so. But halcha pesuka is the world which is completely clear.

This is what he said here: "kinim and pitchei niddah are the body of halacha", whereby a man merits Olam Haba completely through them..

This is why the Torah is called "Torah", from the term "Horaah" (teaching). For the Torah teaches the proper path to Olam Haba, as written: "if he reached the cross-roads, he is saved from all of

them.."

This path needs instruction for it is very narrow..

Therefore, that which the Tana chose kinim and pitchei niddah which are doubts and the halacha clarifies the action to do and the path to take in a case of mixup and doubt. This is as one who chooses the straight path among other paths. Therefore, they are gufei halacha. For Halacha clarifies the walking among several possible paths, as we explained and this is why it is called Halacha.

Because of this, they are gufei halachot.. and whoever toils in halacha merits olam haba. But tekufot and gematriot are not the path of halacha at all which brings to olam Haba...

These things are well explained. But the first explanation is clear. If people knew how to understand the matters, they would not veer from the halacha to examine other books which the sages hate..



Pirkei Avot
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Chapter 4 Mishna 1 - Who Is Wise?

Ben Zomah says: who is wise? He who learns from every man, as written: 'from all who taught me I have gained wisdom, for Your testimonies are my conversation' (Tehilim 119:99).

בֵּן זֹמָא אוֹמֵר, אֵיזְהוּ חָכֵם, הַלּוֹמֵד מִכָּל אָדָם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (תְּהִלִּים קִיט) מִכָּל מִלְמֵדֵי הַשְּׂכָלְתִּי כִּי עֲדוֹתֶיךָ שִׂיחָה לִּי.

Who is mighty? He who conquers his [evil] inclination, as written: 'he who is slow to anger is better than a strong man, and he that rules over his spirit [is mightier] than one who conquers a city'" (Mishlei 16:32)

אֵיזְהוּ גִבּוֹר, הַכּוֹבֵשׁ אֶת יָצְרוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (מִשְׁלֵי טז) טוֹב אָרֶךְ אַפַּיִם מִגִּבּוֹר וּמִשָּׁל בְּרוּחוֹ מִלֵּכֵד עִיר.

who is wealthy? He who rejoices in his lot, as written: "you shall eat of the toil of your hands, fortunate are you and it is good for you" (Tehilim 128:2) - 'fortunate are you' - in this world, and 'it is good for you' - in the World-to-Come.

אֵיזְהוּ עָשִׁיר, הַשֹּׂמֵחַ בְּחֻלְקוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (תְּהִלִּים קכח) יִגִּיעַ כְּפִיךָ כִּי תֹאכַל אֲשֶׁרֶיךָ וְטוֹב לָךְ. אֲשֶׁרֶיךָ, בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה. וְטוֹב לָךְ, לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא.

Who is honorable? He who honors his fellow human beings, as written: "those who honor Me, I shall honor, while those who dishonor Me shall be dishonored" (Shmuel I 2:30).

אֵיזְהוּ מְכַבֵּד, הַמְכַבֵּד אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שְׁמוּאֵל א ב) כִּי מְכַבְּדֵי אֶכְבֵּד וּבִזֵּי יִקְלָו.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - i.e. who is a wise man who is praiseworthy for his wisdom? He who learns from every man, even if the other person is smaller than him. For since he is not concerned for his own honor and learns from the small, it demonstrates that his wisdom is l'Shem Shamayim (for the sake of heaven) and not for his own pride and glory (and thus he is praiseworthy for his wisdom).

"from all my teachers" - i.e. I learned torah from all my teachers, even those inferior to me and I was not concerned for my own honor.

Q Level 2

Rashi

Rashi - *"who is wise?"* - even if the person is not bigger in wisdom than himself, nevertheless, he goes and learns and pushes to enter in every place where there are bnei torah (scholars) and is not embarrassed.

"from all my teachers, I grew wise" - whoever came to teach me, I would think and listen to his words and not be embarrassed.

Q Level 1

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - *"he who learns from every man?.."* - the wise men of the nations said that even if one knows all the wisdoms, nevertheless, if he does not love wisdom, he is not a wise man but a fool..

But one who loves wisdom and lusts for it, even if he knows nothing, nevertheless, he is called a wise man. For he will attain wisdom since his desire and will is in this...

So too here, one who so much loves and desires wisdom that he asks every person. And even one who knows only a single thing, he learns from him - then he will succeed and become wise..

Q Level 2

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot (Saba of Kelm) - *"who is wise? He who learns from every man"* - just like one who is hungry is not satiated by a bit of food he eats, so too the wise man is hungry for

wisdom. The little knowledge he has does not satiate him. Rather, he is still hungry and low in his eyes. His great longing and likewise his lowliness and hunger for wisdom brings him to not be ashamed to learn even from one smaller than him.

Q Level 2

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "he who learns from every man" - for wisdom is endless. No man can claim that he has mastered wisdom. There is always more to learn and from whom to learn. Thus, the highest title of a Jew is "talmid chacham", which means "a wise student". For all remain students. Even for a rabbi who teaches the masses, though his position is rabbi, but his title is "talmid chacham"..

He who does not know that he does not know will never know. But he who knows that he does not know, there is hope that he will know.

Q Level 2

Chatam Sofer

Ketav Sofer Hachadash, Avot - "he who learns from every man" - from a G-d fearing person, he can learn good things. And even from one who does not have fear (of G-d), one can see and contemplate what will be his end. Namely, in his old age he regrets wasting his years on vanity and the useless. This is "he who learns from every man".

Q Level 2

Chida

Chida - chedrei beten emor, ot 17 - "who is wise? he who learns from every man" - the wise man learns from the righteous, the wicked, the craftsman, and all other people. From a righteous or rich person, one can learn from his righteousness or generosity. If some suffering befalls another person, one can study how this loss or suffering occurred to him and guard oneself from it. From this he can learn of the punishments in Gehinom. If a human king exacts justice on a criminal, one can contemplate on the future judgment. And if the person is wicked and runs after lusts, from early morning till late night, one can learn from this regarding the service of G-d, etc...

Q Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "he who learns from every man?.." - this is the opposite of what reason obligates. According to reason, one would think that he who learns from every person would be called a talmid (disciple), not a chacham (wise man). This teaches it is not so. Rather, who is a wise man that deserves the title "chacham"? - he who learns from every person. He always feels he is lacking and still needs to learn from others. But for one who thinks he already reached the level of wisdom, he will not exert himself to attain more and will recede backwards over time (becoming less wise).

Q Level 3

Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer, Emor - "from all who taught me I have gained wisdom, for Your testimonies are my conversation" - he brought the verse "for Your testimonies are my conversation (sicha)". For the torah is compared to a "sichim", i.e. a vast tree with many branches, 600 thousand branches. And every branch by itself is one offshoot (yenika) of an individual of the nation of G-d. Therefore, everyone is obligated to learn from each other without exception so that each can suckle from all the branches. For without this, a sefer torah which lacks even one letter is invalid. Therefore, "from all who taught me I have gained wisdom, for Your testimonies are my conversation (sicha)". Sicha is a word which means a tree from the words "siach v'ilan".

Q Level 3

☆ Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot - for one who loves wisdom "seeks" (mevakesh) it due to his great hunger for wisdom. For "the soul is never filled" (Kohelet 6:7), and thus he is never satiated. This is the secret of eternity (yesod hanetzach)..

We observe the world and everything in it. For a single individual, all this is worth nothing to him

except what he needs for himself. For that which he does not need for himself, what joy does he have in it? But if they belong to him, he has very great joy in them. So too, the Holy One, blessed be He, rejoices very much in all the worlds. For they are His handiwork, and He did not create them for nothing.

Thus, a man who contemplates that the purpose of man is to attain the will of G-d (ratzon H'). Namely, that which G-d wants - this becomes his own will. If so, all that exists in the world which is the will of G-d - they are also his own will. Hence, he rejoices in them very very much and this is a tremendous pleasure.

We can fit this in "who is wealthy? He who rejoices in his lot" - i.e. the portion of the Holy One, blessed be He, which He allotted to His creations.

Q Level 4

☆ Maharal

Maharal - you should know that "wisdom" is separate from man. Man "carries" (nosseh) the wisdom. We explained this matter a few times already. For man is of physical body and wisdom is separate from him.

The title "wise man" applies on the man himself. Thus, it is not proper to call him a "wise man" because of the wisdom he has. For what does man of physical body have connection with wisdom?

But when he longs to receive wisdom, then the carrier, namely man, materializes/integrates (mitatzem) with the wisdom which he receives. This is similar to how the physical, which is the carrier, materializes with the "form" (tzura) it receives..

But if the carrier, namely, the physical, did not long to receive this form, it is completely as if there was no receiving of the form. For there must exist a desire to receive the form.

The torah hints to this in the verse: "*your desire shall be to your husband*" (Gen.3:16), and our sages who know wisdom said: "more than a man desires to marry, a woman desires to become married" (Yevamot 113a).

All this is due to the longing of the physical to receive form and materialize through it.

This is what was said here. Who is wise? He who learns from every man. For when he has a longing for wisdom, then it is proper to call himself by the title "chacham" (wise). (see there for more)

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "*who is mighty?*" - i.e. who is praiseworthy for his might? - one who conquers his evil inclination, as written: "he who is slow to anger is better than a strong man"..

Likewise, for one who "rules over his spirit" when it pushes him - [he is mightier] than one who conquers a city..

Q Level 1

Rashi

Rashi - "*he who conquers his [evil] inclination*" - and does not go after it.

"*he who is slow to anger is better than a strong man*" - who is not easily angered. Rather, he overcomes his yetzer. He is better than a warrior.

Q Level 2

Binyan Avot - "*[he who conquers] his yetzer*" - i.e. his spirit, his will, as in: "wherever would be the

spirit to go, they would go" (Yechezkel 1:12), which refers to "will" (Rashi). He is greater than the conqueror of a city.. For he rules over something non-physical. But the conqueror of a city fights only physical things..

Q Level 2



Michtav M'Eliyahu chelek 1 - "who is mighty" - not this person who built an empire and submitted millions of people, exiled and destroyed, and changed the planet. But rather, this person who fights the daily battle with himself. He who every day conquers a new world of his [inner] worlds, who trips the feet of the yetzer and conquers him.

Q Level 2

Igrot R. Yisrael Salanter - "he who conquers his inclination" - this has two levels. One to restrain one's nature from doing evil. Two, to change one's nature to do good. The latter is more difficult than the former. For it is harder to change one's nature than to merely restrain it. A person needs to go gradually in stages. At first to refrain from evil. This is the first level. And afterwards to do good which is the second level.

Q Level 3

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "he who conquers his inclination (yitzro)" - the word yetzer is from the word "yetzira" (formation). For it is the power which pushes a person to form, advance, move. In order to "form" in this world, a man needs a power which pushes him. This is the yetzer hara - the moving power which pushes through physical, corporeal drives.

Without this power, the world would not be formed and built up. It pushes man to marry, procreate, build homes, cultivate the world, engage in business, etc.

Thus, man's job is not to annul the yetzer. For then the world could not endure. Rather, man's job is to muzzle it and conquer it and use it for positive things.

Q Level 3

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "he who is slow to anger is better than a strong man" - why did Shlomo use the trait of anger as an example of a true mighty man? The commentaries explain that he used this trait because during a time of anger, it is most apparent to everyone present just how much a man is not in control of himself.

Rather, then he is under the dominion of the yetzer hara. The angry person himself also senses during his anger that he sometimes acts without clear mindedness. His reactions are different and inappropriate. Thus, as an example of a person who submitted his yetzer hara, he brought this case of one who rules over his anger. For such a person, the yetzer does not have dominion over him. Rather, he rules over his yetzer.

Another reason why Shlomo chose the trait of "slow to anger" is because anger is an extremely difficult trait to rule over. It is very hard to forgive someone who hurt [you] intentionally, or slandered you, etc. He who nevertheless succeeds in overpowering his grudge towards his enemy and makes peace with him - he is the mightiest of the mighty.

And in Avot d'Rebbi Natan "who is the mightiest of the mighty.. and some say: 'he who transforms his enemy into a friend" - dominion over anger, overcoming hatred - this is the most noble might.

Q Level 3

Chatam Sofer

Ketav Sofer Hachadash on the torah, Avot - "he who conquers his inclination" - he did not say "one who defeats" but rather "one who conquers".

For in warfare between two kingdoms, one can overpower the enemy in two ways.

Either one army sees most of its soldiers have been killed and he must abandon the battlefield and flee from the enemy. The other side chases after the retreating army. In this way, the war is over and the pursuers defeated the other army.

But nevertheless, the victorious army must fear always that in the coming days [or years] the defeated army will regroup and increase soldiers, and come back for a second round. And who knows if he will succeed again in overpowering the enemy?

But if he overpowered his enemy in such a way that he succeeded in placing fear in his heart and the enemy is completely in his hand, then he can rest assured. For his enemy is in his hand.

So too for the war against the evil inclination who wages war against man always. If a man succeeds in defeating it and chasing it away, nevertheless, he is always in danger and fear lest the war renew and the yetzer defeats him another time. This is as our sages said: "every day, a man's evil inclination strengthens and renews over him.." (Kidushin 30b). But one whose yetzer is in his hand, as our sages said that the tzadikim (righteous) have the yetzer in their hands. This is as king David said: "my heart is empty within me" (Tehilim 109:12). For he did not feel any lust. And when the yetzer is in his hand and he has no tendency to anything of this world, he can rest assured without fear and worry at all.

This is the meaning of "who is mighty? He who conquers his yetzer", i.e. conquers him under his hand..

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "who is wealthy?" - i.e. praiseworthy for his wealth - he who rejoices in his lot.

Q Level 2

Rashi

Rashi - "he who rejoices in his lot" - with the portion G-d provides him. He takes everything with a good eye. Alternatively, he has tranquility of spirit and good heartedness on the portion G-d provides him, whether it is good or bad, whether much or little. And he is not pained to chase and pursue more than his portion. For if he does not rejoice from the sustenance of the work of his hands, what praiseworthiness is there? Even the richest of the rich who worries and is sad on his portion - he is the poorest of the poor. Rather, certainly the verse refers to one who eats with contentment. And since scripture praises him, therefore he is called rich.

Q Level 2

☆

Chidushei Haflah Ketuvot - "he who rejoices in his lot" - i.e. he does not place his trust in his money (eino boteach al mamono). For it is human nature to rejoice when he makes a new profit but after he is used to it, he no longer rejoices. But for the intelligent person who realizes that what he has is not his own, for every second it is a gift from G-d - thus he rejoices at all times.

Q Level 2

☆

Michtav M'Eliyahu chelek 1 - "who is wealthy" - the view of our sages is the exact opposite of the view of the rich people. "Who is wealthy? He who is happy with his lot". For only annulment of material aspirations and satisfaction with one's necessary needs - this is what brings to wealth. True wealth is to develop joy in the little that G-d granted him and to realize that it is certainly not worth it for him to have more than what G-d gave him.

Q Level 3

☆ Chida

Chida - *Devarim Achadim, derush 27* - "who is wealthy.." - it is obvious that the matter does not depend on wealth. For if he has a bad soul and is anxious to amass wealth, all that he has appears to his eyes as if it is nothing. This is as scripture states "he who loves silver will not be

satiated by silver" (Kohelet 5:9).

He cannot be quiet and at rest due to his great lust and longing for money. And he is a tremendous miser. A little expenditure appears great. Thus even in his great wealth, he is considered a destitute pauper. This is not a rich man.

The true rich man which it is proper to call him rich is one who is satisfied with the minimum and it appears in his eyes that his table is greater than the table of kings. This is the meaning of "who is wealthy? He who rejoices in his portion". Even though in truth he does not possess wealth, but nevertheless, he is called rich...

Through this, he will be saved from baseless hatred, and will not be jealous of his fellow's imaginary wealth and come to hate him out of jealousy. These are tremendous sins. For the temple was destroyed because of them and "jealousy, lust, and honor remove a person from the world" (Avot 4:21). And the ancients were punished only because of jealousy. Furthermore, hatred is in the heart always and is worse than other sins. For in other sins one transgresses them only at the time he commits the sin. But hatred is always. Every second he transgresses "do not hate your brother" (Vayikra 19:17) and he nullifies the positive commandment "love your fellow as yourself" (Vayikra 19:18) which is the "general principle of the torah".

And when he is happy with his portion and the little he has appears much - he is saved from all this and is saved from lust [for money] which is the father of tumah (spiritual impurity). For it brings to theft, false oaths, hatred and jealousy. And he denies G-d's providence and does not believe that G-d brings poverty or wealth.

One who is happy with his portion is saved from this and he is promised by prophecy (ruach hakodesh): "you shall eat of the toil of your hands, fortunate are you and it is good for you.."

Rabeinu Chaim Vital already explained at length what was said on the traits of jealousy and hatred in his book Shaarei Kedusha.

You can see that the pillar of the service [of G-d] is to be happy with one's portion. This is the rich man we mentioned and through this he will be free to toil in torah and mitzvot, and will trust in G-d. In truth this is a large portion and on this depends torah, avodah (divine service) and acts of kindness, as we wrote.

Level 3

Chatam Sofer

Ketav Sofer, parsha re-eh - "who is wealthy? he who rejoices in his portion" - this is not in man's nature. For he who loves money will not be satisfied by money. If he has 100, he lusts for 200, and he is never content with his portion.

Such a person is not really "wealthy". He merely has what to live on, namely, his sustenance.

Rather, "wealthy" depends on one's merit. He who has merits and is worthy, G-d gives him a life of contentment, namely, that he lives in tranquility and does not constantly lust for more and more.

In this way we can explain the verse "You open Your hand and satisfy every living thing with will" (Tehilim 145:16). Namely, G-d grants will to a man, i.e. to be satisfied and content with what he has. This is the greatest blessing.

This kind of wealth depends on merit. But through mazal (nature/fate) it is impossible to be wealthy of this kind. One may have lots of properties and be successful in business, but nevertheless, his

heart aches within and he seeks more and more. Such a person is considered a poor man.

Q Level 3



Mussar Hatorah Rabbi Whitkind - "who is wealthy? He who rejoices in his lot" - for material wealth cannot satiate the soul which longs for the material pleasures of this world, as our sages said: "he who has 100 wants 200, and he who has 200 wants 400" (Kohelet Rabba 3:13). And our sages said: "this world is as one who drinks saltwater, it appears to him that he has quenched his thirst, but afterwards he is even more thirsty" (Vilna Gaon, Alim Letrufa).

On this our sages said: "who is wealthy? He who is happy with his lot". For real joy will not come to man's [higher] soul, which comes from above (the spiritual realm), through fulfilling the lusts of his [lower] animal soul (nefesh behemit) in physical matters of this world. Only from the side of his inner divine soul will he find satisfaction and joy in his portion.

Q Level 3

Binyan Avot - "who is wealthy? he who rejoices in his lot" - he is not frantic to amass wealth (nivhal l'hon) and he is satisfied with what he has. This leads him to several good qualities. One, he does not come to jealousy and hatred of others. Furthermore, this draws him to torah study. And likewise, he does not come to steal and to covet the money of his fellow.

Q Level 4

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan - "who is wealthy?.." - all physical lusts have a known limit and were given for a necessary purpose by the Creator of man. And when the purpose is attained, the lust vanishes. I will mention two general lusts, namely, lust for food and lust for [marital] relations. Lust for food is for the purpose of survival of the person while lust for relations is for the survival of the human race.

When a man is satiated, the lust for food vanishes. Likewise, when a man has relations with a woman and finishes the act, his lust vanishes.

But the lust for money has no known limit to make it vanish when a man attains a certain amount of money... It is necessary for the maintenance of the world but its lust has no limit. (and thus man is never satisfied).

Since we are creatures of clay, immersed in a sea of imaginations due to our makeup, thus there is no limit to this lust. But from the aspect of knowledge and understanding which G-d has graced us and also from His torah, we can contemplate and know that G-d has given us this world in our hearts only so that we are satisfied in taking only the amount of our basic needs.

Since it is so, then it is clear to the understanding person that wealth and poverty do not have a measure except by a man's mindset.

If he loves money beyond his need, he will be pained on the extra (he lacks) and is thus a poor man.

On the other hand, if he does not love money and is satisfied with what G-d has provided him and rejoices in this, he does not lack anything. This is the purpose of wealth. Thus, he said: "who is wealthy? he who rejoices in his portion"...

He set these four titles, wise, mighty, rich, and honorable in proper order. First is wisdom. For wisdom helps the wise man to conquer his inclination, and one who conquers his inclination will be disgusted by the superfluous and will rejoice in his portion. And one who rejoices in his portion becomes clean from jealousy, lust and honor of the masses and will receive everyone with joy and

a pleasant countenance. This is honoring the public...

Q Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Chasdei Avot (Ben Ish Chai) - (Kabalistic) "He who rejoices in his portion" - on the verse: "And the faith of your times shall be the strength of salvations, wisdom and knowledge (Daat); the fear of the L-ord is his treasure" (Isaiah 33:6), "daat" refers to Seder Taharot as known. Thus, one who studies Seder Taharot, it is proper for him to receive Shefah (spiritual flow) from the Sefirah of Daat. And it is known that wealth is drawn and stems from Daat, as written: "With knowledge (daat), the rooms are filled with all riches.." (Mishlei 24:4).

It is also so that wealth can come through one's mazel (fate), but as known, this kind of wealth is not attributed to the man himself but rather to his mazel. On the other hand, wealth that comes through the merit of torah - this kind of wealth is attributed to the man himself. For he merits this through what he learned.

Thus "who is wealthy", i.e. that the wealth is his, not his mazel - "he who rejoices in his portion (chelko)", i.e. chelek-vav, the sixth part which is Seder Taharot, which corresponds to "Daat", as before. Through Daat a person receives Shefah of wealth from Daat, as written: "With knowledge (daat), the rooms are filled with all riches" (Mishlei 24:4).

Alternatively, as before "chelko" refers to Seder Taharot which is the sixth part (of the mishna). It is known that wealth comes as reward for simcha (joy) a man has in torah and mitzvot, as written: "go eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine in gladness" (Kohelet 9:7).

If a man rejoices in the practical torah which is relevant to him in fulfilling the mitzvot in this world, then it is not a proof that he rejoices in the honor of torah. Rather, perhaps he rejoices in his learning because it will lead him to be a Rabbi in Yisrael and people will honor him for his wisdom.

But if he rejoices in Seder Taharot which is not relevant in our times and has no practical application and people do not ask halachic questions for - this is a proof that his joy is l'shem shamayim, out of love of torah. Therefore, it is proper to bestow on him wealth in the merit of his joy in torah study, as written: "I rejoice in Your word, as one who finds great treasure" (Tehilim 119:162), and the torah makes him rich as written: "on its left is wealth and honor" and "honor and wealth are by me..", which refers to torah. This is what he said: "who is wealthy", who merits wealth and it is attributed to him? This is he who rejoices in Chelko, Seder Vav, Seder Taharot which has no practical application in our times. For then certainly his joy is due to the torah and it bestows wealth on him.

Q Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - "benefits from the work of his hands" - for one who benefits from the work of his hands is divested of the physical (nivdal min hachomer). For the physical is always lacking and thus it receives from another, as we explained many times.. Hence he who rejoices in his portion and is not lacking - this is the level of being completely divested of the physical and thus he said "fortunate are you in this world". For in this world he is divested of the physical. Therefore "fortunate are you in this world", and it will be completely good for you in the next world since there is complete divestment from the physical. This is certainly a lofty level. We explained similar to this earlier regarding "love work". This explanation is completely clear without a doubt.

Q Level 4

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "who is wealthy?.." - there is nothing which occupies human beings more than the desire to become wealthy. What is wealth? Amassing more possessions in order to merit a life of tranquility. To fulfill one's dreams of tranquility and plenty, vacations all over the big world, a beautiful mansion, a nice car, etc.

Most human beings invest all their time and energy in attaining hoped for wealth.

Ben Zoma comes and rouses us. Stop for a moment from the great race to wealth! Think for a moment! "Who is wealthy? He who is happy with his portion" - this person who is satisfied with what he has. He lives life without the incessant race after money, without wasting all his strength and energy on a dream which will never materialize.

People will say: "correct. we agree that a person who is satisfied with what he has is a happy person. But to call him "wealthy"?! A rich man is one who has, not one who does not have. It seems the sage mixed up "wealthy" with "happy"!

But after some contemplation, we will understand that we are fundamentally mistaken in our definition of wealth.

Like wisdom, wealth is measured according to how much a person has. It does not matter how much wealth a person has amassed for himself.

The true wealthy person is he who does not lack anything.

If we asked every person: "why do you want to become wealthy?"

His answer will probably be: "so that I will not lack anything", or "so that I can have everything I want".

If so, the true wealthy person is he who has already reached the goal. Namely, he who does not desire anything more than what he already has and has all that he needs.

Furthermore, our sages said: "a person does not leave this world with [even] half of what he lusts for. If he has 100, he lusts for 200. If he has 200, he wants 400. The more his assets grow, the more his lust for money grows. And the greater the level, the more intense is the lust. One who lacks a peruta (small coin), lacks only a loaf of bread. One who has food, wants a bigger home. As for a very wealthy person - he lacks many millions!

Thus, a man who has amassed much money feels much lacking, and the more his money increases, the poorer he becomes.

"he who rejoices in his lot" - how can one attain this noble trait to become "happy with his portion"?

The Chafetz Chaim says that the answer lies in the words of the mishna. It says: "happy with his portion" and not "happy with what he has" nor "happy with little". Why?

In order to teach us how we can rejoice with basic bread and water. If one realizes that every person has exactly the portion fitting for him - then he will be happy with his lot.

Every person has a unique purpose. Each person receives all the tools he needs to fulfill his purpose in this world.

If he receives wealth which does not help him to fulfill his purpose in this world, it is in the category of: *"riches kept by their owner for his harm"* (Kohelet 5:12).

For example, a carpenter needs a large thick saw to cut beams in order to make various furniture. If a man were to come and offer him: "listen, I have a delicate and very expensive saw for cutting precious stones. Let us make an exchange. You give me the big inexpensive saw and I give you my delicate expensive saw".

The carpenter will mock this offer saying: "what use do I have for your expensive saw? I will not be able to do my work with it. Your saw is made for precious stones not wood!"

So too, every person receives his portion, the amount of money he needs for his unique purpose in this world.

"who is honorable?.." - we are used to seeing an honorable person as one who holds an important position or possesses much wealth. Everyone wants to become close to him and strives to please him and flatter him. This "honorable" person himself also acts in a manner befitting his elevated position. He does not befriend everyone. His position obligates him to guard his high status as is proper for one in a high position.

Ben Zoma tells him - Sir! the honor you are granted is imaginary! The honor is not to you but to the power in your hand. The proof is that if tomorrow you were to lose your chair (position) or lose your wealth - all your honor would completely disappear.

Do you want to be truly honorable? *"who is honorable? He who honors others"*.

Only the humble person.. who relates to others with full honor (respect) - he is the truly honorable...

For only he who knows how to honor others merits honor. Only he who recognizes the special qualities of each and every person around him - he will merit that others will recognize his qualities and honor him...

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - *"who is honorable?.."* - for in these three good things mentioned earlier, namely, wisdom, might, and wealth, one who merits them is intrinsically honorable in the eyes of G-d and men, even if people do not actually honor him.

"He who honors his fellow human beings" - thus, the sage added this teaching and said one who possesses these three traits and is thus intrinsically honorable, what should he do to become honorable by other human beings? - "honor his fellow human beings".

"those who honor Me, I shall honor" - it is a logical inference (kal v'chomer) - if the Holy One, blessed be He, who is the King of Honor and "all He created is for His glory" (Mishlei 16:4), and nevertheless, He honors those who honor Him, how much more so for flesh and blood.

"those who dishonor Me shall be disgraced" - we see from here the humility of G-d. For He did not say those who disgrace Me, I will disgrace. Rather, He said "will be disgraced", i.e. on their own. We also find G-d is more stringent on the honor of the righteous, as written: "those who curse you, I will curse" (Gen.12).

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - *"honor"* - one who honors his fellow - this honor is for himself, not his fellow. For what benefit does one gain when honored by others? If he is honorable, nothing was added to his level and honor due to being honored by others. And if he is lowly, the honor granted him will not

make him honorable.. Thus, one who honors his fellow honors himself. For he causes them to honor him perforce, out of obligation. This is true honor.

Q Level 2

Binyan Avot - "who is honorable? he who honors others" - even if he has all the good qualities - wisdom, might, and wealth. But nevertheless, if he does not honor others, they will not honor him. Alternatively, one who has these three qualities is intrinsically honorable in the eyes of G-d and men. Thus, certainly they honor him before he honors them. But nevertheless the intent is that if he wants the honor to continue, he should honor them since they honor him.

Q Level 2

☆ Maharal Tzintz

Maharal Tzantz - "Who is honorable? He who honors others" - for certainly the honor of a man is in that which people feel honored by his honor. People do not feel honored by [the honor of] a lowly person. But they feel honored by the honor of a great man.

"those who honor Me I will honor" - I Myself. For no one else can honor them like Me.

Q Level 2

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "who is honorable.. those who honor Me I will honor" - if he honors every person and does not investigate whether they are inferior to him. For he tells himself: "they are created in the image of G-d (tzelem Elokim) and are G-d's creations, and 'all that G-d created, He created for His glory'. Thus, when I honor them, I am honoring their Creator".

Thus, in this honor he honors G-d. This is the meaning of "those who honor the public", i.e. in such a way that there is honor of G-d, in this "those who honor Me, I will honor".

Q Level 3

☆ Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot (daat chochma umussar II 14) - "Who is honorable? He who honors his fellow" - the primary formation and root of the nefesh (soul) is an existence of "honor" (ikar yetzirata v'shorsha hi metziut shel kavod). "honor" (kavod) is the essence name (shem haetzem) of the nefesh (soul), as written: "So that my honor (soul) will sing praises to You" (Tehilim 30:13). The commentaries explain that honor refers to the soul. For from the aspect of the soul itself, all its purpose is to honor, praise, and extol. This is so whether between man and his fellow man or between man and G-d. Similar to what scripture says: "they always recall the praise of G-d (tamid mesaprim kavod Kel)". And likewise between man and his fellow, to honor the public and recognize the image of G-d. The matter of dishonor has no existence at all.

This is what the mishna says: "Who is honorable? He who honors his fellow". For in this that he honors the public, and the way he honors, this is a true measure of a man's connection to the matters of soul and he is the truly honorable.

Q Level 4

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - why did the sage choose these four things? There are many other noble traits which he could have asked similar questions. For example "who is humble?", "who is righteous?", "who is pious?", etc. What is special about these four things?

The answer is that human beings long all of their lives for these four things. All human beings dedicate all of their time to attaining these things.

One person may dedicate proportionately more time to attaining wisdom. Another person to gaining might or wealth. A third person may aspire all his days to attain honor.

In any case, all human beings aspire to one or more of these four things.

The prophet Jeremiah also refers to these things as fundamentals in saying: "the wise man should not praise himself on his wisdom, nor the mighty man on his might, nor the wealthy on his wealth, nor the honorable on his honor" (Yirmiyah 9:22-23)...

Thus, every man aspires to these four things either by nature or by intent, therefore, the sage comes to explain what is their correct form.

This is so human beings will not squander their lives chasing after imaginary things and instead dedicate their time in the true way to attain these four things - in this world and the next.

Level 4

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "who is wise?.." - for every person longs very much after four things. Namely, wisdom, might, wealth, and honor. Thus, there is not one second where a person does not strive to attain one of these four things.

However, in all four of them, his efforts accomplish the opposite of his intended purpose.

He wants to be considered WISE. Thus, he does not want to learn from any person thinking that in truth he is the wisest of all. Or he thinks that if he admits (that he is not the wisest) and learns from his inferior, he will no longer be considered wise. Thus, he remains lacking in knowledge (daat).

Likewise, for one who wants to become WEALTHY in order to attain enjoyments. Thus, he toils day and night shortening his life and putting himself in dangers in order to amass wealth. Where then are the enjoyments that he should have attained with his wealth?

So too for one who wants to be considered MIGHTY. He wants to be feared by every person. Therefore, when one of his enemies falls in his hands, he will crush him into dust and trample him under his feet. But his enemies will lie in ambush for his blood, waiting for the day his foot slips. Then those who lay on the ground will all sing in joy and gladness together, to topple him and chase him to utter destruction. Where then is his might?

Likewise for one who wants that everyone honors him. Therefore, he will blow through his nostrils a cheekful of the wind of his arrogance. He will raise his feathers like a bird. But even those who flatter him to his face laugh at him behind his back and pour disgrace on him. Where then is his honor?

Therefore, the sage advised how to strive to attain the desired purpose in each of these four areas.

WISDOM is attained through two ways:

One, through much learning which one receives from the early ones (elders).

Two, through one's own thinking. Namely, to think and understand on those things he learned. However for this thinking to oneself, if it is not preceded by reasoning the logic out with other people, then most of the time it is weak and thin (unclear)...

Even a very sharp person should not rely only on his own view. And the deeper the matter, the more likely he will err in it. One who blocks his ears from hearing words against his view, on him Shlomo said: "the way of the fool is straight in his eyes but he who listens to advice is wise" (Mishlei 15:12).

And even if the person who disagrees with him is of lower knowledge, but sometimes this small person with his weak eye cannot gaze properly with the tiny crack of wisdom opened to him, but the wise man who hears his words will "hear and increase wisdom".

For due to his broad mind and sharp intellect, he will find proofs for the small person's words and find them correct. Thus, the torah was compared to fire. Just like by fire, small twigs ignite a big log fire, so too by torah the small sharpen the big..

So too for other wisdoms. It is proper to listen and examine the words of one who disagrees with him.

MIGHT - for if we praise a gibor (mighty man), it is not because he has the power in his hands to strangle and slaughter thousands of people like pigeons and doves. For if so, why should he be more praiseworthy than wild animals, lions and leopards?

Rather, his praise is in that he is not of weak heart and he uses his might for a noble purpose and is not concerned for physical harm and risks his life, but only for the noble purpose he wishes to attain. And there is no nobler and higher purpose than to don our souls with a generous spirit as this. Namely, that the soul not be tied and subjugated to a life of physicality and lusts of the yetzer (evil inclination)..

And all the more so when his yetzer entices him to take revenge and bear a grudge against his enemy. If he listens to the voice of his yetzer, he conquers only the external of his enemy, namely, his body.

But when he acts benevolently towards his enemy, he conquers the internal of his enemy. For now, even the enemy himself will recognize just what kind of generous person he wants to fight against. He will be ashamed and embarrassed of himself and will become his slave for life.

HONOR - this is human nature, like cause and effect. For since he honors every person, they will love him and honor him also. But it is also in the way of reward from G-d. For since he honors even every lowly person, certainly he is doing this because "in the image of G-d, He created man", and "the crown of his G-d is on his head". Therefore, G-d will cause that they will also honor him (as a reward)..

Level 4

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - the mishna is teaching that it is good for a person to seek that all his fortune (osher) comes only from himself, and that it does not depend on other people. For this is the true wealth.

The secret of the matter is that man has all the qualities within himself and they do not depend on other people. On the contrary, the perfection of the qualities is specifically when they stem from his own essence. But when they depend on others, "the wise man should not praise himself on his wisdom, nor the mighty man on his might, nor the wealthy on his wealth, nor the honorable on his honor" (Yirmiyahu 9:23).

This is what he said: "who is wise? He who learns from every man". For this is a sign that he loves and longs for wisdom itself and this quality is in himself..

Likewise, "who is mighty, he who conquers his yetzer". For the quality of might is not measured by victories over other people. Rather, his might is from his own self. One who conquers his yetzer - this is true might.

For it will stay by him and not disappear forever. He has acquired the quality of might wholly.

Likewise, "who is wealthy? He who rejoices with his portion". This is the true and whole quality of wealth. Fortunate is he in this world and it is good for him in the next world.

Likewise, "who is honorable? He who honors others". For one who honors others acquires the trait of honor in his soul.

Thus, he has everything within himself. It does not depend on other people at all.

Level 4

Reishit Chachma shaar anava ch.6 - the beginning of acquiring humility is to habituate oneself in the four traits mentioned by Ben Zoma in Avot.

Who is wise.. who is mighty.. who is wealthy.. who is honorable, etc. These four traits correspond to the four letters of G-d's Name. With a bit of study, one who is familiar with the teachings of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai will see how each trait corresponds to the right place.

Regarding humility, without a doubt, one who learns from every person is certainly humble. For in his great humility, he is not concerned from learning torah even from the smallest of the small. For he is only concerned for the honor of the torah..

Who is mighty? He who conquers his inclination. For if they mock him and anger him, he withholds wrath and conquers his inclination and keeps quiet.. This is a branch of humility..

Who is wealthy? He who rejoices in his lot. For it is a branch of humility to be content with little.. But for one who runs after luxuries, his heart will become proud, as written: "lest you eat and be sated, and build good houses and dwell therein, and your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold increase, and all that you have increases - and your heart grows haughty, and you forget the L-ord, Your G-d" (Devarim 8:12-14).

"Who is honorable? He who honors the public" - this too is a branch of humility, to honor everyone, the poor and the rich. For since all of them were made in the divine image, one who honors them also honors their Maker who made them and if he dishonors them, he dishonors their Maker..

But the arrogant person acts as if he deserves honor and that other people are inferior to him in his eyes and he does not honor them..

Chapter 4 Mishna 2 - Run To Mitzvah

Ben Azzai would say: run to pursue a minor mitzvah as if it were a major mitzvah and flee from a sin. For a mitzvah drags with it another mitzvah, and a sin drags with it another sin. For the reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah, and the reward of a sin is a sin.

בֶּן עֲזַי אָמַר, הָיָה רָץ לְמִצְוָה קְלָה כְּבַחְמוּרָה, וּבֹרַח מִן הָעֲבֵרָה. שְׂמִצְוָה גּוֹרֶרֶת מִצְוָה, וְעֲבֵרָה גּוֹרֶרֶת עֲבֵרָה. שְׂשִׁכְר מִצְוָה, מִצְוָה. וְשִׁכְר עֲבֵרָה, עֲבֵרָה:

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "For a mitzvah drags with it another mitzvah" - this is the way of the world. One who does a mitzvah desires to do more mitzvot, while one who starts with sins, it is difficult for him to stop.

"the reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah.." - one who does a mitzva is helped and assisted from Heaven to do another one so that he receives reward for both. And likewise for the "reward" of sins, etc.

Another explanation: the reward of a mitzva is a mitzva. All that a person benefits and rejoices in doing a mitzvah, this is considered a mitzvah by itself. He will receive reward for the mitzvah he did and also for the joy and pleasure in performing it.

"the reward of a sin is a sin" - in doing a sin, the benefit and enjoyment a person attains is considered a sin by itself. He will be punished for the sin itself and also for the benefit and enjoyment he received in committing it.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "run to pursue a mitzvah" - i.e. be careful to sanctify your intent that you are doing it "because thus G-d commanded, not because of this or that, etc". For mitzvot need intent and only in this way will your soul attain perfection.

"run.. and flee from sin" - for usually when one decides to do a mitzvah, the yetzer (evil inclination) works against him to test him. But in doing a sin, it is the opposite (the yetzer pushes him to do it). On this we pray "remove the Satan from before us", i.e. when we want to do a mitzva, "and from behind us", in sins.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "sin drags with it another sin" - for this is the way of the yetzer. At first he entices one to light sins and afterwards to severe sins.

Q Level 2



Shevet Mussar, yado bakol - "sin drags with it another sin" - he did not say "a sin causes (gorem) another sin", but rather "a sin drags (gorer) another sin". For a thing which is big and heavy, a man cannot lift it up but instead drags it. This is like "a mouse dragged the chametz (chulda gorerato)" (Pesachim 9a), which teaches on the heaviness of the thing. Therefore, the mouse drags it.

And since a light mitzvah drags after it a weighty mitzvah, and likewise a light sin drags after it a severe sin, therefore I am commanding you "run after a light mitzvah and flee even from a light sin"..

Q Level 2



Yismach Moshe, Vaetchanan - "sin brings to another sin" - for through the sin, the soul becomes

weak and sick. It lacks the strength to guard itself from other sins which the physical presents it. If when it was healthy, it failed to stand up to it, how much more so now. Understand this.

Q Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - "run..flee" - even though sometimes the mitzvah or sin itself is among the light ones and it does not seem to warrant running or fleeing in and of itself. But nevertheless it does warrant this due to what follows them. For a mitzvah drags another mitzvah and likewise a sin drags another sin.

The reason is because the reward of a mitzvah in this world is that G-d grants the person some ability to do another one.. And likewise the reward and pleasure of a sin in this world prepares one for another sin, similar to "you will eat of his offering and betroth of his daughters and they will lure your son to idolatry" (Ex.34:5-16).

Q Level 2

Ben Ish Chai

Birkat Avot (Ben Ish Chai) - "run to do a mitzvah and flee from sin" - i.e. one must run so much after a mitzvah, even a light one, as if he is fleeing away from a sin. Namely, a person who committed a sin such as stealing or an illicit relation (zenut) and people detected it and seek to catch him, he will certainly run away with all his might as fast as he can, in order to escape and not get caught. Thus you need to run to fulfill a mitzvah, even if it is light..

Q Level 3

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim in name of Saba of Kelm - "sin brings more sin" - for a sin is not an independent matter. Rather, it is an illness in the soul. The soul will suffer greatly in its illness. Thus, certainly "a sin will bring more sin", since the soul is afflicted..

In the Zohar: "every mitzvah (opportunity) which comes to a man's hands - it is a special gift (doron) which the Holy One, blessed be He, sends to a man. Perhaps you will say: 'whoever comes to grab, acquires it', thus scripture says: 'how precious is Your kindness O G-d' (Tehilim 36:8)..."

From here we learn that to acquire a mitzvah is not like acquiring a lost object in the street whereby whoever comes to grab acquires it.

Rather, each and every mitzvah is a "special gift" (doron) which G-d sends to man and it is not so easy to acquire it. One must pay a very expensive price for it.

The mitzvah is owner of itself (baalim al atzma) and man needs to have many merits in order to merit that the mitzvah will want to go to him.

This is what Rabeinu Yonah wrote that when a man does a mitzvah, this mitzvah helps him to do other mitzvahs. For a man needs much help to merit to do a mitzvah..

Q Level 3

Michtav M'Eliyahu chelek 1 - "reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah" - for in truth there is no other reward in this world for a mitzvah. For "there is no reward in this world for a mitzvah" (Kiddushin 39b), i.e. besides the reward in this world of "a mitzvah brings another mitzvah". In truth, this itself is true reward that G-d sanctifies us with His mitzvot and draws us closer to His service. There is no other reward in this world which is true reward. For all the good and pleasure in this world is on the foundation of error and falsehood. Only the spiritual which G-d bestows on us - this is the great reward without equal.

Q Level 3

Ben Ish Chai

Chasdei Avot (Ben Ish Chai) - "run for a light mitzvah" - besides the reason that a mitzvah brings another mitzvah is that the "reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah". For even though our sages said: "there is no reward for a mitzvah in this world", but nevertheless, there is a form of reward in this world. Namely, that the Holy One, blessed be He, helps a man to have great joy in doing a mitzvah, similar to what king David said: "I rejoice in Your torah, as one who finds great treasure" (Tehilim 119:162). The ancient ones merited this very much. They experienced tremendous joy in doing the mitzvot, as the Talmud brings: "Rabbi Yirmiya sat before Rabbi Zeira and saw he was very joyful.. He said "I put on Tefilin".. "A smile did not leave his face all day.., when the Rabbis parted with Rebbi Ami, they said to him: 'may you see your world (afterlife) in your lifetime'"

The intent was: "may you merit tremendous joy in toil in torah and doing mitzvot". For this is reward in this world which is similar to the reward in the afterlife. Thus, the reward a man has with G-d's help in performing the mitzvot is called "the reward of mitzvah in this world".

In truth, joy is a great pleasure and benefit to the body, and nevertheless, G-d considers this joy to be a great mitzvah and He grants man reward in the next world just like other mitzvot..

This is another reason why "run for a light mitzvah". Namely, even though it appears light in your eyes and you thus think its reward is small, and do not do it zealously, but it is not so. Rather, run after it to fulfill it. For the reward of a mitzvah is joy. This is the reward of a mitzvah in this world and G-d considers the joy as a mitzvah and gives reward for it in the next world just like other mitzvot.

Therefore, if a mitzvah opportunity comes to your hand, let it not be small in our eyes thinking that since the mitzvah is light, certainly its reward is small and it is not worthwhile ch'v. For every mitzvah has another mitzvah tied and bound to it. Namely, the joy which is called "the reward of a mitzvah in this world".

Thus, perhaps in this light mitzvah you will have great joy and it will be included among the mitzvot which one receives reward for. And the greater the joy increases, the greater the reward will increase.

Thus, [even] if you will receive light reward for the light mitzvah, but from the joy in the light mitzvah, you will receive great reward.

Furthermore, according to human nature, a mitzvah which is light on the body and not heavy, it necessarily has great joy, ten times more than the joy in a mitzvah which is heavy on the body.

Therefore, I told you run to a mitzvah, even if it is light. For the reward of a mitzvah is joy and it too is considered a mitzvah and one receives reward for it.

"the reward of sin is a sin" - here too, just like for joy of a mitzvah, G-d considers it a mitzvah and gives reward for it, so too in the way of bad, the reward of sin, i.e. the joy a man has in doing a sin - this itself is considered a sin. And one will be punished for it besides the punishment for the sin itself.

Level 2

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - "the reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah.." - for when one performs a mitzvah, besides the actual acquiring of a mitzvah, he receives the reward that the mitzvah elevates him to the level that he senses and detects sin and puts this to heart.

"the reward of sin is a sin" - so too for the opposite, the reward of sin is sin. For besides the actual

doing of the sin, his folly dwells with him. For the segulah (special quality) of sin is that it dulls man's heart (metamtem libo) until he loses all sensitivity to sin (Daas Torah, chelek 1, pg.203).

Q Level 1

Sfas Emes

Sfat Emet - "run.." - i.e. the running refers to the enjoyment and joy in [doing] the mitzvah.

"run to a light mitzvah" - for through the light mitzvah, he will come to do the big mitzvah and likewise by fleeing from the sins which are easy to refrain from, he will come to refrain from the sins which are difficult to refrain from.

"the reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah" - since "one hour of torah and good deeds in this world is greater than all the life in the world to come" (Avot 4), if so, it is impossible to pay him reward in this world fully, except through "the reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah".

Q Level 3



Ohr Yitzchak - "run for a mitzvah.." - there is room to investigate why he used the term "run". Furthermore, he said: "a mitzvah brings another mitzvah" - but we see every man does mitzvot as soon as he wakes up in the morning such as tzitzit, berachot (blessings), prayer, and even so, he wastes the whole day idle (batel) and has no desire whatsoever for any mitzvah. On the contrary, we find many such people going after their heart's lust, falsehood, and honor.

We indeed see that sin brings more sin. But from what we see, mitzvah does not bring [more mitzvah]. Why is this so?

The truth is that if a man were to do the mitzvah with a sincere heart like he does some lust, with great fervor, clinging and longing to it with all his will and aspiration - certainly such a mitzvah would bring another mitzvah at all times.

But in truth, even when a man does a mitzvah it is without any desire and will for devekut (clinging to G-d). Due to this, the mitzvah does not have the ability to bring another mitzvah. But the sin is committed with great vitality and strength and thus it brings more sin..

This is the true service [of G-d] which Ben Azai revealed to us in saying "run to a mitzvah..", i.e. that you have at least as much pleasure and desire in doing a mitzvah as you have in secular things. Then certainly it will drag another mitzvah and the [bad] lusts will be annulled automatically. For such a mitzvah will illuminate you and open your eyes, as written: "a mitzvah is a candle and torah is light" (Mishlei 6:23). Then you will see that the lusts are reprehensible things and you will flee from sin.

Q Level 3

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot, Daat Chochma umussar 3:61 - "run away from sin" - in the midrash (Ber.Rabba 32:11) " 'sin crouches at your door' (Gen.4:7)..etc. - at first it is [weak] like the silk of a spider web, and afterwards it becomes strong as the thick ropes of a ship.."

The explanation is that it is known that the yetzer hara is called "the leaven (yeast/chametz) in the dough" (Berachot 17a).

That is to say, it is the nature of the yeast that if it merely enters the dough, the dough expands and rises and rises without any other cause than the yeast itself.

So too, it is the nature of the yetzer (evil inclination) in man. For man's body is like dough so that if a little bit of the yeast of the yetzer enters in man, even a tiny amount, it will expand and rise higher and higher until eventually it pulls him like the thick ropes of the ship. Therefore, a person

needs to guard himself from the beginning. This is the meaning of "run away from sin".

Q Level 3

☆ Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot - "run to a minor mitzvah.." - for the whole matter of man's service is in the secret of drawing closer or distancing [from G-d]. For when one does mitzvot he draws closer to G-d, while for sins it is the opposite - they distance him from G-d, blessed be He.

But we must know that the explanation is not that besides the mitzvah itself, there is an additional matter which causes one to draw closer to G-d and likewise the opposite for bad.

Rather, the secret of the matter is that the mitzvah or sin reaches the loftiest heights - the mitzvah or the sin itself is the secret of drawing closer or distancing [from G-d]. That is to say, the doing of a mitzvah itself, whether it is a light mitzvah or a big one - immediately, behold, "and G-d is with him", he cleaves to G-d absolutely. On the other hand, when doing a sin, even the slightest sin - immediately he is "with her", i.e. with the merkava of tuma itself (forces of evil). He cleaves to the evil.

In light of this certainly "run to a minor mitzvah and flee from a sin".

Q Level 3

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - Ben Azai comes as a supplement to the words of Ben Zoma in the previous mishna: "who is mighty? He who conquers his inclination, as written: 'better one slow to anger than a mighty man, and better he who rules over his spirit than one who conquers a city'".

After a person sees the words of Ben Zoma, he may come to fall in despair and hopelessness: "how can I possibly conquer my inclination? Even king Shlomo testifies that one who rules over his spirit is mightier than one who conquers a city.

It requires more might to rule over one's yetzer than to conquer a city. I am a simple man. I have a hard time dealing with my own day to day difficulties. Can I possibly conquer a city?! If no, then how can I possibly hope to conquer my inclination?"

Ben Azai comes and says "you are not asked to get up in one single day and submit your inclination. All that is asked of you - is to do a light mitzvah. Put on tefilin, say the blessing after a meal (birkat hamazon), fix a mezuzah on your door, etc."

If you fulfill the light mitzvah, already a more difficult mitzvah will follow after it. If you recite the blessing after a meal properly, you will ascend one level and already be able to pray properly.

Start with light mitzvot, simple ones familiar to everyone. Start to fulfill mitzvot even not for their own sake (shelo lishma), since "from shelo lishma you will come to lishma (its own sake, i.e. proper intent)" (Pesachim 50b)..

The service of G-d is like "a ladder fixed on the ground which reaches the heaven". It is impossible to jump straight to heaven without a ladder. One must ascend step by step. Likewise, it is impossible to ascend a ladder unless it is firmly "fixed on the ground".

Q Level 3

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot - Rabeinu Yonah explains:

"a mitzvah brings another mitzvah" - "this is a natural power. For one habituates his nature to do a mitzvah.."

"sin brings sin" - this too is a natural power.. for he habituates his nature to do the abominations

which G-d hates.

"for the reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah" - this is a different reason than human nature. Namely, G-d did not grant actual good and evil in man's hands, but rather free will alone to choose between the two, as written: 'you shall choose life' (Devarim 30:19).

After man chooses one path, if it is good, he goes and G-d is with him..

"the reward of sin is sin" - but if he choose death and evil.. The Holy One, blessed be He, distances from him and leaves him to his evil nature.. And then man's way is no longer [in his hands]. For he already chose this path, etc.

Rabeinu Yonah revealed to us a great foundation. Namely, man's essence is only his free will, whether in the way of [habituating] his nature or the other way [of choosing to be with G-d].

But after he chose his path, his way is no longer [in his hands] and he already lost his essence. Rather, from now on he is already led on this path which he chose, as our sages said: "in the path which a man WANTS to go, he is led" (Makot 10b).

For the secret of man's service is only choosing. This is what the sage said "run to do a mitzvah and flee from a sin". For the main thing is choice alone, namely, running or fleeing, "and you shall choose life"! (Daat Torah 118-119)

We learn a tremendous mussar from Rabeinu Yonah regarding just how much a man needs to put to heart and be careful in all his movements to a hair's breadth. For since nothing was given in man's hands except for free will alone, and if he COMES to purify himself, already he is helped and led on this path he chose. Likewise for the opposite, if he COMES to defile himself, the path is opened for him and already man's ways are not in his hands.

If so, it is already beyond the powers of the human mind to grasp the weightiness of each movement, even the tiniest movement of man. (Daat Chochma u'Mussar 1:22).

From the words of Rabeinu Yonah, we will understand the loftiness of the body.. For G-d seeks from man only his choice, the desire and want for the mitzvah "run (ratz) to do a mitzvah" and the "will (ratzon)" - this is all of man! For the secret of free will (bechira) is the secret of will (ratzon). And the secret of the matter of will is only inside the body. There is nothing else among all the creations in all the worlds which contains this secret of "will".

From here we learn the loftiness of the body.

I found something similar to our words in the words of the Ramchal z'l. In his introduction to "Adir b'Marom" he writes: "the first is knowing the secret of the body.. For it being alone that which causes free will. Even the soul does not have free will without it.." end quote (Daat Torah chelek 3, pg.223,228).

Level 3

Translator - sometimes a person is in doubt whether what he is doing is a mitzvah or a sin. How can one know? After all, the evil inclination often disguises a sin as a mitzvah or vice versa. Besides asking a wise Rabbi, there is a litmus test - a mitzvah brings a mitzvah, while a sin brings a sin. Examine the consequences that come out of this deed. Do more mitzvot come out of this or more sins? Through this one can detect whether or not it is the yetzer hara in disguise (heard from R. Nissan Kaplan).

 **Level 3**

Sefer HaChinuch mitzvah 387 - Know my son and let it be always on your tongue what our sages, of blessed memory, said: "sin brings sin and mitzvah brings mitzvah". For if you decide to fulfill your bad lust one time, you will be drawn after it several times. And if you merit to be a "mighty man in the land", to conquer your yetzer and to close your eyes from seeing evil one time, it will be easier in your eyes to do the same several times. For lust draws the flesh like wine draws its drinker. The drunkards will never become satiated by wine. On the contrary, they will lust for it tremendously. The more they habituate themselves, the more intense will be their lust for it.

If they would just drink a cup of water instead, it would weaken and extinguish the fire of lust for wine and be good for them. So too is this matter. Every person who habituates himself in lusts and is diligent in them - his yetzer will increase strength over him every day.

But when he refrains from them, he will rejoice in his portion always every day. He will see that "G-d created man upright, but they sought many considerations" (Kohelet 7:29), without any benefit whatsoever.

 **Level 3**

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "a light mitzvah.. severe sin" - why by mitzvah he said: "a light mitzvah", while for sin he did not say "a light sin"? [answer:] This is to teach us how to look at mitzvot and sins. For mitzvot, one needs to have knowledge of their hierarchy, which mitzvah is light and which mitzvah is severe. This is in order to know what is more important and which mitzvot it is more worthwhile to spend time in. For if we did not know that "torah study weighs like all the mitzvot" (Peah 1), then why should a man want to spend time in torah study? He can stand in the morning at the cross roads and help children cross the street. Isn't this also a mitzvah?

But because we have an order of importance of the mitzvot, therefore, we know what we need to invest our primary life and time and what gets pushed off to second or third place.

But for sins - there is no such thing. There are no light sins for which it is ok to somehow transgress them and severe sins for which one must distance further. Rather, for all sins it is the same. For each and every one a person needs to flee from it and each one obligates a severe punishment if he does not repent.

Although certainly there are also levels in sins regarding the severity of punishment, but nevertheless, it is impossible to call it a "light sin".

For if the sage used this term, people would think there are "light sins" which one can transgress and manage with this.

The sage comes to exclude this view completely - there is no such thing (as a light sin). One must flee from every sin as one who flees from fire.

It is known that the Chazon Ish would praise Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein saying: "by him it is clear that to commit a sin is to stick one's hand inside a fire".

For one who recognizes and feels that every sin burns and is dangerous as fire, certainly such a person will flee from every place or thing which has a concern (chashash) of sin.

 **Level 3**

☆ **Matanat Avot**

Matanat Avot - "mitzvah brings a mitzvah" - why does a mitzvah bring a mitzvah and the opposite? The sage answers: "for the reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah and the reward of a sin is a sin".

When a person does a sin, even a light one, then in Heaven they see that he wants to do the will of his Creator. Therefore, they send him assistance to do more mitzvot. Likewise for the opposite, G-d forbid.

This is like the Vilna Gaon's words in Mishlei:

"in everything a person does, a ruach (spirit) is sent down from heaven, and helps him to repeat more things like these. And this spirit does not rest and quiet until the person repeats more things like this. The person then finds pleasure in doing these things, whether they are good (mitzvas) or evil (sins). And this is what is meant by 'sin brings sin and mitzva brings mitzva (Avot 4:2)'" And the greater the sin, the greater the spirit, and the greater the lust to do more evil. And likewise for a great mitzva, a spirit from a very holy place comes down and the person lusts immensely for another mitzva. And because of this, he finds enormous pleasure in doing mitzvot. As is known, the greatest of all mitzvot is learning Torah, and the opposite is idle chatter and frivolity (letzanus) which is the opposite of Torah. Therefore, there is greater pleasure in idle chatter and frivolity than in all other sins, even though there is no physical benefit, because the ruach hatuma (evil spirit) is exceedingly great...but really, the pleasure in the holy spirit is greater than the evil spirit (sin) because it is a true pleasure" - commentary on Mishlei/Proverbs 1:23

In the beginning, after one act, as understood, the spirit is not so strong. But when the person is drawn after this spirit and repeats the act a second time, then certainly, the spirit intensifies. For now it is a spirit of two times. So too further on.

From here we learn tremendous mussar why it is worthwhile to run to a mitzvah and flee from sin. For in mitzvot, even though in the beginning it may require enormous effort to do, but if one strengthens himself in the beginning, afterwards, the "spirit" already pulls him and it will be much easier to do that mitzvah.

Likewise for the opposite, G-d forbid. One who starts to do some sin, even if in the beginning it is difficult and unpleasant, but afterwards, the spirit already pulls him forcefully and all the obstacles and impediments will seem straight in his eyes to commit the sin.

Q Level 4

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "run to pursue a minor mitzvah as if it were a major mitzvah" - the explanation is that all the 613 mitzvot are one thing.. The torah is one big light.. We explained this more in its place. The torah is one and all the mitzvot are tied together until it is one complete entity. Thus, a mitzvah brings another mitzvah, i.e. doing one mitzvah is also the beginning of another since they are all one. Therefore, a mitzvah brings another mitzvah, because that which is one is completely indivisible. (see there for more)

(R. Hartman: for the spiritual is one while the physical is plural and divided.. parts apply to that which is physical, but the spiritual does not have parts.. and in Gevurot H' (ch.43), he writes: " we already explained in this book that division is a physical thing, while unity is a divine thing. For unity applies to that which is separated from the physical, while separation and division always applies in the physical".)

Q Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Chasdei Avot (Ben Ish Chai) - "sin brings sin" - for we find that the Holy One, blessed be He, made a hint to the 248 positive commandments and the 365 negative commandments in man's body (man has 248 limbs and 365 sinews/gidim). For there is one skin which joins and unites all the limbs and sinews together. This is to teach mussar to a man lest the evil inclination tempt him saying: "there are 613 mitzvot! If you lack 10 or 20 from the positive commandments and 30 or 40

from the negative commandments, this is not so recognizable".

Answer him: "the 248 positive commandments and 365 negative commandments are like 613 pearls in a necklace on a string. If a thief comes and steals two or three pearls, the owner of the necklace does not cry on these two or three that were stolen but rather on all the 613 pearls. For they are all tied together in one string. It is not possible for the thief to take one or two without breaking the whole string, and once the string is broken, all the other pearls are liable to be lost. They will slowly fall out one by one and be lost. Likewise for the 613 commandments. All of them are interconnected with each other. If a person annuls one positive commandments, he is liable to lose all of them. And if he transgresses one sin of the 365 negative commandments, even though he transgressed one sin, he is liable to transgress all of them.." This is the meaning of sin brings sin..

Q Level 4

Chida

Chida, Zeroah Yamin - "run to pursue a minor mitzvah and flee from sin" - the word "flee" (boreach) is precise. For man is made of dust and the Sitra Achra ("other side", i.e. side of evil) clings to him. But when he is excited in a mitzvah and runs, through this he separates from the Sitra Achra and becomes as one who flees from sin, i.e. from the Sitra Achra. Thus, "run to a mitzvah", and through this you are "fleeing from sin".

Q Level 4

Chida

Chida, Chasdei Avot - "the reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah" - for the reward of a mitzvah is the mitzvah itself, namely, an angel of mercy is created which will defend him and serve his soul - this itself is its reward.

Likewise for sins, an angel of destruction (malach chabala) is created to punish him. The reward of the sin is the sin itself.

Q Level 3

Maharal Tzintz

Maharal Tzantz - "be fleeing from sin" - he did not say "flee (berach) from sin" as a command, but rather "flee (boreach)" (lit. be fleeing). For in every mitzvah he does, he acquires extra holiness in his soul, and in this itself he distances further from sin. That which he comes closer to the side of holiness, through this itself he flees and distances from the Sitra Achra which is sin.

"sin brings sin" - for in that which he drew closer to sin, which is the Sitra Achra, he brings more sin.

"reward of mitzvah is a mitzvah" - i.e. the holiness he acquired in his soul.

"reward of sin is sin" - i.e. that which he defiles (metamei) his soul. This itself is the punishment.. Another explanation - "run to a mitzvah and flee from sin", i.e. in that which he runs to a light mitzvah he is fleeing from sin. For if he were lazy and did not run to fulfill the light mitzvah - not only does he lose the reward of the mitzvah in being lazy but further still, there is a sin in his hands in that he was able to do a mitzvah but did not do it. Thus, in running after the mitzvah itself, he is gaining the mitzvah and also fleeing from sin in not being lazy to fulfill it.

Q Level 4

Chida

Chida, Rosh David, be'haalotcha - "sin brings sin" - for the Sitra Achra chases him and clings to him after the first sin. Afterwards, it does all sorts of strategies to make him sin and turn him and pull him like a sheep to the slaughter. In this [latter stage] he is completely unintentional. So why then is he liable? I heard from my Rav who gave a reason according to halacha. Namely, the Halacha that one is at first negligent and afterwards accidental is obligated to pay (techilato b'pshiah v'sof b'oness chayiv).

Rabeinu the Arizal writes that what one commits in one gilgul (life) drags one to sin in the next gilgul (reincarnation) Kikar l'Eden, Derech Eretz Zuta ch.3

The primary argument the yetzer harah uses to entice man is that the pleasures of this world are recognizable and revealed and tangible to the eye. But the good of Olam Haba is hidden and concealed and ch'v "one who wants to make up a lie distances the witnesses". This is what the torah writes: "the woman saw.. that it was desirous to the eye" (Gen.2), that it is tangible to the eye. This is the whole enticement of the Sitra Achra.

Q Level 3



Divrei Chaim tzantz, Ki Tavo - "run to a mitzvah" - every mitzvah a man does is not really an act. For everything is from G-d. Rather, the primary free choice is that which a man wants to do a mitzvah. In truth, our sages said on this: "if a man thought (resolved) to do a mitzvah but was unable to actually do it due to accident, it is considered as if he did it" (Berachot 6a). For the main thing is the will.

Our sages said in Berachot 7a: "it is a mitzvah to run after a mitzvah and after torah". The talmidei Rabeinu Yonah wrote on this: "for in this it is recognized man's desire and will. Namely, that due to love of G-d he desires in G-d's commandments and rejoices to run to do them. On this the Midrash (Devarim Rabba 7:2) says: " this is what scripture states: 'fortunate is the man who listens to me' (Mishlei 8:34), i.e. whose listening is to me. Namely, all his aspiration is to listen if there is some mitzvah in the world which he can fulfill, that he desires to hear words of torah and to do mitzvot.

This is the meaning of "[fortunate is the man who listens to me] to be diligent at my doors" (Mishlei 8:34), "doors" is written in plural, i.e. two doors, as the talmidei Rabeinu Yonah wrote (Berachot 8a). The talmud there says: "it is a mitzvah to enter inside the synagogue [at least] two door-lengths (before praying)", so that being in the synagogue does not look like a burden.

On the contrary, he should feel contentment for going to another shiur (torah class) in a faraway synagogue.

For G-d gives reward for the footsteps and this is the main reward of the mitzvot - that which he goes and runs since this hints on his longing to fulfill the mitzvah.

This is the primary reward. For the reward for the act itself is almost not in man's hands since G-d gives him strength and feet to move. Rather, the main thing is the joy and longing in the mitzvah. This is recognizable by how he walks.

Chapter 4 Mishna 3 - Respect All Men

He would say: do not disparage any man and do not disregard **הוא היה אומר: אל תהי בז לכל אדם ואל תהי מפליג לכל דבר, שאין לה אדם שאין לו שעה, ואין לה דבר שאין לו מקום** any matter. For there is no man who does not have his hour and there is no thing which does not have its place.

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "do not disparage any man" - do not make light of any man thinking how could this person possibly harm me?

"do not disregard any matter" - do not disregard every thing which one should be concerned about saying "it is very unlikely to happen and one should not worry about it".

Q Level 1

Rambam

Rambam - perforce every person has a time when he can harm [you] or benefit [you] even in a small way.

Q Level 1

Rashi

Rashi - do not disparage any person in the world.

Q Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "do not disparage any man" - even a fool, ignoramus, or completely senseless person, and even a wicked man condemned to death - have compassion on their predicament and do not disparage them. For you will anger not only them but also their Creator, and "all that G-d created He did so for His glory, even a wicked man for the day of evil" (Mishlei 16:4).. and you must also be concerned that he may become your enemy and pose a danger to you..

"do not disregard any matter" - even something disgusting, hated, painful, damaging and poisonous like flies, mosquitos, snakes and scorpions. Do not think they have no use in the world. It is enough to know that G-d created them and that they were created only for the good of the world.

"there is no thing which does not have its place" - even though now you don't see it and the [wicked] person also oppresses those who serve G-d and pursues them and he is like an affliction to the world, nevertheless, know that it is not for nothing that G-d left him alive still. Perforce there is some present or future need which is concealed from you. Who knows what good will result from him? G-d is all knowing..

Q Level 2

☆ Sfas Emes

Sfat Emet - "every man has his hour" - for every Jew has a special matter which no one else can rectify - only him. And likewise, every hour there is a special matter which can only be rectified at that time only.

Q Level 3

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - our sages report in a midrash (Ber.Rabbah 63:8): "Diklitinus the Roman was a pig herder in his youth in the city of Tiberias. One time he reached the Beit Midrash (house of torah study) and the Jewish children came out. They mocked him and beat him. Afterwards, he had a hatred for all the Jews there.

At the time he did not have the power to harm them. After some years, Diklitinus became the great Roman Emperor. He decided to take revenge on the Jews of Tiberias for the shame they did to

him decades earlier.

The midrash depicts how the emperor tried to harm them and how they were saved miraculously.

When the sages of Israel came to appease him, the emperor told them: "since your G-d performs miracles for you, you permit yourself to insult the roman emperor?!"

The sages replied: "we insulted you when you were a pig herder not when you became the emperor".

Diklinitus answered them: "even so, learn a lesson from now on to never disrespect any man, not even the simplest of the simplest Roman".

Ben Azai comes to teach this lesson to all generations: "do not disparage any man and do not disregard any matter. For there is no man who does not have his hour and there is no thing which does not have its place".

(Translator: perhaps a similar story happened to Hitler in his youth. He may well have had a bad experience with a Jew or more and this kindled his fanatical hatred towards all Jews. I heard that Vladimir Putin who was relatively friendly towards Israel (as of 2021), had a Jewish school teacher which was nice to him in his youth.)

Level 4

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - "do not disparage any man" - in Shaarei Teshuva (3:174-6) Rabeinu Yonah writes:

"This is the matter of the group of scoffers (kat leitzim).. the first type are those who find faults in people.. The second type is those who mock people. For they belittle them in their hearts for their failure to attain qualities (virtues)..

The third type is he who always mocks things and deeds. Although his intent is not to belittle them, but he overlooks the matters which should not be overlooked and he overlooks the benefit of things which one should hope for their benefit.. and our sages said: 'do not disparage any man and do not disregard any matter'".

It is clear from his words that the root of the matter of "mockery" (leitzanut) is non-contemplation and non-putting to heart to recognize qualities. Namely, to consider important and elevate each and every thing, to recognize its need. For all that G-d created has a purpose and there is no human being or thing in the creation which does not have its time, place, and need.

The matter of "mockery" (leitzanut) is not just general mockery as we are used to thinking. Rather, mockery (leitzanut) and scorn (laag) is an act which stems from this corrupt power called "leitzanut". Its foundation stems from non-putting to heart and non-consideration of the importance of things until he "disparages every man and disregards every matter".

This corrupt power drills and descends into a person's heart until he may even come to mock G-d's commandments, as Rabeinu Yonah wrote there: "sometimes this trait brings a man to heresy, to mock G-d's commandments".

Thus, certainly we can understand what our sages said: "the group of mockers (letzim) are among the four groups which do not receive the face of the Shechina" (Sotah 42a). For the matter of mockery (leitzanut) is the opposite of the entire Creation, since the entire secret of the Creation is "putting to heart" (Simat Lev). Namely, to appreciate the precious worth of things and to grant them

due honor, raising and elevating them. He who does not put to heart and does not grant importance to things - he departs out of his world and certainly does not receive the face of the Shechina.

Our words are explained explicitly by Rashi on the verse:

"and you shall not ascend with steps upon My altar, so that your nakedness shall not be exposed upon it" (Shemot 20:23). For when ascending stairs, one must spread his steps. And even though this is not really 'revealing nakedness' (gilui erva).. but nevertheless, you are conducting yourself in a disrespectful manner (minhag bizayon) towards them.. thus the torah says: since they have a need, do not conduct yourself in a disrespectful manner.

This is because to grant importance to things, to recognize their need - this is one of the fundamentals of the Creation.

On this the torah exhorts with a negative commandment: "do not ascend with steps..", i.e. do not conduct yourself towards it (the stones of the altar) in a disrespectful manner.

From now let us contemplate how many commandments a person transgresses every day due to not granting importance to objects and things and by conducting himself towards them in a disrespectful manner.

The understanding person will easily see just how severe is the disrespect of man. For besides that "precious is man for being created in the divine image", but also due to "since they have a need" alone.

For "there is no man who does not have his hour". And even for a simple [gentile] villager in the shuk (marketplace), how much does the world need such people! Thus, perforce the command to not act in a disrespectful manner towards them is very severe.

According to this, who can fathom and grasp how much this commandment is multiplied over many times to not conduct oneself in a disgraceful manner towards a Jew? This is what Rashi ends off: "if [concerning] these stones-which have no intelligence to object to their humiliation-the Torah said that because they are necessary, you shall not behave toward them in a disrespectful manner. [In contrast,] your friend, who is [created] in the likeness of your Creator and who does object to being disrespected, how much more [must you be careful not to embarrass him]!".

The depth of judgment on this is very awesome! Who can bear it?

The summary of the matter is that all the days of his life, man must toil in the honor of the creation, to recognize qualities, to think and elevate things and acts, to be "kulo omer kavod" (honoring all). Let not one day pass without thinking and contemplating in this matter and to toil in it. (Daat Chochma u'Mussar 3:34).

Chapter 4 Mishna 4 - Very Humble

Rabbi Levitas of Yavneh would say: be very very humble of spirit. For the hope of [mortal] man is but worms.

רַבִּי לְוִיטָס אִישׁ יִבְנֶה אוֹמֵר: מֵאֵד מֵאֵד הוּא שֶׁפֶל רוּחַ, שֶׁתְּקוּת אָנוּשׁ רַמָּה.

Rabbi Yochanan son of Beroka would say: whoever desecrates the Name of Heaven in secret, punishment will be meted out to him in public. Whether unintentional or intentional, there is no distinction regarding desecration of G-d's Name.

רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן בֶּן בְּרוּקָה אוֹמֵר: כָּל הַמְחִיל שֵׁם שָׁמַיִם בְּסֵתֶר, נִפְרָעִין מִמֶּנּוּ בְּגִלּוּי, אֶחָד שׁוֹגֵג וְאֶחָד מְזִיד בְּחִלּוּל הַשֵּׁם

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "be very very humble of spirit" - even though for other middot (character traits), the middle way is praiseworthy, but for arrogance it is not so. Rather, one should tend to the opposite extreme towards humility of spirit. This is because arrogance is very reprehensible. Furthermore, most people stumble in it and do not separate from it. Therefore, it needs great distancing.

Q Level 1

☆ Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai, Birkat Avot - "be very very lowly of spirit" - he said "lowly (shafal) of spirit", not just plain "lowly" . For the main humility is internal, from the side of the spirit. It is not in external appearance from the side of the body, like a certain priest who conducted himself in humility so that people will praise him for his humility. This is the meaning of "be lowly of spirit" - that it be an internal humility..

Q Level 2

☆ Chida

Chida, Rosh David, parsha Noach - the perfection of humility is when a person reaches "equality". Namely, that words of praise or insult are equal in his eyes. When praised he does not feel joy and when insulted he does not feel pain. Both are equal in his eyes.. That the lowliness (shiflut) is so firmly fixed in his heart until he truly feels in the bottom of his heart the same whether someone honors him or insults him.

If he does not merit this level, then the trait of "one who is insulted but does not answer back" (ne'elevim veinam olvim) is also a great level, as our sages said (Gitin 36b)...

Q Level 3

☆ Chida

Chida, Shulchan Bamidbar - in the talmud (Sotah 5b): "one who is humble, it is considered as if he offered all the temple sacrifices". This teaches that through humility one is meyached yichudim (unites holy Names) similar to the temple sacrifices. For through humility, his heart is broken and his heart and mind are together (meyuchad) with holy thoughts. His words and tone are calm, and all his limbs display humility. It is known that everything hints to the traits above.

Through humility he brings down tremendous spiritual flow to all the mystical worlds (meyached yichud gadol umashpia shefah rav b'kol haolamot).

This is the reason his prayer is answered.. and his entire body becomes like the temple and he constantly unites great yichudim and automatically he increases divine flow and holiness and even the attribute of justice transforms to mercy.. (see there)

Q Level 3

☆ Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat, Daat Chochma u'Mussar 3:24 - we find in the midrash (Gen.Rabba 17:5):

When the Holy One, blessed be He, asked Adam: "you, what is your name?"

Adam replied: "me, it is befitting to call 'Adam', for I was created from the earth (adama)".

G-d asked him: "and Me, what is My Name?"

Adam replied: "You, it is proper to call 'A-donai' (my Master), for You are the Master of all the creatures You created".

The Name of G-d is "Adon" (Master).

" 'I am A-donai, this is My Name' - this is My Name which Adam called Me" (Midrash there).

The matter is awesome and wondrous! Who can fathom the holiness of the Name "Master of all" (Adon kol)?.. This is the defining Name of G-d - only the Name "Adon" (Master).

I will explain a bit. For the name "great", there are many other things "great". For there are many Seraphim and Ophanim (spiritual beings, angels) which can be called by the title "great". But G-d is "greater" than all of them. This ["Great"] is not His Name. Likewise for all other names - they are not inapplicable to the creations. But for the Name "Master of all" - this is G-d's true Name.

For it is inapplicable to all the creations. This is the defining Name of G-d (so to speak). The matter is very deep to those who contemplate it.

With this we will understand the Song at the Splitting of the Red Sea (Parsha Beshalach). All my life, I have tried to understand it a bit but was very puzzled. The entire praise is: "I will sing to G-d, for He has become proud (ki Gaoh Gaah)" (Shemot 15). Likewise in the Song of Miriam there "sing to G-d, for He has become proud (ki Gaoh Gaah)".

Thus they did not extol Him with other praises and titles besides the two words "ki Gaoh Gaah" (for He has become proud). This is all our praise to Him?

The Targum Onkelos renders the verse: "for He became proud over the proud and pride belongs to Him".

Likewise in the Midrash there: "all human beings become proud over each other, but the Holy One, blessed be He, becomes proud over all. This is "ki gaoh Gaah..." why is this so? So that human beings should not become proud and so they should know that the kingdom of Heaven is upon them..." (Shemot Rabba 23:13).

Thus, the midrash explains and defines the praise of G-d, namely - that pride belongs to Him and the entire matter of pride belongs to Him alone and no one else. (Translator: for He answers to no one whatsoever).

This is His title and definition. For no created being has any relevance or connection whatsoever to pride, even a tiny bit. Rather, all pride until the furthest extreme belongs solely to G-d.

This is the matter in scripture: "G-d has reigned, He dons pride" (Tehilim 93:1). i.e. the garment of pride is the garment of the Holy One, blessed be He, and one who uses pride however little - he is using the crown of the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He (see the Ramban's letter).

As we brought from the Midrash, when G-d asked Adam "what is your name?" Adam replied: "it is proper to call me 'Adam' for I was created from the ground (adama)".

(i.e. despite that man is also made of a lofty spiritual soul).

It is clear from here that the title and definition of man is the exact opposite of the title of G-d. The Name of G-d is "Master" (Adon) and pride belongs to Him. But the name of man is specifically - lowness and humility. This is all of man.

This is the name which Adam the first man called man. For man's garment is humility. The entire matter of lowness and humility is the title and description of man.. and it is not for nothing that our sages said: "be very very lowly of spirit" which the Rambam explained "to the furthest extreme, unlike other traits whereby the middle path is praiseworthy". For the entire definition and title of man is humility...

Q Level 3

Rambam

Rambam - "be very very humble of spirit" - our sages praised humility saying: "that which 'wisdom' made a crown on its head, 'humility' made a heel to its shoe, as written: 'the beginning of wisdom is the fear of G-d'" (Midrash Rabba Shir Hashirim, Yerushalmi Shabbat ch.1) .

This is a proof that fear of G-d is greater than wisdom and it is a cause for the existence of wisdom.

Our sages continued there with the verse: "the heel of humility is the fear of G-d". That is to say, you will find fear of G-d in the heel of humility. Hence, humility is much greater than wisdom... You can learn from Moshe Rabeinu who attained perfection in all the virtues of wisdom and character traits. He was the father of prophecy, the father of torah, the father of wisdom, etc. and nevertheless G-d praised him above and over all men with the trait of humility, as written: "the man Moses was extremely humble, more than any other man on the face of the earth" (Bamidbar 12:3)...

To strengthen the matter, the sage here said: "be very very humble of spirit. For the hope of man is but worms", i.e. you must train your spirit until you distance it from arrogance by thinking on the end of the body, namely, its transforming to maggots.

Q Level 3

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - in the torah: "and the man Moses was very humble [more] than any person on the face of the earth".

Why then does the sage here ask us more than Moshe Rabeinu in saying "very very humble"? ("very" two times). I heard in the name of Rabbi Ezra Atiah that every person needs to be "very very humble". But Moshe Rabeinu was "very humble more than any person..", i.e. he was on a higher level more than every man. Thus, he was also "very very humble".

Q Level 4

Chida

Chida, marit haayin - (Kabalistic) "be very very humble of spirit (*shafal ruach*)" - the Roshei Teivot (first letters) have gematria of "Shechina" (divine presence). For the humble person becomes a merkava (chariot) to the Shechina. Through this he merits to become Kadosh (holy), which is the gematria of "shafal". The main thing is talmud torah (torah study), which hints to the Ruach (spirit). This is the meaning of Shafal Ruach, that he occupies himself (*yisa v'yiten*) in torah with humility, pleasantness (*neimah*), and holiness.

For "the hope of man is but worms". Through this he will become a rosh (head), namely, the halacha will be like him, as the roshei teivot "shtikvat enosh rimah..". For it is impossible to acquire the torah unless one is "very very humble of spirit" in truth. Then he will be a baal torah.. From beginning to end he must be truly humble. For if he becomes proud - immediately his wisdom

departs. Even if he merited to attain a level of wisdom, nevertheless, it departs from him. Therefore, he exhorted: "be very very humble of spirit" - always and without interruption. And if he becomes a rosh (head), he should not become proud. For "the hope of man is but worms", roshei teivot "rosh".

Q Level 1

☆ Sfas Emes

Sfas Emes on Avot - "be very very humble of spirit. For the hope of [mortal] man is but worms" - what is this matter of "hope"? We can answer according to what is known. For the soul of the deceased person does not find rest until the body is decomposed and disintegrated and becomes worms, except for the great tzadikim (righteous). Therefore, he used the term "enosh" which is a lower name for man, that he (his soul) hopes to this so he can ascend to his place..

Q Level 2



Derech Avot (Rabbi Eliyahu Shik) - the kabalists teach that a tzurah (form/spirit) cannot receive another tzurah unless the first tzurah becomes annulled... Thus, the main thing is humility, to be humble (thereby annulling oneself in order to receive the divine light).

Q Level 3

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan - "the hope of man is but worms" - as known, beauty and shine of the face makes a person proud. Likewise tallness and strong and thick build inflates the heart. Avshalom is proof of this. Thus, scripture mentions his handsome appearance. For it was his beauty which made him proud and caused him to do what he did.

What is the remedy? Just like one gazes at the external appearance of beauty, let him also gaze at the internal ugliness - blood, biles, liver, lungs, intestines and the filth that circulates in them and the urine in the bladder. Let him remember that if he were to see them when he eats, he would run away from there and be nauseated by all food. Then he would be "a base person despised in his eyes" (Tehilim 15:4). Furthermore, let the intelligent person consider that this handsome external appearance is only due to the movements and reactions in the disgusting interior. The interior is what maintains him and this beauty caused by the disgusting, what is its end? Worms and maggots. Woe to that disgrace!

I heard from my teacher: a great and wise king became arrogant of heart. When he sensed his illness, he summoned a wise sage to consult with him on how to become healed. The sage advised him to wear less beautiful clothing and other remedies but it did not help.

The sage then asked the king to join him in a stroll among the gardens, orchards, fields and vineyards. The sage showed him many beautiful trees and fruits, splendid fields and plants, flowers and meadows.

Afterwards, they arrived in a place where the sewage of the toilets and bathhouses was dumped.

The sage stood there looking astonished and silent. The king watched him and asked him why he is standing there. The sage replied: "my master, the king, I asked this sewage a strong question and they refuted me with a winning answer. I asked them: "what happened O beautiful plants that your wonderful fragrance transformed to a disgusting stench?" They answered: "you [humans] ruined our fragrance by passing us through your bodies".

When the king heard this rebuke, he accepted it and received the mussar (ethics) and was healed from his illness (of pride).

Furthermore, one should contemplate in the way he is nourished. For when a man chews food, if he were to spit out the food, how disgusting and revolting would it be in his eyes to put it back in

his mouth. No doubt he would vomit everything he ate out of intense disgust.

Consider that this food is no different than before he put it in his mouth and chewed it. Nothing disgusting was added to it. The only thing that disgusted him was the new appearance after it was chewed and mixed with saliva. And it was pleasant to his palate and he chewed it with a desiring soul.

This is a powerful rebuke to those who contemplate it. For nature entices us and does this in secret, hidden to the eye so that we should eat and survive and not die, leaving the land barren.

If nature entices the imagination like this and embellishes it, the intelligent man who fears the word of G-d should exhort his mind to not be enticed by contemplating and putting to heart what he truly is, lest he become proud on gazing at his external appearance and tall height.

Q Level 4

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "the hope of [mortal] man is but worms" - in the talmud (Berachot 5a):

Rabbi Levi ben Hama says in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish: "A man should always incite the good inclination [in his soul] to fight against the evil inclination. For it is written: 'Tremble and sin not' (Tehilim 4:5). If he subdues it, well and good. If not, let him study the Torah. For it is written: 'Commune with your own heart' (ibid). If he subdues it, well and good. If not, let him recite the Shema'. For it is written: 'Upon your bed' (ibid). If he subdues it, well and good. If not, let him remind himself of the day of death. For it is written: 'And be still, Selah' (ibid).

This implies thinking of one's day of death certainly helps. For afterwards the talmud does not give any additional advice. This is difficult. If it is such a potent remedy why is it not mentioned first? There are many answers given to this question. One simple answer is that if one does not first employ the earlier remedies (to rouse the good inclination over the evil inclination, toil in torah, recite shemah), then thinking of one's day of death will not help at all. For even if he thinks on this all day, he can still remain thoroughly wicked and not change in the least.

On the contrary, thinking of his day of death will only help him to be more zealous in his lusts and wickedness, as written: "let us feast and drink for tomorrow we die" (Isaiah 22:13). Only one who studied how to employ this remedy of thinking of one's day of death by doing the previous remedies first - only for him this remedy will help to improve and rectify his ways.

Q Level 1

☆ Rashi

Rashi - "whoever desecrates the Name of Heaven in secret" - i.e. that he sins in secret.

"punishment will be meted out to him in public" - the Holy One, blessed be He, reveals his disgrace to everyone, as written: "When the hatred is covered with darkness, his evil will be revealed in public" (Mishlei 26:26).

Why so much? So as not to desecrate the Name of Heaven through him. Namely, so people won't say: "did you see that person who is a wise torah scholar and nevertheless receives such sufferings? Therefore, whether he sins unintentionally or intentionally G-d reveals everything.

Q Level 2

☆ Chida

Ahava b'Taanugim - "whoever desecrates the Name of Heaven.." - he said this after "be very very lowly of spirit" to teach that although the trait of lowliness is good, but this is so only when there is no chillul H' (desecration of Heaven). If there is chillul H', however, such as if he is a torah scholar and others are mocking him - he is under duty to defend the honor of the torah.

Q Level 3

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "desecrates (*chillul*, literally: empty space, a void)" - as written in the zohar on "mechaleleha (those who desecrate the Sabbath)", "mechaleleha" is from the term "chilul" (void). For the "earth is full of His glory". But in a place where a sin was committed, G-d so to speak withdraws His Shechina (divine presence) from there and it becomes void..

Q Level 3

Sefer Yereim - as written in Parsha Emor "you shall not desecrate My holy Name" (Vayikra 22:32). This verse drills to the depths of the earth. Its explanation should cause all to sigh. For chillul H' (desecrating G-d's Name) can occur in many ways without limit. One who disrespects even one mitzvah and is a little lenient in the honor of Heaven (G-d) is called "desecrating G-d's Name". If he studies torah, he must guard himself from anything ugly. He must not cause people to suspect him (of anything bad) so that they don't say anything bad about him. And if he does not act like this, he is called one who desecrates G-d's Name, as we learned in the talmud (Yomah 86a) "what is an example of desecrating G-d's Name? Rava said: for me, if I buy meat at the shop and don't pay immediately" (people may suspect he won't pay). Rabbi Yochanan said: for me, if I walk four amot (cubits) without torah and tefilin..."

Q Level 3



Merkevet Hamishna - he placed this after the previous mishna which exhorts against arrogance. This is to teach that included in desecrating G-d's Name is arrogance. For he dons the garment of the Holy One, blessed be He.

"Unintentional and intentional are equal in desecrating G-d's Name" - for man needs to have fear of G-d before his eyes until he does not err.

The analogy is to one who takes a rock and throws it at the palace of the king without intending to cause any damage to the king. Even though the damage was accidental and unintended, but nevertheless he will certainly be punished as if he were intentional. For he should have chiseled in his heart that sometimes the king is there and may get hurt. The fear of the king should have been upon him and he would not have erred.

So too here, it is proper for a man to chisel in his heart and not forget [the commandment of G-d]. Therefore, it is proper for him to be punished as one intentional in desecrating G-d's Name, even though he forgot.

Q Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - "whether unintentional or intentional, there is no distinction regarding desecration of G-d's Name" - we don't find that the torah was strict with the unintentional (shogeg) except for one who murders unintentionally. This is because the bottom line is that he killed a human being and this is a severe act. Thus, the torah was strict with him and obligated exile (to a city of refuge).

Likewise, the torah was strict with all monetary damages, as our sages said: "a man is always considered fully liable (mued), whether he is unintentional or intentional, whether it is accidental or willful. All this is because the bottom line is that he did monetary damage to his fellow.

Likewise, one who desecrates G-d's Name. "His glory fills the world" and the bottom line is that whether he was unintentional or intentional, he desecrated the honor of G-d, blessed be He, whose glory fills the world..

This is not to say that unintentional and intentional are equal. The attribute of justice does not consider it so. Rather, it refers to what was said earlier: "one who desecrated G-d's Name privately is paid publicly".

The reason for this is in order to rectify G-d's honor. For when G-d delivers retribution on the wicked, His honor is elevated. This is as our sages said: "Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai says: 'G-d's Name is elevated in His world only when He exacts justice on the wicked'" (Mechilta Shemot 14:14).

And in scripture: "I will judge him with pestilence and blood" (Yechezkel 38:22). And afterwards: "I will be aggrandized and sanctified" (ibid 38:33).. and "I will become glorified through Pharaoh and his army, and Egypt will know that I am G-d" (Shemot 14:4).. and many more like this.

Thus, when G-d exacts justice on the wicked, His honor is elevated. Hence, for one who desecrated G-d's honor, it is proper for G-d to exact justice from him in order to elevate His honor corresponding to this person's desecration of G-d's honor.

Through this, G-d's honor is restored.. The reason this sin is worse than all sins is because the bottom line is that the person desecrated G-d's honor and G-d's honor is eternal. Unlike killing a human being who is anyway going to die eventually (see there for more).

Chapter 4 Mishna 5 - Study To Teach

Rabbi Yishmael the son of Rabbi Yossi would say: he who studies [torah] in order to teach shall be granted the ability to study and to teach; he who studies torah in order to practice shall be granted the ability to study, to teach, to guard, and to practice.

רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל בֶּר רַבִּי יוֹסִי אוֹמֵר: הַלּוֹמֵד תּוֹרָה עַל מְנַת לְלַמֵּד, מְסַפִּיקוֹן בְּיָדוֹ לְלַמּוֹד וְלַלְמִיד, וְהַלּוֹמֵד עַל מְנַת לַעֲשׂוֹת, מְסַפִּיקוֹן בְּיָדוֹ לְלַמּוֹד וְלַלְמִיד לְשִׁמּוֹר וְלַעֲשׂוֹת.

Rabbi Tzadok would say: do not separate yourself from the community. Do not act as a law-counselor.

רַבִּי צְדוֹק אוֹמֵר: אַל תִּפְרוֹשׁ מִן הַצְּבוּר, וְאַל תַּעַשׂ עֲצָמָךְ כְּעוֹרְכֵי הַדִּינִין, וְאַל תַּעֲשֶׂה עֵטְרָה לְהַתְגַּדֵּל בָּהּ, וְלֹא קַרְדּוּם לְחַתֵּךְ בָּהּ.

Do not make the torah a crown for elevating yourself with nor an ax with which to cut.

Thus Hillel would say: "he that exploits the crown [of torah for his own ends] shall perish". From here we learn that anyone who derives personal benefit from the torah removes his life from the world.

וְכִּי הִיא הֵלל אוֹמֵר: וְדֹאשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בַּתְּגָא חֲלָף, הָא לְמַדְתָּ, כָּל הַנִּהְנֶה מִדְּבַר תּוֹרָה, נוֹטֵל חַיֵּיו מִן הָעוֹלָם.

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "he who studies [torah] in order to teach" - i.e. one who learns in order to be learning torah always, but he does not intend to bestow kindness to the public. For example "Rava" who "toiled in torah but did not toil in gemilut chasadim (acts of kindness)" (Rosh Hashana 18a).

Even though one should also toil in acts of kindness, but nevertheless G-d helps him to learn and teach and his intent is fulfilled.

"he who studies torah in order to practice" - he wants to toil in torah and also to bestow kindness to others, like Abaye who toiled in both. G-d helps him to fulfill his intent and he will merit to learn, teach, guard, and fulfill.

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "he who studies [torah] in order to teach" - this is not referring to one who wants to learn only and not practise. For then he would be a Rasha (wicked person).. and our sages said "one who learns torah not for its sake, the torah becomes a deadly poison to him" (Taanit 7a).. Rather it refers to mitzvot which don't have action like emunot v'deirot (philosophy of faith) or laws not relevant to everyone like divorce laws.. or studying the laws of Kodashim (temple offerings) for a non-kohen or the laws of tumah and taharah (ritual impurity) in our times.

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "he who studies [torah] in order to teach" - this is not referring to one who learns in order to teach but not to do. For then he is not granted the ability neither to study nor to teach. Rather, it refers to one who does not toil and examine too deeply lest he find a prohibition in the permitted things. He learns the simple meaning only in a superficial manner. Thus he is given only the ability like his thought - to learn and teach only.

"he who studies torah in order to practice" - i.e. his intent is to delve deeply in order to know the truth of the matter. He is willing to toil days and even years to know a small matter and conduct himself according to the truth. This person is considered "learning in order to practise". For all his primary intent is that the action [he does] should be true. Therefore, "he is granted the ability to study, to teach, to guard, and to practice". For all this is included in the [true] act.

 **Level 3**
Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel - "he who studies in order to teach..." - among those who learn torah, there are different levels. Some learn torah in order to teach others or because it is delightful, i.e., he loves to learn torah because it is good. Some learn in order to live [eternally] through it or to elevate oneself and rule over others. Some learn in order to fulfill the torah of G-d, for action is the primary thing.

Therefore, this sage came and mentioned two important levels. For one who learns torah in order to merit others to its qualities - this is a good thing and G-d will grant him the merit to learn and teach others.

In this level he did not mention the aspect of practise. For this preliminary level will suffice [to elevate him] since certainly "from doing it not for its sake, he will come to do it for its own sake" (Pesachim 50b, mitoch shelo lishma ba lishma).

The second level, "one who learns in order to practise", merits all these blessings. This comes to teach that the primary matter is action and this is the true purpose.

For one who learns torah to know its statutes and commandments in the way of "you shall study them and guard to do them" (Devarim 5:1) - he will merit to learn and teach, guard them in his heart and not forget them and fulfill them forever..

 **Level 4**
☆ **Matanat Avot**

Matanat Avot - Sometimes we find two people who are equally intelligent and understanding. They may even be equally diligent. But nevertheless one grows much more than the other. For one wants to know only one or two tractates. This is all he wants. Therefore in the Siyata d'Shmaya (divine help), this is all he gets and no more. But his fellow knows that besides this tractate that they are learning in his yeshiva or kollel, there is also an entire Shas (talmud) and its commentaries, Rambam, Tur, Shulchan Aruch and its commentaries and endless responsa (shayla teshuvot). He aspires and hopes and prays to know everything.

Therefore, he merits divine assistance to know everything. For according to his request is his assistance.

Let us now explain the difference between them.

"one who learns in order to teach" - this refers to a man who sits and toils in torah with great diligence. When he encounters a difficult sugya (talmudic discussion), he musters great strength and plows it forwards and backwards in all its details and fine points. Why does he do this? Because he wants to attain clear understanding in the sugya until he can teach it clearly to others. (as they say: "he who wants to check if he learned something properly, let him check if he is able to explain it to a young child. If he succeeds, it is a sign that he understood properly".)

What does such a person merit? He merits to truly understand the sugya clearly and perhaps he will even merit to actually teach it and explain it to others.

"he who learns in order to do" - here it is referring to one who learns exactly like the previous person. But in all the details and fine points that he finds in the sugya, he also aspires to conduct himself according to them, meticulously following the Halacha (Jewish law) exactly as he learned.

He merits divine assistance to guard all the fine points and stringencies. Likewise, since people

observe that he is meticulous in all the details of Halacha, they realize that he has great knowledge in torah and thus they flock to him in order to learn from the radiance of his torah. Thus, he merited to guard and do and also to learn and teach..

Thus, one who is truly careful to guard meticulously all his ways and conducts, whether in matters between man and G-d or between man and his fellow, then, besides that he will merit divine assistance in continuing to guard the details and stringencies, but he will also merit to teach others the proper path by his very conduct.

Thus we find that for every great Rabbi that passes away, books are printed on his conduct and ways. This is besides his books on Halacha and responsa etc.

For one who is meticulous in all his conducts to the utmost extent, he is fit to serve as an example and role model to everyone.

Chapter 4 Mishna 6 - Honors Torah

Rabbi Yossi would say: whoever honors the torah, is himself honored before others.

And whoever profanes the torah, is himself dishonored before others

רַבִּי יוֹסִי אָמַר: כָּל הַמְכַבֵּד אֶת הַתּוֹרָה, גּוֹפּוֹ מְכַבֵּד עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת, וְכָל הַמְחַלְלֵל אֶת הַתּוֹרָה, גּוֹפּוֹ מְחַלְלֵל עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "whoever honors the torah.." - one who expounds (doresh) the extra letters or missing letters of the words in the torah and derives the reasons for every tiny detail and thus demonstrates that there is nothing superfluous in it - there is no greater honor of torah than this.

Alternatively, it refers to one who honors a sefer torah (torah scroll) and honors those who study torah. All these things are included in honoring the torah.

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "one who honors the torah" - what is honoring the torah? To not leave (torah) books on the floor. To not sit on a bench or chair where books lie. To have reverence for words of torah and honor it and those who study it.

It is known from many verses and also from reason that whoever speaks good on the good [people] and on the torah sages - we can assume he is a tzadik (righteous person). And whoever judges them negatively and argues on their deeds saying they are wrong and he does not see any merit in them but when one speaks about the wicked, he justifies their deeds - it is clear this person has wickedness within him. Do not have any doubt about it.

With this you can test the hearts of people.. For even though one cannot know if his fellow is a heretic. For it is hidden in their heart and they pretend verbally to believe.

"*is himself honored before others*" - G-d causes others to honor him since he honors the torah as before.

Chapter 4 Mishna 7 - Refrains From Judgment

Rabbi Yishmael his son would say: one who refrains from judgment (serving as a judge) rids himself of enmity, theft, and false oaths. But one who is over-confident in rendering legal decisions is a fool, wicked, and arrogant.

רַבִּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל בְּנוֹ אָמַר: הַחֹשֶׁה עֲצֻמוֹ מִן הַדִּין, פּוֹרֵק מִמֶּנּוּ אֵיבָה וְגַזְלִים וְשָׁבוּעֵת שְׂוֵא, וְהֵגֵס לְבוֹ בְּהוֹרָאָה, שׁוֹטֵה רָשָׁע וְגֵס רוֹחַ.

Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "one who refrains from serving as a judge" - i.e. when there is a judge bigger than him (in torah). Alternatively, he tells the litigants to find a compromise between themselves.

"rids himself of enmity" - for the litigant found guilty hates the judge. He thinks in his heart that the judge did not search for his merits.

"theft" - for perhaps the judge will make a mistake and obligate the innocent to pay thus causing theft to occur through himself.

"unnecessary oaths" - perhaps he will obligate an oath to one who is not obligated. Thus, he causes one to utter an unnecessary oath. Alternatively it refers to [causing] a false oath..

"over-confident in rendering legal decisions" - without proper iyun (in depth study) and without waiting (to deliberate).

Level 1

Rambam

Rambam - "one whose heart is over-confident" - his heart is over-confident to strengthen himself to judge without fear and awe.

Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "one who refrains from serving as a judge.." - even though it is written: "you shall appoint judges and officers.." (Devarim 16:18) and "pursue righteousness (in judging).." (Devarim 16:20), thus it is a mitzvah to judge. Nevertheless, this is when there are no other qualified judges. But all the time one can refrain himself from judging, it is better for one to cast the yoke on others. For he saves himself from many doubts...

Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan - "theft" - perhaps he obligated one who is exempt or the opposite. He did not mention cases of death penalty or kidushin (betrothals) and divorces whereby the stumbling block is much greater. Perhaps the intent is that even if one is exceedingly careful in monetary cases, since they are daily occurrences, nevertheless it is impossible for him not to err.

Level 3

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "one who refrains from judgment rids himself of enmity" - instead of waiting for his fellow to claim from him in court, he pays immediately all that it appears he owes him. What does he gain from this? "he rids himself of enmity". For as known, in every court case, the losing side hates the winning side. This is because he always continues to think that he was right and the other person profited at his expense unjustly.

But one who is sure that the money belongs to his fellow and pays it on his own - he has no hatred towards his fellow. He does not think his fellow took his money wrongfully and certainly his fellow also does not have hatred towards him. For he did not need to fight with him on this in court or anywhere else.

 Level 3**Tiferet Yisrael**

Tiferet Yisrael - "fool" - one who is arrogant and pushes to become a judge is certainly a fool. For he increases enemies for nothing. Alternatively, he is a fool. For he does not see the punishment waiting for him from G-d, as the talmud says: "a judge should always see himself as if a sword is between his legs and gehinom is open below him" (Sanhedrin 7a). That is to say, a sword is ready to pierce his body and gehinom is ready to punish his soul. Both can kill him when he does not judge righteously. But this fool is not concerned for all this.

(Translator: note that every person is a judge on himself every day. See the section "watchfulness" in the book "Path of the Just".)

Chapter 4 Mishna 8 - Judge Alone

He would say: do not judge alone, for none may judge alone except One. And do not say, "accept my view," for they [the majority] are permitted [to do so] but not you.

הוא הִיהָ אומֵר, אֵל תְּהִי דִן יְחִידִי, שְׂאִין
 דִן יְחִידִי אֶלָּא אֶחָד. וְאֵל תֹּאמֶר קְבִלּוּ
 דְּעֵתִי, שְׁהֵן רְשָׁאִין וְלֹא אֶתָּה.

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "do not judge alone" - even though an expert judge may judge alone (Sanhedrin 5a), but nevertheless, it is the way of Chasidut (piety) to refrain from this, even for an expert judge.

However, this is only if the litigants did not accept him on themselves to judge them. But if they accepted him on themselves, he may judge alone..

"do not say: 'accept my view'" - do not say to your peers who disagree with you: "accept my view. For I am an expert and even without your joining me I can judge alone."

"for they [the majority] are permitted [to do so] but not you" - since you joined with them (the other judges) and thus it is proper to rule according to the majority opinion.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "do not judge alone" - this is also a form of "refrain from judging" (previous mishna). Even though an expert judge is permitted to judge alone, but nevertheless it is the way of Chasidut (piety) to refrain from this. Rather he should take some peers to judge with him and help him. In this way he effectively refrains from judging a bit. For [at least] not everything is on his shoulders.

"for they [the majority] are permitted [to do so] but not you" - they may accept your view but if they don't, you are not permitted to force them to do so.

Q Level 1

☆ Sforno

Sforno - "for none may judge alone except One" - for G-d judges without need for testimony of witnesses, nor for claims of the litigants who deceive. Rather, He is the witness, judge, and litigant. Other judges need to hear the words of witnesses and litigants. Thus, there is sometimes error or deception.

Q Level 2

☆ Pirkei Moshe

Pirkei Moshe - "none may judge alone except One" - no one can judge alone except G-d because He is One. He is pashut (divested), absolutely pashut (divested), and there are no obstructions preventing Him from understanding the absolute truth. For He is truth itself and it is inconceivable for Him to err in any way. Therefore, no one can judge a true judgment like Him...

Q Level 3

☆

Mahari Tab - "none may judge alone except One" - as the Rambam wrote: "none can weigh [sins and merits] except the Knowing God. He [alone] knows how to measure merits against sins" (Teshuva 3:2).

And even according to the opinion that the angels (spiritual beings) know the thoughts [of men], nevertheless this is only the thought itself. But regarding how true the thought is, this is already more inner than the thought itself. For even the man himself who is the thinker of that thought - even he does not understand on himself how much his thought stems from a point of truth. This is a deeper level. Only the Creator of all worlds knows this..

 Level 3☆ **Matanat Avot**

Matanat Avot - everyone explains this mishna to be referring to judges, but it seems to me the mishna is also referring to each and every person who sees something bad in his fellow. Then he begins to judge his fellow negatively and thinks the fellow is a wicked person and a sinner. "How could he commit such severe sins, etc. etc."

The Tanna (sage) comes and says to this person: "my dear friend, you saw this act alone. Thus who says you are right in your perspective and outlook on your fellow? How can you be so sure that everything you see and understand is truly correct and accurate? Perhaps there are other details you do not understand in the person or his deed. Perhaps since you are missing the full picture, your entire perspective is off and if you could know everything, you would have judged your fellow more to the side of merit? Perhaps you would even think that he is completely justified?"

Therefore, please "do not judge alone". Stop judging your fellow according to all that you yourself saw. For you do not know the whole picture.

"for none may judge alone except One" - only G-d who sees and knows everything absolutely, who sees all the hidden considerations behind every human deed - He alone can decide whether this act is considered good or evil and how much right and wrong it contains. But you are a simple man whose knowledge and vision is lacking and limited. Thus do not be quick to render judgment on your fellow based on something you saw in him..

Chapter 4 Mishna 9 - Torah In Poverty

Rabbi Yonatan would say: whoever fulfills the torah in poverty will ultimately fulfill it in wealth
 And whoever neglects the torah in wealth will ultimately neglect it in poverty.

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

Q Level 1

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "whoever fulfills the torah in poverty" - he pushes off his work which he needs for his livelihood in order to fulfill torah and mitzvot. He learns torah and does mitzvot out of difficulty.

"will ultimately fulfill it in wealth" - for he will become wealthy and furthermore he will have much free time to toil in torah and fulfill mitzvot..

"whoever neglects the torah in wealth" - many times and many hours he had free time to learn but did not do so.

"will ultimately neglect it in poverty" - he will need to toil for his livelihood but will not succeed.

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "whoever fulfills the torah in poverty" - that he is pressed for his livelihood and nevertheless he annuls his work in order to toil in torah.

"whoever neglects the torah in wealth.." - due to his abundant wealth, he needs to put his mind to here and there and he has no free time to toil in torah.

Q Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Ahava b'Taanugim - "whoever fulfills the torah in poverty" - some explain: one who upholds the torah and supports those who study torah while he is poor, ie with the little he has, he gives to the mouths of the torah scholars so that they can toil in torah - in the end, he will support them out of wealth. But one who annuls the torah out of wealth, ie even though he has wealth, nevertheless, he does not benefit any torah scholar and thus he causes bitul torah (annulling torah) - in the end he will annul it out of poverty. He will be dealt with measure for measure and will lose [his wealth].

Some explain: whoever fulfills the torah out of poverty of knowledge, ie even though he does not know torah, he fulfills what he heard and knows - in the end he will fulfill it out of wealth of knowledge. G-d will bestow of His wisdom to him. But whoever annuls the torah out of wealth of knowledge, ie despite his being a torah sage like Doeg, he is a wicked man and annuls the torah. In the end, he will annul it out of poverty. For he will forget his torah..

Q Level 3

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "whoever fulfills the torah in poverty.." - for the yetzer hara (evil inclination) pushes a person to not "rejoice in his portion". But if a man strengthens himself over the yetzer and learns, ultimately he will fulfill it out of wealth. Namely, he will defeat the yetzer and become one who "rejoices in his portion", as Ben Azai said: "who is wealthy? He who rejoices in his portion" (Avot 4:1).

In the beginning of the diligence (b'techilat hashekeida), one has a war with the yetzer. For he longs for money, lusts, and honor, but in the end, he puts to heart to not desire in these things at all. He becomes divested of the yoke of derech erez (earning money) and the vanities of the time

and he rejoices in his portion even if it is small. For he grows spiritually (mossif shlemut). Although in the beginning he learned torah out of poverty, ie pain, afterwards he will learn torah out of wealth, namely to rejoice in his portion.

 **Level 3**

☆ **Chatam Sofer**

Shevet Sofer, chelek 2, peticha 7 - "whoever fulfills the torah in poverty will ultimately fulfill it in wealth" - the Midrash Shmuel already asked on this mishna that our eyes see it is not so. For there are many torah scholars who study torah in poverty and did not merit wealth.

It seems to me the explanation is that in truth, man's soul longs to grand feats and to amass wealth. But one who toils in torah lishma (for its own sake) merits to realize that all is vanity. For such a person, all that his soul longs for is to increase torah. He lacks nothing and is content with the little he has. He muzzles his lusts and even if he has wealth, he does not indulge in it.. and takes only what is needed to strengthen his body for the service of G-d. Then, he comes to the level of "who is wealthy? he who rejoices in his portion" (Avot 4:1).

Thus he said: "ALL who fulfill the torah from poverty", ie even if he is still poor in his eyes, nevertheless, he is assured that through the torah, he will recognize the truth. He will come to the level of "one who rejoices in his portion.", and he will fulfill it out of wealth.

 **Level 3**

Chatam Sofer

Daat Sofer, Ruth - ie even though in the beginning of his torah study the poverty will be difficult on him and he will suffer in this regimen prescribed in the mishna "bread with salt, etc.", but nevertheless, if out of love, he will toil in it always (b'ahavato yishge tamid), namely, all his longing and soul's delight is solely in the torah - then "he will ultimately fulfill it in wealth". For he will be a rich man who rejoices in his portion.

Chapter 4 Mishna 10 - Reduce Work

Rabbi Meir said: reduce work and toil in Torah. Be humble in spirit before all men. If you have been idle from Torah, many causes for being idle from it will present themselves to you; but if you have toiled in Torah then G-d has abundant reward to give you.

רַבִּי מֵאִיר אָמַר, הָיִי מִמַּעַט בְּעֵסֶקְךָ, וְעֵסֶקְךָ בְּתוֹרָה. וְהָיִי שֹׁפֵל רוּחַ בְּפָנֶי כָּל אָדָם. וְאִם בָּטַלְתָּ מִן הַתּוֹרָה, יֵשׁ לְךָ בְּטָלִים הַרְבֵּה; וְאִם עָמַלְתָּ בְּתוֹרָה, יֵשׁ לּוֹ שָׂכָר הַרְבֵּה לְתֵן לְךָ.

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "reduce work.." - minimize your business dealings and let your primary occupation be in torah.

Q Level 2

☆ Chida

Chida, Chasdei Avot - "reduce work and toil in Torah" - some toil (for livelihood) is necessary as written in Sifri: "..all the work of your hand" (Devarim 28:12).

Thus, one must toil in something. For the blessing does not rest on an empty place. But once he works on some work, G-d's blessing rests on it. Thus, R. Meir commanded to minimize the work. For the purpose of the work is so there is something for the blessing to rest on, whether it is a lot or a little. Then he can turn to toil in torah...

Q Level 2

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "reduce your work and toil in torah" - some explain Rabbi Meir's words as a continuation of the previous mishna: "whoever fulfills the torah out of poverty will fulfill it out of wealth".

Thus, wealth and poverty do not depend on the quantity of effort a man invests, but rather on his merits. Hence, there is no reason to squander all of one's days to chase after money.

Therefore Rabbi Meir says: "reduce work" - do not squander all your time in trying to make a livelihood. Rather, reduce your business dealings as much as possible - "and toil in torah". Then your livelihood will increase on its own. This is what was said in chapter 3 "whoever accepts upon himself the yoke of torah, the yoke of earning a livelihood will be removed from him"..

If he accepts the yoke of torah on himself, he will receive divine assistance and the yoke of earning a livelihood will be lightened on him. The little he does will be blessed..

This is what the talmud says: "See what a difference there is between the earlier and the later generations. The earlier generations made the study of the Torah their primary concern and their ordinary work secondary to it, and both prospered in their hands. The later generations made their ordinary work their main concern and their study of the Torah secondary, and neither prospered in their hands" (Berachot 35b).

Q Level 3

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "reduce work and toil in Torah" - it was already said: "more possessions, more worries" (Avot 2:7). The more the business dealings grow, the more its distractions grow and the less peace of mind one has to learn [torah] with focus. Even during the little time he designates for torah study, he does not utilize it properly. When he sits with a book, his thoughts move to and fro on the latest problems in his business dealings, to search for solutions, to increase profits, etc.

The pious Yavetz compared the heart of a man to a house. It's purpose is to be filled with spiritual treasures. G-d created man like an empty vessel. It has the ability to store inside it the wisdom of the torah. But the more a man fills his heart with various worries, distractions and useless thoughts - he shrinks the remaining available room to store the true treasures for which the house was created.

"be diminishing work (hevi memaet)" - he said "be diminishing" in present tense and not "diminish (memaet) business dealings!" as a command. The Midrash Shmuel infers that the Tanah (sage) is emphasizing what is the proper path a man should choose to grow in torah study. He should not cut off his business dealings all at once. For he is liable to not withstand the heavy burden he placed on himself. Rather, he should diminish slowly slowly, to suffice with less time for making profits and more time for spiritual pursuits.

Only after some time has passed can he re-evaluate and diminish his business dealings a bit more, and so on. Let him be always aspiring to "be diminishing" more and more.

In his spiritual aspirations, a man needs to be as "a ladder fixed on the ground whose top reaches the Heavens" - to not jump to high levels. For then there would be a danger of falling and breaking. There is a need to climb a ladder, rung after rung, until one reaches the Heaven..

 **Level 1**

☆ **Bartenura**

Bartenura - "Be humble in spirit before all men" - to learn even from someone inferior to you in wisdom.

 **Level 1**

☆ **Rambam**

Rambam - "Be humble in spirit before all men" - i.e. do not be lowly of spirit only before great men. Rather when you sit with every man, your talking with him should be as if he is greater than you. This is in order to flee from arrogance.

 **Level 1**

Bartenura

Sforno - "Be humble in spirit before all men" - so that it be recognizable that your intent in toiling in torah is not in order to receive honor.

 **Level 2**

☆ **Ruach Chaim**

Ruach Chaim - "Be humble in spirit before all men" - for sometimes when a person is alone with himself he realizes his lacking and becomes humble. But when he goes out among people, he forgets everything and inflates himself. Therefore, he said: "Be humble in spirit before all men".

 **Level 3**

Shaarei Teshuva, Rabeinu Yonah, Shaar 1 - furthermore, the baal teshuva (penitent) is obligated to humble himself and fulfill and conduct himself according to the way our sages set: "be humble of spirit before every man". Namely, he should not get angry nor be makpid (demanding) on his fellow. Likewise in all the things he hears, he should put to heart to overlook them (maaviral midotav). Through this, measure for measure his sins will be overlooked, as our sages said: "whoever overlooks [sins against him] is forgiven for all his sins" (Rosh Hashana 17a). This is a very great opening of hope, and likewise scripture says: "Let him put his mouth into the dust; there may yet be hope; Let him offer his cheek to his smiter; let him be filled with reproach" (Eicha 3:29-30).

 **Level 1**

Bartenura

Bartenura - "If you have been idle from Torah, there are many idlers (betelim) against you" - that will assist to annul you. Alternatively, there are in the world many "betelim", namely, the wicked and harmful animals. Through them, the Holy One, blessed be He, will bring retribution upon you.

🔍 **Level 1**

☆ **Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan**

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan - "if you have been idle from Torah, many causes for being idle from it will present themselves to you" - do not imagine to yourself that if you are idle from torah, then you will enjoy and sit tranquilly. On the contrary, there will arise awesome new things and foreign matters that will occupy you vastly more than the toil you would have had you toiled in torah. These new things will confound your mind and drive you away from your Creator..

🔍 **Level 2**

Steipler, Binyan Olam - "many idlers against you.." - if you were idle (from torah) when you had free time, then you will be claimed on the other times you were idle in order to attain vanities of the times. For it is apparent that your idleness was not at all for G-d's honor. But if you toiled in torah when you had free time, then he has much reward to give you. Namely, even for all the other [secular] activities you did. For they were all causes to help you fulfill the will of G-d.

🔍 **Level 1**

Bartenura

Bartenura - "but if you have toiled in Torah then G-d has abundant reward to give you" - He Himself will pay you reward, not through an agent. In this the [divine] attribute of good is greater than the attribute of retribution.

🔍 **Level 2**

☆ **Rabeinu Yonah**

Rabeinu Yonah - "He has abundant reward to give you" - in order to increase reward. The analogy is to a king whereby a craftsman made a beautiful object for him. The king commanded his servants to pay him generously. Certainly, they will pay him less than if the king himself had paid him. For their hearts are less generous than the king's due to the latter's wealth and glory. Certainly what the servants give him will be less. So too here, the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself will pay reward in order to increase it..

🔍 **Level 2**

☆ **Tiferet Yisrael**

Tiferet Yisrael - "abundant reward" - He will lighten your burden of earning a livelihood. For your work will be done by other people.

🔍 **Level 3**

☆ **Ahava b'Taanugim**

Ahava b'Taanugim - "be reducing work.." - he did not say "minimize work" but rather "be reducing work". This is to teach that it should be a constant thing. Every day he should strive to reduce the work so that it is less than yesterday.

"and toil in torah" - he did not say: "and increase to toil much in torah". This is to teach that even if a man increases to toil much in torah, it is not "much". For he will never complete his workload.

"If you have been idle from Torah, there are many idlers (betelim) against you" - some explain: malachei chabala (angels of destruction) which are batelim (idle) and hope each day: "when will he die?", so they can go out to greet you (and exact retribution).

some explain: not only will you receive punishment for having wasted time, but also for what others wasted time due to learning from you.

Likewise if you toiled in torah, there is much reward to give you even if others did not learn from you. All the more so, if others learned from you to toil in torah..

Some explain: "many idlers" - i.e. ministering (good) angels. For they join those who toil in torah. But they are also idle due to you. And if you toiled in torah and increased to learn much - "there is much reward to GIVE to you", ie the reward is so great that it is proper to call it a "gift".. Thus he said "to GIVE to you", and not "to pay you".

"if you toiled in Torah" - he did not say: "if you learned". For the reward is according to the toil and effort - not according to the amount learned.. For everything depends on the toil..

Q Level 3

Klalei Hamitzvot, Rabbi Giktalia - "many idle things" - he did not say "idling things" (mevatlim, active tense) but rather "idle things" (batelim, passive tense). For it refers to the great hidden reward in the next world for fulfilling that mitzvah. This reward is idle from benefiting you there and you are left poor and destitute without hope for rectifying the loss. This itself is a great punishment.

Q Level 3



Binyan Avot - "idle things" - this refers to the descendants of Eisav, "the man of the field", ie the idle man..

Alternatively, as our sages said: "if one does not do the will of G-d, he will do the work of other people" (i.e. they will be idle from work and learning torah and you will work for them and support them). This is "many idle things opposite you", ie idle from work.. (as written in tractate Megilah - "10 batlanim" which refers to people in the synagogue all day).

Q Level 4

☆ Chida

Chida, Zeroah Yamin - "If you have been idle from Torah, you have many idlers against you" - for in the majority of cases one who is idle from torah speaks useless words. Angels of idleness (malachei batala) are created from each of his words and in the future, he will give a judgment. This is the meaning of: "you have many idlers against you" - these are the angels created who are accusing you.. "you have", ie you acquired them.

Q Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai, Zechut Avot - "if you have been idle from Torah, you have many idlers against you" - it is known what our sages said on the verse: "when they would stand, they would let down their wings" (Yechezkel 1:24) - when Yisrael is idle from the torah, the Chayot (highest angels) are also silent. On this he said: "If you have been idle from Torah, you have many idlers against you", ie many in quality and quantity. When you hear this, how can you not tremble and muster all your strength, knowing the holy Chayot depend on you?..

"If you have been idle from Torah.. - alternatively, it is known what our sages said: "whoever toils in torah, sufferings depart from him", and conversely, sufferings chase after him (if he forsakes the torah), as written: "[why did the land become desolate?] because they abandoned My torah". This is the meaning of "you have many idlers". This refers to the mazikim (angels of destruction) which drive him out of this world and the next.

Q Level 4

☆ Maharal

Maharal - this teaching requires explanation. What is Rabbi Meir coming to teach us? Is it not obvious that one should reduce his business dealings and toil in torah? For otherwise, when will a person learn torah? And what does this matter of "be of humble spirit before every man" have to do with "minimize your business dealings, etc." and the rest of the mishna "if you were idle.."

We may explain as follows. Sometimes a person reduces his business dealings due to the strain or due to laziness. If he reduces his business dealings due to strain or laziness and toils in torah, then that which he reduces his business dealings is not because of torah.

Rather, one should reduce his business dealings even though the work is not at all a burden on him. Perhaps he even wants and loves to work even more in his business dealings. Even so - reduce your business dealings and toil in torah. Namely, that it is apparent that one leaves his worldly matters and reduces them for the torah.

Through this, a man removes himself from the matter of this world and clings to the level of the divine. Therefore, after he said: "reduce your business dealings and toil in torah", ie that he reduces his business dealings for the torah, not for the other things we mentioned (burden, laziness). Then it appears he desires in the torah. For he puts down his affairs and toils in torah. Such a person is fit to acquire the torah since he divests himself of physical matters and turns to the torah.

Likewise our sages said (Shab.83b): "the torah endures only by one who slays himself over the torah, as written: '[this is the torah] when a man dies in a tent' (Bamidbar 19:14)".

We explained this matter. For man is of physical body and thus not fitting for the level of the (transcendent) intellect (Sechel). But when he divests himself completely of the matter of his body, until his body is not at all important in his eyes, and he slays his body and divests himself for the torah of transcendent intellect - then he is worthy of the torah..

"be of lowly spirit before every man" - this is also a trait through which one acquires the torah.. Thus, our sages said (Eirubin 55a): "the torah is not found by the haughty of spirit (gasei haruach)" and "the torah is compared to water. Just like water flows out from the high and goes to the low places, so too the torah endures only by one of lowly spirit.

(Netiv HaAnava ch.8: water leaves a high place and flows to a low place, ie water is not bounded like the dirt. Rather water spreads out and is not bound. Therefore it does not stand on a high place, which is separate and distinct by itself (meyuchad l'atzmo).. so too for the sechel (transcendent intellect, ie the torah) which is not bound, but is rather "simple" (pashut) - it departs the haughty who is bound. For the haughty bounds himself with special importance which is a boundary. Therefore, torah is not found by him just like water is not found on a high mountain which is distinct by itself. end quote)

Therefore, he said afterwards: "be of lowly spirit before every man". For through this trait one also divests himself of the trait of physicality.

As we said many times, haughtiness of spirit (gasut haruach) is a trait of physicality.. There is no trait which is divested of the physical except humility. Thus, Moshe Rabeinu (Moses our teacher), who merited torah, attained this only through humility. For he was "extremely humble, more than any person on the face of the earth" (Bamidbar 12:3). We explained this matter many times. Thus, specifically with these two traits (minimize physical and humility), a person can merit torah.

"If you have been idle from Torah, there are many idlers (betelim) against you" - the explanation is that when a man annuls (wastes) his time from torah, then there are things which annul him even more from the good. For through the torah a person becomes whole (complete) and if man does not make himself whole, then he is a lacking existence (metziut chasser). And that which is lacking draws more lacking and inexistence...

"idlers" - these are sufferings which befall him and are an annulment and inexistence to man... (see there for more)

Chapter 4 Mishna 11 - Advocate/accuser

Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov would say: he who performs one mitzvah (commandment) acquires for himself one advocate, while he who commits one transgression acquires for himself one accuser. Repentance and good deeds are as a shield against punishments.

רבי אליעזר בן יעקב אומר, העושה מצוה אחת, קונה לו פרקליט אחד. והעובר עברה אחת, קונה לו קטגור אחד. תשובה ומעשים טובים, כתריס בפני הפרענות.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "advocate (*praklit*)" - a defending angel (melitz tov, ie a "defense attorney" to assist him).

"accuser (*kategor*)" - a prosecuting angel (melitz rah, ie a "prosecuting attorney" against him).

Q Level 1

☆ Rambam

Rambam - "advocate (*praklit*)" - this is [a man] who speaks good on someone to the king.

"accuser (*kategor*)" - this is the opposite. He slanders a man to the king and strives to have him executed.

Q Level 1

Ahava b'Taanugim

Ahava b'Taanugim - ie do not think that G-d takes a bribe. Namely, if a man does one mitzvah and one sin, then they cancel each other and he is left with no reward and no punishment. It is not so. Rather, from the mitzvah an advocate (*praklit*) is created, etc. Thus, he will receive reward for the mitzvah and punishment for the sin..

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "advocate..accuser.." - for man was made in the image of G-d, every hour he creates within himself angels which are either good or evil. This was hinted to Yaakov our forefather when he left his righteous parents to go to the house of the wicked Lavan. He saw in a dream (Genesis 28:12) "a ladder set on the ground", a reference to the body, "whose top reached to heaven", a reference to the soul. "angels of G-d ascend and descend it" - this refers to man's powers and faculties. It is within his hands to sanctify them for Heaven, to elevate them or the opposite - to debase them. In the dream Yaakov was exhorted that G-d stands over him, He sees and observes all his deeds, whether good or evil. If "he places G-d opposite him always", G-d will tell him "do not fear, etc."

Through this Yaakov was exhorted to not stray in the house of Lavan. These angels will either be prosecutors against him to cause him punishment or defense attorneys to speak good on him. From them good or evil will come out. This is the secret of what our sages said that the angels which accompanied him from Israel were the holy thoughts he had there. After he left Israel and was occupied in the house of Lavan, different angels ruled over him. These were his thoughts.

Q Level 2

☆ Binyan Avot

Binyan Avot - "accuser" - (*katigor*) it ascends on high and accuses him, not resting, not silent, until judgment is executed (*gezar din*). Even if the person has merits, the *katigor* waits and accuses until the time comes (to exact retribution)... the word "*katigor*" means argument and dispute (*ketata v'tagar*). For it always argues and argues until its wish is fulfilled..

"acquires for himself" - he used the words acquires, to rouse a man that the matter of mitzvot and sins are not like imaginary acquisitions of this world. For they pass and go after a person dies. He

leaves behind all his properties and money in the hands of others. Of all his efforts, nothing remains in his hands. "they leave their wealth to others" (Tehilim 49:11). But in matters of mitzvot, it is not so. Rather, one who does a mitzvah - "acquires to himself", one who does a sin, etc. No one else can touch it. Regarding the mitzvot, it says: "your righteousness shall go before you" (Isaiah 58:8), while for sins, it is written: "the paths of their way turn aside, [they go nowhere and perish]" (Iyov 6:18).

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel - the sage is saying a wondrous matter. After one does a mitzvah, it continues to exist in the world as a spiritual being, created from the powers of his soul. Then it is as if he acquired a praklit, ie, a defendant, to shield him and speak good on his behalf, lest the judgments of retribution surround him. For the spiritual mitzvah created will call out loudly to save its maker from troubles that befall him. And the opposite for sins. One acquires a katigor (accuser) which slanders and speaks evil against him to bring and spread over him the attribute of justice. But repentance, however and whenever so, is like a shield to flee and escape from the attribute of justice. It will not slay him and he will be spared. As our sages said: "there is nothing which can stand before repentance" (Yerushalmi Peah 1:1)..

Q Level 3

Maharal Tzintz

Maharal Tzintz - "he who performs one mitzvah (commandment) acquires for himself one advocate, while he who commits one transgression acquires for himself one accuser.." - the words of the mishna is a reason to what our sages said that a man is judged according to the majority. If the majority is merits - he is meritorious. But if the majority is sins - he is guilty. For since every deed creates an angel, thus if the good angels are many, they defeat and conquer the bad angels. This is similar to the natural order [in war] whereby a large army defeats and conquers a small army. But if G-d forbid, the opposite, then the opposite happens.

Q Level 3

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - in the prayers of the high holidays, we mention several times the defenders (sanegorim) and prosecutors (kategorim) which stand before the Heavenly Beit Din in the judgment of all human beings on those days.

For example, in the Yom Kippur prayer, we beseech G-d "silence the prosecutor and advance the defender in his place (hass katigor, v'kach sanigor..)..".

Who are these prosecutors and defense attorneys we are referring to? Our mishna says: "one who does a mitzvah acquires one defender.." and likewise: "one who commits a sin acquires a prosecutor".

"acquires" - every man is judged every second, every day, every year (Rosh Hashana 16a), and of course after death and in the future world.

In every judgment, the defenders stand to his merit and the prosecutors to accuse him of his sins. All the defenders and prosecutors accompany a man forever and ever, standing by him in all his judgments.

Thus the Talmud says in tractate Sotah (3b): "whoever does one mitzvah in this world - the mitzvah advances and walks before him in the world to come". The defending angel created from the mitzvah walks before this man and announces on him everywhere he goes, as written: "your righteousness shall walk before you" (Isaiah 58:8).

Rashi's commentary on this mishnah brings our sages teaching (Avot 6:9):

"When you go it will direct you, when you lie down it will watch over you, and when you awaken it shall be your speech" (Mishlei 6:22) - "When you go it will direct you" - in this world; "when you lie down it will watch over you" - in the grave; "and when you awaken it shall be your speech" - in the World To Come.

Only a person's torah and good deeds accompany him forever and ever, standing at his side in all circumstances, in all stages of judgment he will endure..

Likewise, all of a man's prosecutors do not let go of him. They also accompany him forever. Thus we find in the talmud:

Sotah (3a) - whoever performs one commandment in this world, it precedes him for the World-to-Come; as written: "your righteousness shall go before you" (Isaiah 58:8); and whoever commits one sin in this world, it clings to him and precedes him for the Day of Judgment, as written: "The paths of their way are held by them; they go up into the waste and perish" (Iyov 6:18). R. Eleazar says: "It attaches itself to him like a dog; as it is said: "He (Yosef) did not listen to her, to lie with her (Potifar's wife), and be with her" (Gen.39:10) - "to lie by her" - [refers to] in this world, "or to be with her" - [refers to] in the World-to-Come.

Rabbi Eliezer there gives us a picture of this attachment saying "the sin attaches itself to him like a dog", like a person who ties a dog on a leash and holds it strongly so the dog does not flee. So too the sin is attached to a man like a leech and does not separate from him forever and ever.

A source for this is from a *diyuk* (inference) of a verse in the torah. When Yosef was tempted by the wife of Potifar, it is written there that Yosef refused her repeated temptations: "he did not listen to her, to lie with her and be with her" (Gen.39:10). Our sages expounded this double expression: "to lie with her" - in this world, "to be with her" - in the World-to-Come.

The sin does not let go of a man. It cleaves to him in his judgments in this world and also in his future judgment, it accuses him.

The righteous Yosef knew that if he succumbed to his evil inclination and committed the sin, this deed would cleave to him in this world and the next. Therefore, "he did not listen to her..."

"*he who does ONE mitzvah... ONE sin*" - the Tanna used a singular tense to impress on us the importance of every mitzvah and every sin. Sometimes one single mitzvah or the opposite can tip the entire scales to merit or the opposite, r"l..

Level 4

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim - ie from each and every mitzvah performed, a spiritual power is created. And how much more so from each and every good thought stemming from the depths of the soul (*nefesh*) while performing the mitzvah, a spiritual power is pictured (manifested) in the soul (*mitztayer bnefesh koach ruchani*). This is a defender (*praklit*) in *Olam Haba*. For we already spoke of the Ramban's words in parsha Chukat (21:9) a very wondrous matter in the powers of the soul. A deep thought in the soul (*machshava amuka b'nefesh*) is a very powerful active force. It causes pictures and imaginations in the soul and from there to the body.

And the opposite, G-d forbid, every bad thought in the depths of the soul when committing a sin and likewise all the more so, [every bad thought] in the depths of the soul during a deep lust - this pictures (manifests) in the soul an evil spiritual power of destructive form. These are the angels of destruction (*malachei chabala*) which chase a man until his destruction, r"l.

This is what scripture says: "He who is only rebellious seeks evil, and a cruel angel shall be sent

against him" (Mishlei 17:1). Namely, one who seeks (evil) in the depths of his thought, "a cruel angel shall be sent against him", to punish him and chase him until destruction r"l.

With this we will understand the teaching of our sages: "thoughts of sin are worse than the sin" (Yomah 29a). For the thoughts come from the depths of the soul r"l and through them many angels of destruction are pictured and created in the soul r"l.

And the opposite, through the good one does with great intent (kavana) and tremendous joy coming from the depths of the soul, holy angels are pictured and created in the soul who benefit the person. (Chochma u'Mussar chelek beit, 117)

Q Level 4



Etz Hadaat Tov, R. Chaim Vital, parsha Matot - every word a person utters with his mouth, whether good or bad, if it is good, it creates a good angel, and if it is evil, then an evil angel.

Therefore, a man should be exceedingly careful to not profane his word with loшон hara (slander) or nivlut peh (profanities), or false oaths. One should not tell himself: "there is no deed in this. It is merely light speech". Know that it is not so. Rather, all that goes out of one's mouth makes a complete act. If it is good, it creates a good angel. And if it is evil, an evil angel. Therefore, do not profane your word.

Q Level 4

☆ Chida

Chida - for when one fulfills a mitzvah, one angel (spiritual being) of good is created. If he did the mitzvah wholly, the angel is created whole. But if it lacked intent or a detail of the mitzvah, the angel is also created lacking and blemished, and this is enough of a disgrace. If he did not finish the mitzvah, the angel is also not finished. This is the reason why our sages said: "one who starts a mitzvah but does not finish it is punished". For the angel created is greatly distressed and recognizes his lacking. It screams on him and demands justice until the decree of punishment is sentenced, r"l. (Roshei Avot).

And in the verse "when you make a vow (neder) to the L-ord, your G-d, do not delay in paying it. For seek He will seek it (darosh yidreshenu) from you" (Devarim 23:22). The rishonim (early sages) wrote that one must be careful of vows (nedarim). For from the time he makes the vow, an angel is created and it is not whole until the vow is fulfilled. When he fulfills the vow, the angel is made whole. But all the time he delays the neder, this angel is in suffering..

This is what the torah says: "when you make a vow", an angel is created.. but it is suspended and waiting. "do not delay to pay it (shalmo), ie to complete (hashlim) the angel. For "seek he will seek", double expression, since it refers both on the vow and on the angel. (Pnei David, ki teitzei ot 7).

"kategor" - this prosecutor is created from the power of the sin he committed. It itself always demands justice and accuses until the judgment is exacted from this prosecutor himself. With this we will explain the verse: "woe to the wicked, evil, for the work of his hands will be exacted on him" - ie woe to the wicked for the "evil". Namely, an avenging angel is created from each one of his sins. Woe to him for "the work of his hands will be exacted on him" - the angels of destruction he created. They themselves will exact revenge on him. (Kise David, Drosh 9).

Q Level 3

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "he who performs one mitzvah (commandment) acquires for himself one advocate.." - it seems to me the sage is addressing simple people who are not so interested in fulfilling the will of G-d. In every thing, their main consideration is the profit and loss in the matter. To them the sage turns saying:

Listen, precious Jew. It is clear to you that someday, you will need to return the possessions here in this world and to "move apartment" to the world of truth.

Just like every person, when he moves to a new job, study class, or neighborhood, he seeks there old friends who can help him adjust and explain to him how to manage. Thus he hopes to make the change easier on himself. Likewise, when a person knows that he is being investigated regarding a shiduch, job, kollel, yeshiva, or anything else, he tries to find good friends who will speak good on his behalf and arrange "protexia" (special favors) for him to be accepted in the desired place he dreams of.

So too here and much more so. For when a person comes to the world of truth, he begins a new path and a new home. There he will dwell forever and ever. He will also need to stand before the Beit Din above which will meticulously investigate and scrutinize every act, word, and thought of his in this world to awesome levels of details of absolute justice.

Thus, without a doubt, every person will seek out as much as possible for those who will speak good on his behalf and help him when he stands in judgment before the Master of all and also so they can help him to manage the difficulties in adjusting to this new world.

In light of this, the words of the Tanna are very understandable: "one who does a mitzvah, acquires one praklit (advocate)". This is a recommendation to every person: "know that for every good deed you do, not only do you give great satisfaction to your Maker and Creator, but you add *for yourself* another good angel who will help you and speak good on your behalf in your future judgment in the Beit Din above. He will also help you and improve your stay in the next world.

(as the Vilna Gaon writes on the verse "Wealth adds many friends" (Mishlei 19:4), that the intent of the angels created from one's torah and mitzvot, is that they are his good friends)

Why? Because you created the angel and he wants to express gratitude towards you for his very existence in your merit.

On the other hand, G-d forbid, "he who commits one transgression acquires for himself one accuser". This matter has enough power to quake every sensible person when he wants to commit a sin.

For in this, the Tanna (sage) comes to explain to us: not only are you ungrateful and returning evil for good to your Maker and Creator who bestowed on you countless favors and kindness all the days of your life, and not only do you cause great pain to the Holy One, blessed be He, and immense destruction in the upper spiritual worlds through your sin - but first of all you hurt yourself directly. Is it not enough for you the fact that on the day of judgment in the world of truth, all your deeds, great or small, will be meticulously examined in all its details whether it was done properly as it should? Who knows how many of your [good] deeds will pass this examination. Not only this, but you added for yourself sins and transgressions which created cruel angels of destruction (malachei chabala) whose only aspiration is to strike you down. Is this light in your eyes?!

Imagine to yourself that a person is being taken to a human court for breaking the law. Instead of bringing character witnesses who will testify that he is an honest person and that this criminal offense was not befitting such a person, etc. he brings instead witnesses who will testify on him that he is a serial killer who murdered dozens of people and that he is a big crook who breaks into homes every other day and burglarizes stores once a week.

Is there a greater fool than this?! But one who commits sins creates with his own hands angels which will stand on the day of judgment and testify on the light and severe sins he committed. Besides this, they themselves will punish him and embitter his life in the world to come endlessly such that his stay there will not at all be pleasant..

One who has a little bit of brain in his head will find his hairs stand up when he thinks on this. For every sin he commits, he invites another witness who will testify against him in the Heavenly Beit Din just how much he is a sinner and corrupt. Is it not enough for him the depth of judgment there that he needs to add for himself more problems?

Now it is difficult. After we understood how awesomely severe it is to commit a sin and that it is a tremendous mistake to invite more and more prosecutors to testify against him on the great day of judgment. If so, what can I do now with all the sins I already committed and all the bad angels created through them?

On this the sage continues: "but repentance and good deeds are like a shield against retribution".

Just like in wars of old, the soldiers went out with shields so that if the enemy shoots arrows or stones at them, the shield will stop them. The shield does not destroy the enemies, it only shields from them.

So too for every person. Even though he has many enemies, namely, the angels of destruction he formed through his sins, r"l, and they want to destroy him and torture him with all sorts of bitter and terrible sufferings in this world and the next.

But if he repents and does many good deeds, then in the meantime, until he merits to annul these destructive creatures, at least he has a shield to protect him from them so they don't harm him.

This is as Rabeinu Yonah wrote in "the Gates of Repentance" (Gate 4): "there is an advice and remedy for the sinner. Namely, through good deeds he can shield himself from troubles... if a man transgressed sins which carry a punishment of death by Beit Din or Karet and he repented.. let him prepare his heart to do mitzvot which shield from sufferings... further, he will find atonement in learning torah always.. for the torah is a medicine for all illnesses..."

Chapter 4 Mishna 12 - Sake Of Heaven

Rabbi Yochanan the sandel-maker would say: any assembly which is for the sake of Heaven will in the end endure, but any assembly which is not for the sake of Heaven will not in the end endure.

רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן הַסַּנְדָּלָר אָמַר, כָּל כְּנִסְיָה שֶׁהִיא לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם, סוֹפָה לְהִתְקַיֵּם. וְכָל כְּנִסְיָה שֶׁהִיא לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם, אֵין סוֹפָה לְהִתְקַיֵּם.

Q Level 1

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "for the sake of Heaven" - an assembly l'Shem Shamayim - for torah and good deeds.

"not for the sake of heaven" - when they assemble to domineer over each other and honor themselves over each other.

Q Level 1

Sfas Emes

Sfas Emes - even in an assembly for secular needs of this world, let it's intent be l'Shem Shamayim. For "know G-d in all your ways" (Mishlei 3:6).

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan - "any assembly which is for the sake of Heaven will endure.." - whether in a marriage, or when people assemble to make conditions in their dealings (iskehem), or in visiting the sick, or in a funeral procession, or comforting the mourners, or bringing joy to bridegrooms (chatanim) at a wedding - if the aim of their assembling is l'Shem Shamayim (for G-d), it will endure and succeed. But if their assembling is not l'Shem shamayim, it will not succeed and hold.. For "falsehood has no legs". It breaks apart the joined together and all the more so does falsehood not join together the separate. But truth shall stand forever.

Q Level 3

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "any assembly which is for the sake of Heaven will in the end endure.." - as known, when a man does a mitzva and fulfills G-d's command, he builds mystical worlds of holiness, as our sages expounded: "do not read [the verse] 'your sons' (banayich), but rather 'your builders' (bonayich)" (Berachot 64a), and as scripture states "I have placed My word in your mouth.. to plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth" (Isaiah 51:16).

This is man's reward in Olam Haba. Namely, he is given all the worlds and mystical lights that were added through him. And he delights and enjoys them eternally.

But for sins, it is the opposite. He builds worlds of falsehood and strengthens evil and weakens the powers of good, demolishing and destroying mystical worlds (of good), as scripture states: "those who destroy you and those who lay you waste shall go forth from you.." (Isaiah 49:17). This is the matter of Gehinom.

They exact payment from him after his death, according to the punishment sentenced to him by the Holy One, blessed be He, for the sin.

After he receives the punishment, these forces of evil are destroyed on their own. For their life-force stems only from the sin.

This is what our sages said: "any assembly which is for the sake of Heaven", ie the mystical worlds of holiness he brought and created through his torah study and mitzvah performance - "will in the

end endure". For he will delight and enjoy them forever, since they are eternal worlds which endure forever.

But "any assembly which is not for the sake of Heaven.." - ie that were created from sin - "will not endure in the end", as we explained.

Chapter 4 Mishna 13 - Honor Of Student

Rabbi Elazar ben Shamua would say: let the honor of your student be as dear to you as your own, and the honor of your peer as the reverence for your Rabbi, and the reverence for your Rabbi as the fear of Heaven.

רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן שְׁמוּעַ אָמַר, יְהִי כְבוֹד תַּלְמִידְךָ חֲבִיב עֲלֶיךָ כְּשֵׁלְךָ, וּכְבוֹד חֲבֵרְךָ כְּמוֹרָא רַבָּה, וּמוֹרָא רַבָּה כְּמוֹרָא שְׁמַיִם.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "let the honor of your student be as precious to you as your own.." - as we find by Moshe who said to his disciple Yehoshua: "choose for us men" (Ex.17). He made Yehoshua his equal (ie since he did not say "choose for me" - Meorei Ohr)

"and the honor of your peer as the fear (reverence) of your Rabbi" - as Aharon said to Moshe: "please my master" (Bamidbar 12), despite that Moshe was his younger brother.

Q Level 1

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "let the honor of your student be as precious to you as your own.." - ie every person according to his [due] honor. But the intent is not that one should honor his student like his peer. For that is not so. Rather the intent is that just like you are not permitted to reduce the honor due to your peer, so too you are not allowed and you do not have permission to reduce the honor due to your student.

Q Level 2



Merkevet Hamishna - "let the honor of your student.." - since in the previous mishna, Rabbi Yochanan spoke about which assemblies endure and which do not endure, this sage comes to explain.

He says that if you wish to know which assembly will endure, it is the assembly where the people honor each other, even the superiors to the inferiors. But the assembly which does not endure is that which has disputes (machloket)...

Q Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - included in the duty to honor G-d is to honor His holy items (ex. torah scroll) and holy people, as written "you shall honor an elder and fear your G-d" (Vayikra 19:32). Therefore, this sage exhorted us to honor those who cling to the torah, according to their successive levels in the way of "maalin b'kodosh" (ascending holiness)...

Q Level 3

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - by nature, a person feels more the need to honor his Rabbi, than he feels the need to honor his peer. Likewise regarding his student. The more superior the person in his presence is to him, the more he naturally feels the need to honor him..

The Midrash Shmuel explains that certainly the intent is not to equate the level of due honor to the student as the peer or Rav. Rather, the intent is only to say that one should strive to honor every person one level above the honor truly due to him.. The reason for this is to distance a person from sin. For every person who interacts with others, it is almost certain that he will stumble sometimes saying improper words, disrespectful conduct, etc. Thus, he transgresses his duty to honor his fellow man.

He may even sometimes transgress the [severe] sin of humiliating his fellow (halbanat panim) or honoring oneself through putting down another.

How can one prevent this? The sage gives us an advice - strive to honor every person more than what is due to him according to his level..

 **Level 3**

Reishit Chachma, shaar anava, ch.4 - a man needs to honor his fellow even if the fellow is inferior to him and needs him.. A man is under duty to teach and guide his fellow on the good path and to love him like himself. If you asked your friend a favor and he did not do your wish, do not condemn him.

A wise man said: "if I requested something from a friend and he did not do it, I would tell myself that my request was not granted due to my sins and I forgive him for not having done it.

When benefiting your fellow have intent l'Shem Shamayim (for the sake of Heaven) - not to receive praise from people. And if your fellow sinned against you or wronged you even a lot, remove the anger from your heart and forgive him immediately.. Even if he is your enemy who caused you a lot of anguish, pay him back good for his evil.

Know that troubles that befall a man in this world are only due to his sins. No man has the ability to harm another without help from above due to his sins. Therefore, do not condemn your fellow but condemn instead your own sins, as scripture says: "due to your sins you were sold" (Isaiah 20:1).

Chapter 4 Mishna 14 - Error In Talmud

Rabbi Yehuda says: be heedful of the Talmud, for an error in Talmud is accounted as intentional.

Rabbi Shimon said: there are three crowns - the crown of torah, the crown of the priesthood, and the crown of kingship, but the crown of a good name surpasses them all.

רבי יהודה אומר, הוי זהיר בתלמוד, ששגגת תלמוד עולה זדון. רבי שמעון אומר, שלשה כתרים הם, כתורא וכתר מלכות, וכתר שם טוב עולה על גביהן.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "be heedful of the Talmud, for an error in Talmud is accounted as intentional" - if you made a mistake in a talmud ruling due to negligence of not examining it meticulously and you permitted the forbidden, the Holy One, blessed be He, will consider this as if you did it intentionally.

Q Level 3

☆ Chida

Chida, Petach Einayim, Bava Metziah 33b - why "any mistake in Talmud is accounted as intentional"?

Why can't the talmid chacham (torah scholar) be like the am haaretz (torah ignorant)?

This is not difficult. For the talmid chacham (torah scholar) knows how to learn [talmud] and understand. Due to this, it is a sin. But the am haaretz (ignoramus) did not learn nor understand. Furthermore, due to the greatness of the neshama (soul) of the talmid chacham, the damage [in the mystical worlds] is great, similar to "around Him it is stormy" (Tehilim 50:3), unlike the soul of the am haaretz which is from the world of Asiyah (lower world).

Furthermore, when the talmid chacham sins there is a chilul Hash-em (desecration of G-d's Name)..

Q Level 4

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "be heedful of the Talmud, for an error in Talmud is accounted as intentional" - Talmud is the clarification of the reasons of the mishna (oral law), every matter according to what needs clarification. If one is not careful in it and gives an incorrect reason, he will come to deduce something which is not true. This is considered as intentional.

It is proper to ask: why did he say "be careful in talmud", and not "be careful in mishna". Is one not liable to err also in mishna? Why did he exhort on the talmud? Furthermore why does error specifically in talmud count as intentional?

The explanation of this is that the talmud is not like the mishna. For the mishna does not clarify matters completely. It merely states the law as it is while the Talmud clarifies the underlying reasons to understand the matter through intellect and wisdom.

Therefore, he said: "unintentional in talmud is considered intentional". For unintentional is error and the cause of error is the physical. For if the physical is inactive, the intellect is active and then there is no misjudgement and error. Thus, error applies to actions which pertain to the physical body.

And sometimes the intellect (sechel) which shines on the physical man is not with him and thus he

errs. But for the [transcendent] intellect, it is not applicable to err. Therefore, "talmud is considered intentional". For since the talmud is of intellect (sichli), he should not have erred.

To what is this similar? To a man who walks in darkness and breaks objects in his path. Certainly it is proper to call him unintentional since he did not see. But a man who walks and has a lit candle which shines light and nevertheless, he breaks objects due to not putting to heart - certainly this is considered intentional. For he had a shining candle and nevertheless did not put to heart [to look].

Therefore, specifically "since any mistake in TALMUD shall be counted as intentional". For there is no matter which is completely intellect like the talmud, not mishna nor tanach (scripture). And thus he does not have the same shining candle when he learns these things and as before on the level of intellect there is no error at all.

In the talmud (Bava Metzia 33b):

Rabbi Yehuda ben Ilai expounded: What is the meaning of the verse: "Show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins" (Isaiah 58:1)? [Answer:] "Show my people their transgression" - refers to scholars, whose unwitting errors are accounted as intentional faults; "and the house of Jacob their sins" - to the ignorant, whose intentional sins are accounted to them as unwitting errors. And that is the meaning of what we learned: "R. Yehudah said: Be heedful of the Talmud, for an error in Talmud is accounted as intentional" (Avot).

The explanation is that the talmid Chacham (talmud scholar) who has a shining candle on his head, as written: "the chacham's eyes are on his head" (Kohelet 2:14).

Thus he should not err on any matter, always employing his intellect and thus not erring. Even for matters of the body he should be careful and not err at all. Therefore, even his unintentional mistakes are considered intentional.

But for an am haaretz (torah ignorant) it is the opposite. Even his intentional is considered unintentional. For he lacks the intellect (sechel, ie true intellect which comes through torah study). The am haaretz (ignorant) is entirely bodily and like someone walking without a [lit] candle. Therefore, even his intentional is considered as unintentional since he is [primarily] a man of the physical and error is from the [side of the] body..

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "there are three crowns.." - written in the torah which the torah obligates honoring.

"*the crown of torah*" - as written: "you shall honor an elder" (Vayikra 19), which refers to one who acquired [torah] wisdom.

"*the crown of the priesthood*" - as written there: "you shall sanctify him", and "he shall be holy to you".

"*the crown of kingship*" - as written: "you shall place a king over yourselves" (Devarim 17:15), which our sages expounded "that fear of the king shall be upon you".

"*the crown of a good name*" - one who has done good deeds and has a good reputation due to them, even though we don't find the torah obligates honoring him, but nevertheless, he is above all the other crowns. For they all need this...

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "three crowns.." - not one of the three crowns nor all three together are worthy of

being called crowns if they don't have a good name alongside them. Namely, through good deeds he can do through that crown.

For wisdom, lineage, or wealth are gifts from G-d. One did not earn them through his own efforts. If he uses this crown for good deeds, fortunate is he. He is a crowned king in Israel. But if not, he is the lowest of the low and the crown on his head is like a nose ring on a pig's snout.

Q Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Ahava b'Taanugim - "three crowns" - he said "three crowns" to exclude. ie do not say there are four crowns. For the crown of a good name cannot be attained without first attaining one of these three crowns. This is what he said "there are three crowns.." The crown of a good name is not counted with them. For it can only sprout and rise on top of them. Namely, after there is a foundation of one of these crowns or all of them, then the crown of a good name can sprout and rise. Thus he said "three crowns" and not "four crowns".

Alternatively, "three crowns" comes to exclude other external qualities such as wealth, might, sons. For specifically only the three crowns in the mishna are proper crowns to coronate oneself with and are worthy of being called crowns if he acquired one of them.

Perhaps he said "three crowns" to exclude the view that it is only one crown. For the crown of torah is the cause of all of the other crowns, since regarding the crown of priesthood it is written: "he (the kohen) shall teach your statutes (torah) to Jacob" (Devarim 33:10), and regarding a king scripture states: "through me (the torah) kings are coronated" (Mishlei 8:15)..

Q Level 2

Chida

Chida, Kisei Rachamim - why did he not include the crown of prophecy? Because the prophet is like an angel and a man of G-d while our mishna is referring to human beings. Alternatively, the crown of torah is whole and when he merits the crown of torah wholly (b'shlemut), prophecy will come to him.

Q Level 2

Chatam Sofer

Ketav Sofer, Avot - "the crown of a good name surpasses them all" - as written: "one with whom people are pleased, G-d is pleased; but one from whom people are displeased, G-d is displeased" (Avot 3:12). Thus, if we see that the person who acquired the crown of torah, priesthood, or kingship, also has a good name, then we can know that his intent is l'Shem Shamayim (to G-d, not for honor, etc.) For through the good name, these three crowns also attain importance..

Q Level 3

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "there are three crowns - the crown of torah, the crown of the priesthood, and the crown of kingship" - the crown of torah is greater than all of them. Thus one who merits it is greater than those who merited only the crown of priesthood or kingship.

In the talmud: "a mamzer (bastard) torah scholar comes before a kohen gadol am haaretz (torah ignorant high priest)" (Horayot 13a). Thus even the person of lowest geneology (a mamzer) who cannot even marry into the congregation - he comes before the Jew of highest geneology (high priest), provided he has the crown of torah.

Another proof is from the vessels in the temple. The crowns (zerim) of the vessels which represent Priesthood (kehuna) and Kingship (malchut) are only in the holy chamber (Heychal), namely, the crowns on the Shulchan (Table which represents malchut/kingship) and the golden altar (which represents kehuna/priesthood). But the crown which represents the torah was on the holy ark which was in the holy of holies.

Hence, the torah is what brings a man close to G-d in the highest manner possible and thus its level is higher than the other crowns...

Indeed the crown of torah was written first [in this mishna] because it is the primary purpose and goal of everything.

The goal of the other two crowns is merely to draw a person to the service of G-d and thus merit the crown of torah.

The purpose of the kohanim/priests is to draw the people to the torah in pleasant ways as written by Aharon (the high priest) who "loved peace and pursued peace, loved the public and *drew them close to the torah*" (Avot 1:12).. and likewise the purpose of the kohanim/priests and the tribe of Levi is to teach torah, as Moshe blessed them: "they shall teach Your statutes to Jacob and Your Torah to Yisrael" (Devarim 33:10).. and in parsha Mishpatim, when there is a question in a torah law "and you shall come to the Levitic kohanim and to the judge who will be in those days, and you shall inquire, and they will tell you the words of judgment" (Devarim 17:9)...

Sometimes, there are those who refuse to hearken to the laws of the torah. This is where the king comes in, whose purpose is to punish those who rebel [against the torah law] and return them to the good path..

Chapter 4 Mishna 15 - Exile Yourself

Rabbi Nehorai would say: exile yourself to a place of torah; say **הוֹי גּוֹלָה לְמַקּוֹם**, not that it will come after you, that your colleagues will [help] **וְאֵל תֵּאמַר נְשִׁיא תְּבֵא אַחֲרַיָּךְ**, uphold it in your hand; And "do not rely on your own **שְׂחִבְרֶיךָ יְקִימוּהָ בְיָדְךָ. וְאֵל בִּינְתָךְ אֵל** understanding" (Mishlei 3:5). **תִּשְׁעֶן (משלי ג)**.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "exile yourself to a place of torah" - if there are no torah scholars in your place (city).

"say not that it will come after you" - that torah scholars will come to your place.

"that your colleagues will [help] uphold it in your hand" - do not rely on your colleagues, that when they return from the Rav, you will learn from them what they learned from the Rav. Rather, exile yourself to the place of the Rav. For hearing from the student is not like hearing from the Rav.

Alternative explanation: why do I tell you "exile yourself to a place of torah"? So that "your colleagues will uphold it in your hands" - even if you are extremely sharp and knowledgeable, nevertheless the torah will not endure by you except through debating it with colleagues.

Thus he continues: "do not rely on your own understanding".

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel - "exile yourself to a place of torah" - for we see many times that the students who study torah in their homes, for it is comfortable and enjoyable at home, then the comfort overpowers them and the toil and in depth study of torah weakens.. thus he said: "exile yourself to a place of torah"..

"do not rely on your understanding" - rather join with peers to debate (l'palpel). It is known what our sages said: " 'a sword to the loners' (Yirmiyahu 50:37) - ie a sword of the divine attribute of justice hangs over the loners who study torah alone. For their toil is false and they will become foolish and not attain correct knowledge.

Q Level 2

☆ Ahava b'Taanugim

Ahava b'Taanugim - "a place of torah" - a place where the goal of the people there is only toil in torah. All of their goal and aspiration is solely in toil in torah. This is called a "place of torah". For when a man stands in such a place, perforce he will sit and learn torah due to seeing the people there whose only desire is toil in torah..

Q Level 3

Merkevet Hamishna - the reason this mishna follows the previous one (three crowns..) is so that one thinks about the greatness of the crown of torah. It is the head of all crowns. Therefore one should not be concerned if he needs to suffer until he reaches it. Thus he exhorted to exile oneself to a place of torah and not be distressed by the sufferings of exile due to the resulting lofty purpose and gains he will attain. On this Shlomo said: "if you will seek it like silver and search for it like hidden treasures.." (Mishlei 2:4).

Just like people travel and exile themselves from place to place, crossing seas, etc., unconcerned by the dangers on the roads and the sea. For in their travels they place opposite their eyes their aspirations of great monetary profits that they will gain and thus are unconcerned by the sufferings

they will endure in their journeys and hardships.

If a person does this regarding torah, thinking of the reward he will attain through the torah and is unconcerned by the suffering - then it will cause him to acquire wisdoms. This is what Shlomo continues: "then you will understand fear of G-d" (Mishlei 2:4)...

🔍 Level 4

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "exile yourself to a place of torah" - the Tanna (sage) used the term "exile", not "dwell", nor "go", not even "uproot [yourself]", but rather "exile [yourself]".

What is he trying to emphasize by choosing this term (exile)?

The midrash Shmuel says: "the intent is that he flee to escape for his life like a murderer who is exiled [to a city of refuge]..."

Just like the purpose of the exiled murderer is to save himself from physical death, so too one who goes out to learn torah needs to feel that he is saving himself from spiritual death, from becoming immersed in the cesspool of physicality.

Life in exile is not easy. One's livelihood is not found in abundance. Living conditions are not the best.

The Yaavetz points out that one in exile faces many hardships. He suffers humiliations and no one recognizes him.

So too the obligation to study torah exists in all situations, even when travelling to a place where no one recognizes him and he drops to a lower social standing.

To emphasize this, the Tanna uses the term "exile yourself to a place of torah". One who goes to study torah must conduct himself like an exiled person, with everything this implies..

The benefit from exiling oneself is intense study. To immerse oneself in torah with a mind free from the vanities of this world. This can only occur when one distances from his home and separates from matters of this world..

Furthermore, when a man goes out to a different place to study, he learns to value every second and utilizes his time to learn. For this is the reason he left his home..

The Midrash Shmuel brings: "the main torah study of a man is when he is exiled from his place, away from the place of his father, mother, relatives and friends - so that they don't pamper him and indulge him."

The main study of a man in his youth needs to be far from his family and parent's home so that he is far from the pampering of the home. Learning out of comfort and laziness is not like learning out of effort and strengthening over difficulties. A hint to this: "my father and mother left me but G-d has gathered me in" (Tehilim 27:10).

Another explanation: one who needs to move residence and is unsure where to go. The Tanna tells him: "exile yourself to a place of torah". When you need to move for reasons of livelihood or some other reason - choose "to exile to a place of torah".

One who needs to find a home should first and foremost seek a place of torah, even if this entails

difficulties in other areas.

The needs of the soul come before the needs of the body. The spiritual direction is more important than the directions of the air [in the apartment]..

In the talmud (Shabbat 147b): "his name is not 'Nehorai', but rather Rabbi Elazar ben Arach.. Why then was he called 'Nehorai'? Because he illuminates the eyes of the sages in Halacha".

Thus Nehorai was a nickname of one of the Tanaim (early sages) who merited this nickname due to his tremendous sharpness.. He was the epitome of one who illuminates the path [in torah]. Indeed Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai said he alone outweighed all the sages in Israel in torah (Avot 2:10).

From such a great sage, surely we should find many teachings in his name in the mishna. But actually we find his name very, very few times relative to his peers, Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Eliezer. Where was this sage hidden?

Our sages teach that while the other sages remained in Yavne, the place of torah and the sages of the Sanhedrin, even after the death of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai, Rabbi Elazar ben Arach went to "Diyomsit". Diyomsit was a place blessed with springs of water with healing effects. The place also excelled in wine making.

The talmud reports what happened to Rabbi Elazar ben Arach after he returned from that place, after a prolonged stay in this place of rest. He returned to his peers and wanted to return to his studies. He opened a chumash (torah) where the first mitzvah is written (Parsha Bo): "this month shall be to you.." (hachodesh haze lachem..)

Instead of saying "hachodesh haze lachem.." (this month shall be to you), he said by mistake "hacheresh haya lebam" (their heart was deaf)!

Due to the prolonged time he spent without his peers to push him in learning, he distanced so far from his studies that he erred even in identifying similar hebrew letters. The letter "Dalet" became "Reish", "zayin" became "yud", and "chaf" became "beit" and he said: "their hearts became deaf".

It was not a coincidence that he said these words. From Heaven, he was shown just how much the distancing from a place of torah damaged him. His wellspring was blocked and his heart closed. His mind no longer grasped words of wisdom, like a deaf man who hears nothing.

When his peers saw the extent of what happened, "they prayed for him and his torah returned". Through the power of their prayers, his peers, the great tannaim (mishnaic sages), restored his torah to him. But "a miracle does not occur every day". Not every person merits to friends on the level of the Tannaim who can repair what he corrupted.

Therefore, the Tanna exhorts every one of us: "exile yourself to a place of torah"!

"do not say your friends wil come after you" - in the talmud there (Shab.147b) it implies that desire for comfort is what drew Rabbi Elazar ben Arach to Diyumsat. There it says that the beautiful and healthy waters there: "destroyed 10 tribes of Israel". Rashi there explains: "they were drawn after enjoyments and busied in that instead of torah. Thus, they went out to evil ways."

Hence, it is the drawing after physical pleasures which prevents a man from toiling in torah study.

Even regarding Rabbi Elazar ben Arach, the talmud says there: "he visited there", but afterwards "he was drawn after it" - he was drawn after the pleasures (Rashi: after the wine and bathing). Thus, automatically: "his learning left him"..

In the Midrash (Kohelet Rabba 7): "Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai had five primary disciples.. when he died they went to Yavne except for Elazar ben Arach who went by his wife at Diyumsat.. At first he did not intend to leave his peers.

Rather, "he waited for them to come by him, but they did not come".

When he realized this, "he sought to go to them". He did not want to leave his friends. He realized the benefit of "acquire for yourself a friend" (Avot 1:6) for torah study. But his wife did not let him. She said to him: "who needs who? Who is the greatest sage of the group?"

He answered her: "they need me". The Rav (Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai) crowned him as the greatest of the disciples.

His wife further asked him: "a jug (of food) and mice. Do the mice go after the jug or the jug goes after the mice?" ie one who needs something needs to go after it. They need you. With these words, she injected the poison of arrogance in his heart and "he listened to her and sat until he forgot his learning"...

From here we learn the importance of being in a place of torah, even for a giant of giants like Rabbi Elazar ben Arach...

Level 4

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "exile yourself to a place of torah" - it is known that one who is exiled to a city of refuge (ir miklat, due to accidental murder) cannot leave there for any reason, as the mishna says:

"Even the top general in the army of Israel like Yoav ben Tzeruyah cannot ever leave there, as written: 'that shall escape there' - [the talmud expounds:] there he shall dwell, there he shall die, there he shall be buried" (Makot 9b).

In this the Tanna teaches us that if you truly want to succeed to grow in torah properly, then you must enter in torah like one exiled to a city of refuge who never leaves there for any reason in the world.

Do not think that if you leave the torah for a short or long trip, then you still have hope to grow in torah. Do not say: "it will come after you", ie due to my being such a big torah scholar, then even if I leave the study, I am not considered leaving the torah. For it comes with me every where I go.

Forget that! For the torah is a divine work, the most sublime of all creations. It does not go and follow after any man who is not immersed in it properly...

Of course, it does not mean that if one pauses for one second from his studies that he will forget everything he learned. For all the torah luminaries of the generation also sometimes stopped learning to attend to needs of individuals or the public. Certainly every person needs to take breaks to and get some air in order to recharge his batteries.

Rather, the Tanna is referring to those people who go out completely from the torah study when they take a break. They become "freed from the torah and the mitzvot". Such people cannot

remember their learning since they removed their mind from it (hesech daat). But the best solution is to know that even if one needs to stop learning for whatever reason, but one should not take his mind off of it COMPLETELY. His thoughts should still be in the learning, like the thoughts of a father who left his only son. Even though he is not in the presence of his son, but he thinks about him and his welfare and looks forward always to when they will be reunited.

So too if we must part from the beloved torah for some time, nevertheless, we should at least look forward and long to when we can return to clinging to it as we cherish.

Level 4

Chida

Chida, Chasdei Avot - "do not say that she (the torah) will come after you" - for the torah is compared to a woman, as our sages expounded: " 'Moses commanded us a law [Torah], an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob' (Devarim 33:7) - read not morashah [inheritance], but me'orasah [betrothed]" (Berachot 57a).

While the Talmid Chacham (torah scholar) is compared to her husband. Thus, it seems that the law should be that the woman should come to the city of the husband when there is no reason not to come. Hence, if the torah is a wife, why should I go after her?.. and in Mishlei/Proverbs 8:17: "[the torah says:] I will love those who love me, and those who seek me eagerly will find me; Riches and honor are with me, powerful wealth.."

This is difficult. For the Halacha is that the woman should honor her husband like a king and serve him and comfort him, as the Rambam wrote (Ishut ch.15), and the torah is the wife of the torah scholar.

Why then does she (the torah) not do like the way of women? Why does the husband need to kill himself over her (study hard) and be subjugated to her all his days? For it is written in Megilah: "[the torah says:] if you leave me one day, I will leave you two days" (Yerushalmi Berachot ch.9).

Why does the torah not do like halacha of the physical woman who is obligated to honor her husband?

If he hides from her [one day] and consoles her, the physical woman should be consoled, like all the laws of the righteous women.

There are two answers to the matter..

One, for the physical wife - this alone is her husband. For a woman cannot have two husbands. This is her lot. Thus she is obligated to treat him like a king and calm him. For without him, she will be all alone, like a woman whose husband went to a faraway land.

Thus, justice obligates that she seek his love for no one else can redeem her.

It is not so though for the spiritual holy wife (the torah). She has many many husbands who seek her attention and love, day and night always. Thus, if one of her husbands turns a cold shoulder, it is like nothing to her. For who dares to insult the princess of the King who has countless husbands much better than him.

Thus, it is up to him to appease her and rouse her love.. If he pursues her, in her holiness, she will return to him if he is faithful to her and she overlooks his transgressions.

Secondly, the husband is obligated to provide his physical wife food, clothing, and marital relations (Onaah). In exchange for these, she is subjugated to him for everything. But for the spiritual wife

(the torah), he is only obligated to her "marital relations" (Onaah), namely, to fix times for torah study.

But for food and clothing, not only does he not provide her this - but it is the opposite - she provides for him food and clothing, and "from faraway she brings her bread" (Mishlei 31:14).

Therefore, the Chacham (torah scholar) is obligated to his spiritual wife. For she does two (food and clothing) while he does only one (Onaah).

This is what is written: "[the torah says] as for me, I will love those who love me, and those who seek me eagerly will find me" (Mishlei 8:17). The extra "I" comes to exclude the physical wife. For she seeks love from her husband. But I (the torah) am not like this. Rather, those who love me, I will love. I need first that they love me. Only then, will I love them and only to those who seek me will I find myself to them. This is the opposite of the physical wife who seeks her husband's face... this is what the mishna says: "do not say that she (the torah) will come after you", i.e. like the physical wife.

Chapter 4 Mishna 16 - Wicked Prosper

Rabbi Yanai would say: it is not in our power [to explain the reason for] the tranquility of the wicked, nor even of the afflictions of the righteous.

רַבִּי יַנַּאי אוֹמֵר, אֵין בְּיַדֵּינוּ לֹא מַשְׁלוֹת הַרְשָׁעִים וְאֵף לֹא מִיַּסוּרֵי הַצְּדִיקִים.

Rabbi Matya ben Charash would say: be first to greet every person. And be a tail to lions rather than a head to foxes.

רַבִּי מַתְיָא בֶן חַרְשֵׁי אוֹמֵר, הָיִי מִקְדָּיִם בְּשָׁלוֹם כָּל אָדָם. וְהָיִי זָנַב לְאַרְיֹת, וְאֵל תְּהִי רֹאשׁ לְשׁוּעָלִים.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - this matter is not known to us, namely, why the wicked prosper and why the righteous are crushed by sufferings.

Q Level 1

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "it is not in our power [to explain the reason for] the tranquility of the wicked, nor even of the afflictions of the righteous" - the righteous do not have tranquility, security, wealth and all the other needs of this world, like the wicked do..

Even though in truth we know that there is a reason for all this, but we are unable to grasp it.

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel - our minds are unable to grasp why the wicked have it good or the righteous have it bad, just like it was not known to the prophets and all of them complained on this matter. This is what he said: "it is not in our hands", ie it is beyond the powers of our mind. For there are many possible reasons.

Sometimes a person we consider wicked is really perhaps righteous and one who we consider righteous is really perhaps wicked.

Sometimes that which we consider something good for the wicked is really very bad for him. And likewise what we consider bad of the sufferings of the righteous is really a great good in the future.

And in the talmud (Berachot 7a): "a wicked person who has it good - is completely wicked. A righteous who has it good - is completely righteous".

This latter case is very rare. For "there is no righteous man in the land who does good and never sins" (Kohelet 7:20).

Q Level 3

Maharal Tzintz

Maharal Tzintz - "it is not in our power [to explain the reason for] the tranquility of the wicked, nor even of the afflictions of the righteous" - we may explain according to the Sefer Ikarim who says according to STRICT justice, it is proper for reward to be temporary and punishment to be eternal. But G-d, in His mercy, does the opposite - he makes punishment temporary and reward eternal.

Even though G-d has pity on the righteous, but nevertheless, to exempt them completely (from punishment for their sins) - that is not possible.

Only that He conducts with the righteous according to the attribute of mercy to give them a temporary punishment (in this world).

But for the wicked it is the opposite. They cause the attribute of mercy to transform to the attribute of justice. Thus, according to strict justice, they deserve only temporary reward (for the little good deeds they did). But their payment [of punishment] in Olam Haba is complete [strict] justice which is eternal.

Thus, G-d acts kindly to the righteous by giving them temporary punishment instead of eternal punishment. But for the wicked, they are paid eternal punishment and temporary reward.

 **Level 1**

☆ **Bartenura**

Bartenura - "be first to greet Shalom to every person" - even a gentile in the marketplace.

"be a tail to lions" - to those bigger than you.

"not a head to foxes" - to those smaller than you.

 **Level 1**

☆ **Rambam**

Rambam - "be a tail to lions rather than a head to foxes" - when a man is a student of one wiser than himself, it is better for him and more proper than being a Rabbi to those less [wise] than himself. For in the former, he will increase [wisdom], while in the latter, he will decrease..

 **Level 2**

Rambam

Meiri - "be a tail to lions rather than a head to foxes" - as written: "one who walks with wise people will become wise, But a companion of fools will suffer harm".

 **Level 2**

☆ **Ahava b'Taanugim**

Ahava b'Taanugim - "be a tail to lions rather than a head to foxes" - the Chacham (torah sage) is called a lion, as in the talmud: "the lion of the group" (Kidushin 48b). The reason is because he is mighty as a lion to toil and bear the burden of the torah. The merchants are compared to foxes. For they need to devise cunning plans and strategies like a fox. On this it was said: "or a fox as a shopkeeper.." (Kidushin 82b).

Therefore, he said: "be a tail to lions..", ie do not tell yourself: "I see my mind is weak and lacking understanding. I will never become a great chacham and will only merit to be a tail to lions. Thus, it is better for me to toil in business and merchandise and become a head of merchants".

Thus the Tanna said: better to be a tail to lions, even if you attain only a little bit of wisdom. For "whether one does a lot or a little - as long as he directs his heart to Heaven" (Berachot 5b), rather than that you become a head to foxes, i.e. a head to merchants.

 **Level 2**

Sfas Emes

Sfas Emes - "fox" - this is a bit difficult. Why did he choose a fox? For there are animals smaller than a fox. Why didn't he choose one of those (ex.a cat). We can answer that it is teaching us that even for a fox who is a bit big and also intelligent/clever, nevertheless, the lion is more important.

 **Level 2**

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan - after exhorting not to be concerned that the righteous need to exile themselves from their place [to a place of torah], he exhorted further so that one will not tell himself: "how can I leave a place where everyone knows me and exile myself to a place where I don't know anyone and the people will not respect me?"

Do not be concerned. For it is better to be the tail of the torah sages (chachamim) than the head of the amei haaretz (torah ignorant)..

Chapter 4 Mishna 17 - Corridor/palace

Rabbi Yaakov would say: this world is like a corridor (hallway) before Olam Haba (the World-to-Come). Prepare yourself in the corridor (hallway) in order that you enter the Palace.

רבי יעקב אומר, העולם הזה דומה לפרוזדור בפני העולם הבא. התקן עצמך בפרוזדור, כדי שתכניס לטרקלין.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "corridor" - entrance room.

"palace" - the place where the king dwells. so too prepare yourself in this world so that you will merit the world to come.

Q Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "corridor" - the room before the entrance to the palace. After knowing that this world is but a corridor, therefore "prepare yourself..." You can see that this world is not a permanent dwelling place (dirat keva), it is merely a temporary dwelling place while Olam Haba is a permanent dwelling place (dirat keva).

Therefore, do not appear in your house as one who stands in his [permanent] home and has ample free time to prepare himself before entering before the king. Rather, consider yourself as one standing in the pruzdor (entrance room) who needs to be dressed up properly and ready lest the the king suddenly call him to enter [inside the palace].

So too, a person does not know his time [of death]. Therefore, all his matters need to be rectified always, especially matters of the next world. And he should consider himself as a servant of the king guarding the door who stands there and waits every second lest the king call him in suddenly and he will need to enter. So too one should repent today lest he die tomorrow.

Q Level 2

Michtav M'eliyahu, chelek aleph - "this world is like a corridor before Olam Haba" - this entire world and everything that happens to us in it - everything is only according to what we need to enter Olam Haba. Everything that leaves an impression in us, everything we can feel - it is all carefully measured and weighed with absolute precision and only according to what we need for this purpose of meriting life in Olam Haba.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel - "this world is akin to a corridor (pruzdor) before Olam Haba.." - for this world is the world of action, to guard and do the commandments of G-d, while Olam Haba is the world of payment (olam hagemul). Thus, this sage said: "prepare yourself in the pruzdor", which is the outer courtyard, to rectify your clothing and your body in order that you enter the *traklin* - the inner palace, the abode of the king..

"Olam Haba" - according to the Rambam, this refers to the world a man enters immediately after his death. Others say it refers to the world after the resurrection and the day of judgment. I leave this to what I saw in the words of our sages and in the "Shaar Hagemul" of the Ramban who spoke extensively on the matter.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan - just like one does not enter the courtyard of the king without intent to enter the palace, so too make this world secondary in your thoughts. Do not put to heart its

imaginary benefits. For they are vanity. Instead run after the benefits with which you will reach the primary purpose. Exile yourself to a place of torah where the lions are (see previous mishna) and get up and flee from the amei haaretz (torah ignorant) who are the "foxes who destroy the vineyard" (Shir 2:15). Prepare yourself with tikunim so that you will be fit to enter the palace of the king..

Q Level 2

☆ Sforno

Sforno - "this world is like a corridor (hallway) before Olam Haba" - the corridor is not at all there for its own purpose. Rather, it is for entering the palace and for beauty. If it does not succeed in this purpose, it is there for nothing.

Likewise for life in this world. He who does not acquire Olam Haba in this world, his stay in this world was for nothing.

Q Level 3

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "this world is akin to a corridor before Olam Haba.." - he did not say what Olam Haba is akin to. He only said afterwards: "prepare yourself in the corridor so that you will enter the palace" - whereby it is understood that "the palace" refers to Olam Haba.

Why did he not mention in the beginning of his words: "this world is akin to a corridor before Olam Haba which is akin to a PALACE"?

The answer is that this world is indeed akin to a corridor for each one of us. However, Olam Haba will not be akin to a palace for every person.

Every person's situation in this world is indeed like a man passing through a corridor. All of us are here like passing guests in a temporary station on the way to a permanent place.

However, what will be the permanent place? This varies from person to person. Each person's conduct on the road will determine what will be his final destination. The corridor leads to different places. It leads to the palace but also to a solitary confinement jail cell.

There are two paths in the corridor and "in the path a man wants to go, he is led" (Makot 10b). Every person marches during their lifetime towards their permanent home - "these to eternal life and these to eternal disgrace" (Daniel 12:2).

Thus the sage did not say what Olam Haba is akin to. For it will vary for every person. One person will reach the palace. Another will find at the end of the corridor a normal room. A third person may find at the end of the road a place whereby the corridor was vastly much better.

Q Level 3

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "Prepare yourself in the corridor (hallway) in order that you enter the Palace" - the mitzvot a man does are his reward. He himself makes his own reward. The reward is to "delight in G-d and derive pleasure from the radiance of the Shechina (divine presence)". One who is greater than his fellow can approach closer and his place (mechitza) is more inner than his fellow. This is the true joy.

Through torah and mitzvot he can draw closer. For the 613 mitzvot are 613 garments for the 248 limbs and 365 sinews. When one is fully clothed, he can come closer to the Creator and delights [more].

Thus man himself makes his own garment so that he can enter to receive reward..

It is to these garments our sages intended when saying: "one who does a mitzvah acquires a defending angel" (Avot 4). For all things above are "living"..

Q Level 3

Ahava b'Taanugim

Ahava b'Taanugim - "in order that you enter the Palace" - every mitzvah makes a garment for the soul as written in the Zohar (Vayakhel 210a). This is so that the soul will be able to ascend and enter before G-d, blessed be He. For just like one cannot enter the courtyard of a [human] king wearing sackcloth and ashes, rather he needs to prepare clothing befitting the honor of the king, as written: "and he shaved, changed his clothing [and came to Pharaoh]" (Bereisheit 41:14).

So too for man in this world. All his deeds are in order to rectify and refine himself in order that he will be able to enter the palace and appear before the King. For the soul cannot ascend to appear before the King without proper clothing.. do not think the "soul returns to G-d" (kohelet 12:7) after death and none prevent it. Thus he compared Olam Haba to a king's palace. There are guards at the entrance who allow only those fitting to enter...

Q Level 3

Sfas Emes

Sfas Emes, Emor 5636 - "corridor" - for this world is only for a brief time, just like a corridor where one walks through it in a short time, "our days on the earth are like a passing shadow".

Although it also says (next mishna): "one hour of good deeds in this world is better than all the life in Olam Haba", for even in this world, there exists a hidden light which is of Olam Haba, as written: "may you see your world in your lifetime" (Berachot 17a).

Only that [this light] is encloded in this world and the garment is a corridor. That is to say, according to how much a person works on not clinging to the garment (of this world), namely, according to his service and separation from the material (gashmiut) - accordingly the hidden light in it will open to him, ie, the palace.

This is the meaning of "rectify yourself in the pruzdor", whereby the primary tikun in physical matters is to separate from the klipa (outer shell). Through this, the inner matter will reveal itself to you.

This is the meaning of "the wicked prepares but the righteous will wear it" (lyov 27:17). For the whole klipa is a preparation to find afterwards the hidden light in it.

This itself is teshuva (repentance, literally: return). For one returns to the inner life in matters of this world, to cling to the root of the matter. Through this he elevates everything to its (spiritual) root.

Likewise for "good deeds", the explanation is that he does every matter while clinging to the light, the good hidden in it. This is as our sages brought: "G-d, hid the hidden light for the righteous". And all hiding is in a place of darkness and concealment.

For as before - to find the hidden light through the outer service as before.

The main thing is that all of this world appear in his eyes like a corridor, etc. According to the degree of annulment will the inner side be revealed to him.

Q Level 3

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim - the mishna is coming to teach us that without Olam Haba, this world would have no reason to exist whatsoever. For this world's entire existence is to be a pruzdor (corridor) before the palace, to rectify oneself in the pruzdor in order to merit to enter the palace.

One might think there is room to say that this world has its own independent reason to exist.

Namely, to toil in torah and mitzvot here in this world of action and that man was created for this. The Olam Haba is then the place of paying the reward.

But it is not so (rather man was created for Olam Haba), as the Ramchal writes:

"Man was created solely to delight in G-d and to derive pleasure in the radiance of the Shechina (divine presence). For this is the true delight and the greatest pleasure that can possibly exist. The place of this pleasure is, in truth, in Olam Haba (the World to Come). For it was created expressly for this purpose" (*Path of the Just, ch.1*)

This world is only as a corridor before the palace, a means to Olam Haba which is the purpose. (Kochvei Ohr 21).

Our sages taught: "this world is like the land while Olam Haba is like the sea. If a man does not prepare in the land, what will he eat in the sea?" (Ruth Rabba 3:3).

The foundation of the matter is that Olam Haba is like the sea, a barren place which has no power whatsoever to sprout and grow. The place to grow is only in this world, in the trials and tribulations of this world, the pain and despair, the mud and dirt. There exists the power of sprouting and growth. And the more mud and dirt, the more the potential to sprout and grow.

This is what our mishna says "this world is like a corridor before the palace". Certainly, the purpose is the palace. But in order to enter the palace, prepare yourself in the corridor. For there is the power of growth...

With this we will understand what our sages said:

In the future, the Holy One, blessed be He, will take a torah scroll in His embrace and proclaim: "Let him who has occupied himself in this, come and take his reward."

Thereupon all the nations will crowd together in confusion, as it is said: All the nations are gathered together (Isaiah 49:11). The Holy One, blessed be He, will then say to them: "Come not before Me in confusion, but let each nation come in with its scribes"....

The nations will then plead. "Offer us the Torah anew and we shall obey it." But the Holy One, blessed be He, will say to them:

"You foolish ones among peoples, he who took trouble [to prepare] on the eve of the Sabbath can eat on the Sabbath, but he who has not troubled on the eve of the Sabbath, what shall he eat on the Sabbath? Nevertheless, I have an easy command which is called Sukkah. Go and carry it out... Straight away every one of them betake himself and go and make a Sukkah on the top of his roof; but the Holy One, blessed be He, will cause the sun to blaze forth over them as at the Summer Solstice and every one of them will trample down his Sukkah and go away, as it is said, "Let us break their bands and cast off their cords from us" (Tehilim 2:3)... (Avodah Zara 2)

According to our words this is clear. For G-d showed them they are not willing to stand up to the trials of this world. The secret of this world which brings to the next world is that only one who toiled before the Sabbath, ie in the trials of matters of this world, in the mud and dirt - he will eat on the Sabbath. For the power of sprouting and growth is only from the trials of mud and dirt of his world...

This is what our sages said: "according to the pain is the reward" (Avot 5:23). For according to the pain, according to the mud and dirt one passes through - through this is the power to grow. Thus

performer, according to the amount of pain is the reward. Thus Shlomo said: "even (af) my wisdom stood by me" (Kohelet 2:9), which our sages expounded: "the torah I learned with difficulty (af) - it stood by me" (Yalkut Shimoni 968). For according to the difficulty is the reward.

This is what our sages expounded (Midrash): "Yaakov dwelled (vayeshev).. (Bereisheit 37:2) - Yaakov sought to dwell in tranquility (b'shalva), immediately the calamity of Yosef befell him.. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: 'is it not enough for the righteous what is prepared for them in Olam Haba that they seek to also dwell in tranquility in this world?!'" (Midrash there).

At first view, what will they lack in dwelling in tranquility also in this world? But according to our words it is very clear.

For the power of sprouting and growth is only in the trials and tribulations of this world. If they sit in tranquility here, they will be lacking the mud and dirt of this world, the secret of this world.

What a great loss this would be! And since: "G-d rebukes those He loves" (Mishlei 3:12). Therefore G-d gives them one trial after another so that they will grow continuously.

How unfortunate are those people who seek only comfort in this world. For they lack this world, the power of growth and he who did not toil before the Sabbath, what will he eat on the Sabbath?

Q Level 3

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim (Rabeinu Yerucham) - "prepare yourself.." - this world is a place and time of preparation, ie to prepare the soul (nefesh) and perfect it to be a vessel fit to receive the pleasure and delight of the palace in Olam Haba. This is "in order that you enter the palace", ie that you be a vessel fit to receive from the palace - to delight in G-d and derive pleasure from the radiance of His Shechina (divine presence).

On this the Vilna Gaon writes: "the pleasure of Olam Haba is that one will increase continuously knowing (hasagot) Him, blessed be He, and the depth of His torah which is infinite, each time increasing knowledge of Him, more and more. The longing of the soul to cling to Him continuously intensifying and advancing more and more every second .." (Devar Eliyahu, lyov 3:21 see there).

This power stems from the powers of the soul, its limbs to advance further and further. But if the soul is not whole, if its limbs are lacking the ability to advance - it will lack of the eternity of Olam Haba. Woe to that shame, woe to that disgrace!

Q Level 3

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - the matter is not like people are used to thinking. Namely, that the pleasure and radiance of Olam Haba is a reward and payment for one's deeds in this world - to delight in G-d due to one's good deeds in this world. [It is not so.] Rather, the entire existence of Olam Haba is formed and created from this world.. This is stated by the pious Yaavetz:

"Our sages brought: 'he who toiled before the Sabbath will eat on the Sabbath, but he who did not toil on the Sabbath, what will he eat on the Sabbath?' (Avodah Zarah 3a) - examine their words: "what will he eat" and not "he will not eat". The latter expression implies it is possible for him to eat but his punishment is that he will not eat. Thus, they said: "what will he eat?", ie it is impossible for him to eat.. end quote. This is as we said - without this world, Olam Haba has no existence whatsoever.

Q Level 3

☆ **Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)**

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - "prepare yourself" - this world is a place of

preparation, it is here that the pleasure and radiance of Olam Haba sprouts/grows from. In Olam Haba there is no sprouting/growth. There one lives from what was prepared, what each person prepared for himself in this world. Without preparation, it is impossible to merit Olam Haba. There is no entrance to the palace except through the gateway (corridor). This is as our sages said: "he who did not toil on Friday, what will he eat on the Sabbath?"

This is the secret of the matter of "prepare [yourself]".

The foundation of the matter of "prepared" is that everything is already finished and whole (nigmar v'nishlam). The pruzdor (corridor) includes inside the entire traklin (palace). This is the secret of the tzimtzum (constriction) Olam Haba inside Olam Haze (this world), the tzimtzum (constriction) of the Shechina (divine presence) in the preparation.

The secret of the matter of the tzimtzum (constriction) is that it includes the entire thing - without any lacking or absence of it whatsoever. (Daat Chochma u'Mussar 45:76).

Furthermore, it seems the primary place of the performing of the mitzvot is in Olam Haba. The performing of the mitzvot here in this world is only as a preparation.

To what is this analogous? To one who needs to speak before a king. Before the day of his meeting with the king, he prepares himself many times how to speak before the king. He practises speaking properly before the king. He trains himself to listen properly. Not to mention, he teaches himself how to stand before a king in a befitting manner. All this is but a preparation before the act itself.

So too in our matter. The performing of mitzvot in this world is but a preparation in the pruzdor (corridor) for the place of their true performance in Olam Haba - the palace of the King.

There he will study torah, don Tefilin, etc. without the obstruction of the yetzer (evil inclination). Rather, like Adam, the first man, before the sin. There the pleasure of fulfilling them will increase vastly, as the Ramchal writes (Path of the Just, ch.1) "for this is the true delight and the greatest pleasure that can possibly exist".

Level 3

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - this mishna and the next are among the most moving of the entire tractate. If one truly puts it to heart, he almost does not need any other mussar from the rest of Pirkei Avot. For the intent of the sage is to explain to us in the simplest terms the entire purpose of our coming into this world and why we need to learn torah and fulfill mitzvot (commandments), as the Ramchal explains in chapter 1 of the "Path of the Just".

These concepts are so vitally important that I once heard from one of the great mussar masters that all the spiritual drop in later generations is only because we forgot the first chapter of the "Path of the Just". I would add that this chapter is the aleph-beit (alphabet) of all of Judaism.

One who does not know well the fundamentals of this mishna cannot advance anywhere in the service of G-d just like it is impossible to study torah, mishna, and talmud without knowing the Hebrew letters.

In truth I have no reason to expand the explanation of this mishna for it is very simple and one needs to learn it specifically according to its simple meaning, without complicated analysis. The main thing is to set it firmly in one's heart. For this is all of man!

It is clear to me that our teacher, Rabbi Aharon Shteinman zt'l merited to ascend like an angel of G-d vastly higher than all the people of his generation only because of three mishnas of pirkei avot - this one, the next one, and the one of Akavia ben Mehalal (Avot 3:1). For it all stemmed from putting to heart these three mishnas...

Before everything one needs to realize he is only in a corridor. For only this will cause him to reach all the good levels needed to enter the palace. Every person sees with his plain mind only this world. He does not at all recognize Olam Haba. So why should he forego on all the pleasures of this world for something he does not sense or know?

Therefore, only if he realizes that the entire existence he recognizes is only a small corridor relative to the gigantic palace of Olam Haba. Then he will put to heart that it is worthwhile to invest in things that have value in the palace also..

He must first and foremost realize that Olam Haba is primary and is the palace while his 70 or 80 years here are but a corridor. Only then can he consider in his heart on which is it more worthwhile to invest of himself. Through this simple consideration he will come to prepare himself in order to enter the palace.

I once heard a nice parable by Rabbi Shalom Shwadron of a man in Israel who decided to immigrate to America. The journey by boat was long and had a stop in France for 10 days to resupply before proceeding to America.

When he heard this, he decided to study French so that he will be able to manage during those 10 days. He spent his last month in Israel studying french intensely. After some time his french teacher asked him why he is so interested in learning french. After explaining, the french teacher asked him: "do you know english already so that you wil manage in America?"

"No", he replied, "but it is more important to me to know french since I reach France before America".

The teacher did not know whether to laugh or cry: "you fool! you are going to france for only ten days and you invest all your time to learn french while in america you will spend the rest of your life. Why don't you consider how you will manage there?!!!!

Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - "this world is like a corridor..." - it is proper to ask: instead of saying "this world is like a corridor, etc.", he should have said simply: "prepare yourself in this world so that you will enter Olam Haba"?

Futhermore, he should have also said: "Olam Haba is like a palace".

The explanation of this is deep and since a man must know his purpose, therefore, we will explain this matter.

Know that our sages received from the prophets that there exists an Olam Haba. None argue on this or deny it, even among the nations.

A wise man who understands wisdom and knowledge can deduce this by himself..

The explanation of "Olam Haba" is the world after the resurrection. This [alone] is called Olam Haba and nothing else.. And in the talmud: "all Israel has a share in Olam Haba. And these do not have a share in Olam Haba: one who denies the future resurrection..." (Sanhedrin 90a).

The talmud explains there: "since he denied the resurrection of the dead, therefore he will not have a share in the resurrection of the dead".. (see there)

Hence, it is explicit that after the resurrection and after the judgment of the resurrection, then "some will go to Olam Haba and others to eternal disgrace (d'eraon olam)" (Daniel 12:2).

Hence, Olam Haba will be after the resurrection.. And in the talmud (Chulin 142):
"There is no precept in the Torah, where reward is stated by its side, from which you cannot infer the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.."

Thus the reward for mitzvot is after the resurrection. There is no doubt that Olam Haba is the world where there will be the reward for mitzvot..

It is obvious and clear that then the world will be perfect and whole. For reason obligates that the world should be perfect just like G-d who is perfect. According to the level of the Worker should be the handiwork. Thus if only this world existed, the world of lackings, then this work would not be befitting of a perfect Worker, ie G-d, blessed be He, who is absolutely perfect.

It is evident from clear proofs that a handiwork reflects its worker. You can see this in the natural world. That which is hot produces heat (fire), that which is cold imparts cold. Every thing gives rise/birth to something similar to itself and like itself.

Thus is it conceivable that there exists only this world from G-d, this world which is not similar nor like Him?

For all the creatures in this world die, but He, its Maker, lives forever. All creatures in this world eat, drink, and reproduce, but He does not have these traits.

Even if we say that it is impossible for a creation to be similar to the Creator, but nevertheless, something like this - to not have any relation in character, that is impossible.

And in the Midrash on the verse:

"I shall walk amongst you" (Vayikra 26:12) - this is analogous to a king who goes to his vineyard and the farmer hid from him (in fear). The king told him: "why are you afraid? I am as you".

So too in the future, G-d will walk among the righteous and they will tremble before Him. G-d will say to them: "why are you afraid? I am as you". One may think fear/awe of Me will not be upon you, thus the verse continues: "I shall be to you as a G-d" (Midrash Yalkut Shimoni 401, remez 672).

Thus, they explained that in the future, the relation between the righteous and G-d will be according to what is proper between a Worker (Maker) and His handiwork..

Thus, reason obligates that there exists the World-to-Come. There the handiwork resembles its Maker. This is what our sages taught: "in Olam Haba, there is no eating, drinking, reproducing, business dealings.." (Berachot 17a). All this is to emphasize that the handiwork will be related in character to its Creator..

Do not mistakenly think: "but the higher works (angels) [are already similar in character to Him]"?

It is not so. For if it were so that the angels are the primary creation of the world, when the torah

spoke of the creation in Genesis, why did it not mention the creation of the angels?

Rather G-d's primary creation in the world is man and thus there must be an Olam Haba whereby everything will be perfected and there the work will resemble its Maker, as we said.

And this world which G-d created is a preparation for Olam Haba. Olam Haba is primary just like the palace is primary and the corridor before the palace is secondary. So too, this world is secondary to Olam Haba.

If you ask: "What is the need for this world? Just create Olam Haba without this world?"

This is not a difficulty. For the lacking of the effect (man) is visible in this world, the beginning, and afterwards he completes himself.

Although from the aspect of the Maker, it is proper for the handiwork (man) to reflect its Maker completely. But this is only from the aspect of the Maker..

But from the aspect of the handiwork itself, the effect, by itself it should not exist. For before its creation, it did not exist. Therefore, the beginning of its actualizing its potential, it is in a state of lacking. That is this world.

Thus the beginning of its existence is near to inexistence. For this is proper for a handiwork from its own aspect. Thus man is created from a putrid drop and is near to inexistence. Man likewise receives inexistence, namely, death. That is this world. Afterwards Olam Haba comes and then the handiwork (man) attains its perfection and through that, relation to its Maker.

This is like a newborn. The baby comes to this world after complete inexistence. Thus, he begins small and deficient. Afterwards he grows up until he becomes elevated.

So too for the world. It is not proper for Olam Haba to come first. For is it possible for man to be born fully grown? Can a tree sprout to its full size all at once?

He begins small and lacks the qualities he has in the end.

If you ask: why then does man need to die? Why can't he attain his perfection in the end, without dying and returning to life?

This is not at all difficult to those who understand. For this teaches on the lofty level [after death], that he divests himself completely of the first conduct.

For man was created from flesh and blood, from a putrid drop. How could he then attain the lofty level? After all, he is merely flesh and blood. Therefore, it is necessary to divest from this through death and afterwards return to life (in a higher form).

These things are clear to the understanding and this is not the place to elaborate on this point..

Thus he said: "prepare yourself in the corridor.." For all rectification is a beginning for what will be afterwards. And since this world is the beginning while the next world is the end, therefore, he said prepare yourself in the corridor, which is the beginning, so that you will enter the palace which is the end purpose..

Chapter 4 Mishna 18 - Hour Of Repentance

He would say: better one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world, than all the life of the world-to-come; and better one hour of contentment of the world-to-come than all the life of this world.

הוא הי'ה אומר, יפה שעה אחת בתשובה ומעשים טובים בעולם הזה, מכל חיי העולם הבא. ויפה שעה אחת של קורת רוח בעולם הזה, מכל חיי העולם הבא.

Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "better one hour of repentance and good deeds" - ie [utilized] for teshuva and good deeds.

"*than all the life in the world-to-come*" - for in that time, repentance and good deeds do not help a man, since Olam Haba is only to receive reward for what one has fulfilled in this world.

Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "repentance" - to rectify what the soul (nefesh) corrupted.

"*good deeds*" - to add perfection (shelemut) to the soul.

For in Olam Haba it is impossible to rectify the corruption of the soul or to add perfection to it.

"*contentment (korat ruach)*" - the term connotes "calming of one's mind" (nitkarera daato). For in Olam Haba one quiets his longing for the highest pleasure. For he already attained it.

"*than all the life of this world*" - for all pleasures of this world will eventually cease unlike the pleasures of Olam Haba which are eternal. Therefore, it is proper for you to guard your seconds of time which fly away quickly and not waste them. For that would be an irreplaceable loss, a loss of your precious time, the means for you to acquire the precious purpose..

Level 1

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "better one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world, than all the life of the world-to-come" - for in a short time in this world, a person gains Olam Haba.. the utility of this world is only for that purpose.

"*better one hour of contentment of the world-to-come than all the life of this world*" - as our sages said (Shabbat 63a): "All the prophets prophesied only for the Messianic age, but as for the world to come: 'no eye had ever seen..' (Isaiah 64:3)". For the good of Olam Haba has no valuation and no comparison. This is what David said: "how great is the good You have hid away for those who fear You" (Tehilim 64:3). May G-d in His mercy grant us this merit.

Level 1

☆ Rashi

Rashi - "better one hour of contentment of the world-to-come than all the life of this world" - for in this world, man does not have complete peace due to the troubles and evils that befall him and from his day of death which he fears.

"*contentment*" - that his spirit calms (nitkarer daato) and settles due to joy.

Level 2

Maharal Tzintz

Maharal Tzintz - "better one hour of contentment of the world-to-come than all the life of this world" - for in matters of this world, a person does not attain complete joy, since "man was born to toil" (Iyov 5:7), whether he is poor or rich. The poor man worries on his poverty while the rich man

worries on his wealth. For it is liable to various damages, losses, and many potential mishaps which time brings.

Q Level 2

☆ Chida

Chida, Chasdei Avot - "repentance and good deeds in this world" - he specifically said repentance (teshuva) and good deeds. For good deeds without teshuva are considered as nothing. On the contrary, he increases power to the Sitra Achra (forces of evil). Therefore, when a Jew comes to do a mitzvah, he needs to think in repentance (l'harher b'teshuva) in order that this mitzvah ascends favorably before G-d.

Q Level 2

Michtav M'Eliyahu chelek 1 - "better one hour of contentment of the world-to-come than all the life of this world" - ie if we were to combine all pleasures of every person who ever lived in this world and concentrate all the pleasure in one tiny second, nevertheless, it would be less than one "contentment (korat ruach)" of Olam Haba. "Korat ruach" is a tiny pleasure, like that of a poor man who walks on the street outside the king's palace and enjoys the faint smell of the food coming from the palace.

"Korat ruach" - this is the smallest possible reward. Thus we must say it is for the smallest mitzvah of which there is none smaller. For every mitzvah has reward in Olam Haba. Thus it is clear why there is no reward for mitzvot in this world since the reward for the tiniest mitzvah is greater than all of this world.

Q Level 3

☆

Yismach Moshe, Shlach - every person has in his hands Olam Haze (this world) and Olam Haba (the world to come). If he wishes, he may take Olam Haba, the world of eternal bliss, and trade it for this ephemeral world mixed with sorrows.

Fortunate is he [if he takes Olam Haba]. For even if we suppose Olam Haba is only for one hour while this world is for 80 years, nevertheless, his trade is a good one. For our sages already testified that one hour of korach ruach in Olam Haba is greater than all the life of this world.

How much more so if the pleasures of this world are temporary, one day here, next day gone, while the pleasures of the next world are permanent and everlasting. How great and profitable is this business trade! There are some fools who purchase the temporary and ephemeral and all their days are anger and vexation, all their pleasures are imaginary and false and they lose the eternal world and everlasting bliss. Woe to that folly!

Each person can profit or lose. He can ascend higher and higher, "becoming a tzadik like Moshe Rabeinu or a wicked man like Yeravam ben Navat.." (Rambam, Teshuva 5:2). Thus this world is a world of trade.

Q Level 3

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "better one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world.." - this mishna is a continuation of the previous mishna. It comes to drill into us more why it is so important to utilize our time in this world to acquire merits for Olam Haba

In the previous mishna, the sage explains in clear and penetrating manner to those who did not yet attain wisdom: *"this world is but a corridor before Olam Haba"*.

These people tell themselves: "so what if this world is a narrow corridor relative to Olam Haba? Perhaps the main pleasures are found specifically here in the corridor. Thus it is better to utilize one's time to pursue the pleasures and lusts of this world. For in Olam Haba there aren't pleasures

at such a high level [as this world]."

There is definitely an outlook like this as we find in Isaiah (ch.22): "eat meat and drink wine for tomorrow we die". Such people certainly think it is worthwhile to eat meat and drink wine in order to enjoy as much as possible in this world before death. For after death, we will not be able to have so much pleasures.

on this the Tanna answers them: "fools! You measure Olam Haba according to the low level you recognize here in this world? You think Olam Haba is another type of fancy hotel like what you see in the vacation advertisements? Forget all that! Olam Haba is something immensely greater than anything you can possibly imagine!! To such a colossal extent that all the greatest pleasures of this world are not worth even one small scent of Gan Eden from outside". (see Rambam Hilchot Teshuva 8:6).

Whoever hears these things and understands them in his heart will certainly realize that it is very worthwhile to utilize our time in this world to acquire more and more possessions for Olam Haba in order to attain the eternal bliss there which is unfathomable and without comparison.

"better one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world, than all Olam Haba" - in my youth I found this very difficult. How is it possible that before this, the Tanna said Olam Haba is worth more than all of this world and now he says there is something in this world worth more than all of Olam Haba?

This is like saying Reuven has a 100 dollar bill in his hand while Shimon has 10 pennies. Shimon tells Reuven: even though your bill is worth more than my 10 coins, but nevertheless, one of my pennies is worth more than your 100 dollar bill". Is this conceivable?

We can answer according to the famous story of the Vilna Gaon. Near his death, he held his tallit and said: "woe to me that I am leaving a world where it is possible to acquire the mitzvah of tzitzit with a few small coins and I am going to a world where even if I wanted to forego all my Gan Eden in order to merit to do one mitzvah, I will not be granted permission, not even for the smallest mitzvah".

Even though the Vilna Gaon certainly knew that in Olam Haba he will rejoice greatly in the mitzvot he did and the immense reward, but nevertheless, it was clear to him that when he reaches Olam Haba he will very much want to descend again to this world in order to merit to more and more closeness to G-d, which is the reward of Olam Haba.

Even though certainly in Olam Haba no man will be granted permission to do this, as brought in the Talmud: "once a person dies he becomes exempted from the mitzvot" (Shab.30b). But nevertheless, the Tanna uses this concept to picture for us that even the greatest tzadikim who certainly have infinite reward in Olam Haba, but nevertheless they are prepared to forego all their tremendous reward in order to merit to live one more hour of teshuva and good deeds in this world.

This is to rouse us to grab more and more mitzvot every day we live in this world so we don't cry in Olam Haba for not running after the mitzvot [in this world] and then it will already be too late..

Level 3

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - for most people, it is correct to say: *"better one hour of contentment of the world-to-come than all the life of this world"*. Most people are unable to feel closeness to G-d while attached to a physical body. They cannot "derive pleasure from the radiance of the Shechina

(divine presence).. which is the greatest possible pleasure that can possibly exist" (Path of the Just, ch.1).

For most of us, the service of G-d in this world is done primarily out of recognizing our duty in this world and out of hope for future reward. Thus only after leaving this world, separating the spirit from the physical - only then can the soul feel the pure spiritual pleasure.

Therefore, "better one hour of contentment of the world-to-come" - of true spiritual pleasure in Olam Haba, "than all the life of this world" - than all the imaginary pleasures in this world.

But there are some special people, very few, which merit to ascend. They are capable of feeling sublime pleasure without equal while still in this world and attached to a physical body.

Rabbi Yehonatan Eibschutz in his book "Yearot Devash" (derush 12) speaks of those who merited the sublime level of *"you shall love the L-ord your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might"* (Shema).

This is the maximum love of which there is none higher. One who truly loves another and succeeds in pleasing his beloved will delight in this as if he attained all the pleasures of this world and even beyond this.

All the pleasure he attains for himself will not be equal in his eyes to the delight he feels for having succeeded to please his beloved.

Servants of a beloved flesh and blood king are prepared to suffer bitter cold and scorching heat, physical and emotional suffering - everything in order to fulfill the will of their king.

They are even willing to sacrifice their own lives for him. How much more so are these things appropriate regarding love of the Creator..

Regarding those special individuals, it is correct to say: *"better one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world, than all the life of the world-to-come"*.

For only here can a man please his Creator. Only in the world of action there are mitzvot (commandments) and it is possible to fulfill the will of the Creator. Olam Haba is a world of reward only. There it is impossible to fulfill even one single mitzvah.

If so, those who truly love [G-d] prefer the "korat ruach" (contentment) they have in this world when engaged in teshuva (repentance) and good deeds. This pleasure of doing the will of G-d is greater in their eyes. For the "korat ruach" waiting for them in Olam Haba is only for themselves. How then can they possibly delight fully without the possibility to continue to please their Beloved?

Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin in his book Ruach Chaim explains in this manner the verse in Tehilim: "Bestow reward upon Your servant; I shall live and keep Your word" (Tehilim 119:17).

I want to receive my reward in such a way that I will remain alive here in this world. I prefer to live forever in this world and not merit to life in Olam Haba. Why? "that I keep Your word" - here I will always be able to fulfill Your will.

Although eternal bliss is waiting for me - constant closeness to G-d, without the barrier of the body. But for what are all the rivers of paradise (Gan Eden) worth relative to the happiness of fulfilling the

will of my Creator?!

These things appear far from our grasp. But there are many stories of great torah luminaries who were prepared to trade all their portion in Olam Haba in order to merit to fulfill one mitzvah.

Fulfilling the will of their Creator was greater in their eyes than all their reward.

It is told of the Vilna Gaon that he burst into tears near his death. When asked by his disciple about his weeping he replied: "I am not worried about what awaits me after death, but I am pained about leaving this world. I cry because in Olam Haba, I will no longer be able to attain what is easily obtained here."

As he spoke, he lifted his tzitzit and said: "the mitzvah of tzitzit. One can merit it for a few small coins in this world. In this world, one can merit with a tiny effort to acquire more spiritual perfection, to merit to another second of pleasing the Creator. But in Olam Haba, it is impossible to merit to do any mitzvah for any price whatsoever. Whose heart will not weep for losing the ability to merit more perfection? How can I not sigh for losing the ability to please my Maker?"

Indeed great are the tzadikim (righteous) who reached the recognition that: "better one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world, than all the life of the world-to-come".

Level 4

☆ Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim - in the talmud: "the purpose of wisdom is repentance and good deeds" (Berachot 17a). This means that wisdom by itself, the wisdom of torah which is the highest - nevertheless, it is not the purpose. Rather, the purpose of wisdom is repentance and good deeds. Wisdom is as nothing relative to deed.. Wisdom is but a gateway to come to deed.

This is what we learned: "better one hour of repentance and good deeds than all of Olam Haba". For it is impossible to measure and estimate what is hidden and buried in a deed. If we were to do an "analysis" on the tiniest deed, it would reveal to us just how much is hidden and buried there - more than the highest wisdoms... and "*receiving guests is greater than receiving the face of the Shechina (divine presence)*" (Shabbat 127a)...

This is the secret of action! And this is what our sages brought (Bereisheit Rabba 19:7) "the primary [dwelling place] of the Shechina is below (ikar shechina b'tachtonim), ie in the world of deed..."

Chapter 4 Mishna 19 - Do Not Appease

Do not appease your fellow in the time of his anger, nor console him while his dead lies before him (pending burial). Do not question him in the time of his vow (Neder). Do not try to see him in the time of his disgrace.

רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן אֱלֵעָזָר אוֹמֵר, אַל תִּרְצֶה אֶת חֲבֵרְךָ בְּשַׁעַת כְּעֶסוֹ, וְאַל תִּנְחַמְנוּ בְּשַׁעַת שְׁמִיתוֹ (אֶת הַבְּרִיחַ לְפָנָיו, וְאַל תִּשְׂאֵל לוֹ בְּשַׁעַת נִדְרוֹ, וְאַל תִּשְׁתַּדַּל לְרֹאוֹתוֹ בְּשַׁעַת קְלָקְלָתוֹ).

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "do not appease your fellow in the time of his anger" - for appeasing him then will increase his anger.

"nor console him while his dead lies before him" - for on the contrary, when he sees that no one is pained by his pain, he will feel even more pain.

"do not question him in the time of his vow" - for when he makes the vow, certainly he desires the vow for whatever reason. And when you ask him: "did you make the vow even for such and such reason?", he will surely answer: "yes, even for that!"

Then what will you do in the end when he regrets the vow? (you will not be able to find an opening to annul the vow).

"do not try to see him in the time of his disgrace" - for when he stumbled in doing something improper, do not think it will calm him down to see his friends. On the contrary, he will become more embarrassed through this.

Q Level 1

☆ Ahava b'Taanugim

Ahava b'Taanugim - "Do not try to see him in the time of his disgrace" - and at the time he falls and stumbles. For then he hides lest people see his disgrace. But if you strive to look at him, he will think you rejoice at his downfall. Thus, the next mishna is: "when your enemy falls, do not rejoice".

Q Level 2

Bartenura

Bartenura - "do not pacify your fellow in the time of his anger" - as written: "My face shall go before you, and I will give you rest" (Shemot 33) - the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moshe: "wait until My face (so to speak) of anger passes" (Berachot 7a).

"nor console him while his dead lies before him (pending burial)" - at the time of the destruction [of the Temple and Jerusalem], the Holy One, blessed be He, was mourning. The ministering angels sought to console Him but G-d replied to them: "do not press to console Me".

"Do not question him in the time of his vow (Neder)" - to find an opening to annul his vow. For at that time, every opening you find he will [angrily] say "I am making the vow even on that intent!", and then afterwards you will no longer find any opening to annul the vow. We find that when the Holy One, blessed be He, swore to Moshe that he will not enter the land of Israel, Moshe did not beseech Him right away. He waited and afterwards began to beseech Him in prayer.

"do not try to see him in the time of his disgrace" - when he stumbles in sin. For at that time he is ashamed of every man. We also find when Adam sinned, G-d did not appear to him until they made girdles, as written: "and they sewed fig leaves and made themselves girdles" (Gen.3:7), and afterwards: "they heard the voice of G-d.." (Gen.3:8).

 **Level 2**

☆ **Yachel Yisrael**

Yachel Yisrael - from this mishna, we see just how much our great men were sensitive to the needs of others, and careful in the honor of others. Their sensitivity and carefulness was so great that they saw fit to designate a special mishna to things which seem evident. Even so, they included it in order to save a few people from pain and embarrassment.

 **Level 3**

☆ **Maharal**

Maharal - it is proper to ask: what connection do these four things have with each other?

You should know that these four things are all one matter. Namely, that a man be careful to not do something with intent to rectify but which results in the opposite of what he intended.

For this is complete foolishness when it results in the opposite of his intent.

Therefore, "do not try to appease your fellow when he is angry". For when you try to appease him then, he increases rage on his rage. This is because when one is in a state where anger has overpowered him and someone comes to appease him, he increases rage on his rage.

Likewise, "do not console him when his dead lies before him". For here too, when he is in pain and great mourning, if you come to console him and annul his pain, he increases and strengthens even more in his mourning against the annulment.

Furthermore, "do not question him in the time of his vow".. Here too, he increases anger when one asks him if he regrets the vow and he strengthens and increases the vow even more.

"Do not try to see him in the time of his disgrace" - since he is in pain over his stumbling. And one who wishes to see what he does - this is even more painful for him.

For a person who is stumbling, people who see his stumbling are a burden on him, since he is separate/different from other people due to this stumbling. Thus a person does not want other people to see his stumbling.

The person coming intended to please him by feeling pain for his fellow's stumbling, but the result is the opposite. For his pain is greater when his stumbling is visible to others.

Thus, these four things are all one matter.

Chapter 4 Mishna 20 - Enemy Falls

Shmuel Hakatan (the small) would say: "when your enemy falls, do not rejoice; when he stumbles, let your heart not be glad, lest G-d see it and be displeased, and turn away His wrath from him [onto you]" (Mishlei 24:17)

שְׂמוּאֵל הַקָּטָן אָמַר, (משלי כד) בְּנִפְלֵ אוֹיְבְךָ אַל תִּשְׂמַח וּבְכִשְׁלוֹ אַל יִגַּל לְבָבְךָ, פֶּן יִרְאֶה ה' וְרַע בְּעֵינָיו וְהִשִּׁיב מַעְלָיו אִפּוֹ

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "when your enemy falls do not rejoice.." - it's a verse from Mishlei/Proverbs. Shmuel Hakatan was used to rebuking people with this trait.

"lest G-d see it and be displeased" - that in your heart you consider it as if G-d is your messenger to fulfill your desire.

"and turn away His wrath from him" - he did not say "remove" but rather "turn away", implying not only will G-d remove the anger from your enemy, but He will also redirect it upon you.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "Shmuel Hakatan (the small) says:" - he was used to telling himself this verse in order to not stumble in something people are used to stumbling in.

"when your enemy falls do not rejoice; and when he stumbles.." - "falls" refers to bodily harm while "stumble" refers to spiritual harm.

The verse refers to someone who you believe is a wicked man. For otherwise it is forbidden to hate your fellow (Pesachim 113b). Even so, do not rejoice when physical harm befalls him or if he stumbles in sin or some foolish act he did in public.

Even though scripture states: "when the wicked are destroyed, there is song" (Mishlei 11:10), nevertheless this refers to a person evil to G-d and men who is not your [personal] enemy. But if he is your [personal] enemy, hatred skews your perception to judge him negatively even though he is not really so wicked.

Q Level 2

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "when your enemy falls do not rejoice.." - better you pray that they repent and don't perish (as we find by the wife of Rabbi Meir in Berachot 10b).

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel - for the trait of seeking vengeance and bearing a grudge is an evil trait as the torah exhorts: "you shall neither take revenge from nor bear a grudge against the members of your people; [you shall love your fellow as yourself]" (Vayikra 19:18). This is in order that all of Yisrael be beloved friends, as written: "you shall love your fellow as yourself..". Thus this sage comes to exhort against bearing a grudge, to not bear a grudge and rejoice in the fall of his enemy...

"lest.." - Furthermore, it is not proper for a man to tell himself: "this downfall that I am seeing in this enemy is due to me, for I am righteous and just."

Although king David said: "the righteous shall rejoice when he sees vengeance" (Tehilim 58:11), this is referring to a context where the righteous man is certainly righteous and the wicked man is

certainly wicked. But every person should not rejoice at the downfall of his enemy and the person he hates.

Q Level 2

Meorei Ohr

Meorei Ohr - in Magen Avot: our sages already said in Megilah 16a that this mishna refers to a Jew. But for a (bad) gentile (idolater), it is written: "when the wicked are destroyed, there is song" (Mishei 11:10). Likewise for a dissident Jew (poshei yisrael), it is permitted to rejoice, not out of personal hatred but because he is an enemy of G-d.. as written: "those who hate You, I hate, those who rise against You, I contend.." (Tehilim 97:10).

Q Level 2



Imrei Noam - it is written: "when your enemy falls, do not rejoice", yet in Mishlei: "when the wicked are destroyed, there is song". The answer is well known. All the time the wicked is still falling but not completely destroyed, then: "do not rejoice", for "lest G-d withdraw His wrath". But when the wicked are completely destroyed - then there is song. For this, the Jewish people did not sing when leaving Egypt until the splitting of the sea. Only at the splitting of the sea where Moses said: "you will never see the Egyptians again" and all of them perished [in the sea] - then the Israelites sang song.

Q Level 3

☆ **Sfas Emes**

Sfas Emes on Avot - "when your enemy falls, do not rejoice.." - but does a man always have an enemy? Rather, it is referring to the evil inclination. For man has no greater enemy. The explanation is that even though a man is assisted sometimes to overpower him, nevertheless do not rejoice and trust that he is defeated. For he can return as before.

Q Level 3

☆ **Maharal**

Maharal - "when your enemy falls, do not rejoice.." - for it is written: "he who rejoices at a misfortune will not go unpunished" (Mishlei 17:5). One who rejoices at evil desires evil. For if he did not desire evil, he would not desire even the evil of his enemy. Thus, since he desires evil, he receives evil for himself.

Q Level 4

☆ **Yachel Yisrael**

Yachel Yisrael - the Rashbetz explains in his book "Magen Avot", and likewise other commentators, that the reason why one should not rejoice in the downfall of his enemies is because G-d is pained at that time. The Creator of the world does not rejoice when punishing His handiworks. Thus it is not proper for creations to rejoice during the pain of their Creator...

Regarding G-d it is written: "His mercy is on all His handiworks" (Tehilim 145:9). He does not wish to punish any creature. The necessity to pay retribution to His enemies causes Him pain. Therefore, king Shlomo teaches us: "when your enemy falls, do not rejoice". How can you feel joy when your Creator is in pain?

In the book "Even Shelema" it is brought that this is the reason why: "anyone whose fellow is punished due to him is not allowed to enter the mechitzah (enclosure) of the Holy One, blessed be He" (Shabbat 159b).

Thus, the punishment which befalls a person for committing evil to a Tzadik (righteous man - this also damages the perfection of that Tzadik. This is what scripture says: "to punish, also the righteous man is not good" (Mishlei 17:26) - it is not good for the tzadik (righteous man) that another be punished due to him. Why? Because through him there was caused pain to the Shechina (divine presence) which was forced to punish the sinner.

The righteous man should have instead tried to appease the wicked man. For it is written: "when

G-d is pleased with a person's ways, even his enemies will make peace with him" (Mishlei 16:7). It is also possible that the righteous man could have prayed that his oppressor not be punished through him. All this in order to not cause pain to the Shechina through him.

"lest G-d see it and be displeased, and turn away His wrath from him" - why does this rejoicing cause a diminishing of G-d's wrath towards the person being punished?

Until now, we understand why the one rejoicing is not innocent. But why should his rejoicing exempt the enemy from the punishment he deserves?

How can the sin of one person atone for the sin of another?

Furthermore, some early sages have a version of this mishna which adds the words: "for it does not say 'His furious wrath' (Charon Apo) but rather 'His wrath (Apo)' - this teaches he is forgiven for all his sins".

According to this text version, Shmuel Hakatan expounded from the verse [and did not just quote it]. For not only does the enemy's punishment cease but his sins are even forgiven..

The answer is that G-d sentences the punishment fitting for the person exactly according to what is fitting for him. The amount of suffering he will bear will not exceed what he is due, not even by a hair's breadth than what was decreed for him.

However sometimes besides the suffering he bears, he must bear the look of his rival rejoicing at his downfall. This additional agony was not [necessarily] decreed and is sometimes extremely difficult to bear, even worse than any punishment.

The Rashbatz brings that Iyov (Job), who was the epitome of human suffering, - was asked: what was the most difficult part of your suffering? He replied: "the sight of my enemies rejoicing at my troubles".

Likewise king David thanked: "I will exalt You, O L-ord, for You have raised me up, and You have not allowed my enemies to rejoice over me" (Tehilim 30:2), he praised G-d for elevating him. But that was not enough. The main gratitude for which G-d elevated him was in that "You have not allowed my enemies to rejoice over me" (ibid)..

From this we can answer that the verse teaches us that the pain the punished person feels due to seeing his rival rejoicing at his troubles - this is not included in the amount decreed. The rock the rejoicing person threw in the pit is extra and not in the calculation. Thus, the rejoicing causes greater suffering than what he was supposed to get. This extra pain causes forgiveness for all his sins.

The Yaavetz brings an analogy to a father who punished his son in his anger more than he intended at first. When he sees what happened, he regrets and forgives his son for the rest of the punishment he intended to mete out to him. On the contrary, now he tries to console him and appease him and be more careful next time he deserves punishment.

Chapter 4 Mishna 21 - Erased Paper

Elisha ben Avuya would say: he who learns torah in his youth to what is he comparable? To ink inscribed on new paper. And he who learns torah when an old man to what is he comparable? To ink inscribed on erased paper.

אֵלִישָׁע בֶּן אֲבוּיָה אֹמֵר, הַלּוֹמֵד יְלָד לְמָה הוּא דוֹמֶה, לְדִיּוֹ כְּתוּבָה עַל נֶרְסֵי חֲדָשׁ. וְהַלּוֹמֵד זָקֵן לְמָה הוּא דוֹמֶה, לְדִיּוֹ כְּתוּבָה עַל נֶרְסֵי מְחֻזָּק.

Rabbi Yossi bar Yehudah of Kfar Bavli would say: he who learns torah from the young to what is he comparable? To one who eats unripe grapes and drinks [unfermented] wine from the vat. But he who learns torah from the old, to what is he comparable? To one who eats ripened grapes and drinks aged wine.

רַבִּי יוֹסֵי בַר יְהוּדָה אִישׁ כְּפַר הַבְּבֵלִי אֹמֵר, הַלּוֹמֵד מִן הַקְּטָנִים לְמָה הוּא דוֹמֶה, לְאֹכֵל עֲנָבִים קְהוּת וְשׁוֹתֶה יַיִן מְגֵתוֹ. וְהַלּוֹמֵד מִן הַזְּקֵנִים לְמָה הוּא דוֹמֶה, לְאֹכֵל עֲנָבִים בְּשֵׁלוֹת וְשׁוֹתֶה יַיִן יָשֵׁן.

Rabbi Meir would say: look not at the flask, but at what it contains. There may be a new flask filled with aged wine and an old flask that does not even contain new wine.

רַבִּי מֵעִיר, אֵל תִּסְתַּכֵּל בְּקַנְקָן, אֲלֵא בַמָּה שֶׁיֵּשׁ בוֹ. יֵשׁ קַנְקָן חֲדָשׁ מְלֵא יַשָּׁן, וְיֵשׁ קַנְקָן חֲדָשׁ אֵין בוֹ יַשָּׁן.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "he who learns torah in his youth.. ink inscribed on new paper" - it endures. so too, the learning of one's youth is not forgotten.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "new paper" - white and unwritten corresponding to two qualities of the learning of the youth. One, like white paper on which every fine line makes an impression, so too the youth grasps quickly, he grasps fine logic quickly. Two, just like unwritten paper is not blurry due to previous writing, so too the learning of the youth is remembered for a long time.. Thus he wrote regarding the old man "on erased paper" and not "on old paper"...

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel - for the youth are free from the toil of this world and the distracting thoughts. Thus, their learning is strong and chiseled in their minds, as ink written on new paper whose imprint lasts. But it is the opposite for elders. They are heavily burdened and distracted by their future needs and also their past troubles. Thus, their minds are mixed up and confused from distracting thoughts and thus what they learn in old age will not leave an imprint in their minds and is like ink written on erased paper..

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan - "new paper... erased paper" - he should have said "old paper" which is the opposite of "new paper". The reason he said "erased paper" is because the elder already has chiseled in his mind many calculations which are written in his heart. Thus, when he returns to learn torah, he needs to erase those thoughts from his heart so that the considerations do not arise in his mind and confound him. This is like a letter written on erased paper whereby it is impossible for imprints from the previous letter to not remain and mix in the new letter.

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "he who learns torah from the young to what is he comparable? To one who eats unripe grapes" - which harm the teeth. So too the wisdom of the young [scholars] did not settle properly and [thus] his words are not accepted and sound to the mind.

"and drinks [unfermented] wine from the vat" - which is mixed with grape pits. So too, the wisdom

of young scholars is mixed with doubts he has.

Q Level 1

Sforno

Sforno - "he who learns torah from the young to what is he comparable? To one who eats unripe grapes" - for they did not yet attain whole understanding (iyun shalem) which is clean from errors.

Q Level 2

Tosfot Yom Tov

Tosfot Yom Tov - grapes corresponding to the plain meaning in the torah while "wine" refers to the hidden part (kabala). Thus our sages said: "wine has gematria of Sod (secret)".

Q Level 1

☆ **Bartenura**

Bartenura - "Rebbi Meir would say: look not at the flask, but at what it contains. There may be a new flask filled with aged wine, and an old flask that does not even contain new wine" - Rebbi Meir argues with R.Yossi ben Yehuda and says just like there are new jugs filled with old wine, so too there are young scholars with sound knowledge just like old scholars. And likewise, there are old scholars with lower level wisdom than young scholars.

Q Level 2

☆ **Maharal**

Maharal - "look not at the flask, but at what it contains" - for sometimes G-d grants wisdom to a man, "from His mouth comes wisdom and understanding" (Mishlei 2:6). One should not look at the vessel which is man.

So too for the opposite. Sometimes a man is old and he is an old vessel but nevertheless, there is nothing in him. He does not even have the wisdom of a typical young man. This is because the intellect (sechel) is in G-d's hands and He bestows the intellect to whomever He wishes...

Q Level 3

☆ **Yachel Yisrael**

Yachel Yisrael - after teaching us in the previous mishna that the youth is the best student, our mishna comes to teach that the elder is the best teacher. However, not every elder is a good teacher as we will see.

Many commentators explain that there is no argument between Rebbi and Rebbi Yossi. Rebbi Yossi is speaking generally while Rebbi is speaking on specific individuals.

Rebbi Yossi is correct in saying that generally speaking, wisdom is found more by the elders. Rebbi only comes to emphasize that there are exceptions to the general rule. Sometimes one finds young men with the understanding of elders.

This explanation is in line with the change in tense between the words of Rebbi Yossi and the words of Rebbi.

While Rebbi Yossi uses plural tense - "one who learns from young men... from elders", Rebbi uses singular tense - "do not look at the container.." and not "containers".

This indicates Rebbi Yossi is speaking generally and Rebbi comes only to limit the general principle in saying that there are some exceptions.

Due to this, Rebbi says: "do not look at the flask but rather what is in in it." It is possible that the young man standing before you is one of the exceptions who is a new flask containing aged wine", or the opposite the old man is a new flask which does not even contain fresh wine.

Q Level 4

☆ **Ben Ish Chai**

Ben Ish Chai, Birkat Avot - "look not at the flask, but at what it contains" (kabalistic) - to hint on what is written in Sifri on "'at all times that we call upon Him' - to Him, and not to His Sefirot, to Him

and not to His attributes."

The intent is that one needs to pray and beseech His essence, blessed be He, which fills the Sefirot. On this the Tanna hinted: "do not look at the container", which are the Sefirot, to not have intent to them, "but rather on that which is in them", namely, the light of the Ein Sof (infinite G-d) who fills them. To Him should be your intent in all your prayers and service.

Q Level 3

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - every youth has more than once the thought in his head: "I have my whole life before me. Right now I will enjoy life and afterwards I will do my responsibilities. I have enough time in the future to fulfill my duties to G-d and people."

The mishna earlier replies (Avot 2:5): "do not say 'when I will be free, I will learn [torah], for perhaps you will never become free'".

Our mishna adds: "even if you are free in the future, you will no longer attain what you are able to attain now. The torah study of an older man is not like the torah study of a young man. Only one who immerses himself in learning during his youth, while his strength is with him and his thoughts are sharp and his mind is clear - only he will merit to reach benefit (high levels) from his learning.

Likewise, only he who utilizes the years of youth will merit to teach others. At older age, a man no longer has the strength and energy to influence others. Would that it were that he succeeds on himself.

The mistake of wasting the years of youth is so great that Shlomo concluded his book Kohelet/Ecclesiastes saying: "remember your Creator in the days of your youth" - do not push off the end. Do not think you have extra time!

The days of youth are the most proper times to fulfill your purpose in the world properly. It is incumbent on you to not waste these days "[Remember your Creator in the days of your youth] before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say: life is not pleasant anymore" (Kohelet/Ecclesiastes 12:1)...

One who lived his life free from any yoke, he will not be able to bear on his shoulders in his later years. Such a person may feel superfluous at that time. Life no longer provides him the pleasures he is used to and he no longer has any reason to live.

Looking back he sees that his life passed without his having used his time properly and now he is unable to change this..

Q Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - "he who learns torah from the young to what is he comparable? To one who eats unripe grapes and drinks [unfermented] wine from the vat" - for the unripe grape, its power is still implanted as potential in the body of the fruit. Its taste and power did not yet go out to actuality. Therefore, the grape is bitter until it becomes ripe and its power and taste emerge out to actuality completely. Then, its taste and power is no longer implanted (as potential) in the physicality (body) of the fruit.

Likewise for fresh wine in the pit. It is still mixed with pits and is not removed completely and clear from impurities..

In this the intellect of the youth is comparable. For the youth's intellect is implanted in the physical

and did not go out to actuality, to be divested from the body.

During man's youth, the intellect is still implanted in the body and his wisdom is not removed from the imaginary. But the intellect of an elder is completely divested. For then, the body's power is weak and thus the power of the intellect strengthens exceedingly, as our sages said: "for elder torah scholars, the more they age, the more their understanding increases" (Shab.152a).

For the intellect goes out to actuality, divested from the body.

In this, the intellect is compared to a grape which became ripe. The taste emerged from the body of the fruit and came out to actuality completely. The power and taste is no longer just implanted [as potential] in the physical (body) of the fruit.

And just like wine which is removed from pits and has become pure from impurities, so too the intellect of the elder is removed and not mixed with the physicality.

Understand this analogy for it is completely clear. It compares the intellect of the youth which is stuck in the physicality to an unripe grape whose power and taste did not emerge from the body of the fruit. And likewise to fresh wine in the pit which is mixed and implanted with impurities and [thus] not clear.

The intellect of the elder is compared to ripe grapes whereby the [potential] taste and power of the fruit emerged from the grape and likewise the elder is compared to wine which is divested from impurities and mixtures. Understand this.

You should also know regarding these two comparisons mentioned - unripe grapes and fresh wine in the pit.

Namely, a man in his youth has these two things:

One, his intellect is stuck in the physical body. It is not divested as we explained.

Two, due to the bodily hotness in youth and childhood which is not settled, his intellect is mixed (confounded).

Corresponding to the first, that his intellect is not divested from the body, he said he is like unripe grapes whereby, as before, the taste has not come out of the fruit.

Corresponding to the second, that due to the bodily hotness in the youth, their intellect is not quiet and settled and thus their mind is unclear, he wrote that they are like fresh wine in the pit. The fresh wine is mixed and bubbly due to the hotness rising up from inside.

The opposite of this applies to the elders. Their intellect is divested from the physical and their bodily hotness has quieted and settled down. Therefore, their mind is clear..

Level 4

Divrei Yoel

Translator: "Elisha ben Avouya..." - the story of Elisha ben Avouya and his becoming an apostate Jew was one of the most dramatic events in the lives of the great Tannaim (mishnaic sages). He was a brilliant sage of his time, no less than the teacher of Rabbi Meir. The latter kept a close relationship with him even after his apostasy. The Tannaim refer to him only as "Acher" (the other one).

Why did Rabbi include his name here in Pirkei Avot (given that he became an apostate Jew)?

Many reasons are given. Among them that Rabbi rectified him by including his name in the mishna (Vayikra l'Yitzchak in the name of the kabbalists).

In the Divrei Yoel (Chayei Sarah):

Divrei Yoel - the Yerushalmi brings (Chagigah 2:1) "Rebbi Meir was giving a class in the Beit Midrash (synagogue) of Tiberias. His Rabbi, Elisha ben Avuyah was passing riding a horse on the Sabbath. Rebbi Meir was told his Rabbi is outside. He stopped the class and went outside to greet him.

Elisha ben Avuyah asked Rebbi Meir what he taught today.. "the end of a matter is good from the beginning" (Kohelet 7:8)..

Elisha ben Avyah asked: What did you say on this? Rebbi Meir replied: to a man who had children in his young age who died and later in his older years he had more children who survived. Thus, "the end of the matter is better than the beginning.."

Elisha ben Avuyah said: Akiva your Rabbi did not expound like this. Rather the end of a matter is good from the beginning, ie WHEN it is good from the beginning.

I myself have a story on this. My father Avouya was among the big people of Jerusalem. On the day of my circumcision, he invited all the big (rich) people of Jerusalem and also the sages Rebbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua.

While the rich people ate, drank, and danced they began to sing greek songs. Rabbi Eliezer said to Rabbi Yehoshua: "while they are occupied in their [way], let us occupy ourselves in our way". The two sat and toiled in words of the torah and from there to the prophets and from the prophets to the holy writings.. they reached very high levels, close to the levels at [the giving of the torah at] Sinai..

Then a fire descended from heaven and surrounded them... My father Avouya said: "if this is the power of torah, if my son survives (the circumcision) I will dedicate him to torah study".

Thus, since his intent was not l'Shem Shamayim (for G-d), therefore the torah did not endure [in me] (ie in the end I became an apostate Jew)... end quote

(Yachel Yisrael: in his youth, Elishah absorbed false ideas. In his father's eyes, torah study was not a lofty matter by itself. His goal was not to fulfill the will of G-d but rather a way to attain status. He saw it only as an honorable wisdom, a means to acquire honor and no more. Elisha's family saw torah as just another science. A supplement to greek wisdom. The young Elisha absorbed these ideas in himself. Our sages report: "while Elisha was in his youth toiling in torah, greek songs never left his mouth" (Chagigah 15b) and likewise "when he would get up to leave the study hall, books of heretics would fall from his lap". The falsehood inscribed in the heart of the young Elisha eventually exploded in his later years.)

Thus, we see from R.Akiva that it is impossible for the end of a matter to be good unless it is good from the beginning. Namely, that the foundation of the beginning be l'Shem Shamayim (for G-d). Then there is divine help to complete and attain a good end. Otherwise, no.

Elisha ben Avuya personally verified the teaching of Rebbi Akiva through his own personal experience since he had a bad foundation. Therefore his end was not good.

From this we can explain why Rebbi included Elisha ben Avuya's name in Pirkei Avot and not just "Acher" as we asked earlier.

For the root of this mishna is built on the teaching of Rebbi Akiva: "the end of a matter is good from the beginning" - everything depends on the quality of the beginning and start. Elisha brought a proof from his own personal story as before.

From here we learn that one must be very careful on the holiness and purity of the days of youth which are the foundation of man's building in torah and service of G-d.

Then he is like "ink written on new paper", and it endures in his hand in his end and old age.

But if he is lazy and wastes his days of youth in emptiness and worthlessness and all the more so if he corrupts himself and soils his soul in sin, G-d forbid, then even if he regrets in his later years, and he wants to repent and rectify his past - it is like ink written on erased paper. The ink does not stick/absorb properly.

Even though the Creator fully accepts the repentant, but nevertheless, one who lacks the foundation of the days of youth, it will be difficult for him to reach full repentance.

He lacks the shielding power to overcome the enticements of the evil inclination and the difficult trials. We learn this from the teaching of Rebbi Akiva and the story of Elisha ben Avuya.

Level 4

☆ **Matanat Avot**

Matanat Avot - as known, Elisha ben Avuya went out to evil ways and transgressed all the sins in the torah. When his disciple Rebbi Meir tried to convince him to repent, Elisha explained to him that it is hopeless since he is blemished from his beginning (Chagigah 15a).

He told Rebbi Meir that at his Brit Mila (circumcision), his father invited all the great men of Jerusalem... and Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua sat and spoke words of torah and fire descended from heaven and surrounded them... when my father saw this, he was very impressed from the honor of torah and he said: "if this baby survives, I will dedicate him completely to torah". Since his intent was not l'Shem Shamayim (for G-d), therefore the matter did not succeed.

Likewise, it is brought there that when his mother was pregnant with him, she passed a temple of idolatry and smelled the odor of the cooking sacrifices for the idol. Due to danger (of not eating), she was forced to eat some and the idolatry. The food entered the body of Elisha like the venom of a snake and damaged him.

Of course, all this was just excuses! In truth, Elisha was on the level of a Tanna and he did not remain a simple am ha'aretz (ignoramus). Certainly, he had tremendous divine help to learn much torah and reach the level of Tanna.

He was even one of the four who entered Pardes (a high spiritual level close to prophecy). That which he afterwards went to evil ways was his own free choice and not the fault of his parents at all. For if he truly did not have free will in this, then he would not have been punished for his sins.

According to this, all his conduct revolved around the verse: "the end of a matter is good from the beginning". He understood from this that the end is good only if the beginning is good. And if the beginning is not good, the end will not be good. This is how he justified continuing to go in his evil ways. He thought that since his beginning is corrupt therefore his end is evil.

Thus it is understood why it is fitting that specifically Elisha ben Avuyah says: "he who learns torah in his youth to what is he comparable? To ink inscribed on new paper".

For in this he explains to every youth what he himself experienced in life. He tells every youth:

"know precious youth that everything you learn in your youth will build your entire foundation. It will stay in your memory always. Do not tell yourself: 'I am only a youth and barely understand what I am learning and cover almost zero ground'.

For everything you learn is like ink on new paper. It is imprinted on the best quality paper. Therefore, do not take lightly all that you learn during your youth. For it will remain in your memory your whole life, much more so than what you will learn in your later years".

"And he who learns torah when an old man to what is he comparable? To ink inscribed on erased paper" - here is great encouragement and support to those who come to learn torah in their later years. For the older people have absorbed in their heads tens of thousands of foolish words and vanities of all types. Thus, this mishna comes so the older person does not tell himself: "since I looked at many foolish things in my life, there is no hope for me to learn torah and remember it well."

Rather, he should know faithfully that even though he is no longer like ink on new paper, but nevertheless, he is at least like ink on erased paper. Even though the ink is not absorbed as well on erased paper than on new paper, but nevertheless the Tanna promises him that if he learns well and strengthens himself and strives to remember what he learns and clings to the holiness of the torah as much as possible - then slowly, slowly the previous material of foolishness will be erased from his mind.

In its place will be written the new material of torah that you learn. Even though certainly this will be only like ink written on erased paper which is of lower quality than on new paper, but nevertheless we are promised that at least your old paper with all the foolishness will be erased in order to make room for you to write the new material.

Do not think that if you have old material in your head it will never be erased and you will never have room to inscribe words of torah on your heart.

Chapter 4 Mishna 22 - Jealousy..

Rabbi Elazar Hakapar would say: jealousy, lust, and [desire for] honor remove a person from the world. רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר הַקָּפָר אָמַר, הַקְנָאָה וְהַתְאָוָה, מוֹצִיאִין אֶת הָאָדָם מִן הָעוֹלָם וְהַכְּבוֹד:

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "lust" - seeking to fulfill one's lust in eating, drinking, intercourse, or the like.

"(desire for) honor" - that people honor him.

Q Level 1

Rashi

Rashi - "jealousy" - which a man has of his fellow, as written: "jealousy rots the bones" (Mishlei 14:30).

"lust" - he lusts for a lot of money, as written: "he who loves money will not be satiated by money" (Kohelet 5:9).

"honor" - for "dominion buries its possessor" (Pesachim 87b).

Q Level 1

Rambam

Rambam - for through these traits or one of them, a person will necessarily lose faithfulness to the torah and will fail to attain virtues of the intellect or character traits.

Q Level 1

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - "jealousy, lust, and [desire for] honor" - all other middot (bad character traits) are included in these three traits (Vilna Gaon).

Q Level 2

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "jealousy.." - through these three traits he wastes all his days to chase after the superfluous.. he wants to be like his fellow in food, drink, honorable garments, etc. etc..

Q Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "jealousy" - out of jealousy to have as much or more than his fellow, he lusts to amass money even if it entails danger to life.

"lust" - physical lust which causes him sometimes to squander his money or dignity. Likewise due to physical indulgences he becomes lazy from torah and wisdom.

"honor" - this refers to arrogance. Also due to this, he will squander all that he has and endanger himself.

"remove a person from the world" - this world and the world to come. For besides the evils they cause in this world, there is no sin in the world which is not caused by one of these three causes.

Q Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Ahava b'Taanugim - "jealousy, lust, and honor" - the Tanna mentioned these three things which "remove a person from the world". Even though there are many things which "remove a person from the world" such as sins which incur the death penalty, but these three things are natural in a man and each one is all-encompassing in that he transgresses the whole torah or most of it. Thus, he did not mention the rest since human nature does not push a person to go after them like these three.

"*Jealousy*" - one who has jealousy of the good of his fellow and does not want him to have any good or virtue - he transgresses "love your fellow as yourself" which is the general principle of the whole torah (Shabbat 31a). Furthermore "jealousy rots the bones" (Mishlei 14:30), and he will die before his time. Likewise due to jealousy he may come to harm his fellow and incur death or the like.

"*Lust*" - by nature, a man lusts to have more good than his fellow. Thus he strives with all his might to amass money in permitted or forbidden ways and through great strain. Thus he will fall in the hands of the Beit Din (courts of law) and die or the like.

"*Honor*" - likewise by nature there are people who wish to have more than their fellow, whether in permitted or forbidden ways and they debase the honor of their fellows who may come to kill them or the like.

Thus, he warned against these three things which are human nature and not other things.

Some explain that these three things correspond to the three things Rabbi Yehoshua brought (evil eye, evil inclination, hatred of others). For jealousy comes from an evil eye. Namely, his eye is evil on others. Lust comes from Yetzer Hara (evil inclination), the inciter of all lusts. Hatred of others stems from honor. For the primary cause that a man hates other people is due to honor. Namely, he thinks they are not honoring him as he deserves.

Level 2

Sfat Noach 5656 - the parshas (chapters) of Kain, the generation of the flood, and the generation of the tower of Bavel were written because every man has within himself something of these generations and he needs to rectify himself. They correspond to the levels of jealousy, lust, and honor. Kain is jealousy, the generation of the flood is lust, and the generation of the tower of Bavel is honor...

Level 3

Toldot Yaakov Yosef, Vayeshev "jealousy" - he is jealous of others due to seeing something he does not have, whether in material or spiritual matters. He hates his fellow a baseless hatred (sinat chinam) due to the jealousy. This is the opposite of the humble man who finds favor in the eyes of every man since he sees that all of them are better than himself. Therefore, they hate him and remove him from the congregation of the world (klalut haOlam)...

"*lust*" - great lust is the opposite of contentment (being satisfied with one's portion) and the whole world is not enough for him. This too removes a person from the world..

"*honor*" - when troubles come in life he is unable to bear it and they remove him from the world. For "in his pride the wicked man does not seek Him; G-d is not in all his thoughts" (Tehilim 10:4).

Level 3

☆ Meorei Ohr

Meorei Ohr - "jealousy" - such as when a man is jealous of his fellow because the fellow is greater than him in wisdom. He wants his fellow to be an ignoramus (am haaretz) like himself. This is the worst - that he is not wise and wants that no wise men exist in the world. Such a person hates G-d and His torah.

Likewise, even if he himself is wise but nevertheless, he is jealous of his fellow and wants that there not exist in the world a wise man greater than himself. This too is an evil trait which brings to hatred. These traits are likewise found regarding wealth (the rich).

Due to these traits disputes arise and they will come to severe sins such as murder, as written: "if,

however, a man hates his neighbor and lies in wait, attacks him and kills him.." (Devarim 19:11), as brought in the Midrash there and as happened to Kain with Hevel..

"*lust*" - this refers to one who goes after his heart's lust, whether in food, drink, or intercourse, etc..

All this is well known and the damages that result are many and lead to death. For example heavy eating (*achila gassa*) causes illness and painful death. The *siman* (sign) of the matter (Bamidbar 11:34): "*kivrot hataava*" (graves of lust). And when he gives his strength to women (excessive intercourse) old age jumps on him (ie he ages quickly). Likewise he transgresses the will of his Maker to fulfill his lust in forbidden ways and thus he becomes banished from the world to come...

"*honor*" - this refers to pursuing dominion over others. This takes a person out of this world, for "*Rabbanut buries its owner*" (Berachot 55a). Thus Yosef died before his brothers. It can also take a person out of the World-to-Come as happened to Yeravam ben Nevat. G-d told him "repent and you, Myself and Ben Yishai will walk in Gan Eden. He asked: "who will be at the head?" G-d replied "Ben Yishai". Yeravam said: "if so, I don't want" (Sanhedrin 102a).

Q Level 3

Chachma u'Mussar

Chochma u'Mussar 2:201 - there is one type of jealousy which is very praiseworthy. Namely "the jealousy of scholars increases wisdom" (Bava Batra 21a). This is when a person wants to attain a virtue just like his fellow. This is good and desirable.

But one who is jealous thinking "why does my fellow have this good thing?" And he wishes that his fellow be without it like him. This is a very evil disease and it removes him from the world.

Q Level 3

Rov Dagan - "*jealousy..*" - this is analogous to a flesh and blood king who has ministers, deputies, servants, etc. each one appointed according to the level appropriate to them. If one of the lowly servants complains and whines to the king: "why does he serve as deputy to the king, etc. (and I am but a lowly servant)" Immediately, the king's anger is kindled against him and he loses what was in his hands and is punished severely.

How much more so for the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, whose glory fills the world - when the jealous people sit and speak before Him on their good fellows whom they are jealous of. Certainly, they are rebelling against the King. Therefore, they are removed from the world and what is in their hands is taken away, as before.

Q Level 3

☆ Chachma u'Mussar

Chochma u'Mussar 2:305 - "*lust*" - the way of lust to cunningly trap souls is as follows. At first, it tells a man "but is not this (superfluous) thing permitted?" Afterwards, the person becomes filled with desire to fulfill his lust also in a minor forbidden thing. Eventually, it leads him to fulfill his lust even in a severe forbidden thing.

This is what our sages said regarding the Ben Sorer (wayward son): "just because he ate a *tartimar* (portion) of meat and drank a half lug of italian wine, the torah says "execute him..". Rather, the torah judges him on his end.. in the end he will seek (torah) but will not find.. and he will rob people. The torah teaches better he die now meritorious and not die guilty [later]".

For after the symptoms of lust begin to flash in him, he will go from the light to the severe more and more. Thus his death now is better than his life..

For this is the way of the lustful. At first it was a very small matter, but afterwards they are immersed in everything forbidden...

Q Level 3

Lev Tzadik - in the book *Be'er Mayim Chayim*: "we spoke about this already many times that the whole matter of lust is the root of the evil klipot. And when a man fulfills his lust willingly, he is cast down and placed under the hands of the klipot and his heart is no longer in his control.

Then due to his habit and his being drawn after the lust he will no longer be able to forego his lust even if it means committing a severe sin. From then he will progress to the worst wickedness and evils."

Q Level 3**Chachma u'Mussar**

Chochma u'Mussar 2:48 - man's service is to train himself to go against his will. Man naturally lusts for things like eating, drinking, intercourse, money, etc. Man desires to attain them and wants and rejoices when he attains them.

But the intelligent person will understand that they are ephemereal things and not many people rejoice in them. Therefore, one should strive to desire things which stand and endure forever, pleasant and good in quantity and quality...

Q Level 3**Daat Zekenim**

Daat Zekenim - "remove THE man from the world" - ha'Adam - THE man (ha-Adam), ie even the well known man, ie a great man (R.Yitzchak Blazer in name of R.Yisrael Salanter. He wrote that these were the final words of R.Yisrael Salanter before his death).

Q Level 3**Maharal**

Maharal - "remove THE man (haAdam) from the world" - know that these three things are very prone to this and they removed THE man (haAdam) from the world, namely Adam, the first man.

You will find that the tree which Adam ate from which brought him death - it had these three things.. (see there for more).

Q Level 3**☆ Daat Zekenim**

Daat Zekenim - "remove THE man from the world" - ie remove a man from the inner world to the external world, the world of the senses. For there exists an inner world with inner limbs, namely, sichliot (spiritual). And there likewise exists an external world with external limbs, namely, physical senses.

These two worlds have no connection whatsoever to each other. And it is possible for a man to be so much immersed in the external world, the world of [physical] senses, until he becomes divested of the spiritual. He "goes out" completely from the inner world.

This is the secret of the matter and severity of jealousy, lust, and honor which remove a man from the inner world and brings him to the external world, the world of the [physical] senses, until he descends ch'v down to the pit (she'ol tachtit).

Man's service is to enter inside the inner world and to go out completely from the external world until he divests himself from the gashmiut (physicality/material)..

We find in the words of our sages that Rav Yosef and Rav Sheshet were blind. It is written in the *Teshuvot Hageonim* (Siman 178, brought in *Choshen Mishpat chelek aleph*, 111) that they were blind because they conducted themselves in a matter of piety of Rav who was accustomed to not look outside his four amot (cubits). They were unable to stand up to this until they blinded themselves.

Even though a blind man is exempt from all the mitzvot (kidushin 31a) and considered as a dead man (nedarim 64b), nevertheless, it was worth it for them to blind their eyes in order to not look outside their four amot (cubits).

The secret of the matter is that using (excessively) the external senses, even just physical seeing outside one's four amot, this causes such darkness and blackness to the inner limbs. For the secret and severity of lust is in this that one exits the inner world through using the external limbs and senses... (see there for more. note such extreme levels of asceticism are only appropriate for extremely exceptional sages)

Q Level 3

☆ Matanat Avot

"*Matanat Avot*" - "*jealousy..*" - in this mishna, the Tanna (sage) comes to explain to us that jealousy, lust, and honor causes whoever is immersed in them to come out of the real world and live inside a bubble detached from reality.

This is also the reason he continues to pursue these things all the time. For he is immersed in imaginations and fantasies that if he attains what he seeks, he will be the happiest person in the world and all his problems and troubles will disappear.

Let us start to explain each one be'H.

"*Jealousy*" - the entire existence of the jealous person is that he sees something precious by his fellow which he lacks. He imagines that if only he would attain that thing for himself, he would be extremely happy and full of joy.

But he does not know the basic fundamental principle that every Jew needs to know, namely, that if this were good for you, G-d would have also given you this. And if He did not give you this, then certainly it is not fitting for you.

Besides this, there is another problem of "there is no end to this" (ein le'davar sof). If you think this thing by your fellow will grant you happiness, tomorrow you will find something else by another person which "only that" will grant you happiness.

The day after that you will find yet something else by another person that "there is nothing but that" (ein od milvado) to bring the "true happiness" which you are so waiting for.

Thus you waste your life constantly chasing after some virtual pleasure which you imagine it alone will make you rich and happy and fill you with true satisfaction.

But in the end of the matter, you found no satisfaction from this. All you succeeded was to waste your life amassing more and more portions of "jealousy is rot of the bones" (Mishlei 14:30).

"*Lust*" - this too is on the same foundation as jealousy. Jealousy is when I see something by someone which I don't have. Lust is more general. This is when a man lusts and is "fired up" after something specific. He begins to imagine in his twisted imaginations how much he will be happy and full of satisfaction after he attains his lust.

Due to this imaginary cloud which envelopes him, he chases after his lusts like a wild animal. He is prepared to transgress the whole torah for this and trample anyone in his path in order to attain his lust. For he imagines that if he could just attain that lust, all the joy of the world will be in his hand.

Our sages already said on this: "there is a small organ in man; he who satisfies it is hungry and he who allows it to hunger is satisfied" (Sanhedrin 107a). It seems to me their intent is not only on the lust for women as is usually explained, but for all lusts which a person lusts for. The more he succeeds in attaining his lust, the more hungry it comes back at him. His lust only increases over time.

"Honor" - here too, the matter is familiar and evident. If a person wants honor from his neighbors and immediate surroundings and he does all sorts of acts in order to impress and draw their admiration, and he is certain that "if I only attain honor from them then that is everything and I will already be tranquil and not need honor from anyone else" - a bitter error is in his hands.

This thought came to him only because he already "came out of the world". He lives inside an imaginary bubble detached from reality.

There are some more severe cases. Some people are certain that the whole world honors them and looks at them with blind admiration. Therefore they permit themselves to do all sorts of "classy things" like the "rich people" which they strive to emulate.

They think that through this, they will appear more honorable in the eyes of people. But everyone standing at the side who looks at their "classy acts" laugh pitifully at those poor people. For due to their great striving after honor, they inherit only more and more disgrace.

May the Merciful One save us from these three reprehensible traits and their branches.

Level 3

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - the Rashbatz explains what is the uniqueness of the THREE mishnas which count the things which "remove a man from the world".

In Avot 2:11, Rabbi Yehoshua said: "an evil eye, an evil inclination, and hatred of others - remove a man from the world". The intent is from THIS world. One who is afflicted by these traits - his life is not a life.

On the other hand, in Avot 3:10, Rabbi Dosa ben Harkinas said: "morning sleep, afternoon wine, and sitting with the assemblies of the ignorant - remove a man from the world". The intent there is from the WORLD-TO-COME. For in this world, it appears he is "nicely" wasting his time. He rests nicely, enjoys fine wine, is well mixed socially (daato meurav im habriot), and so on.

His situation will reveal itself only in the end - that in truth he "wasted" his time. Time, which is man's most precious thing, he squandered and wasted it, not utilizing it properly. He will sense this fact only in the world of reward, when he arrives there empty handed and without any merits for receiving reward.

Now comes a third mishna. Rabbi Elazar Hakafar says there are three other evils which are higher than all of them - "jealousy, lust, and honor removes a person from the world" - BOTH worlds. One afflicted by these traits has no tranquility in this world, and of course, he will not enjoy contentment in the World-to-Come.

Thus, these three traits remove a man from this world. No need to elaborate. Whoever is afflicted by one of these, his life is not a life.

The jealous person "consumes himself" in seeing all the success of his fellow. The lustful person slays himself in running after his lusts. He who lusts for honor loses his mental composure due to a

mere shadow of coldness [from others]. If he does not attain the honor he hopes for, his whole world crumbles down.

Furthermore, one who suffers from these traits loses his portion in the World-to-Come.

The common denominator of these three traits is that they completely engulf a man, not leaving him any opening or room to fulfill his duties in this world.

The jealous person spends his whole life trying to quiet his jealousy. The lustful person spends all his energy trying to quiet his lusts. Likewise, one who chases after honor, all his thoughts revolve around one swivel - attaining honor.

Thus it is evident that such a person is not free to spend his days and seconds on the true purpose [of life]. His acts are not aligned towards doing righteousness and kindness. His mind is not free to attain wisdom [of torah]. Thus, a man afflicted with these evils inherits pain and anger in this world and humiliation in the future world-to-Come.

Level 4



Chachmat Hamatzfon, Yitro - without torah, the world cannot endure. For jealousy, lust, and honor remove a person from the world. The torah is like an iron bridge which holds a man to not fall in the raging sea of life.

Thus, all of a man's deliberation (shikul daat) should be only in the torah - to deepen and widen (understanding) from all sides. Namely, that all of one's deeds and matters be on the side of true perfection . Only then can a man stand and endure in life.

The moment he finds that he has no bias of self interest, and he can renounce all of his self if the torah chooses so, and all his gaze and aspiration is solely to seek what is the way of torah - whether this way or that way, and he himself has no personal interest in all the circumstances he finds himself in, and he can renounce all his past and all his habits, and anything that he deems detrimental and distracting, it is proper to distance from them - only then will the torah guide him to all of its successes.

Chapter 4 Mishna 23 - Born To Die

He would say: the born [are destined] to die, the dead to be brought to life, the living to be judged, [it is therefore for them] to know, make known, and to become known that He is G-d, He is the Maker, He is the Creator, He is the understander. He is the judge, He is the witness, He is the plaintiff, and He will summon to judgment, blessed be He, before Whom there is no iniquity, no forgetting, no favoritism, and no taking bribes, for all is His.

Know that everything is according to the accounting. And let not your evil inclination assure you to think that the grave will be a refuge (escape) for you. For against your will were you formed, against your will were you born, against your will you live, against your will you will die, and against your will are you destined to give a judgment and accounting before the supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.

הוא הִיָּה אוֹמֵר, הַיְלֹוֹדִים לְמוֹת, וְהַמֵּתִים לְחַיִּוֹת, וְהַחַיִּים לְדוֹן. לִידַע לְהוֹדִיעַ וְלְהוֹדִיעַ שֶׁהוּא אֵל, הוּא הַיּוֹצֵר, הוּא הַבּוֹרֵא, הוּא הַמַּבְיֵן, הוּא הַדַּיָּן, הוּא עַד, הוּא בַּעַל דִּין, וְהוּא עֵתִיד לְדוֹן. בְּרוּךְ הוּא, שְׂאִין לְפָנָיו לֹא עוֹלָה, וְלֹא שִׁכְחָה, וְלֹא מִשׂוֹא פָּנִים, וְלֹא מִקַּח שֹׁחַד, שֶׁהַכֹּל שֶׁלּוֹ.

יְדַע שֶׁהַכֹּל לְפִי הַחֲשָׁבוֹן. וְאַל יִבְטִיחַךְ יִצְרָךְ שֶׁהַשְּׂאוֹל בֵּית מְנוּס לָךְ, שֶׁעַל כָּרְחֶךָ אֵתָה נּוֹצֵר, וְעַל כָּרְחֶךָ אֵתָה נּוֹלֵד, וְעַל כָּרְחֶךָ אֵתָה חַי, וְעַל כָּרְחֶךָ אֵתָה מֵת, וְעַל כָּרְחֶךָ אֵתָה עֵתִיד לְתַן דִּין וְחֲשָׁבוֹן לְפָנָי מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמַּלְכִּים הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא:

Q Level 1

☆ Machzor Vitri

Machzor Vitri - "the born [are destined] to die" - those born already - their end is to die.

"the dead [are destined] to live" - those dead already - their end is to live (resurrect).

"the living to be judged" - those who resurrected [in the future] - their end is to be judged when the Day of Judgement arrives, in the valley of Yehoshafat which is the valley of the king.

"to know" - I am saying all this "to know" - so that all the people of the land will know this circle that the world turns around and they will improve their deeds.

"and to make known" - so that they too will make known to others and teach their children.

"and to become known" - so that it be revealed to all the nations in order that they have fear (reverence) before G-d.

"He is the Maker" - just like a maker of clay pottery does whatever he wants to the pottery, so too every human being is in G-d's hands and G-d can do whatever He deems proper to him..

"He is the Creator" - He creates man in His image and knows man's secret thoughts. Nothing is hidden from Him..

"He is the understander" - He understands all their deeds.

"He is the judge" - He is the expert judge and discerns the fine line of justice..

"He is the witness" - He Himself will testify in the matter. For He sees everything, as written: "the eyes of G-d roam to and fro throughout the whole earth" (Zecharia 4) and "I will come near to you to judgment and be a swift witness" (Malachi 3).

"He is the plaintiff" - to scream at man and summon him to judgment.

"no forgetting" - He will judge in the future, there is no forgetfulness by Him - do not tell yourself: "by then everything will be forgotten already". Know clearly that he will summon you to judgment. For He will judge in the future. Nevertheless, He will judge you truthfully and rightfully. If you behaved properly do not fear and do not worry that He will charge you unjustly out of mistake or forgetfulness.

"before Whom there is no iniquity" - as written: "a G-d of faithfulness and without iniquity" (Devarim 32:4).

"nor forgetfulness" - for everything is inscribed in a book before Him, as written: "then the G-d fearing men spoke to one another (torah), and the L-rd hearkened and heard. And a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who feared the L-rd and for those who honored His Name" (Malachi 3), and "by the hand of every man it is signed" (Iyov 37).

"nor favoritism" - a man should not trust on a falsehood saying that G-d will show him favoritism or that He will accept a bribe..

"everything is His" - as written "silver and gold are Mine, says the L-ord of Hosts" (Chagai 2:8). Thus, why should He accept a bribe if everything is already His..

"know that everything is according to the accounting" - that all your deeds enter the accounting and nothing is left out. All are brought together and sum into a great calculation.

"let not your inclination entice you.." - do not tell yourself "the grave will be my refuge (escape). I will be exempt from judgment after entering the grave and will never wake up from there.

"by force.." - just like you were born against your will and your life is always toil and vexation.. for many times you desired to die but would not. And when your time of death arrives, you will not be able to escape from it. So too you will perforce give a judgment and accounting of your deeds..

Q Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Ahava b'Taanugim - *"to know"* - if one did not learn torah, he is claimed on why he did not learn.

"make known" - if he did learn, he is claimed on why he did not make known and teach others.

"become known" - if he taught others, he is claimed to become known, ie he should have publicized G-d in the world like Avraham, our forefather, such that G-d should become known to the world.

Q Level 2

☆ Chachma u'Mussar

Chachma u'Mussar 1:113 - *"to know, make known, and to become known"* - "to know", ie to know well intellectually, thinking it over and knowing. Afterwards, "make known" to the powers of the nefesh, namely, the heart. For the heart moves the powers. Then, "become known", ie after setting in the heart, specifically then it is called a whole knowledge. May we merit to whole knowledge and then we will know life.

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - *"He is the judge"* - since He knows the truth of all matters, He is fitting to judge. For He will judge a true justice.

"He is the witness" - everything is revealed before Him.

"He is the plaintiff" - He claims from the sinners.. For if one hurts his fellow man, do not think he

sinned to his fellow alone and not to G-d. It is not so. G-d claims from him just like the fellow. For he also sinned to G-d.

Q Level 3

☆ Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim - "He is the plaintiff" - Rabeinu Yonah explains: "He claims from the sinners, etc. For if a man harms his fellow man, do not think that he sinned to man only and not to G-d. It is not so. G-d claims from him as a plaintiff Himself, since the man also sinned to G-d". end quote

The explanation is as the Saba of Kelm wrote (Chochma u'Mussar 1:13): "come and see how much G-d cherishes Yisrael (the Jewish people), etc. the good of Yisrael is the good of the Holy One, blessed be He. Why? Because G-d benefits everyone without limit, especially His treasured people.. and one who does good to a Jew, it is as if he did good to G-d, blessed be He. And one who loves a Jew, it is as if he loves G-d. Therefore: " 'love your fellow as yourself' - this is the general principle of the torah" (Bereisheit Rabba 24:8).

For this includes (all the commandments) between man and man and all the traits with which G-d conducts His world, as explained in the book Tomer Devorah. And likewise love of Yisrael is love of G-d.. Thus it is the general principle which includes inside it the entire torah...

Thus according to his words, the converse is also true - one who does evil to a Jew, it is as if he does evil to G-d, so to speak. Thus G-d Himself is the plaintiff to claim the sin from him..

Q Level 4

☆ Ahava b'Taanugim

Ahava b'Taanugim - "He is the G-d, Maker (yotzer), Creator (Boreh), Understander (Mevin)" (Kabalistic) - he wrote four parts corresponding to the four mystical worlds (Atzilut, Beriah, Yetzira, Asiyah).

Corresponding to the world of Asiyah, he wrote "He is the G-d". For it is proper to make known in this world that He is G-d and there is no other, namely, the klipot (evil forces).

Corresponding to the world of Yetzira, he wrote "He is the Maker (Yotzer). Corresponding to the world of Creation (Beriah), he wrote "He is the Creator". Corresponding to the world of Atzilut, he wrote "He is the Understanding One". For no creature can grasp nor understand. For it is concealed from all creations and He alone can understand there.

Thus one should make known and publicize that He is the Ruler in all the four worlds..

"He is the witness" - He is THE (quintessential) true witness. For there is no forgetfulness at all by Him.

"He is the judge" - likewise He is THE (quintessential) Judge. For there is no favoritism nor bribery at all by Him.

Q Level 3

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "the born [are destined] to die" - it is not enough to know that the end of man is death. Man needs to also live with the feeling that every second he approaches his end. The sage emphasizes this saying "the born to die". He didn't say "the living to die" like he said afterwards "the dead to resurrect". Rather, "the born" - their end is death. Already from the time of birth, a man walks towards his death.

Thus it is written: "for man walks to his eternal home" (Kohelet 12:5), in present tense not in future tense. All of a man's life, he walks to his grave. A man needs to live in this world with the feeling that he is constantly approaching his death. All his life is a preparation to the day of death and with

this awareness he needs to examine every deed and every step he makes..

"the dead to resurrect" - just like it is clear to every person that the end of every newborn is death, so too he must clearly know that the end of the dead is to resurrect.

From here is another reason why he chose the expression "the born to die" and not "the living to die" - this is to teach us that man does not die forever. Only the physical part is born and dies. The physical body is merely a garment and covering of the soul. And when the time comes, the soul divests of the body.

"to know, make known, and become known that He is G-d..." - after realizing our station in this world, the big question becomes what is the purpose of life?..

The answer is folded into three words "to know, make known, and become known that He is G-d.." The entire creation is aligned towards one purpose - knowledge of G-d. Man's job is to recognize the existence of the Director of the world and to know His ways.

The mishna says:

"to know" - every person is under duty at first "to know" - to realize through study and toil. To learn from others and also to try through his own efforts to know as best as he can the knowledge of G-d and the walking in His ways. For this purpose the torah and mitzvot were given.

Afterwards, every intelligent person must "make known" - to share his knowledge with other people. Through this, he draws the world closer to its intended purpose.

"to become known" - in the end of days, the knowledge of G-d will eventually be known by itself, without need to toil to attain it..

This future revelation will occur on the great day of judgment. Then every act done in the world will be seen in the perspective of world history. Everyone will understand the solution to the riddle of everything that ever happened in the world. It will be realized that nothing occurred by accident and thus that there was always a Director of the world.

Level 3

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - *"to GIVE a judgment and accounting"* - why does it say "to give" a judgment and accounting. Does the person "give" the judgment? Isn't he the one being judged?!

In the Midrash Shmuel (3:1) it is written that when a person comes before the Heavenly court, G-d wants that the person accepts the ruling they judge on him. However, "a man does not see guilt on himself" (Shabbat 119a).

On every sin he committed that they rebuke him, he will find reasons why he does not deserve punishment. He will find an excuse for every sin and make light of every sin. What does G-d do?

First a man is taught all the laws of the torah. Now he understands the depth of the severity of sins and he knows the punishment for every sin. Then he is presented with various cases and asked to judge them. What is the judgment for transgressing this sin? What is the punishment for that sin? And so on. The person confidently calls the judgments and condemns without hesitation as he learned.

Afterwards, he is shown that these are his own transgressions and sins and that he himself "gave" his own judgment with his own mouth. Now, he can do nothing other than to accept the judgment

and say: "Master of the World, you have judged rightly.." (Eirubin 19a). (Nathan the prophet used this method to judge king David regarding the story of Batsheva. See Shmuel II 2:12)

"judgment and accounting" - judgment refers to the sin itself while accounting refers to the time lost which he could have used for torah and mitzvot. (Vilna Gaon).

"against your will you live, against your will you will die" - according to this that one's birth and life is by force and against his will, the question comes up: "why should a person give a judgment and accounting for a life he did not desire? Why should he pay for 'merchandise' he did not want"?

The Dubna Magid answers with a parable:

In a city lived two sisters which nobody wanted to marry. One was very ugly and the second was hot-tempered, always yelling, and full of complaints on everything.

Years passed and a clever person had an idea to marry the ugly sister to a blind man and the hot-tempered sister to a deaf man.

The two couples lived a happy married life.

After some years a special doctor came to town who was able to heal almost all illness. The blind and deaf man went to see him in hopes of curing their condition.

The doctor successfully healed them. However, upon returning home, their life became full of strife. The previously blind man suffered from the appearance of his ugly wife while the previously deaf man suffered from the screams and constant complaints of his wife. Their lives became very difficult.

In the meantime, the doctor's bill arrived. In the bill was the amount to be paid for the treatment. However, the two refused to pay claiming that the doctor caused them only pain and suffering and that their lives became a living hell.

The two sides went to a judge to decide between them whether or not they are obligated to pay the doctor's fee.

The judge listened to their claims and ruled:

"Correct, the doctor caused them only pain and suffering. Therefore, I rule that the doctor is obligated to revert the two patients to their previous condition. Namely, to blind the now seeing man and to make deaf the now hearing man."

The two patients did not accept this ruling. The blind man was not prepared to return to the world of darkness and likewise the deaf man refused to return to the world of silence.

The judge said: "if so, pay your debt to the doctor. For you admitted that you benefited from his work".

The Dubna Maggid ends off saying that so too for every mortal towards his Creator. Although the Creator brought his soul down to this world against his will, but what sane person would want to leave this world willingly? Who would want to die before his time? Even a severely ill person full of sufferings - he seeks out the biggest doctors, fighting for every day of life.

We desire to live in this world. Thus, even though we were sent to this world against our will, but nevertheless we want this "merchandise" and we are not prepared to forego it. Thus it is clear why

we must give a judgment and accounting for our lives.

Level 3

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "to know" - first of all, the Tanna (sage) explains to us that all of us need "to know" ourselves, "and to make known" to others. By speaking this to ourselves all the time and with our surroundings, near or far, in the end we will reach the level of "to become known", which is a very clear and tangible perception.

What will we know exactly? The awesome depth of judgment. This includes several important matters.

Firstly, that we realize before Whom we are going to judgment: "He is G-d, He is the Maker, He is the Creator, He is the understander".

That is to say, He is the G-d which we know is the Maker of all the worlds and also the Creator who sustains their existence every second. He also understands all the actions of the creations and nothing is hidden from Him. It is Him!! No less!

"He is the judge" - thus He determines the rules of judgment. Do not think that if you disregard some small or big matter in the torah and that it is not at all important in your eyes in the least, then G-d will also judge you according to the standards and rules which you yourself invented and He will also ignore the things you ignored.

It is not so.. Rather, by Him the rules are completely different from what every person thinks. The judgment will be only according to those laws and statutes. Every thought, word, and deed of yours will be judged by this standard.

This is one of the reasons why the depth of judgment is hidden from people (Pesachim 54a). For nobody imagines just how meticulous is the judgment on every tiny grain of deed, word, or thought, despite that in this world it appears completely insignificant.

"He is the witness" - do not think that when you go to judgment there, some witness will come who barely knows you. Rather, G-d Himself is the witness for all your deeds and He knows you all too well and remembers everything you did all the days of your life and every place you went all over the world. When you realize this, you will understand that there is no action of yours which will not be judged in the Beit Din (Heavenly court) above.

"He is the plaintiff" - He will claim from you on every second of life you received from Him. He will ask you: what did you do in every second of your life? Did you utilize the time to increase the honor of Heaven or the opposite, ch'v?..

"He will summon to judgment.." - do not think this meticulous Judge will retire at some point or that He is busy with old records and has no time to examine your case. Rather, everything I told you until now on the depth of judgment - this is exactly what will happen to you in the future. Know this with complete certainty. That same judgment with the same laws and statutes, and that same Witness who knows everything, and that same Plaintiff who claims on everything...

"let not your evil inclination assure you to think that the grave will be a refuge (escape) for you" - I once heard an old secular man who apparently had a difficult life, say: "fortunately this difficult life of mine has an end". In my heart, I felt such pity for him. For this poor man thinks that although in this world, it was hard for him, but when he dies all his problems will end. This is exactly what our mishna writes. The evil inclination tells the sinners and wicked men who followed his advice all

their lives and finally see that they did not benefit at all from this and are near the end of their lives: "don't worry. granted you had a rough life, but soon you will die and rest in peace..."



**Pirkei Avot
Ethics of the Fathers
Chapter 5**

*with a select treasury of commentaries
compiled by Rabbi Yosef Sebag*

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Chapter 5 Mishna 1 - 10 Sayings Creation

With 10 sayings the world was created. And what does this teach us? For surely it could have been created with only one saying? Rather, this was in order to pay back the wicked who destroy the world that was created by 10 sayings, and to grant good reward to the righteous who sustain the world that was created with 10 sayings.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "with 10 sayings the world was created" - it is written nine times "G-d said", the tenth: "Bereisheit" (in the beginning [G-d created heaven and earth] - Gen.1:1) was also a saying, as written: "by the word of G-d were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Tehilim 33).

Q Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "with 10 sayings the world was created" - ie the world and everything in it was created with 10 commands. Namely, the 9 times "G-d said" is written in the first chapter of the Torah.

The (first) word "Bereisheit" (in the beginning G-d created) was also a saying. For without a doubt, the heavens and earth were created intentionally by G-d, just that it is not written: "and G-d said" there. For since they were created from nothing, if so, it is not possible for G-d to command the nonexistent to be created. But for the other creations, once Heavens and Earth were already created, it is conceivable to command them to create something from something..

Q Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "surely it could have been created with one saying" - ie if it were so that G-d was not capable of creating the world with one saying and that this great and awesome act required many sayings, then it is understood why the torah teaches us that the world was created with only ten sayings.

But we know that our Master is great and of immense power, capable of creating the world with only one saying. If so, that which He created the world with ten sayings is for some hidden reason known to Him.

Thus, why did the torah make known to us that the world was created with ten sayings? For the true reason why it was created thus is beyond our grasp and it appears as if to reduce G-d's glory (to create it with 10 sayings if He can do so with only one).

Perforce the torah informs us this for our good, so that we may learn something from this. Therefore, we must contemplate what matter to deduce from this?

The torah taught us that the world and everything in it was created with ten sayings so that we may know how much G-d cherishes the world and its components. For it was created with ten sayings similar to the mystical world which was created with ten sefirot.. This is the reason for all the "tens" in this chapter.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "the wicked who destroy the world" - for "whoever destroys a Jew, it is as if he

destroyed the whole world". Through their sins, the wicked destroy their own souls and thus it is as if they destroy the world. Alternatively, they destroy the world. For they incline the whole world to the side of guilt. Thus the world is destroyed because of them.

"who destroy the world that was created by 10 sayings.. - destroying a handiwork that was completed in one day is not like destroying a handiwork completed in many days.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan - "pay back the wicked who destroy the world that was created by 10 sayings" - this is faithful testimony that the wicked indeed destroy the world.

We must know that the world is very very precious and that by our transgressing the will of G-d who created us, we are destroying it. Likewise, we must know that by doing the will of G-d, we are sustaining the world and our reward is very very great.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "to grant good reward to the righteous who sustain the world that was created with 10 sayings" - for the world was created only for doing what is just in G-d's eyes. Those who do so uphold the world.

Q Level 3

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai, Chasdei Avot - "wicked/righteous.." - for the righteous, besides the reward they will receive for guarding the world from the natural filth and corrosion, they are also rectifying and rebuilding all the destruction in the world inflicted by the wicked through their evil deeds.

On this he said the world was created through ten sayings. Even though G-d could have created it with one saying, but nevertheless, He created it with 10 sayings to increase its worth. For through this the wicked are payed back for destroying the world which was created with ten sayings.

But the purpose and intent of increasing the punishment of the wicked who destroy the world is in order to increase the reward of the righteous who uphold the world and rectify it from the harm of the wicked. Through this, their reward will increase a hundred fold. For the reward of a guardian of a palace who merely did not let harm inside is not like the reward of a guardian who rebuilt and fixed the damage inflicted by bad people.

Q Level 3

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim - "to grant good reward to the righteous who sustain the world that was created with 10 sayings" - because the world was created for the man who is completely whole in everything (Adam Hashalem Bakol vekol). Every righteous person upholds the world by himself (see Yomah 38b). For the whole world is worth creating just for him alone (kol habriah kedai lo). This matter is explicit in the words of our sages. In Berachot 58b:

"Ben Zoma saw a huge crowd.. he said: 'blessed is He who created all these people to serve me..' He would say: 'what does a good guest say? How much efforts did the host toil for me.. and all this toil was only for me'.."

Likewise in Yoma 38b: "even for one righteous person the world was created.."
And in Sanhedrin 37a: "every person is obligated to say: 'the world was created for me'".

This is what our sages said: "the Holy One, blessed be He, sought to return the world to emptiness and void due to the generation of Tzidkiyahu (who were wicked). But after He gazed at Tzidkiyahu (who was righteous), His spirit calmed down (so to speak), and He refrained from destroying the world).

For it is worth creating the whole world for one whole (righteous) man. Thus, through each and every righteous man, the world is upheld (Kochvei Ohr maamar 79).

Q Level 3

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "reward/punishment" - the world is given under the responsibility of man. It is in his hands to be the crown of creation and to elevate the whole world or to destroy and corrupt himself and drag down the whole world with him.

In order for man to recognize the responsibility placed on him, the torah depicts in detail the order of creation. This is to teach us how important the world is in the eyes of the Creator and how great is the responsibility placed on man..

Man was created last in the "6 days of creation". He came to the world when it was already completed and perfected like a groom who enters the wedding hall when everything is ready and the guests have arrived.

The talmud expounds the verse: "it is all of man" (Kohelet 12:13) - "says the Holy One, blessed be He, 'the whole world was created only for him.. it was all created to be his company'" ie to be together with him...

Since man's actions determine the fate of the world, he must be careful of every deed and consider before making every step. This watchfulness needs to be such that he sees himself as in the middle of a great balance - fifty percent mitzvot and merits and fifty percent sins and demerits. Thus he should also view the whole world.

Hence from now, every act he does has the power to tilt the fate of the whole world. If this moment he does even a small mitzvah - he inclines the scales to good. For now there are more than fifty percent merits to him and the whole world. Likewise for the opposite, G-d forbid.

If a man were to remember this always and strive always to tilt the world to the side of good and not evil, the whole world would change for the good.

Q Level 4

☆ **Maharal Tzintz**

Maharal Tzintz - "surely it could have been created with one saying? But, this was in order to take retribution on the wicked who destroy the world that was created by 10 sayings" - the commentators asked on this: if it is possible to create the world with one saying, why should the wicked pay [more] just because it was created with ten sayings?

For a person who buys an object worth one gold coin for ten gold coins and afterwards another man destroys his object, the latter will be obligated to pay damages of only one gold coin (not ten).

The answer is that as known, through ten sayings, the world came to physicality (through a chain of transition from divine to spiritual to physical).. As known, man is "a ladder fixed on the ground whose end reaches the heavens". For every mitzvah like tefilin, tzitzit, lulav, etc., although in the physical world it appears to be a light matter, but according to the drawing of light to the spiritual roots in the mystical worlds, it is extremely lofty...

Thus since G-d desires kindness, He gives reward according to the lofty effects in the mystical worlds and pays punishment according to the [small] effects in the lowly physical world.. Thus both are a kindness.

This is the meaning of "by 10 sayings the world was created". For if it were created with one saying, it would be extremely difficult to hold the upper end due to its extreme holiness and sublime spirituality. But after it has come down one saying after another until it has come to the realm of physicality due to countless chains of descent - then the righteous man can grasp the mitzvot in his manner in the physical world and move all the upper mystical worlds.

This is the meaning of "to give reward to the righteous, etc." For due to the chain effect of the ten sayings, the righteous man can fulfill mitzvot in the physical world and rouse the upper mystical worlds. Thus his reward is very great.

Similarly for the damage caused by the wicked. He is judged according to the level of the bottom saying. This is the meaning of "to pay the wicked". For if one were to measure the punishment according to the destruction in the upper mystical worlds, there is no end to his punishment and it is impossible for him to ever repay.

But G-d desires kindness, "He does not desire the death of the wicked" (Yechezkel 18:23) so "He devises means so that the banished one will not remain an outcast" (Ibal yidach mimenu nidach) (Shmuel II 14:14) after receiving his punishment.

This is a kindness of G-d, that the punishment can be measured according to this lowly world. Without this, there would be no hope for the wicked to rise up.

But now that we measure the punishment according to its perspective in the lower world, then it is possible to pay back even the wicked man. And after payment, he will go out a free man and have a portion in the land of the living, so that his soul be bound in the cord of [eternal] life..

And for the righteous, the opposite - they are given reward generously according to the perspective of the highest lofty saying of creation.

Thus both reasons are along the same lines (i.e. a kindness), whether for the righteous or the wicked.

Level 4

☆ Maharal

Maharal - that which the world was created with ten sayings and not one saying, this teaches that this world has a supernal quality (maalah elyona). For G-d's Shechina (divine presence) is in this world. The number ten teaches on this. For the Shechina (divine presence) is always with ten and no less, as we explained earlier in the mishna "ten who sit and study torah, the Shechina resides among them" (Avot 3:6).

Know that which the number ten receives the glory of the Shechina, this is because ten has holiness. Thus, if the world were created with one saying (instead of ten), it would not have this supernal quality. But now that the world was created with ten sayings, it has this holy supernal quality. For we have already explained that ten has holiness and thus every matter of holiness requires ten [people] (ex. to recite the kadish prayer).
(and as the torah writes: "the tenth shall be holy" Vayikra 27:32)..

Thus the world was created specifically with ten sayings. For if it were not created with ten sayings, it would have a lower level. But now that it was created with ten sayings, this teaches on the lofty holy level the world has.

Thus the wicked who destroy the world which has this level of holiness - they are destined to give a judgment on this..

For there is a big difference between one who steals a coin to one who steals the crown of the king..

And likewise, for the righteous who uphold the world, their reward is very great...

If you ask, even though the wicked man destroys the world which was created with ten sayings, but nevertheless, there are other righteous men who uphold the world. Thus the result is that the world is not destroyed.

This is not difficult. For since from the perspective of this wicked man, the world receives destruction, if so, there is a judgment on him that he is destroying the world. We have already explained in the mishna "pray for the welfare of the government" (Avot 3:2) that the world was created for each and every individual, as explained there.

"to give good reward.. to pay [retribution] from the wicked" - he did not say: "to PAY good reward" like he wrote by the wicked "to PAY from the wicked". For it is not proper respect [towards G-d] since it implies that G-d has a debt to pay reward to the righteous that He must pay.

But really even if a righteous man serves his Creator, G-d is not obligated to pay him anything. Rather it is only a kindness of G-d. For a creation has no claim of payment from his Creator.. Thus he wrote "to GIVE reward". The reward G-d gives is in the way of divine grace, purely a kindness and not a payment..

But for the punishment to the wicked, it is applicable to use the term "pay" since the payment is certainly from the attribute of justice. However, the giving of reward is not from the attribute of justice (since on the contrary man owes G-d for granting him life and other countless favors).

Level 4

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "by 10 sayings the world was created. And what does this teach us?..." - who will go after the King to examine what He has done, to contemplate the reason and intent of the Creator, blessed be He?

Nevertheless, we have been granted permission to contemplate what has already been explained in the holy Zohar and the words of the kabbalists.

Namely, G-d wanted to create countless worlds. He also created within them a power of evil - that knows its Master and intends to rebel against Him.

When the creations do the will of G-d, this evil is submitted and put down, becoming null and void.

This evil is not recognizable in all the worlds except for this world, in those who dwell in clay [physical bodies]. But in the upper lofty worlds, there is no trace of evil at all. Below them the existence of evil begins to appear. Below them still, the power of evil begins to appear but it is still a trace of a trace - not in actuality.

In the worlds lower still, evil begins to dawn until in the lower world (our world) it is almost all evil.

If not for the kindness of the Creator on His creations, to create man from the dust and breathe into his nostrils the soul of life - a spiritual power which includes all the worlds. From the lower (physical) world until the loftiest (spiritual) world, a power which collects all the angels, Serafim, Ofanim, Holy Chayot, and the firmament above the Chayot. This man will contend and wage war

with the power of evil and through his deeds he will overpower it and reduce it more and more until he removes wickedness from the land.

The entire existence of evil is only for the purpose of being annulled and to give reward to those who annul it..

Since man includes all the worlds, therefore in truth everything depends on man. Man should not tell himself "G-d has left me", "I am just a barren tree", "and if I become righteous, what effect does this have?"; "and if I become wicked what harm is there?".

But really man is like the center point. Although it is tiny, but nevertheless all the lines [of a circle] are drawn from it. A slight deviation in the center point will warp the whole circle.

So too for man. Every good matter he does weakens the power of evil from his body. Through this, evil is reduced from the world and all the worlds become rectified. Likewise for the opposite, G-d forbid, he damages all the worlds and increases evil in them. (see there for more)

Level 4

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "by 10 sayings the world was created.." - as many commentaries explained, the 10 sayings hint to something called the "10 Sefirot" (in Kaballah). What are these 10 Sefirot?

As known, one of the fundamentals of Judaism is that G-d is absolutely One (yachid pashut). That is to say, it is not at all applicable to attribute to Him any sort of plurality or parts.

This is not like one city which is comprised of many neighborhoods, nor like one machine which is comprised of many parts, nor like one human being of many limbs.

Rather, G-d is One, without any sort of division whatsoever.

When G-d wanted to create all the worlds, His end goal was to create man possessing free will and the ability to change the state of all the worlds according to his free choice of good or evil. Thus, G-d created a system of conduct which can be changed according to man's free will. And since G-d is absolute (Pashut) and thus never changes and likewise His will also never changes (for He knows everything that was, is, and will be), thus in order to create a system of will that can change according to man's free will and deeds, He created an immense system made up of 10 parts. Through them passes the conduct of all the worlds.

The state of each part by itself as well as all of them together and the exchange and connection between them is capable of changing, to increase or decrease - according to the free will of man.

Of course, it is G-d's pure will which drives these 10 Sefirot which are comprised of countless details and details of details. He grants them life and power to move and guide the whole world according to their current state which depends on man's free will.

For according to the order and state that man fixes in the Sefirot on high, correspondingly will be the power and influence from G-d to conduct the world.

Even though G-d conducts the world and not the Sefirot, but nevertheless since all of His conduct and influence passes solely through the Sefirot, therefore, the situation and order of conduct in the world is given to change according to the state of the Sefirot which are determined by the actions of man.

An analogy to this is electricity which flows through all electronic machines. The electricity is exactly the same in all machines, but according to the machine it is connected to will be the resulting effect - cold for a refrigerator and heat for an oven, etc.

And since "G-d looked into the torah and created the world" (Genesis Rabba 1:1), ie all the worlds were created according to the torah, therefore it was ordained in the nature of the sefirot that the laws of the torah alone are what causes good or bad changes in their states.

That is to say, when a man does everything that is written in the torah according to Halacha (Jewish law), then he arranges the Sefirot in good proper order and the divine influence flows through them abundantly and without problems.

(as known, the Sefirot have countless details and parts connected to the 613 commandments. Every mitzvah or detail of mitzvah corresponds to the state of some part of the sefirot. Furthermore, every Jew and every second of his life is connected to one area in the ten sefirot. By using his time properly, he rectifies what no one else can do).

But when a man transgresses what is written in the torah, through this he inflicts damages in the proper order of the sefirot and the work there breaks down, whether a little or a lot. Then, the flow of divine influences corrupts a bit and it becomes partially disconnected according to the severity and quantity of sins.

Thus, that which the Tanna asked: "but the world could have been created with one saying (instead of ten)".

The intent is why didn't G-d create a world without Sefirot and without intermediary, rather the will of G-d and the flow of divine influence will flow constantly and steadily without connection to the acts of human beings?

He answers: since G-d wanted that man have free will in order that he receives reward in Olam Haba through merit and not as an unearned free gift, therefore He created the world with ten sefirot in order that there be room for change in the conduct of the world through man's free will. Thus, it will be considered a righteousness for him that through his good deeds, he caused the flow of divine influence through the Sefirot. Hence, now that there exists this system of Sefirot, there is also the system of reward and punishment.

Chapter 5 Mishna 2 - Adam To Noah

There were 10 generations from Adam to Noah, in order to **עֲשֶׂרָה דוֹרוֹת מֵאָדָם וְעַד נֹחַ, לְהוֹדִיעַ** make known how forbearing G-d is. For all those generations **כְּמָה אַרְבָּה אַפִּים לְפָנָיו, שֶׁכָּל הַדּוֹרוֹת הָיוּ** kept on angering Him repeatedly, until He brought upon them the **מִי הָיָה עַד שֶׁהֵבִיא עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת מֵי הַמַּבּוּל.** waters of the flood.

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "10 generations from Adam to Noah.." - as written in the torah: Adam begot Shet, Shet begot Enosh, etc. until Noah. Why did the torah make known to us this order of generations? To teach us until how many generations G-d withholds retribution to give them a chance to repent.

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "in order to make known how forbearing G-d is.." - so too do not wonder that He withheld wrath from the nations of the world all these years for their oppressing His sons (Israel). For He was more forbearing to the generations from Adam to Noach and afterwards they perished in the flood.

Q Level 3

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "in order to make known how forbearing G-d is" - this mishna teaches a very great fundamental principle of the torah. It is important to realize this, especially in our orphaned generation where most people imagine G-d as someone very scary and threatening. He, so to speak, stands behind their back with a punishing stick saying "if you don't listen to Me, you will surely receive a severe beating!".

These poor people think G-d's entire goal in the world is only to seek how to punish everyone for having committed some sin. Without a doubt, such views are a big mistake and also contain heresy and foolishness. For anyone who applies his mind can understand that it is not conceivable that G-d created the world only to conjure up all sorts of strange laws in order to catch people who transgress them and punish them severely.

Rather, all of G-d's goal is only to bestow the maximum good possible to His creations, as written in Tehilim: "G-d is good to all and His mercy is over all His works" (Tehilim 145:9).

Only that if people do not heed His voice and corrupt all that is just, then He has no choice but to punish them to return them to the good or to cleanse them of their sins so that they will be able to merit to cling to the Source of good in the future.

The sage of this mishna tells us: "come and I will prove to you that G-d is not at all interested in punishing His creations but rather to give them perfect reward. And even when He is forced to punish them, He waits a long time and withholds anger to give them a chance to repent. Only that if they still did not repent, then in the end He is forced to punish them."

The Tanna brings a proof from the "ten generations from Adam to Noach, in order to make known how forbearing G-d is". G-d waited for them for over 1600 years and "all those generations kept on angering Him", and He still did not punish them. Only in the end after their measure [of sin] was full and they did not repent despite all the warnings of Noach - He brought the flood upon them.

The same thing happened from Noach to Avraham (next mishna). G-d so much desired to bestow good reward to them, but there was no one capable of receiving it until Avraham came and G-d

finally found someone worthy of receiving the reward. Thus, G-d gave him all the reward of the previous ten generations in addition to his reward.

Chapter 5 Mishna 3 - Noah To Avraham

There were 10 generations from Noah to Avraham, in order to **עֲשֶׂרָה דוֹרוֹת מִנֹּחַ וְעַד אַבְרָהָם, לְהוֹדִיעַ** make known how forbearing G-d is. For all those generations **כְּמָה אָרְךָ אַפִּים לְפָנָיו, שְׂכָל הַדּוֹרוֹת הָיוּ** kept on angering Him repeatedly, until Avraham our father came **עַד שֶׁבָא אַבְרָהָם וְקִבֵּל** and received the reward of them all. **עָלָיו שְׂכָר כָּלֵם.**

Q Level 1

☆ **Bartenura**

"Avraham received the reward of them all" - he did as much good deeds as was fitting for all of them combined to do. Therefore, they were all saved in his merit. And just like Avraham took upon himself the yoke of mitzvot in this world corresponding to all of them, so too he will receive reward in the next world corresponding to all of them.

For every person has two portions. One in Gan Eden and one in Gehinom. If he is meritorious, he takes his and his fellow's portion in Gan Eden. But if he is guilty (evil), he takes his and his fellow's portion in Gehinom (Chagigah 15b).

Q Level 2

☆ **Tiferet Yisrael**

Tiferet Yisrael - "the reward of them all" - ie the reward which was fitting for all of them. Namely, to draw them under the wings of the Shechina (divine presence), to reveal Himself to them as G-d did to Avraham, to establish a covenant with them and give their descendants the torah, to perform miracles and wonders for them and bestow prophecy on them.

All this was the original intent of G-d - that all human beings merit these things. But when these ten generations sinned, they all lost these things. Only Avraham and the chosen of his seed, namely the descendants of Yisrael (Jacob), merited these gifts.

Q Level 3

☆ **Matanat Avot**

Matanat Avot - "with ten trials Avraham our forefather was tested and he withstood all of them; to make known how beloved was our father Avraham (next mishna)" - if someone were to ask: "why did Avraham merit to be so pleasing in G-d's eyes and to merit the reward of all of them?"

Answer him: because he stood up to these ten great trials. And when he stood up to all of them, he showed that he has nothing in his world besides doing the will of G-d. Nothing was more important to him and he also demonstrated that he fulfilled the will of G-d with joy and zeal..

Thus, G-d revealed His true purpose to bestow the maximum reward and He gave Avraham also the reward of previous generations and chose his descendants to be fitting for this goal of bestowing perfect reward for fulfilling torah and mitzvot.

Q Level 4

☆ **Maharal**

Maharal - "reward of all of them" - that which Avraham receives the reward of all of them - this is a deep matter. For all these generations from Noach until Avraham were vanity and empty (hevel vetohu), without substance, everything as emptiness, as our sages said: "2000 years of void (tohu)" (Avodah Zarah 9a) - ie until Avraham came.

Avraham was the beginning and head of the creation. Thus since he was the beginning, he is considered more of an existence than all other human beings in the world. For the beginning is the primary existence and the chief existence of the world.

The generations before Avraham were the opposite of him. For all those generations were vanity, without substance while Avraham was the foundation and primary [existence]. Due to this, he received the reward of all of them. For the opposite of something receives its opposite..

It is proper to ask: why were the generations of the beginning of creation such sinners? (from Adam until Noah).

You should know on what we explained earlier regarding: "he whose deeds are greater than his wisdom [his wisdom does not endure]" (Avot 3:17), that everything is drawn after the body of man. Man's body is considered the foundation and primary of man (yesod v'ikar haadam).

When this foundation is as it should be, namely, removed from pettiness, afterwards he grows and advances higher and higher until he acquires the loftiest levels.

This matter is akin to the roots of a tree. When the roots are strong, the tree grows higher and higher.

But if a man's quality is not in his roots, rather his primary quality is in that he is at a lofty level, and he lacks strength in his roots - this is not considered a [high] level. Most likely, he will suffer a complete fall, as we explained earlier.

He is compared to a tree with much foliage and few roots. It has no standing and permanence. On the contrary, it is fragile and unstable when its foliage is greater than its roots. For the root and foundation must be according to the foliage of the tree.

With this you will understand these things. For Adam, the first man, who was created in the image of G-d (Gen.1:27), he received the loftiest level. Likewise for the generations from Adam until Noah, they were near this lofty level. But they did not have a foundation appropriate to this high level.

Therefore, they were like a tree whose foliage is greater than its roots. This quality (of great foliage) was actually a lacking, as we explained.

You should understand that these three men (Adam, Noach, Avraham), each had a special level by himself.

You will find that Adam had the level of "image of G-d" (Tzelem Elokim, higher soul), as we explained earlier (Avot 3:14) regarding this level.

Below this is the level of Form (tzura, lower soul). This level is not the level of Tzelem (higher soul). Rather the truth of this tzura is that which a man is a speaking creature (chai medaber).

(R.Hartman commentary - the tzurah is the interface between the physical (body) and the spiritual (higher soul). This is expressed by the power of speech. Therefore this is what is man. And in Netiv Halashon(ch.2), he writes: "know that man is of physicality. Thus the sechel (intellect, higher soul) is not the Tzurah (form, lower soul) of man. For man was not created completely sechel (intellect). But the speaking intellect (sechel dabri) is through the physical limbs, namely, the tongue - this is the tzurah (form) of man." end quote

And there in chapter 6: "the speaking intellect (sechel dabri) is the tzurah (form) of man who is called a speaking living creature (chai medaber). This matter is the primary and root of a man" end quote.. These three levels (Adam, Noach, and Avraham) correspond to Neshama (higher

soul), ruach (lower soul), and nefesh (life soul), which correspond to thought, speech, and action..(see there for more).

Below this level (of Noah) is the level of the body of man (ie nefesh).

Thus, Adam had this lofty level of this Tzelem (higher soul) which is the Tzelem Elokim (image of G-d) with which Adam was created, as our sages brought regarding the great light of Adam the first man. But Adam did not have a foundation and root to this lofty level.

This matter was certainly a lacking, namely, when the branches/foilage are greater than the roots.

Therefore, Adam and the generations after him had lackings.

Afterwards, Noah had the level of tzurah (form).

this matter is clear. For this Noah was called "a man of the ground" (Gen.9:20), as we explained elsewhere that man is the Tzura (form)..

He also did not have a complete foundation and root to this level and all the more so for his ten generations. Thus, lacking and deficiency were drawn after them.

Afterwards, Avraham came. He had the level of body wholly. Thus the Gematria (numerical value) of Avraham is 248, corresponding to the 248 limbs in man, and as our sages said: "he coronated G-d over his 248 limbs" (Nedarim 32b). Therefore he was granted the Brit Milah (circumcision, Gen.17:10) on his body.

This is the greatest level. For when man is whole (perfect) from the aspect of his physical body (ie lower soul, character traits), which is considered the foundation and primary - then he can receive wholly the level of Tzurah (form). This is as the foliage to the perfection of the body. And then he can receive the splendor of the Tzelem Elokim, according to the level fitting for him.

Then the level of Sechel (transcendent intellect) can attach on the physical.. Thus he would ascend always level after level and he was the opposite of all the earlier generations.

He was like a tree whose roots were more numerous than its branches/foilage (and thus endured the trials)..

Chapter 5 Mishna 4 - Ten Trials Avraham

With ten trials Avraham our forefather was tested and he withstood all of them, in order to make known how beloved was Avraham our forefather.

עֲשָׂרָה נִסְיוֹנוֹת נִתְּנָה אֲבִרָהּ אָבִינוּ עָלָיו
הַשְּׁלוֹם וְעַמְד בְּכֻלָּם, לְהוֹדִיעַ כְּמָה חֲבָתוֹ שֶׁל
אֲבִרָהּ אָבִינוּ עָלָיו הַשְּׁלוֹם.

Q Level 1

☆ Meorei Ohr

Meorei Ohr - "with ten trials Avraham.." - these are explained in Pirkei d'Rebbi Eliezer: one, when Nimrod tried to kill him, he hid underground for 13 years. Two, Nimrod cast him into a fiery furnace. Three, G-d commanded him to leave his land. There is no greater test, to leave one's land and birthplace and his father's house where he grew up.

Four, the famine in Israel after he arrived. There is no greater test than this. For G-d told him "[leave your land] I will bless you and make your name great, etc.", and after he leaves famine greets him. But he did not become upset nor complained. Rather, "Avraham descended to Egypt" (Gen.12:10).

Five, Sarah was taken to Pharaoh. There is no greater test than this to have your wife kidnapped and this is the opposite of what G-d told him: "I will make your name great" (Gen.12:2).

Six, when his nephew Lot was taken as a prisoner and he was forced to wage war with the four kings..

Seven, the covenant at Bein Habetarim where G-d informed him of the four exiles.

Eight, the command to circumcise himself after he was 100 years old and weak, there is no greater test than this.

Nine, he was commanded to send away Hagar and Yishmael despite that it was very difficult in his eyes as written: "the matter was very evil in his eyes regarding his son" (Gen.21:11).

Ten, the offering of Yitzchak which was the biggest test of them all..

Q Level 1

Tosfot Yom Tov

Tosfot Yom Tov - "[Avraham] our father" - we merit and receive good in his merit for having stood up to all the trials. Therefore, the Tanna calls him "our father".

Q Level 1

☆ Rashi

Rashi - "he withstood all of them" - he did not complain in his heart of G-d's attributes (lo hirer achar midotav).

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "with ten trials.." - why was he tested with these ten trials? If it was in order to know what is in his heart, does G-d have any doubts? Rather, it was to make known to everyone how great was his love of G-d and it was not for nothing that G-d chose him.

Q Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - "with ten trials.." - to make known how much Avraham cherished his Maker, to call His Name (in prayer) and bring many [converts] under His wings. All this despite that he was full of trials. It is thus proper for all his descendants to do likewise, as written: "look to Avraham your forefather" (Isaiah 51:2).

Corresponding to these ten trials which Avraham stood up to, G-d performed special kindness to his descendants, namely, ten miracles in Egypt. And the Israelites, who were ungrateful, paid G-d back with ten trials in complaining and rebelling against Him in the desert (next mishna).

All this is reported in the holy torah to teach mussar to the thinking person and to turn away from evil.

Q Level 2

☆ Sfas Emes

Sfas Emes on Avot - "ten trials" - for through a trial (nissayon), a person is elevated to a high level. The hebrew word "nissa" connotes elevation, such as "lift up a banner" (se'u ness). Thus, through the ten trials, Avraham our forefather was elevated all the ten levels..

Q Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Ahava b'Taanugim - "he withstood all of them" - he did not question (hirher) G-d's ways due to his great love of G-d.

That which G-d tests man, this is for man's benefit. Namely, so that his good thought comes out to actual deed. Sometimes it is for the benefit of other people who see him, so that they learn from him and act like him.

Thus the word "nisayon" (trial) comes from the word "ness" (banner), which is something revealed openly. Likewise it is called "ness" to elevate the one being tested.

Thus it is written: "and G-d tested (nissa) Avraham". Namely, G-d elevated his status in the eyes of men for all generations after him and his matter was a banner to the nations.

"our father" - here he is called "our father" to hint that it is proper for us to hold the deeds of our forefathers in our hands (continue in their ways).

Some explain that the reason he was tested with ten trials was not for his own need but rather for the needs of his descendants. Thus it says "our forefather".. so that in his merit, G-d will perform 10 miracles for his descendants in Egypt and at the Red Sea and save them from the accusers. Thus the next mishna mentions the ten miracles in Egypt and at the sea.

Q Level 3

☆ Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - "with ten trials.." - just like the world was created with ten sayings, so too through ten trials Avraham the giant of giants was built.

In the Midrash: "one trial after another, one growing after another" (Bereisheit Rabba 55:1).

In the book Derech Etz Chaim, the Ramchal writes: "a man must think always: 'what did our forefathers do that G-d desired in them?'"

A man must know that one does not grow by chance. Rather, everything through cause and effect. And when one sees the immense greatness of the holy forefathers, he must realize that there was a path and a way to their growth. How? through "one trial after another, one growing after another". For the power of sprouting and growth is trials! (Daat Torah 1 pg.136).

Why is there "nature"? It is only a trial. All of us are under the trials of this "false prophet" called nature.

All of nature is nothing less than a deceitful appearance which G-d put in the world. It is all a

misleading appearance, a trial.

From here we can contemplate the difficult service placed upon every man, to stand in a situation of great and difficult trials all of his days..

And that which our sages said that Avraham was tested with ten trials, it appears the common denominator between all of them was that there was no way whatsoever to comprehend them, as the midrash says (brought by Rashi Bereisheit 2:12): "yesterday You said to me: 'through Yitzchak will be your seed (descendants)', and now You tell me: 'go and offer your son as a sacrifice'"

Likewise for other tests.. But nevertheless, Avraham did not suspect G-d's traits. Through this Avraham ascended levels - by standing firmly like a wall, not weakening in his faith, even with difficult matters like these which had no way whatsoever to understand.

Nevertheless, he was wholehearted with G-d to have faith in Him. (Daat Chochma u'Mussar 3:37).

Level 3

Chatam Sofer

Shevet Sofer, chelek beit drosh aleph - "with ten trials Avraham our forefather was tested.." - 10 generations from Noach until Avraham. In every generation there were people who believed in G-d such as Adam, Metushelach, Chanoch, and Noach. Yet we don't find that G-d tested any of them. Rather, Avraham was the first to be tested with ten trials.

It is so that G-d examines the hearts of men and nothing is hidden from His eyes and everything is revealed before Him from the beginning, and He knows already if the righteous man will pass the trial.

The Midrash expounds the verse: "G-d tests the righteous" (Tehilim 11:5) - this is as a potterer who tests his pots. He knocks only on those pots which he knows will not break. So too G-d tests only the righteous. For He knows they will stand up to the test.

If so, what benefit is there in the trial? Many explanations have already been given.

It seems to me, because the primary purpose of man is not to perfect only himself. He must not look only at himself and not feel for others. In truth, G-d does not desire in these. Rather man is also under duty to rectify other people.

However, many times what we see and experience teaches us that if one rebukes his fellow and wants to straighten him out and he speaks to his heart to be strong in faith and service of G-d, then the listeners say: this preacher sits in his house and all his toil is only in torah and service of G-d. For him, it is easy to preach to others to observe the Sabbath and Yom Tov.. and likewise to not engage in business talk then, etc. for him it is easy to preach this.

But it is difficult to fulfill for one who is forced to engage in business and worldly matters and must travel faraway places.

Who knows if this preacher would say all this if he himself had to stand up to all these trials. Perhaps he himself would not even fulfill them.

Therefore, one who teaches others and wants to rectify them and guides them to recognize that the truth is with him, and everything he asks, he himself would fulfill it if the test came - for such a righteous man, there is a purpose if G-d tests him and places him in a trial - so that he will stand as a banner to others and they will see and learn how much one needs to be strong in his faith.

This is the reason G-d waited with the tests until Avraham. For until him, there was nobody who recognized and understood the purpose of man and what is the will of G-d. For all of them perfected only themselves and did not strive to help the people of their generation..

Avraham was the first who understood that in this G-d wants - to call out the Name of G-d and make Him known in the world.. Avraham made many converts. And to show that the truth is with him, G-d tested him until he demonstrated to the whole world that he was G-d-fearing as he preached..

Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - it is proper to ask: "why was G-d forbearing for ten generations specifically, no less and no more?"

We have already explained previously (Avot 3:6,13) that numbers do not go above ten. (after ten it is just an extension of the original ten). Thus, each number of the first ten has a special level and distinction by itself, as we explained earlier.

Therefore, G-d withheld retribution until ten generations. For until ten generations, there is to say: "perhaps this generation, which is a distinct generation by itself, will become a righteous generation." Likewise for all generations of the ten generations.

Therefore G-d granted forbearance until ten generations.. But since they were wicked until ten generations and there was no improvement and the number returns to the beginning (11 is echad-aser=one-ten in hebrew), and the world became corrupted, therefore, the Holy One, blessed be He, paid retribution to the wicked and destroyed them from the world (with the flood).

Likewise, that which G-d withheld wrath for ten generations from Noach to Avraham was for the same reason - perhaps there will be a generation different than the others. This was until ten generations. From then on, it returns back to the beginning.

Thus this mishna follows the previous one: "the world was created with ten sayings". Ten sayings specifically so that the world will not lack any parts until it is completely whole. Thus it was created with ten sayings so that it includes everything.

For this same reason G-d tested Avraham with ten trials (Avot 5:3) - so that he will be tested with all types of different trials. For sometimes a person stands up to one trial but not on another.. Thus he was tested with ten trials which includes all trials.. So too for the ten miracles in Egypt and the ten plagues, etc... (see there for more). Thus these mishnas are ordered one after the other...

Level 3

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "Avraham our forefather" - here he says "Avraham our forefather" while last mishna he says only "from Noach until Avraham", without "our forefather". This is as written: "The righteous who walks in his integrity - blessed are his children after him" (Mishlei 20:7).

For many traits which the righteous man toils and works hard to attain, they become like second nature to his descendants after him. With just a bit of toil, they can reach it. We can see tangibly that many simple Jews gave up their lives al kidush Hash-em (martyrs). This is ingrained in us from Avraham our forefather who was willing to give up his life for his faith at Ur Kasdim.

So too for all the ten trials. They were to straighten the path before us.

Likewise when a man is suddenly inspired to travel to the holy land. This is from the trial of "go out from your land" (lech lecha).

And to accept all that comes from G-d as good - this is from the trial of famine. Avraham did not suspect G-d in His judgment...

Q Level 3

Meorei Ohr

Meorei Ohr - "he withstood all of them" - in the Duties of the Heart (gate 8):

"Know, my brother, that for the ten trials which G-d tested Avraham our forefather with, we would not be praising Avraham for standing up to these trials, if it were not the case that he had received everything from G-d willingly and with a good heart, as written: 'And found his heart faithful before You' (Nechamia 9:8)". end quote.

This teaches there is another condition in standing up to trials. Namely, even if one stood up to the test but did not do so with joy - it is a sign that he did not yet reach wholeness (shelemut).

Q Level 4

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "ten trials.." - the trial of Ur Kasdim is not mentioned in the torah explicitly (where Avraham was given a choice to bow to Nimrod's idol or be cast in a fiery furnace). The Bartenura counts it as one of the ten trials, but the Rambam does not count it.

The torah mentions it only in hint. In the brit (covenant) bein habetarim, G-d says to Avraham: "I am G-d who took you out of Ur Kasdim" (Bereisheit 15:7)..

Likewise, Avraham hints to the miracle done to him there when telling himself "I am but dust and ashes" (Bereisheit 18:27).

The Midrash says that Avraham meant to say: "if not for G-d's help, I would have become "dust" - through the four kings who battled him, and "ashes" through Nimrod who cast him in fire at Ur Kasdim..

Why is such a difficult trial not mentioned even in one verse of the torah? Many seemingly much easier trials are mentioned in the torah explicitly. Why specifically this trial is omitted and mentioned only in hint.

We can answer according to the verse in tehilim: "who will ascend the mountain of G-d" (Tehilim 24:3), this is indeed not easy to ascend, to climb and contend against the force of gravity. But the verse continues "and who will stand in His holy place" - this is even more difficult, to stand firmly at the mountain summit, to be constantly inspired in the service of G-d.

Every person has a moment where he can be inspired greatly to the point where he can give up his life. Throughout history, many Jews chose to be burnt at the stake rather than give up their faith. This self sacrifice is indeed a high level, but it requires only a brief inspiration, a one time elevation.

But it is very difficult to maintain inspiration in a fixed manner. Only with very great efforts can one guard an elevated spiritual state in every day life.

For example, Yom Kippur is guarded more meticulously than the Sabbath. Even though the punishment for violating the Sabbath is greater and one must fast on Yom kippur.

Nevertheless, Yom Kippur is guarded more and there is greater inspiration. Why? Because it is only once a year whereas the Sabbath is over fifty times a year.

Likewise, for the mitzvah of Tefilin. For some Jews, on the day of their son's bar mitzvah they go with great fanfare to the Western Wall and the Bar Mitzvah boy dons the tefilin with great emotion. But after a short few days, the tefilin remain in his drawer all alone.

A single inspiration is easy, but to keep the flame burning afterwards is extremely difficult.

The key is to maintain the fire, to fulfill the mitzvot with emotions in day to day life. Three prayers a day, reciting the Shemah, washing hands, grace after meals, Sabbath, Tefilin, in the spirit of "know Him in all your ways" (Mishlei 3:6). In every act, to remember to Whom we are doing the mitzvot and to be aware of the privilege we have to perform them.

Avraham, the epitome of faith and self-sacrifice, was prepared to offer his whole being for G-d's honor. For him, the trial of Ur Kasdim was not so difficult. For it was a trial of merely one second.

On the other hand, the trial of Lech Lecha (leave your country) was a day to day, hour to hour trial. At the age of 75, he was told to leave his country. Until when? Until his death..

Avraham versus Iyov(Job)

There was another person in history who was tested with an extremely difficult test - Iyov (Job). Iyov remained a servant of G-d, but the results by him were different. By Avraham our forefather, it is written "he stood up to all of them".

But Iyov said: "Let the day perish on which I was born, and the night that said, 'A man is conceived'" (Iyov 3:3). He cursed the day he was born. Although he passed the test, but not with the same standing as Avraham. On the contrary Avraham grew and became more elevated with each additional trial.

The Sfat Emet says that not everyone passes their tests in the same way. Some people pass the test like Iyov. Even though he passes the test, but his spirit breaks. The trial bends him down. He walks around sad, worried, without life.

On the other hand, some people pass the test like Avraham our forefather. He stood up to the test firmly. Every trial reinforced his faith and elevated his stature.

This is the true purpose of a test - to elevate a person and show him to what high levels he has the ability to reach.

The trial of the offering of Yitzchak

"After these things G-d tested Abraham.." (Gen.22:1) - the most difficult trial was the sacrifice of Yitzchak.

The torah emphasizes with this verse that the trial is attributed to the merit of Avraham our forefather. Why does the torah not write: "G-d tested Avraham and Yitzchak"? Is it a small thing to stick out one's neck to be slaughtered? To offer up one's life to obey G-d's command - is this not considered a trial? Why is this not a trial also for Yitzchak?

Rather, as we explained regarding the trial of Ur Kasdim, namely, why is it not mentioned explicitly

in the torah, so too we can answer regarding Yitzchak.

As before, the trial of Ur Kasdim was a test for a moment, a one time test. And for a giant like Avraham, it is almost not considered a test.

So too regarding the trial of the offering of Yitzchak, Yitzchak grew up in the home of Avraham and Sarah. For him, this was not such a difficult trial. To offer his life for the will of G-d; "there is no man who does not have his hour" (Avot 4:3) - every person can elevate himself for a short time. Throughout Jewish history, many Jews offered their lives for the sanctification of G-d's Name.

The much more difficult trial was on the father - Avraham. It is a more difficult trial to live sanctifying G-d's Name than to die sanctifying His Name. To return home after the offering of Yitzchak as a destitute father, knowing that he himself slaughtered his own son - the same only son which was said on him: "through Yitzchak your descendants will be called" (Bereisheit 21:12).

Furthermore, this trial would shatter all his spiritual makeup. It was a complete contradiction to his whole life. Avraham spent his whole life spreading G-d's Name in the world. All his days, he waged war against idolatry. He also converted masses of people (away from idolatry), as written: "and the souls Avraham made in Charan" (Bereisheit 12:5) which our sages explained: "Avraham converted the men and Sarah converted the women" (Bereisheit Rabba 39:14). The Rambam writes that these converts numbered in the tens of thousands (Hilchot Avodat Kochavim 1:3).

One of the most heinous forms of idol worship in those times was known as "Molech". It involved a father passing his son through fire, offering him as a sacrifice to "Molech".

Now, after Avraham offered up his son Yitzchak as an offering to G-d, what will he answer to all his many disciples?! They will tell him: "you speak of kindness - and you murdered your own son! you speak against idolatry and you yourself sacrificed your own son!"

All the teachings of Avraham were in danger of collapse, all his life work was about to be destroyed. The offering of Yitzchak appeared a complete contradiction to everything he stood for.

Avraham journeyed for three days to the place of the Akeida (sacrifice). He had plenty of time to think, to question, and perhaps to complain. But he did not question. He did not complain on the command to offer up his son. Rather "both of them went together" (Bereisheit 12:6) - Avraham and Yitzchak - with joy.

It is not a wonder that after standing up to such a difficult trial, G-d says to him: "now I know that you fear G-d" (Bereisheit 22:12) - a clear knowledge, without a shadow of a doubt.

Level 4

☆ **Daat Zekenim**

Daat Zekenim - "with ten trials.." - in the talmud: "G-d said to Avraham before the final (tenth) trial of the sacrifice of Isaac: 'I tested you with several tests and you stood up to all of them. Now stand up to this trial so people won't say the trials were nothing (not so hard)' (Sanhedrin 89b).

This needs explanation. The midrash says (Yalkut Shimoni, kedoshim 626, quoted by Rashi on Vayikra 20:26):

"How do I know a man should not say: 'I don't like pork meat' or 'I don't like to wear kilaim' rather 'I do [like] but what can I do? My Father in Heaven decreed on me [to abstain]'. Thus scripture states: 'I have separated you from the nations to be Mine'. For one who separates from sin takes upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven."

The midrash speaks of a man who stands and guards all the statutes of the torah such as to not eat pork meat or wear kilaim and it is out of his own view and understanding. What more do we need! But nevertheless, he did not reach the end purpose of the service. For this is not considered taking upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven since his deeds are due to his own understanding.

Through this we will understand the matter of the ten trials of Avraham our forefather. For the first nine trials were primarily on the traits of Avraham, the man of kindness.

But the final test was on the general level of Avraham. That which he stood up to the previous nine tests, was this due to fear of G-d, namely, because thus G-d decreed or did he do them because of his own [natural] perception and goodness? For the previous tests were not a contradiction to his being.

But the final test (sacrifice of Isaac) was against the entire outlook and being of Avraham. It was a complete contradiction to every trait of his service of G-d (ex.kindness) and to the promise of G-d that his descendants will come through Isaac. The purpose of this trial was to know and make known if he was truly G-d fearing (or just doing what is right in his own eyes).

When he stood up to this test, he certainly demonstrated and proved that all the previous trials were also done because G-d decreed and that he was indeed a servant to the will of G-d. This is what scripture states "now I have known that you are G-d fearing" (Gen.22:12). But if he did not pass this final trial, then all the previous trials were nothing and he did not reach the perfection of service, namely, fully accepting the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven.

Level 4

☆ Maharal

Maharal - according to our sages, all the forefathers (Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov) were tested (Sanhedrin 107a, 111a). Only that by Avraham the torah states it explicitly (Gen.22:1).

This matter is deep. For the forefathers, in their being forefathers - they were not human beings like other ordinary human beings. Rather they were G-dly men. Therefore, they were tested. For the hebrew word "trial" (nisayon) comes from the word "ness" (miracle). For just like a miracle is supernatural, so too [passing] the nisayon (trial) is supernatural. For if the person tested does not conduct himself outside the natural order, he cannot stand up to the trial. Human nature does not allow a man to slaughter his own son. Likewise for the other trials.

Thus, perforce the forefathers were tested because they are not ordinary human beings. If they acted according to human nature, they would not be worthy of that lofty level.

Avraham was the first of the forefathers and even more special than the others. Namely, he was above [human] nature. Namely, he was elevated above the natural order.. Thus by Avraham, the torah writes explicitly that he was tested. For he needed to act above the natural order [to pass the test]. Therefore, he merited this lofty level.

David also had somewhat of such a level, as is known regarding the level of David. Therefore, he wanted to be tested like the forefathers. But he did not stand up to the trial. For his trait was near the natural world, as is known to those who have wisdom and understanding (ie the sefirah of Malchut which receives - R. Hartman).

Therefore, he did not stand up to the trial, despite that he was not completely worldly. This matter is of very deep wisdom..

We already explained why Avraham was tested with ten trials. For ten are distinct parts, some stand up to one trial but not another. Through ten trials, he was tested from all trials. This matter is clear.

And furthermore, just like the world was created with ten sayings. For the world has a lofty level (inwardly) divested (spiritual) which the number ten points to. So too, Avraham was tested with ten trials specifically and through these ten trials he also became completely divested from nature. This is the matter of a trial as we explained... until he became completely godly (Eloki lagamrei, ie spiritual). For every trial is a test whether he will go after his nature. This itself is the test.

After the ten trials, he demonstrated that he does not go after nature, rather he is divested of it. Thus, he is worthy of the whole world which was created with ten sayings. For the whole world received a level divested above the natural order.. and thus in his merit, G-d performed supernatural miracles for his descendants (in Egypt, etc.)

Chapter 5 Mishna 5 - Ten Miracles Egypt

Ten miracles were performed for our fathers in Egypt and ten at the [Red] Sea . Ten plagues did the Holy One, blessed be He, bring upon the Egyptians in Egypt and ten at the [Red] Sea.

עֲשָׂרָה נִסִּים נַעֲשׂוּ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם
וְעֲשָׂרָה עַל הַיָּם. עֲשָׂר מַכּוֹת הֵבִיא הַקָּדוֹשׁ
בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַל הַמִּצְרַיִם בְּמִצְרַיִם וְעֲשָׂר עַל
הַיָּם.

With ten trials did our fathers try G-d, blessed be He, in the desert as it is written: "and they tested Me 10 times, and they did not listen to My voice" (Numbers 14:22).

עֲשָׂרָה נִסְיוֹנוֹת נִסּוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֶת הַמְּקוֹם
בְּרוּךְ הוּא בַּמִּדְבָּר, שְׁנָאָמַר (בַּמִּדְבָּר יֵד)
וַיִּנְסוּ אֹתִי זֶה עֲשָׂר פְּעָמִים וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ
בְּקוֹלִי.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "ten miracles were performed for our fathers in Egypt" - they were spared from the 10 plagues. All of the ten plagues afflicted the Egyptians but not the Jews.

"ten at the [Red] Sea" - 1. the water split. 2. the sea became like a tunnel which the Jews entered.. 3. the sea floor became dry, without mud or wet sand, as written: "the sons of Israel went on the dry land [inside the sea]" (Shemot 14:16). 4. when the Egyptians walked over the sea floor, it became muddy and wet, as written: "[you trampled the sea with your horses] the surging of mighty waters" (Chavakuk 3:15). 5. the water on the sea floor hardened and became like orderly paved rocks. 6. the water on the sea floor became hard as rock. 7. the sea split in 12 places so that each tribe can pass through its own path. 8. the [walls of] water froze like sapphire and glass so that each tribe can see the other tribes. For the pillar of fire shone light for them. 9. the sea water became drinkable and the people drew from it and drank. 10. after drinking, the remaining water froze and became piles.

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "ten miracles were performed for our fathers in Egypt" - they were spared from the ten plagues even though they were deserving to be afflicted by them just like the Egyptians. For they were evil and sinners like them. But they were spared in the merit of their forefathers,

"10 at the sea" - all of them are listed in Avot d'Rebbi Natan (ch.33).

Q Level 3

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "ten miracles in Egypt and ten at the Sea" - after G-d performed ten miracles for the Jews in Egypt, why was it necessary to do so also at the sea?

it seems because G-d performed miracles for the Jewish people in order that they be His completely, as the Torah says (ten commandments): "I am the L-ord your G-d who took you out of Egypt" (Shemot 20:2). For since He took you out of Egypt, it is proper for Him to be a G-d unto you.

And since salvation is in two ways. One, from human beings who have free will and intelligence. Two, from nature.

A human enemy has intelligence and is more difficult from one perspective than nature. For he thinks constantly how to overpower his enemy. On the other hand, he is sometimes less difficult than nature. For he may change his mind and annul his threat. But nature is not like this. It stands in its way always.

Therefore, G-d took out the Jews from Egypt through miracles, saving them from an intelligent enemy, Pharaoh and the Egyptians who came on them with force and might. He also performed miracles for them at the sea which was a natural opponent even after they left the domain of Pharaoh. He took out the Jews from the sea and split the sea which stood before them, saving them from a natural opponent.

Through saving them from the two types of opponents, He acquired them completely as His people. Thus these two things are equal, the exodus from Egypt and [the salvation] from the sea, and each one had ten miracles.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "with ten trials did our ancestors try G-d.." - two at the sea. before entering, they said: "are there no graves in Egypt?.." (Shemot 14:11). After exiting the sea: "they came to Marah and complained". One in Refidim "the people disputed with Moshe. Two by the manna, "do not go out [on the Sabbath!]", and "do not leave over". Two by the "Slav" (birds). One by the golden calf. One by the complainers (mitlonenim) and the spies which is the tenth.

Q Level 3

☆ Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim - "with ten trials did our ancestors try G-d.." - it seems very strange that the Israelites would rebel against the word of G-d and test Him ten times, as written by the bitter waters: "why did you (Moshe) bring us in this desert to die of thirst..", "why did you bring us out of Egypt..", and more.

In truth, why did they not believe despite all the miracles they saw with their own eyes? We may explain as follows.

As known, G-d conducts the world through two types of systems - nature and the miraculous.

In the desert, the conduct with the Israelites was through the miraculous system. The difference between the miraculous system and the nature system is that in the nature system, even if they do not merit, G-d will not change the natural order so easily. This is as our sages said: "the world pursues its natural course, and as for the fools who act wrongly, they will have to render an accounting" (Avodah Zarah 54b).

On the other hand, for the miraculous system, any time they do not merit, G-d will change His conduct.

We may say that on this was the matter of these ten trials (the Israelites tested G-d). For the Israelites were repulsed by the miraculous system since a person is not assured in his service of G-d. Thus they were afraid all the time, lest G-d remove His miracles from them and they will die.

This was the main point of dispute: "why did you take us out of Egypt?", ie out of the natural system (R.Yitzchak Blazer, Kochvei Ohr).

Q Level 3

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - after the Tanna (sage) explained the great love G-d showed for us, now he demonstrates the other side - how much we repayed good with evil and angered our Creator with ten trials, namely, the ten times our ancestors did not believe in G-d or did not honor His will.

The tanna brought this great mussar so that we also make an accounting of all the good G-d bestowed on us versus all the evil we payed Him in return. This is not just for the general congregation but also for each individual. When a person contemplates to himself how much good

G-d bestowed on him all the days of his life and all the bad he payed G-d in return, certainly he will feel abashed.

Without a doubt, he will take on himself to strive to be a bit more concerned for the honor of G-d his Benefactor. He will also strive to not complain on G-d's choice if some trouble befalls him. For he realizes that due to his many sins, he deserved much worse and G-d spared him a lot as written in Eicha "what should a man complain, a living man, because of his sins?" (Eicha 3:39) (ie it's enough that he is a living man, i.e. alive).

Level 3

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "with ten trials did our ancestors try G-d" - Avraham our forefather stood up to ten trials, demonstrating his righteousness. On the other hand, our ancestors in Egypt tried G-d ten times, i.e. they rebelled against Him ten times until G-d testifies: "they have tested Me now these ten times, and have not listened to My voice" (Bamidbar 14:22).

Despite the great miracles in Egypt, at the sea, their song there, the miracles in the desert, and their witnessing the punishment of the Egyptians, nevertheless, they angered G-d, testing Him if He is able to fulfill their wishes.

After the tenth rebellion, namely, the sin of the spies, the measure was full and G-d decreed on them to wander 40 years in the desert and that they would die there. Only their children would merit to enter the land of Israel (Bamidbar 14)..

This teaches that a man can behold open miracles with his own eyes and nevertheless it won't affect him and won't bring him to a more elevated level. How is this possible?

The Tanna wants us to know that this phenomena is rooted in the trait of ungratefulness. It is an evil trait. One afflicted with it thinks he deserves everything. He receives every gift as if it is self-understood. A man who does not recognize the good G-d does to him every second, he will not feel any duty to return the good.

Even if he does the mitzvot of G-d, he does them without desire, as one forced. For one who is not grateful on the good does not appreciate the help of those around him, nor see a need to repay the favor to his fellow. In the end, he will demean everything, whether mitzvot between man and G-d or between man and his fellow.

The root of a person's growth is the trait of gratitude. The driving force to fulfill mitzvot between "man and G-d" and "man and his fellow" springs from the trait of gratitude. A person who feels gratitude for what G-d bestows to him - wants to make a return. He rejoices to do the will of G-d. For such a person, it is not a burden to dedicate time to his religious duties like prayer or grace after meals with intent, or guarding the Sabbath properly.

There are many mitzvot whose entire being is gratitude. We find many mitzvot in the torah that are "a remembrance to the Exodus from Egypt", so that we don't forget G-d's kindness and don't stumble in ingratitude like our ancestors.

The torah teaches us that we must be grateful even to a dog, as written: "you are not to eat flesh torn apart in the field; you are to throw it to the dogs" (Shemot 22:30). Why a dog? Rashi says: "but to all the children of Israel, not one dog will whet its tongue" (Exod. 11:7). Said the Holy One, blessed is He, 'Give it its reward' -[From Mechilta].

The mitzvah of honoring your parents is rooted in gratitude. Only a person who is aware of the

good bestowed to him by his parents will rejoice to return good to them and help them. Thus one needs to relate to the people around him - to see the good they did for him and to be happy to try to make a return out of gratitude.

In his parting words, Moshe Rabeinu emphasizes this trait. In the song of Haazinu, Moshe gives his final, concluding rebuke: "is this how you repay G-d?.. is He not your Father, your Maker, He made you and established you. Remember the days of old, contemplate the years of every generation.." (Devarim 32:6).

Contemplate what G-d did for you. If you don't know, "ask your father and he will tell you, your elder and he will say to you" (Devarim 32:7). "They were in a desert land...", "He surrounded, cared for, and guarded him as the pupil of His eye." G-d guarded the Jewish people like one guards the pupil of his eye..." What happened in the end? "Yeshurun became fat and kicked.. your forsook G-d who made you" (Devarim 32:15).

In his final words Moshe spoke on the foundation and necessity to fulfill the mitzvot. But he does not specify any particular mitzvah. Rather, he speaks on the root of the mitzvot. If you possess the trait of gratitude, you will be happy to fulfill the will of the Creator and to refrain from angering Him and transgressing His commandments.

But if not, "Yeshurun became fat and kicked" - one will come to removing the yoke completely.

The prophet Isaiah opened his words where Moshe left off. In the beginning of chapter 1: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for G-d has spoken, I have raised up and elevated sons, but they have rebelled against Me" (Isaiah 1:2).

In truth, the first prophecy of Isaiah is found in chapter 6.. But nevertheless, the book begins with the prophecy in chapter 1. Why? Because this prophecy is a summary of the prophecies of Isaiah. There he speaks on the foundation, the root of all mussar - the duty of gratitude and the disgrace of ingratitude.

When we contemplate the generation of the desert who tested G-d ten times, ten rebellions in a short period of less than a year and a half - we wonder at what happened.

The Tanna of our mishna comes to teach us an important lesson. The generation of the desert is called "the generation of knowledge" (dor deah), the generation which the prophet Yirmiyahu testifies on them: "Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, So says G-d, I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothals, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown; Israel is holy to G-d, and the first fruits of His crop" (Yirmiyahu 2:3)- they were the bikurim (first fruits), the choicest of the nation.

Nevertheless, even this noble generation stumbled in testing G-d because they sinned in the trait of ingratitude.

This implies that this danger lies in ambush at the entrance of each one of us. If they did not stand up to the test despite their very high spiritual level, certainly we must be concerned that perhaps we also contain this bitter herb of ingratitude.

From here we see just how dangerous is this trait of ingratitude and how important and necessary is the trait of gratitude.

Chapter 5 Mishna 6 - Ten Miracles Temple

Ten miracles were performed for our ancestors in the Temple.

[1] no woman ever miscarried from the scent of the sacred meat [of the sacrifices].

[2] the sacred meat never rotted.

[3] no fly was ever seen in the place of slaughter.

[4] the high priest never experienced a nocturnal emission on Yom Kippur.

[5] the rain never extinguished the wood-fire upon the altar.

[6] no wind ever prevailed over the column of smoke [rising from the altar].

[7] no disqualification was ever found in the Omer, the Two Loaves, or the Shew-bread.

[8] though the people stood pressed together, they had ample room in which to prostrate themselves.

[9] No snake or scorpion ever injured anyone in Jerusalem.

[10] no man ever said to his fellow: "the place is too crowded for me to lodge overnight in Jerusalem".

עֲשָׂרָה נִסִּים נַעֲשׂוּ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בְּבֵית

הַמִּקְדָּשׁ:

לֹא הִפִּילָה אִשָּׁה מֵרִיחַ בֶּשֶׂר הַקֹּדֶשׁ

וְלֹא הִסְרִיחַ בֶּשֶׂר הַקֹּדֶשׁ מֵעוֹלָם

וְלֹא נִרְאָה זָבוּב בְּבֵית הַמִּטְבָּחִים

וְלֹא אָרַע קָרִי לְכַהֵן גְּדוֹל בְּיוֹם

הַכִּפּוּרִים

וְלֹא כָבוּ גְשָׁמִים אִשׁ שָׁל עֵצֵי

הַמַּעֲרָכָה

וְלֹא נִצְחָה הַרוּחַ אֶת עֲמוּד הָעֵשֶׂן

וְלֹא נִמְצָא פְסוּל בְּעֹמֶר וּבִשְׁתֵּי הַלֶּחֶם

וּבַלֶּחֶם הַפָּנִים

עוֹמְדִים צְפוּפִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִּים רַחֲוּיִם

וְלֹא הִזִּיק נָחָשׁ וְעֶקְרָב בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם

מֵעוֹלָם

וְלֹא אָמַר אָדָם לְחֵבְרוֹ צַר לִי הַמְּקוֹם

שָׂאֵלִין בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם.

Q Level 3

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "ten miracles were performed for our ancestors in the Temple.."- as to why miracles were performed in the temple, this is because the temple was holy and G-d's Name was upon there. Thus if no miracles were there, it would be just like other places. This would not be proper. For it was called a temple (mikdash) in that it was holy and separate from nature. Therefore, ten miracles were performed there and as we mentioned earlier, the number ten points to a level above the natural order..

As to why these miracles specifically, you should know that this world is a world of origination and loss (ex. birth and death). But the temple has a quality divested from the realm of origination and loss. Thus, it is proper for all its qualities and miracles performed there to be counter to loss/corrosion.

For as we explained many times, this death/inexistence clings only to the physical. But things divested of the physical are not prone to loss. Therefore, the temple which had holiness, it is proper for it to have divestment from loss which stems from the nature of physical things which are not in the realm of the divested.. Thus all the miracles there were a distancing from loss/corrosion...

As to why the final one speaks of Jerusalem and not just the temple, this is because the ten miracles correspond to the ten sefirot. They are brought here in reverse order starting with the lowest - a woman never had a miscarriage. For the woman is last and receives from another.. The last miracle regarding all of Jerusalem is collective and includes everything. It corresponds to the higher level (Sefirah) which includes everything.. (see there for more).

Q Level 3

☆

Ohr Yechezkel chelek gimel, maamar vayishma yitro Maharal - "ten miracles.." - this was only regarding outside, but regarding inside, the whole temple was full of miracles. For G-d's conduct in the temple was openly revealed. Everyone saw with their own eyes the conduct of G-d and there was no room at all to attribute it to nature.

Each and every person must recognize this fundamental principle (yesod). For this is the primary service of man - to know that there is no "nature" in the world. Everything was formed by G-d and there is nothing besides Him (ein od milvado).

This recognition is the purpose of the entire creation and this is our primary job (avodah) in this world - to know that there is nothing but Him (ein od milvado).

To reach this fundamental principle (yesod) is no small matter. For we see that despite all of Yitro's greatness, nevertheless he did not reach this understanding of ein od milvado (there is nothing but G-d).

We merited to attain this recognition when the temple stood. For we saw tangibly that nature does not rule at all but rather it is ein od milvado (nothing but Him, i.e. G-d is behind nature).

The more one feels this foundation and primary matter (yesod v'ikar zeh), the more he will be among the mourners of Jerusalem. For he knows and understands what is his primary service and he recognizes that when the temple stood, everyone saw tangibly that there is nothing but Him (ein od milvado).

This is the primary job of man (ikar avodat haAdam) - to attain recognition of this foundation. And even with a small recognition of this, a person can merit great and awesome things. Therefore, every person must strive to acquire for himself recognition in these foundations.

🔍 Level 4

☆ Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim - "ten miracles.." - in the Maharal: "since the temple was holy and divested from nature, therefore miracles were performed there outside the natural order of the world".

We find that the forefathers guarded the natural order (see Ramban on Shemot 12:22). When Avraham saw the people working the land in its proper times, he said: "halevai (would that it were) that my portion be in this land", ie he saw that in this land they guarded the natural order and were afraid to go out of its laws and boundaries.

Likewise it is said by the prophet Shmuel when G-d commanded him to go: "Shmuel said to G-d: 'but how can I go? Shaul will hear and he will kill me.'" (Shmuel I 16:2). Even though G-d commanded him to go anoint David as king. For Shmuel guarded the natural order and did not rely on a miracle..

In Michah: "O My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab planned, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him.. so that you may know the righteous acts of G-d" (Michah 6:5).

Behold to know the "righteous acts of G-d" the prophet Michah does not mention the matter of the Exodus from Egypt or the splitting of the Red Sea but rather the story of the blessings of Bilaam. What was so special about that?

Rather the secret of the matter is that Bilaam was evil and had an evil eye. G-d knew just how much [harm] he could do with his evil eye. G-d changed him to the good all that time he sought to curse the Jews and instead of cursing them, he blessed them.. We learn from here that to change the nature of a man from evil to good is an even greater wonder than to change the nature of physical things like the miracles of Egypt or the splitting of the Red Sea.

Thus to know the "righteous acts of G-d", the greatest testimony is that which Bilaam's nature was

changed from evil to good and he blessed the Jewish people.

And even so, our sages said: "better the curses of Achi Hashiloni than the blessings of the wicked Bilaam" (Sanhedrin 105b, for his blessings were mixed with evil). For this is the secret of the matter - the nature of something cannot be changed or budged from its place under any circumstances.

This raises the question: the purpose of man's service is to change and perfect himself to become completely good. But how is this possible? For as before it is impossible to change the nature of something.

Our sages teach us a great foundation in this. In the talmud: "a mountain is hard, but iron cuts it. iron is hard, but fire melts it ..". (Bava Batra 10a, Rashi: "softens it").

The matter is that iron is hard and in truth it is impossible to soften it. Even if we toil for many days to soften it, nevertheless it is impossible for us to change its [solid] nature.

However, "fire melts it". For thus nature was ordained. Fire is a thing antagonist to iron and it can soften iron until it becomes soft like butter.

So too here in our matter. Holiness is a trait like humility or arrogance, etc. The trait of holiness is a trait above nature. Thus, nature melts down and yields to holiness just like hard iron becomes soft as butter before fire.

Even though nature is very strong and it is impossible to budge it and change it in any way. But the trait of holiness is above nature and thus it bends and annuls nature. For this is the secret of holiness...

This is the true explanation to what our sages said:

Said R.Papa to Abaye: how is it that for the former generations miracles were performed and for us miracles are not performed? It cannot be because of their [superiority in] study, because in the years of Rav Yehudah the whole of their studies was confined to Nezikin, and we study all six Orders.. And yet when Rav Yehudah merely took off one shoe, rain would come, whereas we torment ourselves and cry loudly, and no notice is taken of us! He replied: The former generations used to sacrifice (mosser) their lives for the sanctity of [G-d's] name; we do not sacrifice our lives for the sanctity of [G-d's] name (Berachot 20a).

For miracles are above nature, the annulment of nature. And "in the measure with which a man measures it is meted out to him?" (Sotah 8b). Thus the early ones who would sacrifice (mosser) their lives for the sanctity of G-d's Name, and the matter of mesirut nefesh (self-sacrifice) is above nature, from the secret of holiness. Therefore, according to their level of mesirut nefesh (self-sacrifice) they merited miracles which is the annulment of nature.

Thus "10 miracles were performed for our fathers in the temple.." since in a place of holiness, nature bows and yields.

Chapter 5 Mishna 7 - Ten At Twilight

Ten things were created at twilight on the Sabbath eve. They are: [1] the mouth of the earth [that swallowed Korach], [2] the mouth of [Miriam's] well, [3] the mouth of [Bilaam's] mule, [4] the rainbow, [5] the Manna, [6] the staff [of Moses], [7] the Shamir [worm], [8] the text, [9] the writing, [10] the tablets [of the ten commandments]. And some say also the mazikim (evil spirits), the sepulcher (grave) of Moses, and the ram of Avraham our father. And some say: [the original] tongs, for tongs are [subsequently] made with tongs.

עֲשָׂרָה דְּבָרִים נִבְרְאוּ בְּעֶרְבֵי שַׁבָּת
בֵּין הַשְּׁמָשׁוֹת, וְאֵלוֹ הֵן, פִּי הָאָרֶץ,
וּפִי הַבְּאֵר, וּפִי הָאֶתּוֹן, וְהַקֶּשֶׁת,
וְהַמָּן, וְהַמַּטֵּה, וְהַשְּׁמִיר, וְהַכְּתָב,
וְהַמְּכָתֵב, וְהַלְוִיחוֹת. וַיֵּשׁ אֲוִמְרִים,
אֶף הַמַּזִּיקִין, וְקִבְרֵתוֹ שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה,
וְאֵילוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ. וַיֵּשׁ
אֲוִמְרִים, אֶף צֶבֶת בְּצֶבֶת עֲשׂוּיָהּ.

Level 1

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - even though these things were needed only after many years, the Creator needed to create them in the beginning of creation.

For they are not needed in a fixed way by human beings, therefore they were not created during the actual six days of creation but rather at the end of the sixth day near the closure of the creation era. For these things are closer to miracles outside the natural order of the world. Thus, they could not be created in the six days of the creation of nature. Only after the six days were finished and *bein hashmashot* (twilight) arrived, which is not really part of the day, - then it was the time to create these things...

Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "*twilight*" - on the eve of the Sabbath of Genesis, before the creation was complete.

"the mouth of the earth" - to swallow Korach and his congregation.

"the mouth of [Miriam's] well" - which followed the Jewish people in the desert in all their travels..

"the mouth of the mule" - at the twilight it was decreed that it would speak with Bilaam (Bamidbar 22:28).

"the rainbow" - as a sign of the covenant to not bring another flood.

"the Manna" - which fell from the sky forty years in the desert.

"the staff" - used to make the signs (miracles).

"the Shamir" - a sort of worm the size of a barley seed.. [used to cut stone since metal was forbidden]

"the text" - the form of the letters which were chiseled on the tablets.

"the writing" - which was [miraculously] readable from all four angles.

"the tablets" - they were made of sapphire..

"evil spirits" - these are the demons. After G-d created Adam and Chava (Eve), He toiled in creating them. When He created their spirit, He did not have time to create their bodies until the Sabbath came. Thus, they remained spirits without bodies (Bereisheit Rabba 7:5).

"*the Ram of Avraham*" - it was decreed at the twilight that it would get entangled on the foliage at the time of the Akeidah (sacrifice of Isaac).

"*tongs*" - the tongs are only made with other tongs. Thus, who made the first tongs? Perforce it was created miraculously from Heaven. However, the Talmud rejects this since it is possible to make them with a mould by pouring molten metal in the mould..

Q Level 2



Merkevet Hamishna - this mishna teaches an important principle. Namely, it informs us that G-d looks and knows all that will happen from the beginning. He looks and sees till the end of generations and knows that everything He created has a need in its proper time..

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "twilight" - it does not mean literally that these things were created at the twilight (ben hashmashot). For is it conceivable that the ram of Avraham our forefather or the mule of Bilaam lived thousands of years and the torah conceals this miracle from us? Rather, it means the potential for this was implanted in the creation for it to come out in its time.

"*the mouth of the earth*" - for the ground was given a power at this place to open it's mouth and swallow the congregation of Korach and close afterwards. It was like a wild animal which opens its jaws and kills its prey in anger and then swallows it and closes its mouth..

"*the mouth of the well*" - it was a round rock and since Moshe struck it in the desert, it would give out water at all times. This rock rolled with them everywhere in the desert like a portable wellspring. Thus all their forty years in the great fearsome desert, they did not lack water..

"*the mouth of the mule*" - G-d implanted the first mule the ability to produce this mule in the generation of Moshe.

"*the rainbow*" - G-d implanted nature with the ability to produce the rainbow effect in the atmosphere in order to be a sign to rebellious human beings that they are deserving of destruction and to recall the kindness of G-d (that He withholds this). For in His mercy, G-d remembers the covenant [with Noah].

"*the manna*" - it had many wonders. It melted in the heat of the sun like a congealed liquid but nevertheless they needed to grind it and cook it and it did not turn to liquid in the oven. Furthermore, if left overnight, it rotted and became wormy. Even so, on the Sabbath night it did not rot nor become wormy.

Furthermore, every day when they measured in their homes what they collected outside, whether a little or a lot, every person found it was what he needed for himself and his family for one day. On fridays each person found it was a double portion relative to the rest of the week (due to the Sabbath). All these wonders occurred for them in their daily bread all the time they were in the Beit Midrash of Moshe Rabenu (40 years).

This was to make known how much G-d's providence is on His servants who guard the torah.

"*the staff of Moshe*" - it was made of Sapiron (Sapphire) and was created with the Name of G-d engraved in it. It was through the power of this Name that he did the signs (miracles). But when Moshe first found it. he did not know its powers until G-d informed him and told him to take this staff in his hand.

"mazikim" - spirits of destruction. the wicked are punished through them in the next world and sometimes also in this world. They are of much lower level spirituality than ministering angels.

"sepulcher" - for this cave was created miraculously. After Moshe was buried there, it was hidden away, as written: "no man knows of his grave to this day" (Devarim 34:6).

"the ram of Avraham" - it was decreed on one of the rams in the creation era that one of its offsprings would remain ownerless so that Avraham will not offer a stolen ram and that at the time of the Akeidah (sacrifice of Yitzchak), it would run to Avraham and get entangled there by its horns.

🔍 Level 3

☆ Machzor Vitri

Machzor Vitri - "the staff" - with it Moshe split the Red Sea. There was nothing like it in the world. It had the Shem Hameforash (42 letter Name of G-d) chiseled on it. Adam gave it to Shet and every generation bequeathed it to the next until Yaakov descended to Egypt and gave it to Yosef. When Yosef died, the servants of Pharaoh searched everything in Yosef's palace and they brought it to the treasuries of Pharaoh.

Yitro the [future] father-in-law of Moshe was there who was one of the astrologers of Pharaoh. He knew through his astrology the importance of the staff. He took it and implanted it in the garden of his house and it fixed in the ground. He saw through his astrology that whoever was able to pull it out would become the savior of the Jews. Many people tried and failed. When Moshe arrived, he stood and pulled it out. Yitro imprisoned him in a pit in his courtyard. Love of Moshe entered Tzipora's heart and she asked her father for Moshe's hand in marriage. Yitro accepted and he married her to Moshe.

"mazikim" - [evil] spirits and demons, etc. G-d did not finish creating them until the Sabbath arrived. Therefore, the eye does not have the power to see them for they are like a wind..

🔍 Level 3



Gefen Poriah - "mazikim (evil spirits)" - the intent is not that G-d initially wanted to make them with body and soul. For man was intentionally created alone for many reasons as brought in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 37a). If these (Mazikim) were also created [with body and soul], then man would not have been created alone. Furthermore, is it conceivable that A-Imighty G-d did not have enough time? Without a doubt, He can create a thousand worlds instantly with one single saying.

Rather, G-d intentionally created the world like this. This was to teach human beings that they too should try to do and not be upset if their work may be cut short in the middle before the Sabbath (ie death).

🔍 Level 3

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai, Birkat Avot - "mazikim" - from this a man can recognize the kindness of G-d towards him and how many hidden miracles and wonders G-d does for him every moment that he does not see.

Thus it is written: "who alone does great wonders [for His mercy endures forever]" (Tehilim 136:4) - ie G-d alone knows what He does, but man does not see or recognize.. Man can recognize this through the matter of the Mazikim. For certainly there are many mazikim which are demons in the world, as our sages said in Berachot: "if the [human] eye were granted permission to see [the mazikim], no one would be able stand up [out of fright].." (Berachot 4a). See there.

Despite this, we see that no man is injured from them. Thus, it is clear from here that G-d performs

many great miracles for a man every second to save him from the mazikim. But man does not see this miracle done for him. So too, there are many other miracles done for him every second which he does not see.

Level 3

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai, Birkat Avot - "the rainbow" - it represents the "ot brit kodesh" (holy covenant of the Brit) which upholds the world. The rainbow has three (main) colors. This hints that the (righteous) man who upholds the world must be whole, pure, and holy in three areas, namely, (1) thought, (2) speech, and (3) deed. He should not be lacking in his holiness in these three areas.

Through this, he will be worthy of upholding the world. And therefore this was hinted in the rainbow. For G-d gave it to human beings (after the flood) as a sign of the covenant to uphold the world.

Thus, a man should take mussar (a lesson) to sanctify himself in these three areas and not be lacking in any one of them.

For in our many sins and in this bitter exile, the primary (ikar) is lacking in man, namely holiness of thought. In the majority (of torah observant Jews), speech and deed is good, but he does not have a heart. And as scripture says: "For as much as this people draw near, and with their mouths and with their lips do honor Me, but they have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear of Me is a commandment of rote practise" (Isaiah 29:13).

If you examine people closely, you will find many people are in this category. Thus, the primary thing is missing, namely, thought. If so, certainly when we will be whole in the service of G-d, with threefold holiness in thought, speech, and deed - then we will be worthy of the redemption immediately, without any delay.

Thus from the rainbow, a man will be roused in this matter.

Level 3

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai, Birkat Avot - "text and writing (ktav v'michtav)" - it is written in the name of Rabbi David Benshushan that "ktav" refers to the written word while "michtav" refers to speech..

Thus, from the written word, man learns knowledge/wisdom. For G-d created the existence of writing in the world so that words can endure and not be forgotten.

Without the written word which reminds on every matter, things would be forgotten. Each generation would not know what happened in the generation before them, whether in the wisdom and knowledge they innovated or the deeds and events which they experienced. All these things need to be known.

If so, a man should also learn mussar in this final exile. For in our many sins, forgetfulness has intensified in the world. A man does not have a broad heart to guard all the things he needs (to remember). And especially in torah study, forgetfulness is very prevalent ch'v.

But in the previous generations, whose hearts were broad, the torah was engraved in their hearts and their memory was wondrous.

Thus, in these generations a man needs to do things so that the torah endures in his heart and not be forgotten, whether it be in being careful and diligent in his studies during his youth, or being careful and diligent in tranquility of mind (yishuv daat) by removing all distracting thoughts when he

learns, or being careful and diligent to review every matter many times and also learning it with great enthusiasm and desire.

Every person must find ways to help the torah endure in his heart so that it is as inscribed in his heart with a metal pen. Also one should be careful to write down every chidush (insight) so that it be remembered forever.

All this is more needed in these generations, the end of the exile, when the hearts have diminished.

A man can learn all this from the written word which G-d created in the world so that human beings will not forget things and so they endure for all generations.

So too from the "michtav", which refers to speech, a man should take mussar to be careful of his words. To be careful of uttering improper words, evil speech (slander), falsehood, flattery, useless chatter (devarim batelim) or the like. In our many sins, many people stumble in these things in these generations.

For in our generations, you will not find many religious Jews who commit severe sins written in the torah. In the vast majority of cases it is only sins "which a person tramples with his heels", most of whom depend on speech such as evil speech, falsehood, frivolity (letzanut), flattery, useless chatter, or the like.

For a person makes light in his eyes of forbidden speech. He tells himself: "what forbidden act did I do? I merely said some words. What significance is this speech I uttered?"

But he must know in truth that even though speech appears intangible, without substance, and merely just air, nevertheless it produces many great effects whether for good or evil and G-d will be meticulously strict in this. A person will be judged even on light speech on the day of judgment.

Therefore, a man needs to be very careful to guard his tongue. For "life and death is in the power of the tongue" (Tehilim 18:21). Therefore, speech was created as an independent thing (as stated in our mishna) to teach man its great importance. For it is indeed great and a man needs to be careful and guard it. Therefore it was created on the eve of the Sabbath, bein hashmashot (at twilight), to say that a man needs to be especially careful in these generations which are like the twilight on the Sabbath eve.

For in our many sins, most of the war against the yetzer hara and the stumblings of man is in speech. Therefore more rousing is necessary to guard from it.

Chapter 5 Mishna 8 - Golem/Wise

Seven things [characterize] the Golem (boor) and seven the Chacham (wise man).

The chacham does not speak before one who is greater than him in wisdom or age. He does not enter in the midst of his fellow's words. He does not rush to answer. He asks what is relevant and answers according to the Halacha. He speaks on the first point first and on the last point last. Where he has heard no tradition he says: "I have not heard". He admits to the truth. The reverse of these [characterize] the Golem (boor).

שְׁבַע דְּבָרִים בְּגֵלָם וְשִׁבְעָה בְּחָכָם. חָכָם אֵינוֹ מְדַבֵּר בְּפָנָי מִי שֶׁהוּא גָדוֹל מִמֶּנּוּ בְּחָכְמָה וּבְמִנּוּן, וְאֵינוֹ נִכְנָס לְתוֹךְ דְּבַר חֵבְרוֹ, וְאֵינוֹ נִבְהָל לְהַשִּׁיב, שׁוֹאֵל כְּעִנְיָן וּמְשִׁיב כְּהִלְכָה, וְאוֹמֵר עַל רֵאשׁוֹן רֵאשׁוֹן וְעַל אַחֲרוֹן אַחֲרוֹן, וְעַל מָה שֶׁלֹּא שָׁמַע, אוֹמֵר לֹא שָׁמַעְתִּי, וּמוֹדֶה עַל הָאֱמֶת. וְחִלּוּפֵיהֶן בְּגֵלָם.

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "Golem (boor)" - since he did not say "a fool" or "a simpleton", this teaches we are talking about a torah student who sits before his Rabbi. And even if he learned much [torah], but he did not rectify himself according to his level of [torah study].

Q Level 1

☆ Machzor Vitri

Machzor Vitri - "he does not interrupt his fellow's words" - such as Aharon who was silent until Moshe finished his words and he didn't tell him "shorten your words!"

Likewise G-d with Avraham in the story of Sodom (when Avraham beseeched Him) "perhaps there are 50 righteous men.. 40.. etc.", even though everything is revealed before Him.

Q Level 1

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "Golem" - any thing whose form is unfinished is called a Golem, as written: "Your eyes saw my unformed substance (Golemi); in Your book were written" (Tehilim 139:16). So too one who understands what he is being taught but he is unable to make inferences for himself is called a Golem. For his wisdom is not recognized and his mind does not push him to adopt these seven traits which are all matters of wisdom and good character traits.

"does not speak before one who is greater than him in wisdom or age" - he listens and is silent and learns. This is a wisdom. But the Golem does not desire understanding but rather to show off his views [to other people].

Q Level 2

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "Golem (boor)" - from the term "golmei keilim" (clay lump), namely, an unfinished vessel. So too a man whose mind is unfinished, namely, [incomplete] in character traits and wisdom - such a person is called a Golem.

"does not speak before one who is greater than him in wisdom or age" - as we found by Elazar and Itamar who did not want to speak before their father (Aharon) when Moshe was angry at them. Aharon answered for them [to Moshe].

"he does not interrupt his fellow's words" - so as not to confuse him, as written: "[and G-d said] hear now My words" (Bamidbar 12:6), wait until I finish speaking. All the more so for an ordinary person.

"he does not rush to answer" - so that his answer is according to halacha. Likewise by Elihu, it is written: "be patient for me a little, and I will show you" (Iyov 36).

"He asks what is relevant and answers according to the Halacha" - ie a student asks in the relevant matter under discussion and then the Rabbi replies according to the Halacha. But if the student asks outside the relevant matter under discussion, he causes the Rav to reply not like halacha. This is as Rav Chiya told Rav: "when Rebbi is teaching one tractate, do not ask him a question from another tractate" (Shabbat 3)..

"he speaks on the first point first and on the last point last" - likewise we find when Moshe told G-d: "who am I to go to Pharaoh" (Shemot 3), this was the first [question], "and to take out the Jewish people from Egypt", this was the second [question].

G-d answered him on the first "I will be with you", and on the second: "when you take the people out of Egypt, you will serve G-d [on this mountain]".

"where he has heard no tradition he says: 'I have not heard'" - if he rules a question [of Halacha] from his own logic, he does not say: "thus I heard from my teachers". We find by the men of Charan, when Yaakov asked them: "is he at peace?" (Bereisheit 29:6), they replied "he is at peace, and here comes Rachel with the sheep", ie that's all we know. If you want to know more, here comes Rachel with the sheep and she can tell you. For we don't know more than this.

"he admits to the truth" - even though he can defend his words with a different claim. Likewise, we find by Moshe. When his brother corrected him on the kodashim (Vayikra 10), he heard and was pleased and admitted he erred. He did not say that he did not learn this halacha but rather that he did indeed learn it but he forgot it.

🔍 Level 2

☆ Chida

Ahava b'Taanugim - *"He does not enter in his fellow's words.. he asks what is relevant"* - for one who does not enter in his fellow's words "asks what is relevant". But one who enters his fellow's words and asks him questions on his words, does not "ask what is relevant", since he did not let him finish his words. If he had understood the end of his words, he would not have asked. Thus he asks "not what is relevant". Hence, when a man does not enter in the words of his fellow, certainly he will "ask what is relevant".

Likewise one who "rushes to answer". Sometimes, he will err in judgment and answer not like the halacha. But one who is not "rushing to answer" but waits and deliberates with great examination - this will lead him to answer like the halacha.

🔍 Level 3

☆ Siftef Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftef Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - *"seven things.."* - these seven things are all fences which a person fences and curbs himself due to the dictates of wisdom. In truth, this is the secret and essence of wisdom - that it fences its owner (sod u'mahut hachachma shemagdira et baaleha).

We find in the midrash: " 'And G-d gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore' (Kings 4:29) [the Midrash expounds:] just like the sea shore is a fence to the sea, so too Shlomo's wisdom fenced him" (Yalkut Shimoni, Melachim 177).

But if a man is like a breached city, without a wall, then even if wisdom flows within him like a mighty river - he is not called a wise man.

"admits the truth" - this implies that it is from the aspect of wisdom alone. Namely, even without the help of fear of G-d, he admits to the truth. This seems very difficult. For in order to admit to the

truth, certainly one confronts various character traits and great might is needed to break the desires pressing against him. How is this due to wisdom alone?

Thus it is among the dictates of the wise to admit the truth. For by the wise man, the truth is clear as if it is alive. Thus it is impossible for him to not admit to this despite that it is against his nature.

We see from here the power of wisdom. For perfect wisdom pierces through everything before it, even without fear of sin. Perfect wisdom cuts through and breaks character traits! Character traits are annulled before wisdom. (Daat Torah 1 pg.291).

Q Level 4

☆ **Matanat Avot**

Matanat Avot - "Golem..." - first of all, it is very important to emphasize how much our sages had a good eye and positive view of every person. For they did not write that the opposite of the Chacham (wise man) is the "fool" or "wicked" but rather "golem" (unfinished) - like the mould of unfinished vessels.

For when our sages saw a man who acts in the opposite manner of a Chacham, they did not say on him that he is a stupid person who lacks understanding and there is no hope for him.

Rather, they said: "don't worry about him. Granted, right now he is a Golem. He still did not complete his preparations in wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, but a day will come when his mind will mature and he will act like a Chacham (wise man)".

From here is great mussar to all the adults in our generation, (especially teachers). Namely, when they see sometimes kids or youths acting in a gross manner, brazen and with other bad character traits - the adults should not think they are wicked or crazy, etc.

Rather, they need to understand that these youths are basically as Golems - they did not yet mature completely. But someday, they will grow up and act according to the ways of the Chacham, with G-d's help.

Chapter 5 Mishna 9 - Seven Sins

Seven types of retribution comes to the world for seven types of sins.

שְׁבַע מִיְּמֵי פְּרַעְנִיּוֹת בָּאִין לְעוֹלָם עַל שְׁבַעַה גּוֹפֵי עֲבֵרָה.

(1) When some give Maaser (tithe) and some do not - a famine of drought comes: some will be hungry and some will be satiated.

מִקְצָתוֹ מֵעֲשָׂרִין וּמִקְצָתוֹ אֵינֶן מֵעֲשָׂרִין, רָעֵב שָׁל בְּצֻרַת בָּאָה, מִקְצָתוֹ רְעִבִים וּמִקְצָתוֹ שְׂבִיעִים.

(2) [When] all resolve to not give Maaser (tithe), a famine from tumultuousness and drought comes.

גָּמְרוּ שְׁלֵא לְעֹשֶׂר, רָעֵב שָׁל מֵהוֹמָה וְנָשַׁל בְּצֻרַת בָּאָה.

(3) [When they resolve] to not give the first dough-offering (Challah), an all-consuming famine comes.

וְשְׁלֵא לְטַל אֶת הַחֲלָה, רָעֵב שָׁל כְּלֵיהָ בָּאָה.

(4) Pestilence comes to the world for sins punishable by death according to the torah that are not brought before the Beit Din (court), and for the seventh-year fruits.

דָּבַר בָּא לְעוֹלָם עַל מִיתוֹת הָאֲמוּרוֹת בִּתְוֹרָה שְׁלֵא נִמְסְרוּ לְבֵית דִּין, וְעַל פְּרוֹת שְׁבִיעִית.

(5) The sword (war) comes upon the world for the suppression of justice, the corruption of justice, and because of those who interpret Torah not in accordance with the Halacha (accepted law).

חֶרֶב בָּאָה לְעוֹלָם עַל עֲנוּי הַדִּין, וְעַל עֲוֹת הַדִּין, וְעַל הַמּוֹרִים בִּתְוֹרָה שְׁלֵא כְהִלְכָה.

(6) [attacks by] wild animals comes to the world for vain oaths and for the desecration of G-d's Name.

חַיָּה רָעָה בָּאָה לְעוֹלָם עַל שְׁבוּעֹת שָׁוְא, וְעַל חִלּוּל הַשֵּׁם.

(7) Exile comes to the world for idolatry, illicit relations, bloodshed, and [desecrating the] Sabbatical year.

גְּלוּת בָּאָה לְעוֹלָם עַל עֹבְדֵי עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה, וְעַל גְּלוּי עֲרִיּוֹת, וְעַל שְׁפִיכוֹת דָּמִים, וְעַל הַשְּׁמִטַּת הָאָרֶץ.

During four periods pestilence increase: in the fourth year (of the Shmittah cycle), in the seventh year, after the seventh year, and after Sukkot of every year.

בְּאַרְבַּעַה פְּרָקִים הַדָּבָר מֵתְרַבֵּה, בְּרַבִּיעִית, וּבְשִׁבְעִית, וּבְמוֹצָאֵי שְׁבִיעִית, וּבְמוֹצָאֵי הַחֹג שְׁבָכַל שָׁנָה וְנִשְׁנָה.

In the fourth year because of the tithe of the poor (Maaser Ani) [due] in the third year. On the seventh year because of the tithe of the poor (Maaser Ani) [due] on the sixth year. After the seventh year, because of the fruit of the Sabbatical year. After Sukkot of every year because of theft of the gifts designated to the poor [by the torah].

בְּרַבִּיעִית, מִפְּנֵי מֵעֲשֶׂר עֲנִי שְׁבִישְׁלִישִׁית. בְּשִׁבְעִית, מִפְּנֵי מֵעֲשֶׂר עֲנִי שְׁבִישִׁשִׁית. וּבְמוֹצָאֵי שְׁבִיעִית, מִפְּנֵי פְּרוֹת שְׁבִיעִית. וּבְמוֹצָאֵי הַחֹג שְׁבָכַל שָׁנָה וְנִשְׁנָה, מִפְּנֵי גָזַל מִתְּנוֹת עֲנִיִּים.

Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "seven types of retribution (puraniyot)" - they are called "puraniyot" (literally: payments) because they are measure for measure, collecting payment for what man borrowed.

For G-d's intent is not to take revenge on man, but rather to rouse man to repent before G-d. It is because of this that the punishment comes measure for measure.

Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "a famine of drought" - there is little rain and thus the price [of food] increases.

"a famine from tumultuousness and drought comes" - due to [danger of] the armies [waging war], they are unable to gather in the produce of the field.

"an all-consuming famine comes" - the heavens are like iron and the land like copper (no rain at all).

"pestilence come to the world for sins punishable by death according to the torah that are not brought before the Beit Din" - i.e. they did not fulfill the judgment [capital punishment] of the torah.

"and for the seventh-year fruits" - people do business with them and do not treat them with the [laws of] holiness of Sheviit.

"suppression of justice" - the judges know where the final judgment leans but they withhold and do not give a ruling.

"corruption of justice" - to make the guilty innocent and the innocent guilty.

"those who interpret Torah not in accordance with the Halacha" - to forbid the permitted and permit the forbidden.

"vain oaths" - in vain, without need.

"desecration of G-d's Name" - one who transgresses a sin publicly with a high hand. Alternatively, that people see and learn from his deeds (to do like him).

"[desecrating the] Sabbatical year" - they plow and sow during the Sabbatical year.

"tithe of the poor (Maaser Ani)" - during the 3rd and 6th years, tithe of the poor (Maaser Ani) is given instead of Second Tithe (Maaser Sheni).

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "to not give the first dough-offering (Challah)" - it is more severe than maaser (tithe). For after one separates Challah and eats it, he incurs [the penalty of] death by Heaven (unlike maaser).

"desecration of G-d's Name" - he commits a sin publicly, brazenly and with a high hand. Or he does something which people can think he is doing a sin and does not care.

Q Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - "Pestilence comes to the world for sins punishable by death.. that are not brought before the Beit Din (court)" - some explain such as in the case where the sinner was not given warning (whereby the Beit Din cannot execute him) or that he escaped. Some explain it refers to sins which incur death by Heaven or Karet (being cut off). Just like one who is executed by Beit Din dies when he is perfectly healthy, so too one struck by pestilence sometimes he is here today and tomorrow in the grave.

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel on Avot - "Pestilence comes to the world for sins punishable by death according to the torah that are not brought before the Beit Din" - it is clear that pestilence (Dever) is the messenger of G-d. Since the sinner was not executed by Beit Din (court), G-d sends His pestilence and executes him.

"[attacks by] wild animals comes to the world for vain oaths and for the desecration of G-d's Name" - this too is from G-d and it is measure for measure. For an oath in vain desecrates Heaven, as written: "you shall not swear by My Name falsely, and so profane the Name of your G-d" (Vayikra 19:22). Thus, since one who swears in vain/falsely and one who desecrates G-d's Name belittles G-d his Master, not recognizing His exalted level - so too G-d brings upon these sinners wild animals to decimate youth, animals, and men.

The wild animal will likewise not recognize man's elevated status despite that it was said: "The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth.." (Gen. 9:2). For since man did not recognize his Creator, so too the wild animals will not honor the face of a wicked man. This punishment is mentioned in the torah: "And I will send the wild beasts of the field against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock and make you few in number" (Vayikra 26:22).

Q Level 2

☆ Meiri

Meiri - "Pestilence comes to the world.. and for the seventh-year fruits" - ie that he does not mafkir (abandon) them and thus causes death to the poor since they don't have what to eat. For people did not plant this year and thus the poor did not receive maaser (tithe) and matanot (gifts). Measure for measure, pestilence comes..

Q Level 1

Rambam

Rambam - "theft of the gifts designated to the poor" - this refers to leket, shikcha, peah, peret, and olelot. For on Sukkot all these are paid out since then all the work of the land is completed. Then he who gave them, gave them and he who did not give them stole them.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan - "during four periods pestilence increase" - all these sins are in the category of stealing from the poor. And regarding the poor, the wise man said: "Do not rob the poor, because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate; for the L-ord will plead their cause and rob of life those who rob them" (Mishlei 22:22-23).

Q Level 2

Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer, sefer hazikaron pg.100 - "Exile comes to the world for idolatry, illicit relations, bloodshed, and [desecrating the] Sabbatical year (Shmitta)" - for this is the entire fruit of the Shmitta - to make known that the land belongs to G-d. For they do not sow the land nor harvest and yet the land produces enough for three years.. But when the Jewish people desecrated the Shmitta, they were exiled. And it is written: "And if in spite of these things you are not chastened to Me, but will walk indifferently (keri) with Me" (Vayikra/Lev. 26:23).

For one who denies the Shmitta year believes in accident (keri) and fate (instead of G-d's providence)..

Q Level 3

Sfas Emes

Sfat Emet on Avot - "Exile comes to the world for idolatry, illicit relations, bloodshed, and [desecrating the] Sabbatical year" - that which the second temple was destroyed due to baseless hatred, there is to say that the destruction of the temple is a different matter. For the exile already started from the first temple. In the second temple era, they were already subjugated under a different [gentile] kingdom most of the time.

Q Level 3

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "seven types of retribution (payment) comes to the world.." - although we do not have the ability to understand the riddle of every bad thing, why it came and for what, but nevertheless this we can know clearly - there are no coincidences in the world. There are no

random accidents. No troubles befall us by chance and without a reason. In many places in the torah, there are detailed descriptions of reward to those who do G-d's will and punishments destined to those who transgress His word..

G-d does not bring upon us good or bad for no reason or according to changing will, Heaven forbid. Rather, it is man's deeds, man's free will whether for good or evil which brings to the world good or bad.

If a person integrates this knowledge - that there are no accidents, even though he does not understand every event and why he suffers - nevertheless, it will be easier, at least a bit, to bear the burden.

We must know that the troubles do not come out of vengeance, G-d forbid, but rather as "payment" - like collecting a debt whereby afterwards the person is clean of debt and purified of sin.

We can see from Jewish history that when the Jewish people did the will of G-d, all the blessings were fulfilled. But unfortunately we also saw the flip side, what happens when the people do not go in the proper path.

in the second parshah of Shema we recite every day: "guard yourselves lest your heart be enticed and you stray and worship other gods" - ie the sin of idolatry. The consequence of this sin is exile: "G-d's wrath will kindle against you.. and you will perish quickly off the good land which G-d has given you" (Devarim/Deut.11:16-17).

Idolatry causes siluk Shechina (withdrawal of the Divine presence) from Israel. G-d, so to speak, exiles Himself from His place in the land of Israel. Therefore, the consequence of idolatry, measure for measure, is the withdrawal of Yisrael from their land and their going out to exile.

In Avot d'Rebbi Natan (38:4), an additional reason is given for the connection between the sin of idolatry and the punishment of exile: "says the Holy One, blessed be He: 'since you desire in idolatry, I too will exile you to a place of idolatry'" - to the land of the nations, there is the source of idolatry.

In this punishment there is also a blessing. For in the foreign lands the people will see idolatry up close and recognize its emptiness. They will perceive the true worthlessness among its worshipers - and even sense this in themselves. For sometimes a person cannot sense how lowly his conduct is, until he sees someone else acting just like himself.

"When some give Maaser.. when all resolve to not give Maaser" - here we see a tangible example of "sin drags more sin" (Avot ch.4). For at first: "part of them Maaser and part of them do not Maaser". But those who give Maaser did not rebuke those who do not give Maaser. They did not fulfill the commandment: "you shall rebuke your fellow and not bear sin" (Vayikra 19:17).

Since they did not admonish the sinners, slowly slowly, they became accustomed to the situation. Already the transgressing of the mitzvah of maaser did not bother them. In the end, they joined the sinners and "all resolve to not give Maaser".

"theft of the gifts designated to the poor" - the Midrash Shmuel brings attention to two words in the mishna that appear contradictory "theft" and "gifts" to the poor.

If it is a "gift" then it is not in the category of "theft". For by definition a gift is something given without obligation. Thus, if one refrains from giving this gift, why is it considered theft?

To answer this, consider the case of a father who gives a plot of land to his son and commands him: "I am placing the land in your hand, but you must give to your brothers such and such percent of the crops it produces every year".

The son accepted the field. He labored in it, sowing, planting, irrigating until his work bore fruit. But when the time of harvesting came, the time to fulfill his father's condition, he did not fulfill his father's command and gave nothing to his brothers.

In this he steals from his brothers. Although his brothers see this giving of produce as a gift since the field was not given to them and they did not labor on the fruits. But since the father gave the field on that condition, if he does not fulfill his father's condition - he is stealing from his brothers what they were rightly supposed to receive.

So too, G-d gives a person a field and commands him to give gifts to the poor. Those poor "merit from G-d's table" their gifts. For everything belongs to G-d. But G-d wants to bring merit to the Jewish people and thus He gives them much torah and commandments. He gave them the land as an inheritance but on condition that they give the gifts of the poor.

Those who refrain from fulfilling the command of G-d, to give to their poor brothers their gifts - this is complete theft..

We find this concept in chapter 3: "give to Him from what is His - for you and yours belong to Him". The giving to the poor is not a giving of "yours". Rather it is "from what is His". You give to G-d what is already His. Everything you own was given to you as a deposit in order that you do with it the will of the Depositor. And His will is that you separate a portion to the poor.

We can also see from the Midrash how much G-d is strict on the gifts to the poor. The Midrash says:

"R.Pinchas says: 'five times David asks G-d to rise up in the book of Tehilim (Psalms)'" (five times king David beseeches G-d 'Rise up G-d!', 'rise up and act, help the nation of Israel in their troubles!')

"The Holy One, blessed be He, answers him: 'David, my son, even if you ask Me to rise many times, I will not rise. When will I rise up? When you see the poor robbed and the destitute oppressed'. This is what scripture says: 'because the poor are being oppressed, because the needy are sighing, I will now arise', says the L-ord" (Tehilim 12:6)..

Level 3

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - why are the gifts to the poor something so severe? Because when the poor did not receive food, they remain hungry. Then, they cry out to G-d and their cry breaks through all the [heavenly] gates and rises up to the highest place. When G-d hears that He has children who remain hungry and without food, immediately the attribute of justice strengthens and claims retribution (puraniyot) on the entire Jewish people for not providing for their poor, ignoring the screams of the poor and destitute.

Then it no longer matters that most of the people did separate their maaser (tithe) properly. For nonetheless there are screams of the hungry poor before G-d and the screams demand justice. Now there is no choice and the justice must be done. For it is impossible for G-d to not heed their

cry since He wrote explicitly in the torah: "For that is his only covering, it is his cloak for his body. In what else shall he sleep? And it will be, if he cries to Me, I will hear him, for I am compassionate" (Shemot 22:27).

Q Level 4

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "seven types of retribution comes to the world" - the term "comes" implies "by itself". For it is brought in the Beraita of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi regarding the matters of Gehinom, and it is shocking to hear of the greatness of the sufferings in Gehinom. It appears very strange. For where is the mercy of "He who has mercy on all His handiworks" (Tehilim 145:9)?

The answer is that this is not at all in the category of punishment. Rather it is as written: "evil pursues the wicked" (Mishlei 13:21) - the sin itself punishes him.

Likewise regarding Gehinom our sages taught: "for the wicked, Gehinom is made deep for them" (Eiruvin 19a). And likewise the prophet said: "behold, all you who kindle a fire, that gird yourselves about with firebrands; walk you in the flame of your fire.." (Isaiah 50:11). For through their own sins, they generate the fire of Gehinom. And the soul which sins is in Gehinom immediately after the sin only that the person does not sense this. Therefore, he wrote "comes", ie comes on their own.

Q Level 4

☆ Chida

Chida - Roshei Avot (kabalistic) - "Seven types of retribution comes to the world for seven types (literally:bodies) of sins" - as our sages said: "one who commits a sin acquires a prosecutor" (Avot ch.4). The kabbalists taught that this prosecutor ascends above and prosecutes to exact retribution from the sinner. Afterwards the prosecutor himself becomes the emissary to bring the evil upon him..

This is the meaning of "seven types of retribution come to the world on seven Gufei (literally: bodies) of sin". Seven bodies which were created from the sins, prosecute and scream always for retribution on the sinners. Afterwards the decree is sealed and retributions come to the world.

Every sin creates one mashchit (destroying angel). But they are seven.. For there are seven types of destructive angels corresponding to the seven klipot below which strengthened due to their sins.. (see there for more).

Chapter 5 Mishna 10 - Mine Is Mine

There are four types of character in men. One who says "what's mine is mine and what's yours is yours" - this is the trait of a middle (average) person, though some say this is the trait of Sodom. "what's mine is yours and what's yours is mine" - Am Haaretz (ignorant man). "what's mine is yours and what's yours is yours" - chasid (pious). "what's mine is mine and what's yours is mine" - Rasha (wicked).

אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּאָדָם. הָאוֹמֵר שְׁלִי
שְׁלִי וְשֻׁלְךָ שְׁלִי, זֶה מִדַּת בִּינוּנִית.
וְיֵשׁ אוֹמְרִים, זֶה מִדַּת סְדוֹם. שְׁלִי
שְׁלִי וְשֻׁלְךָ שְׁלִי, עִם הָאֶרֶץ. שְׁלִי.
שְׁלִי וְשֻׁלְךָ שְׁלִי, חֲסִיד. שְׁלִי שְׁלִי.
וְשֻׁלְךָ שְׁלִי, רָשָׁע.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "what's mine is mine and what's yours is yours.. middle person" - I don't want to benefit you and I wish that you do not benefit me.

Q Level 1

☆ Rashi

Rashi - middle person, i.e. he is not a tzadik (righteous) nor a rasha (wicked).

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "some say this is the trait of Sodom" - it is near to come to the trait of Sodom. For since he is habituated like this, then even in a case where his fellow benefits and he loses nothing, nevertheless he will not want to benefit his fellow. This was the trait of Sodom. They tried to drive away guests from their land even though there was plenty of room and they had nothing to lose.

Q Level 2

☆ Ahava b'Taanugim

Ahava b'Taanugim - "some say this is the trait of Sodom" - for if today one tells his fellow: "I don't need to, what's mine is mine, what's yours is yours", tomorrow he will say this even to a poor man. This was the trait of Sodom. For they did not strengthen the hand of the poor and destitute. Thus, since this trait brings a man to acquire the trait of Sodom, it is proper to call it midah Sodom (the trait of Sodom).

Q Level 4

Avodat Yisrael, avot 5:9 - the people of Sodom were non-believers, they denied the existence of the Creator. Due to this, they made sure not to help any poor person.. The word "Sodom" hints to their wickedness. For Sodom is letters Samech-Mem hinting to the evil inclination which blinds the eyes of man to not look at the existence of G-d. The middle letter "Dalet" means "Dal" (poor). For man is poor and has no strength without G-d's help. This is Sodom - Samech-Mem Dal - to blind them from the Dalet and make them think it is their own power and the might of their hands which accomplishes for them (kochi v'otzem yadi).

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "what's mine is yours and what's yours is mine - am haaretz (ignorant)" - he benefits others and benefits himself equally. This promotes the welfare of the land (yishuv haaretz). But he does not know scripture. For it is written: "he who hates gifts shall live" (Mishlei 15:27).

The term "am haaretz" (literally: "people of the land") refers everywhere to one who wants [to promote] the welfare of the land (society) but he lacks wisdom to discern between the proper welfares.

Q Level 3

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "am haaretz (ignorant)" - for when he says "what's mine is yours", this is not due to generosity and goodness of heart. Thus he also says "what's yours is mine". For a generous, good hearted person does not seek from others like this.

Rather, it is as if he said: "what's mine is yours" *in order* that it be also "what's yours is mine". Namely, my money is your money and your money is my money.

On this the Sage said that this trait is the trait of an am haaretz (ignorant). For if he had intellect and wisdom, this would dictate that what belongs to a man is his.

But this person who says: "what's mine is yours and what's yours is mine", he does not place boundaries and distinction between his money and the money of others. Rather this one is worth like that one. Certainly, this goes out of the bounds of wisdom.

For wisdom sets everything according to what is proper to be and gives boundaries to everything. Therefore, one who says "what's mine is yours and what's yours is mine" is an am haaretz and has no wisdom at all. Due to this he has no [perception] of measure and boundary...

Q Level 3

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai, Birkat Avot - "am haaretz (ignorant)" - the Chasid is honored among the Chasidim but not among the wicked. Likewise, the wicked man is honored among the wicked but not among the Chasidim (pious).

On the other hand, the am haaretz (ignorant) is foolish and misleading. It is possible for him to be honored among both types.

For when he says: "what's yours is yours", the Chasidim will think he is also a Chasid like them and he will be honorable among them.

And when he says "what's yours is mine", the wicked will think he is wicked like them and he will be honorable among them...

With this we will understand the verse: "my son, fear G-d and the king, and do not mingle with changing ones" (Mishlei 24:21). That is to say [do not mingle] with the am haaretz which are changing, ie they change their deeds and tongue. For sometimes they appear as Chasidim saying "what's mine is yours" and sometimes they appear as the wicked saying: "what's yours is mine".

Thus they are changing, transforming every second from this to that. Therefore do not mingle with them. For these will easily entice you to be like them and do like their deeds.. But for the wicked, he does not need to warn you against. For his evil is openly apparent and he has no good aspect. Thus, certainly you will flee from him on your own and not mingle with him.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "what's mine is yours and what's yours is yours (Pious)" - he benefits others with his possessions but does not [take] benefit from them.

"chasid (pious)" - for he does beyond what justice dictates.

Q Level 2

☆ Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim - "what's mine is yours and what's yours is yours - pious" - the Bartenura wrote: "he benefits others but does not [take] benefit from them." We can explain this as the Sabah wrote in his letters:

"a man needs to walk in G-d's ways, as written: 'you shall walk in His ways' (Devarim 28:9).

When we investigate at the foundation of His ways, we find that G-d gives to others but others do not give to Him. They need Him but He does not need His creations.

Thus, man needs to resemble G-d in this manner. Namely, to always benefit others and not

receive gifts from them."

Q Level 3

☆ Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer, Ketav Sofer chadash, Avot - "what's mine is yours and what's yours is yours - pious" - some ask: isn't this obvious? For since he said: "what's mine is yours", then all the more so "what's yours is yours".

We can answer according to what our sages said: "the poor man does more for the rich man, than the rich man does for the poor man" (Midrash Ruth Rabba 5:9).

For the rich man does not give anything of his to the poor man, as written: "give to Him of His [for you and yours belong to Him]" (Avot 3:7).

The portion the rich man gives to the poor man was only as a deposit in the hands of the rich man. And for the tzedaka (charity) he gives to the poor man, he is blessed and becomes more rich.

If so, the poor man does a kindness to the rich man by taking from him and the rich man does not give anything of his to the poor man. He gives only the portion of the poor man which G-d graced him with.

This is what he says: "what's mine is yours", ie what I have is not only mine but also it will be yours.

"what's yours is yours" - ie even what I (the rich man) gave you is yours not mine. I am not giving you from mine that you should think I am doing you a favor. Rather "what's yours is yours". This is your portion [which G-d entrusted me with] and I am not giving you anything of mine. This is a chasid. Thus the question is answered.

Q Level 1

☆ Rashi

Rashi - "what's mine is mine and what's yours is mine - wicked" - I receive your good but nevertheless you will not have anything to do with me - this is a trait of the wicked.

Q Level 3

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai, Birkat Avot - that which he said by the Chasid (pious) "what's yours is yours" - this is superfluous. For by the Chasid, there is no point in saying "what's yours is yours". Rather the primary point of the Chasid is "what's mine is yours".

Likewise, regarding the wicked, that which he said: "what's mine is mine" - this is superfluous. For it is not a chidush (novel idea) regarding the wicked...

We can explain as follows. The trait of the Chasid is to benefit others and give them of his - even though they do not benefit him nor ever give him anything at all, even at a time he needed them.

But the wicked is the opposite. For he is ungrateful. He does not want to benefit others, not even those who benefited him many times and gave him much of their own. Nevertheless, he does not want to benefit them at all whatsoever.

This is what the Chasid says: "what's mine is yours", ie I accept to benefit you of my possessions even though your trait is "what's yours is yours", ie that you do not benefit others at all and I never received any benefit from you whatsoever. For what is yours is always only yours.

But the wicked says the opposite: "what's mine is mine", I never give you anything ever, even though you benefit me many times and say "what's mine is yours".. certainly such a person is an

ingrate and it is proper to call him wicked. For this is a trait of the wicked.

Q Level 3

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel on Avot - these four traits are the four divisions which human beings inevitably fall into in their societies. They are two extremes and two in-betweens.

For the Chasid who says: "what's mine is yours and what's yours is yours" - he is the opposite of the wicked man who says: "what's yours is mine and what's mine is mine".

But the middle trait which is called: "what's mine is mine and what's yours is yours", some call it the trait of Sodom. For there is a reason for both names. He who calls it the middle trait, this is proper. For it is in-between the two extremes; he does not want to burden his fellow and does not want his fellow to burden him.

But he who calls it "the trait of Sodom" is also saying properly. For the people of Sodom were evil and sinners. Their deeds are known, they hated each other and despised charity and acts of kindness, not helping each other.

But the am haaretz (man of the land) who seeks the public welfare, to benefit himself and also others, on him it is said: "what's mine is yours and what's yours is mine". For through this the welfare of society will endure, since when this one lacks the other will fill his lacking and vice versa.

But the primary of everything is: "love your fellow as yourself" Vayikra 19:18). This is the command for proper guidance of people in society with each other.

One who habituates in this will overcome his [negative] character dispositions (ex. anger) as he says in the next traits (next mishna).

Q Level 3

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "what's mine is mine and what's yours is mine - wicked" - this trait is the complete opposite of G-d's traits. For G-d wants only to give as much as possible and He does not at all seek to receive anything back.

It seems difficult that this person is called a wicked person (rasha). For this title usually applies only to one who commits sins. What sin is there in not helping others and only taking from them?

The answer is simple. For the concept of a "mitzvah" is to fulfill the will of G-d while the concept of a "sin" is to do an act which is against the will of G-d.

Thus one who seeks only to receive wherever possible and he refuses to give anything of his to others - there is no greater opposite of G-d's will than this. And he who does the opposite of G-d's will, this rightly gives him the title "wicked".

Q Level 4

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - how can a person divest himself of the trait of Sodom? how may he break this trait?

The Yavetz advises: increase giving tzedaka (charity) and do so with joy. Give and give, more and more, until one is habituated in this and it becomes second nature. This is what Shlomo said: "a man's gift broadens him and brings him before the great" (Mishlei 18:16) - the giving itself will make his heart broad, open to give to his fellow.

Due to this reason, the Rambam writes (commentary to Avot 3:15) that it is better to give 100 coins to 100 poor people rather than 100 coins to one poor man. This is to habituate oneself in the trait of generosity through repeated acts of giving.

"wicked" - from his side, the wicked man is not willing to give anything. He wants only to take, only to receive. "what's yours is mine" - give me, you owe me. Evidently, "what's mine is mine" - he does not want others to benefit from him.

Such a person is not satisfied with what he has. He covets what others have. Amassing possessions stands at the head of his thoughts. All his days he thinks how to gain from his fellow. Where can one profit more? He is not concerned for others.

The outlook of the wicked man is that he himself won't give a penny, he will not diminish what he owns. But he will never let others think like him.

For such a person, as long as he can fulfill his desires, he will act lawfully. But when he cannot attain his desires easily, he will demand and take by force.

Lust for money brings many sins. Firstly, he transgresses the commandment: "do not covet" (Shemot 20:13). He transgresses it when he strives to attain what does not belong to him, even if he is prepared to pay for it! All the more so when he takes it against the will of its owner. For then he transgresses "do not steal" (Shemot 20:11), "do not oppress" (Vayikra 19:13) and a host of other severe sins.

Likewise, many bad character traits result from chasing money such as jealousy or the like.

"chasicd (*pious*)" - the Chasicd (*pious*) lives with a feeling of being indebted to the Creator and His world. He always seeks opportunities to give, help, donate. When he gives to others, he wants nothing for himself.

Our sages bring as a model of this Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa: "every day a heavenly voice proclaims: the whole world is sustained in the merit of Chanina, My son, and Chanina, My son, is sustained by a [mere] kab of Carobs for the whole week" (Berachot 17b).

The other extreme is Alexander Mokdin. He was the king of a huge empire, many nations were conquered under him. He ruled over half the world. But this was not enough for him and he continued his journeys of conquest until he reached the faraway "mountains of darkness"..

The midrash reports that when he reached the country "Katzya", he received from the king of Katzya a gold loaf of bread on a gold platter. Alexander who was hungry understood the hint. For the king of Katzya succeeded in giving him the mussar that he lusts for money..

Alexander sought to observe how they judge in Katzya. He sat and listened to the court case before the king.

One person bought a ruined property from another. What was the problem? After buying the property, the new owner dug the ground there and found a hidden treasure. He did not want to take it for himself claiming he bought a property and not a treasure. The seller also concerned for theft did not want to take the treasure claiming he sold the property and everything in it.

The king of Katzya heard the claims and asked one of them: "do you have a son?", he answered

"yes". He asked the other: "do you have a daughter?". He answered: "yes".

The king ruled: "let them join together in marriage and the treasure will be theirs".

The king of Katzya saw the amazement in the face of Alexander Mokdon and asked him: "did I not judge properly?" Alexander replied "not good".

"if this case came before you, how would you have judged it?"

Alexander replied: "I would have commanded that their heads be chopped off and not only that the treasure be confiscated but also all their possessions".

The king of Katzya was shocked and asked: "is there rain in your land?" - "yes" Alexander replied.

"does the sun shine there?" - "yes".

"are there grazing animals" - "yes".

"it seems the rain falls and the sun shines only in the merit of the animals!"

For in the land of Alexander Mokdon, the land whose customs and laws are the epitome of acquiring, of "what's mine is mine and what's yours is mine", man lives in the merit of the animals.

The midrash brings the verse "man and beast you save, O L-ord." (Tehilim 36:7). Sometimes man is saved in the merit of the animals.

Chapter 5 Mishna 11 - Easy To Anger

There are four types of character in temperaments: he who is easily angered and easily appeased - his reward (gain) is canceled by his loss; difficult to anger and difficult to appease - his loss is canceled by his reward; difficult to anger and easily appeased - Chasid (pious). Easily angered and difficult to appease - Rasha (wicked).

אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּדַעוֹת. נוֹחַ לְכַעַס וְנוֹחַ לְרִצּוֹת, יֵצֵא שְׂכָרוֹ בְּהַפְסְדוֹ. קָשָׁה לְכַעַס וְקָשָׁה לְרִצּוֹת, יֵצֵא הַפְסְדוֹ בְּשִׂכְרוֹ. קָשָׁה לְכַעַס וְנוֹחַ לְרִצּוֹת, חֲסִיד. נוֹחַ לְכַעַס וְקָשָׁה לְרִצּוֹת, רָשָׁע.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "easily angered and easily appeased - his reward is canceled by his loss" - a man who gets angry quickly on every thing, even though he returns and is appeased quickly - his loss is greater than his reward. For most of his deeds are spoiled due to his swift anger on each and every thing.

But one who is difficult to anger, even though he has the bad trait of being difficult to appease, nevertheless, his little loss of being difficult to appease is cancelled by his great reward of being difficult to anger and most of his deeds are properly rectified.

Q Level 1

Rambam

Rambam - observe how he called the forbearing person (savlan) whose forbearance is great until he is near to not feeling the emotion of anger - a chassid; and he called one who has the pettiness of the trait of anger - a wicked [person].

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "easily angered and easily appeased.." - on every little thing he gets angry, but he is easily appeased by others or by himself.

"difficult to anger and difficult to appease.." - he does not get angry except when he sees the evil done to him is great. Therefore, he is also not easily appeased...

Q Level 1

☆ Tosfot Yom Tov

Tosfot Yom Tov - "difficult to anger and easily appeased - Chasid (pious)" - but to not get angry at all, this does not exist in any type (deah). For who among us is greater in humility than Moshe Rabeinu and yet it is written by him (Lev.10:16): "and Moshe got angry.." (Midrash Shmuel).

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan - "there are four types of temperaments (deot)" - "deah" is the intent in the mind (kavana benefesh).

Anger is an extremely ugly evil in the eyes of G-d and men. It is said of the angry person: "if he is a prophet, prophecy departs from him" (Pesachim 66b).

If for a prophet his prophecy departs from him but he nevertheless remains with his deah (soundness in the mind). Then for other human beings (non-prophets), anger causes their deah (mind) itself to depart from them and they will become like lunatics (during the anger tantrum).

You can see how anger leads one man to murder his fellow or to strike and curse his father and mother, or to worship idols. Therefore, the torah states: "there shall not be a strange god within you.." (Tehilim 81:10). He (the evil inclination) is called god from the term "Eylot" which means a ruler. For once you allow him to rule over you, you will not be able to remove the yoke of his

burden and the staff will be on your shoulder. If you begin to fall before him, you will not be able to defeat him and will fall completely before him.

Therefore guard yourself, be silent and do not be afraid: "and be not quick in your spirit to become angry, [for anger lodges in the heart of fools]" (Kohelet 7:9).

Q Level 3

Ahava b'Taanugim

Ahava b'Taanugim - "there are four types of temperaments (deot)" - "deot" (temperament) on tranquility of spirit (yishuv daat), ie there are four traits on tranquility of spirit or its breakdown (trufo).

He taught that these depend on bad traits. He did not say "[four traits] in man" as in the previous mishna. For the matter of anger and appeasement depends on the daat (mind), according to one's mind and calmness/tolerance (sichlo v'savlanuto).

Even though anger is a bodily feeling/reaction (hitpalut chamri), but nevertheless when the intellect rules over the body, one can remove anger. For it is the bitter root of all the pettiness..

"difficult to anger and easily appeased - Chasid (pious)" - this teaches that we do not say only one who never gets angry is a chasid. Thus he said this person (who is difficult to anger..) is called a chasid, but one who never gets angry is called a Malach (angel).

"easily angered and difficult to appease - wicked" - this teaches that we do not say only one who does not at all become appeased is called a rasha. But one who is appeased even difficultly is not called a rasha. Thus he teaches that he too is called a rasha.

Some explain that chasid and rasha, the intent is on their end. For since he has this trait it will lead him to acquire chassidut in other mitzvot. For most of the torah and mitzvot depends on this trait. Thus from now already he is called a chasid. Likewise for the rasha (wicked), even though he did not yet corrupt his actions but since he acquired for himself the trait of anger, it is the grandfather of tumah and will produce many offsprings of big and severe sins.

Likewise our sages said: "whoever gets angry it is as if he worshiped idols" (Shabbat 105b, Zohar Bereisheit 27b). According to that, from the beginning at the time of anger he is called a rasha (wicked). The reason is as the Arizal said (Sharei Kedusha 1:2): in all severe sins a man damages his soul only, but through the sin of anger, his holy soul departs and a defiled soul (neshama temeah) enters him in its place from the strange god (el zar, ie forces of evil).

Q Level 3

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "easily angered and easily appeased" - with this, the Tanna comes to encourage he who all the time wants to work on his anger and to become forbearing and slow to anger, but he always stumbles again and again and explodes. He already gives up on himself and is sure that he will never attain the trait of forbearance.

To him the Tanna says: my dear friend, I will teach you how to work on anger. First of all do not try to go against your angry nature from the beginning and decide to never get angry again.

Rather, before everything train yourself on the second stage of "easy to appease". If you already got angry on someone who irritated you. First of all, forgive him wholeheartedly. Afterwards go and appease him and eventually after you train yourself to forgive and be at peace with everyone, the habit to get angry and irritated at everything will pass.

This is the meaning of "[difficult to anger and difficult to appease] - his loss is canceled by his reward". Namely, the loss of being a person full of anger will depart from him through the reward of learning to overlook the wrongdoing of others and appeasing those he wronged.

Q Level 3

Maharam Shik, Avot - "easily angered and difficult to appease - wicked" - what is the sage coming to teach us in that there are four deot? In the previous mishna, he was teaching us to choose the good trait (of "what's mine is yours and what's yours is yours"). But a person cannot choose his natural temperament.

What then is he coming to teach us (and why is he wicked if he was born hot-tempered)?

The answer is because he did not strive to rule over his spirit and he left his character traits as they are, not laboring to rectify them.

It is self-understood that also for other bad traits, one must make efforts and strengthen himself greatly to remove them.

For through training and habit, one can change his bad traits to the good. On the contrary, his reward is greater if by nature he was easily angered and he strengthened himself to abandon this bad trait and he succeeded in becoming difficult to anger. Without a doubt his reward is greater than if he was born with this trait. This is what he is coming to teach us.

Q Level 3

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - on the subject of anger, the mishna uses a puzzling expression - four traits in deot (mindsets) - it would seem that character traits and "deot" are two separate matters. "Character traits" are connected to the heart - the realm of emotions, whereas "deot" is a matter of intellect - thoughts, which stem from the brain.

If so, why does the sage mix these two together?

Furthermore, there is no greater time a man loses his intellect than at a time of anger. If so, how can one call the trait of anger - "deah" (mindset)?

Rather, the sage is coming to teach us a big matter: anger depends on a person's deah (mindset). The free will to get angry or not comes from a high command - from the brain. The consequences of this teaching - is that anger can be controlled!

The tendency of a man to get angry or to rule over his anger stems from the education and training he received. We find small children, 3 or 4 years old who tell each other "I am hot tempered" and even sometimes "I am going to kill you".

Does he understand what anger is? Does he understand what it means to kill someone? He was not born like this. He acquired this at home. He was "brought up" like this. He heard such expressions from his parents and understands that this is the appropriate response when his request is not fulfilled.

The child absorbs that when things don't go as he wishes he should express his protest through anger, through violence. This is as the Talmud says: "the words of a child on the street are from either his mother or his father" (Sukkah 56b).

So too for other traits. It is not correct to say the child was born with this or that bad character trait

and he cannot change it.

All lackings in a person are the rotten fruits of a depraved education (upbringing) and bad habits.

Thus, the Rambam writes in his introduction to Pirkei Avot (ch.4): "a man is not by nature, in his beginning - a person of virtue or of lackings. Rather, without a doubt he habituated himself from his youth in acts according to his relatives and the people of his land".

Since it is so, the Rambam continues there that all character traits are capable of being "healed" and he brings there the proper way to break bad character traits.

Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - "hard to anger and easily appeased - Chasid (pious)" - that which he is "hard to anger", this indicates he has a hard nature. Thus, that which he is "easily appeased" certainly this is because he loves people and therefore he overcomes his (hard) nature.

Alternatively, we may say the opposite. That which he is "easily appeased", this indicates his nature is soft. Thus, that which he is difficult to anger, this is because he loves people and therefore he overcomes his (soft) nature and does not get angry on people and is concerned for their honor.

Thus certainly (either way) he is a chasid.

"easily angered and difficult to appease - wicked" - here too, either way he hates people. For either his nature is soft and therefore he is easily angered, and thus why is he not easily appeased (if his nature is soft)? It must be because he hates people.

Alternatively, his nature is hard and therefore he is not easily appeased. If so, why is he not difficult to anger? It must be because he hates people. Therefore, he is easily angered and thus a wicked man.

(R. Hartman - according to this explanation, the reason he is a wicked man is due to hatred of people within him and the "easily angered and difficult to appease" is just an indication of this. Likewise, the reason for being a chasid is love of people and "difficult to anger and easily appeased" is likewise just an indication of this. Now he will bring an alternative explanation whereby these are not just indications but rather they are the cause itself for being righteous or wicked).

However, that which he said: "easily angered and difficult to appease - wicked" and likewise "difficult to anger and easily appeased - Chasid (pious)" there is to explain this directly, as the talmud brings:

"Rav Nachman says: 'whoever gets angry, it is known that his sins are greater than his merits, as written: 'a man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger abounds in sin' (Mishlei 29:22)" end quote.

This teaches that one who is "easily angered", he "abounds in sin" (rav pesha), as the verse states.

Without a doubt, this matter has a reason which contains great wisdom. For all anger is going out of equilibrium (shivuy), namely, going out of the bounds of the proper measure due to overpowering of anger and wrath. This matter teaches on transgression (pesha) and sin.

For a man of merits does not go out of equilibrium. On the contrary he remains in equilibrium. This is implied in the word "tzadik" (righteous) and "yashar" (just), namely, that he remains in the just/straight balanced (path) ("yosher hashav"), without going out of the completely straight (path).

But this person who is of great anger - due to his anger, he goes out of the just/straight balanced (path). Certainly, he is a man of sins (baal pasha). For a baal pasha goes out from the straight and the equilibrium.

Due to this, he said here that one who is easily angered and difficult to appease is close to anger and wrath which is going out of equilibrium and the straight (path).

Likewise for the opposite, if he is difficult to anger and easily appeased, certainly such a person is of equilibrium and of justness/straightness (yosher). Therefore, it is difficult for him to go out of the equilibrium, and even if he goes out, it is easy for him to return to equilibrium which is his place. For he is a righteous and just man (ish tzadik veyashar).

For anger is going out of equilibrium due to being overpowered by rage. This matter is clear.

R.Hartman: in his commentary on the Talmud (Nedarim 22b) the Maharal writes: "there is no one who goes out of equilibrium like the hot tempered person (baal chema)... due to rage, he goes out of the order (seder), and he is a rasha (wicked man) and a sinner (baal chet)". end quote

And in Netiv Haavodah (ch.13) he writes: for anger is one of the excess actions of the soul, as known, therefore he said "do not get angry". For this is the beginning of the soul's going out of equilibrium. And our sages said: "do not get angry and you won't sin" (Berachot 29b). end quote. Note Rashi there explains: "due to anger, you come to sin". end quote

And in Netiv Hakaas (ch.2) the Maharal explains:

This statement comes to teach a man to not remove clinging (devekut) from G-d, but rather to be clinging with Him. On this it is written: "do not get angry and you won't sin".

For G-d created man with body and soul. The body is physical and the soul is spiritual. They are two opposites. And when a man stands as is proper, without swaying to one side, then man stands in his equilibrium, and he clings to G-d. This matter is hinted in man and woman. For the body is like a woman and the soul is like man. The Name of G-d (Yud-Heh) is between them when they join properly (Sotah 17a). But when the soul goes out of the bounds of what is proper through anger... He goes out from the equilibrium and the clinging [to G-d] is removed. Due to this, he said: "[do not get angry] and you won't sin". end quote

And in Be'er Hagolah (be'er 6) the Maharal writes:

"The tzadik does not go out of the center to any side, only he does not sway from the center point".

And in Gur Aryeh (Bamidbar 28) the Maharal writes: "the Tzadik also does not sway from the middle.. For the Tzadik is he who does not sway from the just (Yosher) nor sway from the Tzedek (righteousness) and he remains on the point and in the center". end quote

And in Netiv Hashalom (ch.3) the Maharal writes: " '[the world stands on] he who shuts his mouth at a time of dispute' (Talmud) - he does not go out of equilibrium, namely, the center". end quote

And in Be'er Hagolah (be'er 6) the Maharal writes: "the tzadik does not go out of the center to any

side, he only does not sway from the center point". end quote

And in Gur Aryeh (Bamidbar 28) the Maharal writes: "the Tzadik also does not sway from the middle.. For the Tzadik is he who does not sway from the just (Yosher) nor sway from the Tzedek (righteousness) and he remains on the point and in the center". end quote

And in Netiv Hashalom (ch.3) the Maharal writes: " '[the world stands on] he who muzzles his mouth at a time of dispute' (Talmud) - he does not go out of equilibrium, namely, the center". end quote.

Level 3

Chayim Sheyesh Bahem on Avot - the Chafetz Chaim would often say: a man needs to work on himself to not feel any pain when someone scorns and shames him. Thus our sages said: "those who are insulted but do not insult back, hear themselves reviled without answering, act through love and rejoice in suffering, of them scripture says: "but they who love Him shall be as the sun when it goes forth in its might" (Shab.88a).

He would quote the words of the holy Rabbi Elazar Azkari in his book (Sefer Chareidim): "when I hear someone who scorns and shames me publicly, I imagine before myself scales. On one end my sins and on the other end the scorns and insults. I look and the side of sins tips the scales. Thus I am silent and accept the judgment. Thus I do for all types of sufferings of speech or actions...

The admor, R.Yechiel Michal, the maggid of Zotshov was willing to pay a great sum of money for an Esrog Mehudar (beautiful Esrog fruit). But since he was extremely poor, he was unable to fulfill his wish.

What did he do? The righteous man went and sold the Tefilin mehudar who came to him by inheritance of his father, the Magid of Druhavit. For buyers were willing to pay a hefty sum for these tefilin. With the money, he purchased a special Esrog with all the stringencies and arrived at his home full of joy.

"What is this joy?" His wife asked. "Every corner of the house there is poverty and you are still joyful?"

The tzadik opened the box of the Esrog and showed his wife the special treasure he purchased.

"Where did you get this? Where did you find the money?"

"I sold my father's tefilin!"

"The Tefilin you inherited from your father?? You sold the most precious object in the house? And for what? For an Esrog of seven days?!"

Out of anger and fury, she grabbed the Esrog from him and bit off the top and threw it on the ground.

Rabbi Yechiel Michal pondered what happened. Now he is left without tefilin and without an Esrog. He thought for a bit and told himself: "really I should have gotten angry. But what for? I have no Tefilin. I have no Esrog. And now the Evil Inclination stands to make me stumble in the trait of anger? No! I will overcome him!"

That night his father appeared to him in a dream and said to him: "my son, you sold my precious tefilin to buy an Esrog mehudar - this made a big noise in Heaven. But your overpowering anger made an even bigger noise.."

Chapter 5 Mishna 12 - Quick To Hear

There are four types of character regarding students: quick to hear (comprehend) and quick to forget - his reward (gain) is canceled by his loss; Difficult to hear and slow to forget - his loss is canceled by his reward (gain); Quick to hear and slow to forget - Chacham (wise man); Difficult to hear and quick to forget - this is a bad portion.

אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּתַלְמִידִים. מְהֵרָה לְשָׁמַע וּמְהֵרָה לְאַבֵּד, יֵצֵא שְׂכָרוֹ בְּהִפּוּסָדוֹ. קִשָּׁה לְשָׁמַע וְקִשָּׁה לְאַבֵּד, יֵצֵא הִפּוּסָדוֹ בְּשְׂכָרוֹ. מְהֵרָה לְשָׁמַע וְקִשָּׁה לְאַבֵּד, חַכָּם. קִשָּׁה לְשָׁמַע וּמְהֵרָה לְאַבֵּד, זֶה חֵלֶק רָע.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "quick to hear (comprehend) and quick to forget - his reward (gain) is canceled by his loss" - for since he forgets what he learns, what benefit is there in being quick to hear? Thus, his loss is greater than his reward (gain).

"difficult to hear and slow to forget - his loss is canceled by his reward (gain)" - the good trait he has is greater than the losing trait since what he hears with difficulty he remembers and does not forget.

The consequence (nafka minah) is that if we have before us two students but we have food only for one of them, we give preference to the "slow to forget" over the "quick to hear".

"difficult to hear and quick to forget - this is a bad portion" - it is not applicable to say here Chasid (pious) or Rasha (wicked). For here it is not something that depends on man's free will. Rather, it is a lacking he was born with.

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "quick to hear (comprehend) and quick to forget" - he grasps and comprehends quickly what he learns but he then forgets it quickly.

"his loss is greater than his reward" - the lesson is that such a person needs to review many times if he wants to gain something from his studies, as written: "one who reviews his chapter 100 times is not like one who reviews 101 times".

"difficult to hear and slow to forget - his loss is canceled by his reward (gain)" - his gain is greater than his loss. For he can study carefully until he understands and then it will remain in his memory. The lesson is that if there are two students but only room for one, he takes precedence over the first since he has greater chance of succeeding in his studies.

Q Level 2

☆ Chida

Chida, Chasdei Avot - "there are four types of students.." - although the traits of every person are implanted in his nature from birth but nevertheless if he is a baal nefesh (spiritual person), he will pour out prayer and scream to G-d to grant him strength to hear (comprehend) quickly and not forget. For everything is from His Hand and G-d will not withhold good from those who walk wholeheartedly and G-d will change his nature to the good.

The person also must strive to girdle strength and review his learning with fear, love, and joy. For this is all of man..

G-d will grant him the power of memory for his mercy is endless. These are the true segulot (remedies). Do not go after swearing in (angels through practical kabala) for this is a severe sin.

Also do not endanger yourself by drinking strong potions for you may lose your mind, G-d forbid. There is no medication like fear of G-d and no segulah (remedy) like prayer with a broken heart.

Q Level 3

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "quick to hear (comprehend) and quick to forget - his reward (gain) is canceled by his loss" - here the Tanna (sage) turns to the sharp student who grasps everything quickly and tells him: be careful, precious student. Do not be proud that you grasp quickly and think that this is enough to become a talmid chacham (torah scholar). This is a mistake. For perhaps specifically because you grasp quickly, you will also forget quickly. For you think just because you grasped it quickly then you can already move on without any review, summary and test. In truth you will forget it all just as quickly as you grasped it and at the end of the day be left with nothing. Furthermore one does not appreciate something he acquired without hard work and he does not guard it.

"difficult to hear and slow to forget - his loss is canceled by his reward (gain)" - here the Tanna comes to encourage the student of weak grasp who thinks nothing will come out of him. The Tanna tells him: don't worry my brother of weak grasp. For because you grasp only after much toil and effort, then the torah you learn is very precious to you. Thus certainly it will be well imprinted in your mind and guarded in your memory always. For in this loss you see in being slow to grasp, this itself causes your reward. For through this you appreciate greatly the torah and thus it is guarded in your memory.

"quick to hear and slow to forget - Chacham (wise man)" - this person grasps quickly and also remembers all that he learns. This indicates he very much appreciates what he learns and therefore he merits so much siyata dishmaya (divine help) to grasp quickly and also to not forget. This is because he sees the torah as the most precious thing that exists.. This is called a man who has "a good portion". He realizes that the torah is the most worthwhile portion to acquire. It is very worthwhile to be around such people.

"difficult to hear and quick to forget - this is a bad portion" - it seems the tanna is not speaking about a pitiful person whose mind is blocked and cannot grasp anything. For what gain is there to say he has a bad portion. Is it his fault that his mind is blocked? What use is there to put him down further?

Rather we are talking about someone who is the opposite of the previous case. He does not at all see the torah as important. Therefore it is not important to him to remember what he learned and therefore he does not make any efforts to strain his mind and rectify his soul, to grasp and remember what he learns since he is not interested.. this is a "bad portion" from beginning to end.

Q Level 3

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - why is there preference to he who is "slow to forget" over he who is "quick to hear"?

There is an answer to all the questions in the Tosfot Yom Tov. Granted a weak memory is a natural trait which a person is born with. However, there is an advice for which his learning will endure by him. What is this advice? It is written in Pirkei Avot (3:9) "he whose fear of sin is greater than his wisdom, his wisdom will endure". Namely, if he acquires fear of Heaven, he acquires for himself assistance to retain his wisdom.

Likewise it is possible that the cause of his forgetfulness and weak memory is not due to a natural weakness of memory he is born with. But rather, [perhaps] it is due to a lack of fear of Heaven in the student. For "he whose fear of sin is greater than his wisdom, his wisdom will endure" (Avot

ch.3:11).

Thus if there is a student who is "quick to forget", that his wisdom does not endure - granted your memory is weak. But it is possible that you yourself caused this. Maybe it is your own fault. For you did not precede fear of sin to wisdom. If so, it is within your power to change your situation. You must work on your middot (character traits). Later on, we will see additional remedies against forgetfulness.

Superficial Learning

the great loser in the mishna is the first student - "quick to hear (comprehend) and quick to forget". Regarding him the Tanna says: "his reward (gain) is canceled by his loss".

His reward - that he grasps quickly is pushed to the corner and swallowed inside the great loss of forgetfulness. He learned and listened. The material was grasped by his mind. But after some time, it flew out of his mind and disappeared.

It was specifically his quick grasp that caused him to stumble, as the Maharal writes: "the cause that he is quick to forget, is that he is quick to comprehend".

A student who understands quickly and grasps things immediately does not go into them. He does not strive to contemplate them in his mind. Therefore, they are not chiseled in his soul. Only when a man toils to grasp wisdom does it become part of him. Things which come easily are also lost easily.. As they say: "in one ear, out the other".

Furthermore, the student who grasps quickly does not toil to understand things to their depth. He does not put to heart the small details. His mind "pushes" to go further to the next question or the next answer.

On the other hand, the student slow to grasp lends ear to all the words of the Rav, perhaps now he will understand more, perhaps these words will illuminate the darkness for him.

Thus, the result is that the one slow to grasp receives from his Rav more than he who is quick to grasp. His lengthy toil also helps him to discern many details which were hidden to his swifter colleague..

Thus our mishna teaches important lessons to the sharp student - he who is quick to grasp. Do not go after your lightning grasp. Do not be content with superficial understanding. Rather, stop and delve deeply into what appears to be self understood. There are always deeper levels of understanding which are not apparent on the surface. Remembrance is acquired only after toil and only if things are completely clear..

REVIEW

the primary advice which our sages advise us to prevent forgetfulness is review (shinun). When a man reviews his studies, he drives them into his mind and chisels them in his memory..

In the Talmud: "whoever learns torah but does not review is as one who sows but does not reap" (Sanhedrin 99a). Rabbi Yehoshua there uses stronger terms: "whoever learns torah and forgets it is like a woman who gives birth and buries [her baby].

Torah study without review is like a blessing said in vain. There is no benefit, for it is forgotten. Without review of the material, all his investment goes to loss and nothing remains of all his toil.

The more a person reviews, the more it will remain longer in his memory. The talmud reports several times that the sages reviewed every matter forty times until the study was "in his pocket" (Megilah 7b).

The talmud in tractate Chagigah brings a powerful message on how important it is to review one's learning as much as possible: "he who reviews his learning 101 times is not like one who reviews it 101 times".

If one reviewed 100 times (!), what benefit is there in reviewing one additional time? But it is not so. For even the 101st review has benefit. Even with this extra review, the matters will be sharper. He will discover new details and the matter will be clearer.

From the words of the talmud it is implied that the 101st review is not just another review. Rather, "it is not like".

Interestingly, according to the Shlah and the Kli Yakar on the verse: "guard yourself and guard your soul very much lest you forget the things..." (Devarim 4:9) - [the Shlah writes:] the name of the angel (spiritual being) appointed over forgetfulness is "Shachach" (forget). The gematria of the hebrew word shachach (forget) is 328.

The angel appointed over remembering is "zachor" (remember) and has gematria of 227.

The difference is $328-227=101$. For every review weakens the power of forgetfulness and strengthens the power of remembering. In order to annul the power of forgetfulness completely, he must review 101 times. Thus "shachach" - 101 = "zachar".

Another hint our sages bring (Yerushalmi Peah 1:1, Yalkut Shimoni on Yehoshua 24:22) is from the verse when Moshe Rabeinu says: "For it is no empty word from you (mikem), but your very life.." (Devarim 32:47).

Our sages expounded "mikem" (from you) has gematria 100. Thus if a man learns 100 times and nevertheless "he is empty" - he is empty of the words of torah - "mikem" (from you). It is because you learned it only 100 times. If you had learned it 101 times, it would have been chiseled in your memory..

We find another hint in the talmud (Pesachim 50a, Kohelet Rabba 9:8) which speaks of a heavenly voice that proclaims: "fortunate is he who comes to here (lekahn) with his learning in his hand" (ashrei mi shebah lekahn vthalmudo beyado). The gematria of "lekan" (to here) is 101, hinting that he who has reached this level that he reviewed his learning 101 times "his learning is in his hand" and he will no longer forget it.

Review is an important fundamental (ikar chashuv) in torah study. Therefore it does not only say (in the Shemah): "ulemadtem" (you shall study them) and "vedibarta bam" (you shall speak in them). Rather already in the first chapter we say "veshinantam levanecha" (you shall review them to your sons). Torah study must be given in the way of repetition and review.

The most common expression in the talmud is "Tanu Rabbanan" (the sages reviewed/shanu chachamim). It does not say: "the sages said" or "the sages taught" but rather "tanu" - they reviewed and repeated. Only those who review become sages.

In a siyum (completion) of a tractate it is said: "whoever reviews (shonei) halachot every day is guaranteed to be a ben Olam Haba". Here too it does not say "whoever learns" but rather "whoever reviews" - he learns and reviews. The way to acquire torah is through repetition and review..

Another advice to guard in memory is to write down what one learned. Through this he automatically reviews and clarifies what he learned. This is a tried and tested advice verified by experience and hinted in pirkei avot (1:6) "kanei lecha chaver" (acquire for yourself a friend). This can be read "kanei" (the pen) should be your friend.

To end off, even after all the toil, nevertheless remembrance depends on siyata dishmaya (divine help). One needs to pray much and strive to be worthy of divine help. This is first and foremost by toiling in learning and review. Only after toil can one hope that he will be assisted from Heaven..

Why does the mishna call all four types "students"? For all people are equally called "students". Even the greatest sage is called by the title "talmid chacham" (wise student).

In torah study one never finishes to study. For "its measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea" (Iyov 11:9). Its treasures are endless. Each tractate begins with page 2. For even if we finish it all we still did not reach even Aleph (1). There are layers upon layers of meaning. The wise man knows that the more he knows, nevertheless he is still at the beginning of the journey.

Chapter 5 Mishna 13 - Four Tzedaka

There are four types of character in tzedaka (charity) givers. He who wants to give but [wants that] others do not give - his eye is evil regarding others; he who wants that others give but he [himself] does not [want to] give - his eye is evil regarding his own; that he gives and others also give - Chasid (pious); that he does not give and that others also do not give - Rasha (wicked).

אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּנוֹתַי צְדָקָה. הַרוֹצֵה שְׂיִתֵּן וְלֹא יִתְּנוּ אֲחֵרִים, עֵינּוֹ רָעָה בְּשָׁל אֲחֵרִים. יִתְּנוּ אֲחֵרִים וְהוּא לֹא יִתֵּן, עֵינּוֹ רָעָה בְּשָׁלוֹ. יִתֵּן וְיִתְּנוּ אֲחֵרִים, חֲסִיד. לֹא יִתֵּן וְלֹא יִתְּנוּ אֲחֵרִים, רָשָׁע.

Level 1

☆ Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "he who wants to give but [wants that] others do not give" - he wants all the good and all the praise for himself.

"his eye is evil regarding others" - for he does not want the good of the public.

Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "who wants to give but [wants that] others do not give" - he knows that tzedaka makes a person rich and he does not want others to become rich.

Alternatively, some people are more concerned about the money of their relatives than their own money. Even though they themselves give, they don't want their relatives to give.

Level 1

☆ Rashi

Rashi - "he who wants that others give but he [himself] does not [want to] give - his eye is evil regarding his own" - he is tzar ayin (stingy) on himself. He refuses to give tzedaka (charity) in order to not diminish the amount of his money. But he does not put to heart on the reward guarded for him in Olam Haba (if he gives tzedaka).

Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan - "he who wants to give but [wants that] others do not give - his eye is evil regarding others" - this evil of the eye comes from evil of the heart - he hates other people and does not want their money to be blessed nor that they find favor in the eyes of G-d and men. On such a person the wise man said: "the soul of the wicked desires evil" (Mishlei 21:10).

"that others give but he [himself] does not [want to] give - his eye is evil regarding his own" - this does not come from evil of the heart but rather from overpowering love of money in his heart. On such a person it is written: "he who hastens to be rich has an evil eye [and does not know that poverty will come upon him]" (Mishlei 28:22).

"that he gives and also others give - Chasid (pious)" - on him the wise man said: "He that has a good eye shall be blessed; [For he gives of his bread to the poor]" (Mishlei 22:9). He desires the blessing and righteousness of others and he fulfills the commandment: "love your fellow as yourself" (Vayikra 19:18)...

"that he himself does not give and that others also do not give - wicked" - for his eye is evil on himself and on others and the poor do not find favor in his eyes.

Level 3

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "there are four types of character in tzedaka (charity) givers.." - it seems the fourth category does not belong in the mishna. For the mishna states "there are four traits of givers of tzedaka". But the case: "he does not give and wants that others do not give" - how is he counted

among the "givers of tzedaka"? What place does he then have in the mishna?

Some answer that the sage is including all types of people - even those who do not give.

The Yavetz gives a different answer. He draws an inference from one word in the beginning of the mishna. This word appears once but it applies to all four categories - "harotze (he who wants)".

The emphasis of the mishna is what is a person's will regarding tzedaka. What is the ideal situation according to him?

Some want to give but do not want that others give. Some want the opposite. Some want to give and also want that others give. At the end is the wicked man. What does he want? - that he does not give and that others also do not give.

The emphasis is on the will of a man. The wicked man does not want to give at all. But many times he is forced to give and thus he is counted among the givers of tzedaka. So why is he called a wicked man?

Because he does not want to give nor that others give. He gives only out of embarrassment, only because he is forced to do so. He gives without any desire, with a grumpy face. He feels they are squeezing him dry..

Chapter 5 Mishna 14 - Beit Midrash Goers

There are four types among those who go to the Beit Midrash (house of torah study): he who goes but does not do - the reward for going is in his hand; he who does [study] but does not go - the reward for doing is in his hand; he who goes and does - chasid (pious); he who neither goes nor does - Rasha (wicked).

אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּהוֹלְכֵי לְבֵית הַמִּדְרָשׁ. הוֹלֵךְ וְאֵינוֹ עוֹשֶׂה, שְׂכָר הַלֵּיכָה בְּיָדוֹ. עוֹשֶׂה וְאֵינוֹ הוֹלֵךְ, שְׂכָר מַעֲשֵׂה בְּיָדוֹ. הוֹלֵךְ וְעוֹשֶׂה, חֲסִיד. לֹא הוֹלֵךְ וְלֹא עוֹשֶׂה, רָשָׁע.

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "he who goes but does not do" - he goes to the beit midrash to listen but he does not study and learn and does not understand.

"he who does [study] but does not go" - he studies and learns in the beit midrash in his home.

Q Level 1

☆ Rashi

Rashi - "he who goes but does not do" - he [himself] does not learn anything but he hears from others.

"he who does [study] but does not go" - he learns in his home.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "[those who go to the] Beit Midrash (house of torah study)" - the place where the people are taught with drashas (speeches) with rebukes of mussar (ethics), the emunot v'deot (faith and outlook), derech erez (ethical behavior), and how to fulfill the mitzvot (commandments).

"he who goes but does not do" - not that he intentionally transgresses their words. For then he would be a rasha (wicked man). Rather, it means he does not have the strength to conquer his [evil] inclination at the time of doing.

"the reward for going is in his hand" - for at least he longs to hear the words of the living G-d. And perhaps over time the words will make a mark on his soul and he will conquer his inclination, for "torah study brings to action".

"he who does [study] but does not go" - he conquers his inclination to do according to the mitzvot of the torah and in derech erez but he thinks he does not need the words of the torah scholars (chachamim) and their rebukes (and thus he studies at home).

"the reward for doing is in his hand" - he missed out on the reward for going. For if he had went, he would have done more, as written: "he who goes with the wise becomes wise" (Mishlei 13:20).

"Chasid (pious)" - even though his learning is in his hand and he knows what is proper to do, nevertheless he goes to hear words of mussar to strengthen his soul in the way of G-d.

"Rasha (wicked)" - he knows he lacks knowledge but nevertheless he does not want. For "a scoffer does not love one who reproves him; he will not go to the wise" (Mishlei 15:12).

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "he who goes but does not do - the reward for going is in his hand" - the explanation is not that he does not do at all of what he heard in the Beit Midrash and he does not fulfill the mitzvot. For then he would be a Rasha gamur (completely wicked) since a wicked person

is not just someone who commits sins only.

One who refrains from doing the mitzvot is also called a rasha (wicked). If one does not do the mitzvot nor commit sins - he is completely wicked (rasha gamur). On this the Talmud Yerushalmi says: "one who learns but does not do - better for him had he died in the womb and not been born into the world" (Berachot 1:2).

Rather, the explanation of: "he who goes but does not do - the reward for going is in his hand" is that he does not seek them out to do them. But when the mitzvot come to his hand, he does them.

He fulfills the mitzvot haphazardly not in a fixed way (derech mikre velo bikeviut). For he goes after the vanities of the world. But he is not a Rasha (wicked man) and he has reward.

"he who does [study] but does not go - the reward for doing is in his hand" - he does not go to the Beit Midrash and he does not know how to be meticulous in the mitzvot and to be machmir (stringent) in them. But he does them according to the little knowledge he has. He has reward for this doing.

"Chasid (pious)" - he goes after the mitzvot and is meticulous in all their details and stringencies that he knows and can do and does more than the obligation (lifnim mishurat hadin).

"Rasha (wicked)" - for he does not go after them and even if they happen to come to his hand - he will not do them.

Q Level 2

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "he who goes and does - chasid (pious)" - some ask on this: "what chasidut is there in this? Is one not obligated to study torah? (Chasid implies doing more than the obligation).

Answer: he could have learned in his house. Instead he went to the Beit Midrash (synagogue). This is certainly better.. For torah study with many people is better. This does not need explanation. For the torah one learns in his house is not like what he learns in yeshiva with many people.

Q Level 3

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "he who goes but does not do - the reward for going is in his hand" - just the going itself has value. For by being in the Beit Midrash, a person absorbs holiness and spiritual elevation. In the Midrash: "Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: 'whoever enters the batei knesiot and batei midrashot (synagogues and houses of torah study) in this world merits to enter the batei knesiot and batei midrashot in the future. From where do we know this? Because it is written (Tehilim 84:5): "fortunate are they who dwell in Your house; they shall still praise You. Selah (ashrei yoshvei betecha - od yehallelucha selah)" (Midrash Devarim Rabbah 7:1).

Our sages further said there (ibid): "whoever comes to the synagogue and hears words of torah - merits to sit among the sages in the future (world), as written (Mishlei 15:31): " the ear that hears the reproof of life shall abide among the wise" .

Everyone who hears words of torah - even if he does not understand all that is being said - merits to sit among the sages in the future (world)..

Likewise the Ramah rules in his commentary on the Shulchan Aruch: "even if one does not know how to learn, he should go to the Beit Midrash and the reward of going is in his hands" (Orach Chaim 151:1)..

 **Level 4**

 ☆ **Yachel Yisrael**

Yachel Yisrael - "he who does [study] but does not go.." - how is it possible that a Jew does but does not go (advance)? If he does (torah and mitzvot) why does he not grow? Why does he remain the same?

Rather, it refers to a Jew who learns torah. He prays and does mitzvot but in the way of rote (mitzvah anashim melumada) - without yirat shamayim (fear of Heaven), without internal joy which springs from love of G-d.

For such a person, his actions do not have any effect on him and do not become part of him. Thus automatically, he stays the same and remains as he was.

In chasidut, a man's station in the world is compared to a man who needs to cross a river covered by a thin sheet of ice. If he stands in the same place, he drowns for the ice under him will break. If he runs fast, he will also drown as the ice will break under his feet.

What should he do? To advance constantly and carefully but to always advance further - to not stop!

Thus it says the four who GO to the beit midrash. Every person wherever he is, needs to go all his days if he does not want to sink (regress) down, to always advance further..

Chapter 5 Mishna 15 - The Sponge

There are four types of character among those who sit before the sages: the sponge, the funnel, the strainer, and the sieve. The sponge absorbs everything. The funnel takes in from one end and lets out from the other. The strainer lets the wine run through and retains the pits. The sieve lets out the coarse flour and keeps the fine (choice) flour.

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - here he is not referring to the levels of memory since that was taught earlier. Rather, he is referring to a sound or faulty intellect.

Q Level 1

☆ Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel on Avot - this mishna is almost like the earlier mishna ("quick to hear.. etc."). Just that the earlier mishna was referring to understanding and receiving wisdom easily or with difficulty, forgetting or remembering. But this mishna revolves around a different matter. Namely, examining and discerning the truth from the falsehood in matters and to clarify and hold on to the good and drop the unsound and incorrect in the ways of pilpul (logical rigor). For the latter sometimes confuses from correct understanding.

Q Level 2

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "four types among those who sit before the sages" - earlier regarding the characters of the students, he was speaking about the matter of memory and forgetfulness. Now he is referring to sound logic and discerning between what is correct and what is incorrect.

"*the sponge*" - he absorbs water, whether it is murky or clear. So too some have a broad heart and receive everything they hear but they lack the power to discern the truth from the falsehood.

"*The funnel takes in from one end and lets out from the other*" - a funnel is that which is placed on the opening of a barrel or jug when one wants to fill it with oil or wine. So too some [students] receive everything they learn but it leaves them just like it came.

"*the strainer lets the wine run through and retains the pits*" - he sifts out everything he heard in the Beit Midrash (study hall) and retains only the irrelevant matters.

"*The sieve lets out the coarse flour and keeps the fine (choice) flour*" - after sifting out the waste from the milled flour, the choice fine flour remains which is the important part.. So too there are some who have the power to clarify and elucidate what he heard and to extract the truth from the falsehood and the irrelevant.

Q Level 3

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "four types among those who sit before the sages" - here the mishna is talking about a Rav who gives a shiur (class) in halacha or talmud in-depth. He presents at first one path built on a certain foundation and then afterwards brings questions and difficulties from here and there. He refutes this and answers that, bringing a proof from here or there and after an hour or more of warfare in torah, the Rav throws out the final resolution which explains the entire sugyah (topic) and all the problems are solved.

One of the students may tell himself: "why do I need to remember this entire path of the shiur and

all its questions and pilpulim (rigorous logic)? Isn't it sufficient for me to know only the final conclusion from which the halacha is derived and that's it?"

On this the Tanna says to you: "no!". For in order to grow in torah and know how to mechadesh chidushim (deduce insights) in halacha, one must go through the entire long road of questions, refutations, answers, differences, etc. etc. and to get thoroughly entangled in this salad. In this way and only in this way does there come out in the end lamdanim gedolei torah (sharp torah scholars), as written in the talmud: "a person does not stand on words of torah unless he first stumbled in them" (Gitin 43a).

For it is not possible for each person to merely look a bit on the Gemorah (talmud) and then go straight away to a clear understanding of all the halachas and foundations in that sugya.

Rather, only he who toiled seriously to what the Gemorah wanted in the question and what it thought in the answer and what is the difference between the hav amina (assumption) and maskana (conclusion), etc.

Only such a person can merit in the end to illuminate all the foundations and boundaries in halacha that are in this sugya (topic).

Chapter 5 Mishna 16 - Unconditional Love

Any love that depends on something, will cease when the thing upon which it depends ceases. But if it does not depend on anything, it ceases not forever. What is [an example of] a love which depends on something? The love of Amnon for Tamar. And [what is an example of] a love which does not depend on anything? The love of David and Yehonatan.

כָּל אֲהָבָה שֶׁהִיא תְּלוּיָהּ בְּדָבָר, בְּטֵל דָּבָר, בְּטֵלָה אֲהָבָה. וְשִׂאִינָה תְּלוּיָהּ בְּדָבָר, אֵינָה בְּטֵלָה לְעוֹלָם. אִיזוֹ הִיא אֲהָבָה הַתְּלוּיָהּ בְּדָבָר, זוֹ אֲהָבַת אֲמֹנוֹן וְתַמָּר. וְשִׂאִינָה תְּלוּיָהּ בְּדָבָר, זוֹ אֲהָבַת דָּוִד וְיְהוֹנָתָן.

Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "any love that depends on something, will cease when the thing upon which it depends ceases.." - ie any love which depends on something transitory (batel), then when this transitory cause passes, the love also passes. But a love which does not depend on something transitory, rather it depends on something permanent, such as the love of the righteous or the sages - this love never passes. For just like the cause of that love is permanent, so too the love is permanent.

"love of Amnon for Tamar" - because of her beauty.

"love of David and Yehonatan" - to fulfill the will of their Maker. For Yehonatan said to David: "you will be king over Israel and I will be your minister".

Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "any love that depends on something" - ie it depends on something intermediary between the lover and the beloved. For example, the love of a man towards his benefactor whereby he loves the future benefits he hopes to receive, not the benefactor. Thus, really he loves only himself.

"but if it does not depend on anything" - by nature such as a father to a son or to family. Or in mind, such as the love of wisdom or virtue. When he is asked: "why do you love these things?", he is unable to give a reason. This is a love which does not depend on something intermediary between the lover and the beloved.

But if he loves a certain wise man or tzadik (righteous person), or person of good character traits, then this is also considered a love which depends on something. For when the wise man stops toiling in wisdom, etc. then when the intermediary is annulled, the love is annulled.

"Amnon and Tamar" - he loved only himself, not Tamar. He loved the pleasure he hoped to get from her. This pleasure was the intermediary between the lover and the beloved. Therefore when the pleasure he got from her subsided, it is written: "and Amnon hated her.." (Shmuel II 13:15).

"David and Yehonatan" - it did not depend on anything and was great in magnitude like the love of a father to his son which can never be annulled even if the son acts improperly.. So too by Yehonatan, even though he heard that David would take the kingship from him, nevertheless his love did not subside and he even put himself in danger several times for David.

Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - a love which does not end is one where [the love exists] even though the person deems he will incur some loss and embarrassment such as Yehonatan and David. For even though Yehonatan was fit to be king in place of his father and David would take away the kingship from him, nevertheless his bond of love towards him was strong..

But the love of Amnon towards Tamar is clear and there is no need to elaborate.

🔍 Level 2

☆ Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer, Torat Moshe, Emor - and even if it is unconditional only from one side, here too it will not be annulled. For example, if you say David's love for Yehonatan depends on something, namely, since he sees that Yehonatan loves him an unconditional love therefore he loves him. Thus that which David loves Yehonatan depends on something, namely, that Yehonatan loves him.

Nevertheless, this love will never be annulled. For Yehonatan's love for him does not depend on anything and will not be annulled. Thus so too David's love will likewise not be annulled.

🔍 Level 3

Yafe l'Einayim - the Baal Haturim on Bereisheit 24:16 says on the verse: "and Yitzchak brought Rivka to his home.. and she became his wife and he loved her..". This term "and he loved her" appears two times. One is here and the second is by Amnon. In the latter it was a love which depended on something. Therefore it became annulled. But here it did not depend on anything. Therefore it was not annulled". end quote.

That is to say that Yitzchak's love towards Rivka was not due to her beauty like Amnon towards Tamar. Rather it was because "and she became his wife". For "a wife is for children" (ein isha ela lebanim), ie for the mitzvah of having children. And he loved her because she was righteous and pious like his mother Sarah. For this does not depend on his own pleasure/benefit.

🔍 Level 3

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - here the Tanna comes to tell us clearly that it is not possible for me to love a person a true love and then one day this passes and I stopped to love the person.

Rather, if I stopped loving the person when something happened between us, this means I never truly loved the person. All that love was only because of some thing I thought the person would provide for me.

When I found out that the person is unable to provide me what I wanted or that I already got what I wanted from him and he has nothing interesting more to give me, then the cause of that "love" passed and now comes my true view towards him.

For if I had loved this person because his essence finds favor in my eyes and not because of some side matter I hope to get from him, then even if I find out he cannot provide me anything, I would continue to love the person. For I love him and not something else external to him.

Almost everyone stumbles in this matter. For in many places we hear of the concept of love starting from "I love fish" and ending on "I love a woman".

It is told of a certain wise man who was walking on the street and passed a restaurant. As he was walking, he overheard someone eating fish saying: "oh how I love fish".

The wise man asked him: "if you love fish so much why do you eat them, guard them in an aquarium?"

"Rather you love only yourself. And in order to give yourself pleasure, you love to eat fish".

Thus any love which depends on something is not even a temporary love until he gets what he wants. Rather it is not love at all.

The proof of this is that when "when the thing upon which the love depends ceases, the love also ceases".

That is to say the moment the cause of the love is annulled, immediately the love is also annulled and there is no remembrance of it at all.

If this love had something true, it would not have been annulled so quickly. But since it is a love which depends on something, then besides the desire to obtain that cause, there is no love at all.

Only a love "which does not depend on anything", ie only if I love someone even if he does not give me anything - this is a sign that I truly love him and not something else by him. Therefore, such a love "is never annulled". For when I love that person himself, the love will continue as long as he lives since there is no reason for it to end.

This is something especially important to emphasize in our times. For when we see the filth outside on the street and we see our brothers erring and wandering, all the time running after women, putting their whole soul, and all their strength in order to satisfy their base lusts, and furthermore they are not ashamed to call their dirty affairs "love".

Any person who has not been blinded by the mud of this lust understands that there is not there the faintest trace of true love and it is just a fake mask in order to catch the desired prey to fulfill their lusts..

Amnon and Tamar

the story there is well known. Immediately after Amnon fulfilled his lust with Tamar it is written: "Amnon hated her a very great hatred" (Shmuel II 13:15). It is a wonder. That which appeared at first to be a tremendous love, when the cause of the love was annulled, not only was the love finished but rather an even greater hatred entered and took its place.

This is a great lesson and warning to all those people who have "friends" who want to squeeze out some benefit from them. These "friends" pretend to be true friends that will still love them after obtaining their request.

But the Tanna comes to tell those "beloved": "forget this. This 'friend' will not retain a tiny grain of love for even one second after he no longer needs you. Therefore, it is worthwhile for you to divest yourself as fast as possible from such 'friends' and to seek a true friend. And even if you don't find anyone like this it is better to be without love than to get entangled by such "love". For it appears nice at first but its end is bitter..

David and Yehonatan - for this love had no interests. Rather immediately when the two met it is written: "the soul of Yehonatan bound to David and he loved him like his own soul" (Shmuel I 18:1).

It is unbelievable that a love without any interest already reaches a much higher degree than the fake love which depends on something.

Another surprise is the fact that as time went on it became clear that David stood to take the throne from Yehonatan and there was a good reason for him to be Yehonatan's greatest enemy. But nevertheless, Yehonatan loved him and tried to save him from Shaul even putting his own life in danger for him! For this is the power of a true love which does not depend on anything. It

strengthens over everything!

Q Level 3

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - the love of Amnon to Tamar is an example which sticks out of a love which depends on something.

"And it happened after this Avshalom the son of David had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar. And Amnon the son of David loved her. And Amnon was so troubled that he fell sick for his sister Tamar,.. " (Shmuel II 13:1).

His love was so intense that he became sick. His friend Yonadov saw his situation and said to him: "Lay down on your bed and make yourself sick." Pretend you are a bedridden sick man. "And your father will come to visit you. Then say to him.. Please let my sister Tamar come and give me food, and prepare the food in my sight so that I may see and eat it at her hand. " (Shmuel II 13:5)

He followed the advice. And when Tamar came he seized her to rape her. She told him: "no, my brother, do not violate me. For no such thing ought to be done in Israel. Do not do this folly. And I, where shall I cause my shame to go? And as for you, you shall be as one of the fools in Israel. But now please speak to the king. For he will not withhold me from you" (Shmuel II 13:12).

She told him - We can get married in a permitted way. Why do in a forbidden way what can be done in a permitted way?! "But he would not listen to her voice; but being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her".

Immediately in the next verse: "then Amnon hated her with a great hatred. And the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her". He then threw her out of his house. The tragic end to this story is that after two years, her brother Avshalom avenged his sister's honor and murdered Amnon.

How is it possible for such a strong love of Amnon to transform instantly to an even greater hatred?

The mishna here says: "any love which depends on something..."

A love which depends on an external cause is not a true love. The proof is that: "when the thing ceases", when the cause is annulled, "the love is annulled". The mishna continues: "What is [an example of] a love which depends on something? The love of Amnon for Tamar".

This is an example of a fake love. There it was proven to everyone that there was no real love.

Amnon thought he loved Tamar. Did he really love Tamar? No, he only loved himself. If he truly loved her, he would have honored her, considered her wants, understood them. But instead he raped her and humiliated her.

The sages came and taught us "when the thing ceases, the love ceases". The love depended on an external cause - Tamar's beauty and Amnon who essentially loved himself desired only her beauty. Therefore, immediately after he got what he wanted, he lost all feelings of love towards her and "he hated her a tremendous hatred". The hatred was even more intense than the love before - when the love was annulled the hatred came.

There are many people who love only themselves, attributing their selfish desires to love of something.

 Level 4

☆ Chida

Chida - Petach Einayim - "any love that depends on something, will cease when the thing upon which it depends ceases" - for since there is a bitul (annulment) of the love, then there is hatred in its place. This is as written in the Zohar: "when there is no beracha (blessing), the Sitra Achra (side of evil) comes in" (Zohar Balak 186b). Thus it fits well why he chose Amnon (whose love for Tamar transformed to hatred).

"but if it does not depend on anything, it ceases not forever" - the intent is that it will not be annulled completely. He brings from king David who did kindness towards the descendants of Yehonatan (after Yehonatan was dead) (Shmuel II 4:4).

 Level 4

Ohr Hameir, Lech Lecha - (kabalistic) in Tehilim (104:31): "the glory of the L-ord shall endure for ever: the L-ord shall rejoice in his works", that is to say, G-d's primary glory in creating the world was for the joy He will rejoice and delight in His creations when they go in the just path.

But if all their aspirations are only for their own physical needs, if so what joy is there that He wanted to receive from the creations? For then each man turns to his way without understanding why he came to this lowly world. But the living will put to heart to not feel for his own needs at all. Rather all his aspiration and desire is to the Shechinah (G-d) and rectifying the upper worlds. Then his service will be perfect without a doubt since it does not depend on anything. For "any love that depends on something, will cease when the thing upon which it depends ceases. But if it does not depend on anything, it ceases not forever".

Therefore, those people whose whole being and intent is entirely for their own benefit, then their religious service is incidental. For as long as he feels the benefits and kindness of G-d towards him, he correspondingly increases to thank and praise Him. But if the benefits G-d bestows on him are stopped, his love towards G-d also stops.

Even in times of troubles one also needs to serve G-d. In those [difficult] circumstances G-d manifests towards him now, he must also serve G-d. For the Creator, blessed be He, knows what's best for you better than you do. Thus He metes out to you different things according to what His divine wisdom deems fit. He sends a man suffering sometimes. Everything is for man's good, such as to benefit him in his end.

Chapter 5 Mishna 17 - Dispute

Any dispute that is l'Shem Shamayim (for the good/sake of סוּפָהּ, שָׁמַיִם, לְשֵׁם שְׁמַיִם, סוּפָהּ Heaven) shall endure in the end. But one that is not l'Shem שָׁמַיִם, אֵין, וְשִׂאִינָהּ לְשֵׁם שְׁמַיִם, אֵין Shamayim shall not endure in the end. What is [an example of] a מַחְלֻקֵּת, אֵיזוֹ הִיא מַחְלֻקֵּת, סוּפָהּ dispute l'Shem Shamayim? This is the dispute between Hillel and הִלֵּל, זֶה מַחְלֻקֵּת הִלֵּל, שְׁמַיִם, שָׁמַיִם, לְשֵׁם שְׁמַיִם, אֵין Shamai. And one that is not l'Shem Shamayim? This the dispute of Korach and all his congregation. מַחְלֻקֵּת קִרַּח וְכָל עֲדָתוֹ.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "l'Shem Shamayim (for the sake of Heaven)" - when the purpose and goal sought from this dispute is to attain the truth - this endures. For through the argument the truth is clarified, as we find in the argument between Hillel and Shamai that the Halacha follows beit Hillel.

But for an argument which is not l'Shem Shamayim, the desired purpose there is to gain dominion and to love defeating the other. This does not endure in the end as we find by Korach and his congregation whereby their end purpose was to attain honor and dominion but the end was the opposite.

Q Level 1

Machzor Vitri

Machzor Vitri - "l'Shem Shamayim (for the sake of Heaven)" - to arrive at the truth in something or to rebuke people on a sin, but not to rule over people, acquire a name for oneself, or to become arrogant for nothing over one's fellow.

Q Level 2

☆ Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - "Any dispute that is l'Shem Shamayim (for the sake of Heaven) shall endure in the end" - for machloket and love are two opposites. Love comes from peace (Shalom), while machloket comes from hatred. The Tanna makes known to us that all things go after their foundation.

If the foundation is l'shem shamayim, then even machloket which by nature causes annulment - even so it will endure.

But if the foundation is not l'shem shamayim, then even love which by nature causes endurance - even so it will eventually be annulled.

Hillel and Shamai - both agreed on the primary mitzva and service of G-d . They just disagreed on how to get there and how to do it.

The end purpose which both agreed on is seeking the truth. This was the common matter which caused them to endure and be joined them together. Both asked themselves: "what is the reason of Beit Shammai? What is the reason of Beit Hillel?" ..

But the dispute of Korach was not l'shem shamayim. On the contrary, he denied the providence and prophecy of G-d. Thus it does not endure. For falsehood eventually disappears on its own. Thus, they disappeared from the congregation..

Q Level 2

Meiri

Meiri - "any dispute that is l'Shem Shamayim (for the sake of Heaven) shall endure in the end" - there is to wonder here - how is it proper to say on a machloket - "it shall endure in the end"? For

in the end only one of the views argued on will remain and a machloket (endures) implies both views [remain]..

The answer is if the second person argues not in order to vex (lekanter) or defeat the other person, but rather to find the truth - then his words will endure. For truth will do its way. But when he is not l'shem shamayim and he questions and argues only in order to vex (lekanter) and defeat the other person - it will not endure. Rather, only the words of the first person will endure.

The intent is to exhort one to strive for truth and argue on those who come to annul it and not fear any man, not even those who come to vex (lekanter)..

Q Level 3

☆ Chatam Sofer

Ketav Sofer Hachadash, Avot - "What is [an example of] a dispute not l'Shem Shamayim? This the dispute of Korach and all his congregation" - this needs investigation. For it should have said "Korach and Moshe". It seems to me [to answer] that if one looks closely at the order of the verses, he will see that at first Korach came to protest on the high position of Moshe and he wanted to be a ruler over his people. Afterwards the congregation of Korach said [to Moshe]: "you take too much for yourself, etc." (Bamidbar 16:3). They said there is no need at all for a leader and ruler. For "everyone is holy" and everyone is equal.

Certainly if no personal interest was apparent in the dispute of Korach, all of Israel would have been drawn after him due to his smooth tongue.

Thus to rouse their hearts against Moshe, he said at first that there is no need for a leader, we want to be free (hefker). Through this many were drawn after him. But afterwards they detected the deceit in his heart and that he was seeking honor for himself. Therefore, they pulled back. For he and his congregation were not united. They wanted to be without a king and leader while what he wanted in all of this was for himself to be the leader.

This is the way of a dispute not for the sake of Heaven (machloket shelo l'shem shamayim) - each person turns and pulls towards himself. Therefore, even among the disputers peace does not hold and each one leaves the other and the dispute (machloket) eventually disintegrates.

On the other hand, a dispute for the sake of Heaven (machloket l'Shem Shamayim), all of them have only one heart l'Shem Shamayim and one intent and it endures..

Q Level 3

Chatam Sofer

Shevet Sofer Korach - it was already asked that it should have said "the dispute (machloket) of Korach and Moshe". The Ramban infers from Moshe's answer: "is it not enough..it is much for you Bnei Levi". He answered only the Leviites and he only consoled them". Even though afterwards the whole congregation of Israel complained also and also the first born Jews for the service was taken from them.

In truth, Korach screamed only at the first born Jews for the temple service was taken from them. He pretended that he was not screaming for his own honor and not complaining for himself and that he could not bear to see the injustice being done to others.

For he knew that through this many would join him. Thus the first borns did and complained that Moshe chose the people of his family to be the Kohanim (priests) and elevated his tribe, etc. taking much greatness for themselves.

But Moshe sensed that it was not as Korach said. Rather he was only screaming for his own

personal honor. For this was the primary dispute. Therefore Moshe only said: "it is much for you Bnei Levi" so that the Jewish people would understand that he is only seeking his own honor.

If in truth, Korach's intent was only for the honor of the first borns in that they were invalidated for the temple service and that this was hard on him, he would not have been punished so severely and he would have been a little bit l'Shem Shamayim in his dispute.

So too for the first borns. If they protested only because of the honor of their peers and deemed they also deserve the privilege to stand and minister unto G-d, they would not have been punished so severely.

But in truth it was not so. Each one did not care about the honor of his fellow and each joined thinking only of his own honor. Thus the whole argument of Korach and his entire congregation was not l'Shem Shamayim and each person had a different intent. Thus the mishna chose the phrase "the dispute (machloket) of Korach and his congregation".

Q Level 3

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "Hillel and Shamai" - in the Talmud: "a bat kol (Heavenly voice) proclaimed: 'these and these are the words of the living G-d'" (Eirubin 13b)..

For even though Beit Shammai forbids and Beit Hillel permits, nevertheless both are truth. For according to this reason it is forbidden and according to this reason it is permitted.. and both reasons are from G-d who includes opposite things. Thus if one learned the two views, he learned torah from the mouth of G-d..

And when we say the Halacha follows Beit Hillel, this is only practical Halacha of what action a man should do. But nevertheless even though both views have their own reasons, both are completely equal (in truth). Thus it says "these and these are words of the living G-d".. (see there for more).

Q Level 4

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - machloket (dispute) is as old as the days of the world. For it is not possible for all people to have a single view on all matters. Our sages said: "just like peoples' faces are different, so too their opinions are different" (Bamidbar Rabba 21:2).

Machloket (dispute) stems from the fact that people vary in their thinking patterns and on how they arrive at conclusions.

Likewise each person has his own personal aspirations, wants, and goals which can conflict with those of his fellow. From here the path to machloket is even closer.

The damages of machloket are great. Many are its victims.. The Rambam writes in his letter to his son:

"do not defile your soul with machloket which destroys body and soul and money - what else is left?.. I have seen rulers toppled, families destroyed, ministers removed from their posts, great cities shaken, civilizations separated - due to machloket. Therefore, hate it and flee from it" end quote.

The Chafetz Chaim once said: "the general principle - there is no evil in the world like machloket".

In this mishna, our sages come to strengthen us in the dangers of machloket. Likewise, the mishna teaches us that there is a type of machloket which is good and which builds instead of

destroys, namely, a machloket l'shem shamayim".

What is l'shem shamayim?

the Meir Nativ defines this as: "giving oneself over without impurities (vested interest), for a higher purpose in life".

ie a Jew who does not do anything for himself. Everything he does is "l'shem shamayim". So too, a machloket l'shem shamayim means a machloket without personal interests, without intent for personal gain. Rather it is "l'shem shamayim" - to increase the honor of Heaven.

Why is the service of G-d with pure motives and giving oneself over called "l'shem shamayim"?

The word "shamayim" is often seen as another name for G-d. Even though every Jew knows that G-d's glory fills the earth and He is found in the Heavens and in the Earth. But since the Heaven represents that which is beyond us, far away, the infinite, thus the term is used for G-d who is beyond our grasp.

"shall endure in the end" - this is the reward of a machloket l'shem shamayim. The result of a machloket for clarifying the truth without personal bias is - the machloket will endure.

What is this promise? What kind of reward is this that the machloket does not end? Who wants the machloket to endure forever?

According to Rabeinu Yonah it means the arguers endure, they live long days and years to argue on more places in the sea of the Talmud..

Furthermore, even after their death, their words of torah endure forever. People continue to toil in their words and mention their teachings.

In the Talmud: "For three years there was a dispute between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel, the former asserting, 'The halachah is in agreement with our views' and the latter contending, 'The halachah is in agreement with our views'. Then a Bat Kol (heavenly voice) proclaimed: 'both are the words of the living G-d, but the halachah is in agreement with the rulings of Beit Hillel'" (Eiruvim 13b).

Until today we toil to understand the view of Beit Shammai just like the view of Beit Hillel. Likewise for the reasons of the other Tannaim and Amoraim in every mishna and every sugya where there are different views.

Even though the halacha does not follow him, there is an obligation to understand the different view because his words are also torah.

Many ask: "how can two contradicting views be true and 'these and these are words of the living G-d'"?

The answer is that in the torah there is room for different views. For "there are seventy facets to the torah" - everything in the torah can be explained in seventy ways and each way is correct and true from one angle. However, when one comes to instruct how to act practically (Halacha), we must rule like one of the views. Fo it is impossible to act practically in different ways.

Hillel and Shamai - it does not say "Beit Hillel and Beit Shamai". For only great holy men can

testify on themselves that they are l'shem shamayim.

Thus it does not say "Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai". For in some of the disciples it is possible that they had some personal interests. This is the nature of machloket. Even if it starts l'shem shamayim, as time goes on, hitchikers jump on the bandwagon without the honor of Heaven as their motive.. These small people use the machloket to fulfill their personal aspirations and the fire of machloket can destroy.

But Hillel and Shammai themselves loved truth and also peace. They argued and were at peace with each other.

The talmud in Yevamot (14b) testifies on the friendship between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai: "even though Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel argued, Beit Shammai did not refrain from marrying women of Beit Hillel and vice versa. To teach you that there was love and friendship between them, to fulfill the verse: 'love truth and peace' (Zecharia 8:19)".

Chapter 5 Mishna 18 - Merit To Many

whoever brings merit to the many, sin occurs not through his hands. But whoever causes the many to sin, he shall not be given the opportunity to repent. Moshe was meritorious and brought merit to the many, the merit of the many is attributed to him, as written: "he executed the righteousness of G-d, and His ordinances with Israel" (Devarim 33:21). But Yeravam sinned and caused the many to sin, and so the sin of the many is attributed to him, as written: "because of the sins of Yeravam that he committed and that he caused Israel to commit" (Melachim I 15:30).

כָּל הַמְזַכֵּה אֶת הָרַבִּים, אֵין חָטָא בְּאֵל עַל יְדוֹ. וְכָל הַמְחַטֵּיא אֶת הָרַבִּים, אֵין מְסַפֵּיקוֹן בְּיָדוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת תְּשׁוּבָה. מִשָּׁה זָכָה וְזָכָה אֶת הָרַבִּים, זְכוּת הָרַבִּים תְּלוּי בּוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (דְּבָרִים ל"ג) צְדָקַת ה' עָשָׂה וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל. יִרְבְּעַם חָטָא וְהִחְטִיא אֶת הָרַבִּים, חָטָא הָרַבִּים תְּלוּי בּוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (מְלָכִים א טו) עַל חַטָּאוֹת יִרְבְּעַם (בֶּן נֶבֶט) אֲשֶׁר חָטָא וְאֲשֶׁר הִחְטִיא אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "whoever brings merit to the many, sin occurs not through his hands" - so that it will not be that he is in Gehinom (Heaven) while his disciples are in Gan Eden (Paradise).

"but whoever causes the many to sin, he shall not be given the opportunity to repent" - so that it will not be that he is in Gehinom while his disciples are in Gan Eden.

"Moshe was meritorious and brought merit to the many" - he taught torah to all Yisrael

"and His ordinances with Israel" - it is as if he (Moshe) did them.

"because of the sins of Yeravam that he committed and that he caused Israel to commit" - since it did not say "the sins of Yeravam and Yisrael", this teaches everything hangs on his head.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "whoever brings merit to the many" - he teaches them torah, fear of Heaven and mussar. Or he caused them to do mitzvot.

"sin occurs not through his hands" - from Heaven, he will be prevented from sinning, as our sages said: "so that it will not be that he is in Gehinom while his disciples are in Gan Eden" (Yomah 86).

"But whoever causes the many to sin" - he entices them to sin or he causes them to sin in some other way.

"he shall not be given the opportunity to repent" - not only will he not be prevented from sinning further, but even if he wants to repent for his sins, he will not be helped from Heaven like others who want to repent. All this is so that it will not be that he is in Gan Eden while his disciples are in gehinom.

"the merit of the many is attributed to him" - it is considered as if he did them.

"But Yeravam sinned and caused the many to sin, and so the sin of the many is attributed to him" - it is considered as if they are his own sins.. since the verse includes his sins with those of Yisrael, this teaches they are equal. He would not have been punished so severely if he did not cause Yisrael to sin. He was also not given the opportunity to repent, as we find that he saw the great and awesome miracle which the man of G-d did to him and nevertheless, he did not repent. This

teaches he was prevented from Heaven.

Q Level 2

☆ Meorei Ohr

Meorei Ohr - "whoever brings merit to the many, sin occurs not through his hands" - nevertheless, it is written in the Sefer Chasidim (Ot 352): a man who brought merit to the public and taught them [torah] and committed sins - this will not shield him from punishments. Know that king Shlomo taught many proverbs (of Mussar) but nevertheless the sages wanted to count him among those who do not have a portion in the world to come until a fire came down. etc. (see sanhedrin 104b). Therefore one who brings merit to the public should not feel inflated thinking "I will do as I wish". For his merits will not help him.. end quote.

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan on Avot - "whoever brings merit to the many, sin occurs not through his hands" - ie no mishap will occur through him. But if he himself intends to sin, he is just like other people who do good or evil by free will. Thus, he did not write "he is prevented from sinning", but rather "sin occurs not through his hands". For some people have mishaps occur through them unintentionally which they are unable to fix. This is the reason for: "no evil shall befall the righteous [but the wicked shall be filled with mischief]" (Mishlei 12:21).

"but whoever causes the many to sin, he shall not be given the opportunity to repent" - he did not write: "he is prevented [from repenting]" but rather "not be given the opportunity to repent". For after many stumbled in sin due to him, it is almost impossible for him to bring each and every person to repent properly. But do not consider that "the Rock whose work is perfect" (Devarim 32:4) will prevent one of his servants from repenting.. Likewise, He will not prevent any man from exercising his free will, whether for good or evil. For He created man with two inclinations and will not prevent man from choosing as he wishes..

Q Level 3



Shoshanim l'David - "Moshe was meritorious and brought merit to the many, the merit of the many is attributed to him" - one may think that since the merit of the public depends on him, therefore the public loses reward and it is given to him for he caused them to do. It is not so. Thus, he brings the verse: "and His ordinances with Israel". From the word "with", we learn that just like him so too them. All receive full reward. Those who do (the public) do not lose due to he who caused them to do.

Likewise regarding punishment. Do not think that since he caused them to sin, if so the sin depends on him and they will be spared. It is not so. For "there is no messenger to a sin (ein shliach ledavar aveira), the words of the Rav or the words of the student, who should one heed?"..

Q Level 4

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "whoever brings merit to the many, sin occurs not through his hands" - this is a bit difficult. For we find many people who "benefit the public" and nevertheless they feel they have what to confess on Yom Kipur. Not one of them can honestly tell himself that he is clean and assured that "sin occurs not through his hands". So what do we do with the promise of this mishna?

It seems the intent of the mishna is that in that matter which he is bringing merit to the public, G-d will coordinate that no sin will come through his hands.

For example, one who benefits the public by disseminating words of mussar and chizuk, then G-d will help that people will not err in his words and misinterpret them and come to deny the torah and mitzvot.

Even so this is just a segulah (remedial), it is not a promise. The proof is many heretics bring proofs for their heresy from the tanach or talmud. Thus everything depends on free will.

"but whoever causes the many to sin, he shall not be given the opportunity to repent" - it is obvious that this too is only a segulah and not a promise. For G-d does not lock the gates of repentance before any person! Who among us is more wicked than Menashe king of Judah? Even so G-d accepted his repentance (Sanhedrin 103a)..

Furthermore, it is not possible to take this literally. For then no man has any hope left since almost every person who does not act properly and others learn from him - he causes the public to sin. Is it conceivable that almost every Jew's repentance will not be accepted. (for example, the mashgichim say that a bachur who sleeps late and misses sedarim in yeshiva is a machti harabim by cooling them down when they see his conduct).

Rather, it is just a segulah. For when others sin due to him, then he does not deserve that G-d helps him to be disgusted by the sin and thus he has less chance of repenting.

Chapter 5 Mishna 19 - Evil Eye

Whoever possesses these three things is of the disciples of Avraham our forefather; and whoever possesses three other things is of the disciples of Bilaam the wicked.

A good eye, a humble spirit, and a lowly soul - he is of the disciples of Avraham our forefather.

An evil eye, a haughty spirit, and a gluttonous soul - he is of the disciples of Bilaam, the wicked.

What is the difference between the disciples of Avraham our forefather and the disciples of Bilaam the wicked? The disciples of Avraham our forefather eat (enjoy) in this world and inherit the World to Come, as written: "I will cause those that love Me to inherit a substance (lasting possession); and their treasures shall I fill" (Mishlei 8:21).

But the disciples of Bilaam the wicked inherit Gehinom and descend into the pit of destruction, as written: "but You, O G-d, will cast them down into the pit of destruction, bloodthirsty and deceitful men, they shall not live out half their days, but as for me I will trust in You" (Tehilim 55:24).

כָּל מִי שֵׁישׁ בְּיָדוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים הַלְלוּ, מִתְּלַמְּדֵי־וֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ. וְשְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים אַחֲרִים, מִתְּלַמְּדֵי־וֹ שֶׁל בְּלַעַם הַרְשָׁע.

עֵין טוֹבָה, וְרוּחַ נְמוּכָה, וְרוּחַ גְּבוּהָה, וְנַפְשׁ שְׂפִלָּה, מִתְּלַמְּדֵי־וֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ.

עֵין רָעָה, וְרוּחַ גְּבוּהָה, וְנַפְשׁ רְחֻבָּה, מִתְּלַמְּדֵי־וֹ שֶׁל בְּלַעַם הַרְשָׁע.

מָה בֵּין תְּלַמְּדֵי־וֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ לְתַלְמִידֵי־וֹ שֶׁל בְּלַעַם הַרְשָׁע. תְּלַמְּדֵי־וֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ, אוֹכְלִין בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה וְנוֹחְלִין בְּעוֹלָם הַבָּא, שְׂנֵאָמֵר (מִשְׁלֵי ח) לְהַנְחִיל אֶהְבִּי יְשׁ, וְאַצְרִיתֵהֶם אֲמִילָא.

אָבֵל תְּלַמְּדֵי־וֹ שֶׁל בְּלַעַם הַרְשָׁע יוֹרְשִׁין גֵּיהֵנִם וְיוֹרְדִין לְבָאֵר שַׁחַת, שְׂנֵאָמֵר (תְּהִלִּים נה) וְאַתָּה אֱלֹהִים תּוֹרִידֵם לְבָאֵר שַׁחַת, אֲנִשֵׁי דָמִים וּמְרָמָה לֹא יִחַצּוּ יְמֵיהֶם, וְאֲנִי אֲבַטַח בְּךָ.

Level 1

☆ Rambam

Rambam - "a good eye - we already explained many times that this refers to histapkut (being content with what one has).

"lowly soul (*nefesh shefala*)" - this is zehirut (watchfulness from evil).

"low spirit (*ruach nemocha*)" - this refers to great humility.

The three opposite traits are:

evil eye - zeal (*charitzut*) to acquire money.

gluttonous soul (*nefesh rechava*) - great lust.

haughty spirit (*ruach gevoha*) - arrogance.

Level 2

Bartenura

Bartenura - "disciples of Avraham" - he learns from Avraham and goes in his ways.

"a good eye" - he contents himself (*mistapek*) with what he has and does not desire the money of others. Thus we find by Avraham our forefather who told the king of Sodom "I will not take a thread nor a sandal strap nor anything else that is yours" (Gen.14).

"humble spirit" - great humility. Likewise we find Avraham said: "I am but dust and ashes" (Gen.18).

"lowly soul" - watchfulness and abstinence from lusts.

We find by Avraham: "he said to Sarai his wife: 'behold now, I know that you are a beautiful woman to look upon'; [And it will be when the Egyptians see you, they shall say, This is his wife. And they

will kill me]" (Gen.12). Until then, he did not recognize her beauty due to great modesty (tziniut).

"evil eye" - by Bilaam we find an evil eye. For he knew it was evil in G-d's eyes that he go to Balak. But nevertheless, he went to receive money, as written: "if Balak gives me a house full of silver and gold" (Bamidbar 24).

"a haughty spirit" - as he said on himself: "he who knows the knowledge of the Most High and sees the vision of the Al-mighty" (Bamidbar 24:16).

"a gluttonous soul" - for if he were not steeped in lust, he would not have advised to send the woman of Moav as prostitutes and our sages said: "Bilaam would have intercourse with his mule" (Sanhedrin 105a).

"I will cause those that love Me to inherit a lasting possession" - Avraham is called "loves [G-d]", as written: "the seed of Abraham, who loved Me" (Isaiah 41).

"I will cause those that love Me to inherit a lasting possession (yesh)" - in Olam Haba (the world to come).

"and their treasures shall I fill" - in this world.

"men of blood (bloodthirsty)" - Bilaam is called "a man of blood" for through his evil advice, he brought the death of 24,000 Jews.

Q Level 2

Sfas Emes

Sfas Emes on Avot - *"a good eye"* - all that one sees, he recognizes in it the kindness and goodness of the Creator, blessed be He, and everything is good in his eyes. Through this it becomes good as we find by Nachum Ish Gamzu (who always used to say: "this too is for the good")..

Q Level 2



Merkavet Hamishna - *"disciples of Bilaam"* - for anyone, whether Jew or gentile, who conducts himself according to Bilaam's traits is called his disciple and it is as if he learned from Bilaam..

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - *"disciples of Avraham"* - even if he is a non-Jew, nevertheless, he is a disciple of Avraham our forefather who taught the world knowledge of G-d and just character traits. Due to this, he did not say: "disciples of Moshe Rabeinu". For these need to fulfill the whole torah.

"Bilaam.." - he was exceedingly wise like Achiqofel (Bamidbar Rabba ch.22). For he advised Balak to cause the Jews to sin cunningly. Likewise he was a great prophet like Moshe Rabeinu. But all this did not help him due to having these three corrupt traits. Every sin in the world is caused perform by one of these three traits.

They are:

1. error of the intellect which is symbolized by the eye, as written: "a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise" (Ex.23:8), ie their wisdom.
2. through arrogance which is symbolized by the word "ruach", as written: "before destruction comes pride, and before stumbling [comes] a haughty spirit (ruach)" (Mishlei 16:18).
3. through physical lusts symbolized by the word "nefesh", as written: "lust of the nefesh" (Isaiah 26:8).

All of these were in Bilaam.

"What is the difference between the disciples of Avraham our forefather and the disciples of Bilaam the wicked?" - it is obvious that there is a great difference between them in Olam Haba. Rather he is teaching us that even in this world, good will be bestowed on those who guard these three traits greatly.

"the pit of destruction" - even if he attains all the lusts, wealth, and physical pleasures, nevertheless, his heart worries on the darkness of his day of death. For he does not know when it will come. This will embitter all the sweetness of the world that he tastes.

Q Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - "a good eye" - some explain that he has no desire at all for possessions of this world. For the little he has appears much in his eyes. But for others, he deems it little and he wants more for them than what he wants for himself. He is not at all jealous of others and is happy to see that others have more than him. This is what the torah says "you shall love **TO** your fellow as yourself". It did not say: "you shall love your fellow as yourself".

The opposite is the evil eye. What he has appears little in his eyes and what his fellow has appears much. He is jealous of his fellow and is content to have little provided his fellow has less than himself.

He who has a good eye, this teaches he has a lofty neshama (higher soul).

"ruach nemocha (humble spirit)" - humility. This is wholeness of the spirit (ruach) and the opposite is arrogance.

"nefesh shefala (lowly soul)" - to be content with the minimum necessary. The opposite is nefesh rechava (wide soul) which is rechava (wide/gluttonous) in lusts. These three traits teach on wholeness of the nefesh, ruach, and neshama...

"eat (enjoy) this world and inherit the World to Come" - for one who has a good eye and rejoices in his portion - certainly he eats of this world. For he never worries and his life is a life.

But he who has an evil eye will never be satiated by money and "more possessions, more worries". Normally, he does not eat of this world. For his life is not a life.

Likewise for one who has a ruach nemucha (humble spirit), without arrogance and irritability (gaava v'kapdanut). For if insulted he does not answer. He is always in a state of joy and his heart does not worry.

But it is not so for the arrogant who has a ruach gevoha (haughty spirit). All his days are vexation. For at all times he feels others are slighting his honor. Normally, he does not eat of this world.

Likewise for one who has a nefesh shefela (lowly soul) and he lowers and submits himself and the lusts of his nefesh (soul). All his days he is healthy like an Ulam (hall). But it is not so for one who increases lusts, and especially for relations. He causes evil to himself and weakens his body. So too for excessive bodily lusts (eating). This causes bad illnesses to arise. This is something nature testifies...

Q Level 2



Likutei Maharid m'Belz - why did he say "what is the difference between the disciples of Avraham and the disciples of Bilaam" and not simply "between Avraham and Bilaam"? It seems because in his clothing, Bilaam looked like Avraham. It was possible to think that both are the same. Thus

externally there was no visible difference between them. But in their disciples, it was already very much recognizable the gaping difference between them.

Q Level 2

Siftef Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftef Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - "a good eye, a humble spirit, and a tamed soul" - he mentioned here only matters of middot (character traits). For this is the primary fulfilling of the torah as written in Shaarei Kedusha by R.Chaim Vital. Here is a quote from there: "because of this, the middot were not counted in the mitzvot. For they are the foundation of the whole torah and not an individual mitzvah.. and without rectifying the middot (character traits), it is impossible to fulfill the torah..." end quote.

Q Level 2

Chochma Hamatzfon - the words of the mishna make the heart shudder. For it is possible for a man to live 100 years, toiling in torah and fear of Heaven, and to think of oneself as a tzadik (righteous), yashar (just) v'neeman (faithful). But according to the words of the mishna, if he is afflicted with an evil eye, a haughty spirit and a nefesh rechava (gluttonous soul) - he is among the disciples of the wicked Bilaam and is considered in Heaven among the "bloodthirsty men of deceit" and his end is that he inherits Gehinom. How terrifying is this! May G-d guard us from this.

Q Level 3

Siftef Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Daat Chochma u'Mussar 1:27 - "What is the difference between the disciples of Avraham our forefather and the disciples of Bilaam the wicked?" - this implies that regarding wisdom, there is no difference between them. Indeed our sages brought: "scripture says: 'And never since has a prophet like Moses arisen in Israel' (Devarim 34:10)- this implies [in Israel no] but among the gentiles there did arise and who? - Bilaam ben Beor" (Sifri Devarim 34).

The difference between them is in these traits. Although Bilaam had great wisdom, but he was corrupt in his character traits.

It is clear from here that wisdom and likewise torah are not a remedy for character traits (middot). Rather, the opposite is true. Through middot one merits to torah. The middot are formation vessels (keilim hayotzrot) to torah. From them the whole torah branches out.

If a person is not pure in his middot, the torah itself becomes to him a deadly poison.

Q Level 3



Ohr Yahel - "whoever possesses these three things... what is the difference between the disciples of Avraham our forefather and the disciples of Bilaam the wicked? - scripture says: "the spirit of a man can endure sickness; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" (Mishlei 18). Behold - here is the difference between an animal - here is the balance line to define with what man is above the animal!

The animal is constrained and remains as it was created - as its nature. It does not seek an escape to go out of the bounds of its nature. The animal is content to feed on its trough. It lends its shoulder to bear the yoke of its work and does not lift its head at all.

But man is not like this! His spirit does not rest. It pushes him always to rise up above his current situation. Whether the poor man in his poverty or the rich man in his wealth - all of them turn their gaze upwards!

This aspect (of spirit) places a definition and measure on with what man is above the animals..

What powers drive this spirit which pushes man in this world? All of its powers is but seeking to be

free and unrestrained. For this spirit in man is unable to be imprisoned and confined. Therefore, the Jewish people were chosen to receive the torah of G-d only because "Yisrael is the most brazen of all nations" (Beitzah 25).

This spirit of the Jewish people pulls them upwards and when it strengthens leads to ruach hakodesh (holy spirit) from the Source of holiness - it is connected to the foundations of eternity (yesodei hanetzach) - the place of true happiness. Compared to its bliss, all other things and fantasies of pleasures are as nothing. For when this ruach (spirit) intensifies in man, all [material things] that he seeks are as naught!..

If we understand these foundations, namely, the intensifying of the divine ruach, then he who recognizes the Creator of the world and cleaves to Him, how is it conceivable for him to brazenly don might to wage war against this powerful ruach (spirit), namely, the ruach Hash-em (spirit of G-d) within him?

Thus, how great is the amazement and surprise to see a man of tremendous knowledge and understanding like Bilaam the wicked. Our sages reported of him: "in the Jewish people no prophet arose like Moses, but among the gentiles there indeed rose! (Bilaam)" (Sifri, Zot Haberacha).

Likewise the torah testifies explicitly: "he knew the knowledge of the most High" (Bamidbar 24:16).

And even so, who waged war with him? This stormy ruach (spirit)? - Just this lowly thing! A petty and lowly thing like silver, imaginary honor, and despicable lust - to have relations with a mule? Is this not awesome and wondrous!

Even a young lad will wonder: is it conceivable to exchange closeness to G-d almighty, who creates and sustains the universe, to abandon him and cling to... the company of a mule???

Where is the knowledge of such an enormously brilliant person? This is a tremendous wonder, who cannot stand bewildered? What is this? What caused this? Rise up and be perplexed!

But our sages in their deep wisdom and great knowledge came and revealed to us the primary drive and source of what moves the machinery of this great and wondrous creature called man which includes Bilaam harasha. They are: an evil eye, a haughty spirit, and a gluttonous soul which is "jealousy, lust, and honor which removes a person from the world" (Avot 4:21) - even the greatest man, it removes him from the world - this world and the next (Vilna Gaon).

In truth, they are all things permitted by the torah: money, honor, and lust. We don't find any prohibition on them. The torah does not say: "you shall not have money", "you shall not have honor", "you shall not have lust".

What then is the prohibition in this? - the desire and longing for them - this is the head of all sin!... To yearn for money, for honor, to lust for lust - this is the severe prohibition - this is what removes a person from both worlds!

Level 3

Chida

Chida, devarim achadim, drush chet - "a good eye, a humble spirit, and a lowly soul" - these three traits stem from love of G-d. Avraham loved G-d as written: "Avraham who loved Me" (Isaiah 41:8).

Thus one who has these three traits is among those who love G-d.. For he who has a good eye is not jealous of the good of his fellow. Since his heart is full of love of G-d, certainly he has no jealousy. For if his heart became jealous, then his heart turns away from love of G-d.

Likewise if he lusts bodily desires then his mind is not on love of G-d but on vanities of this world.

So too if he seeks honor he does not love G-d since one who loves G-d knows that He is the King of Honor/Glory while a man is puny and dark, like a passing shadow.

Thus one who holds on to these traits walks in the path of love of truth which is love of G-d and he is among the disciples of Avraham our forefather, peace be unto him.

Q Level 3

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan - "gluttonous soul (nefesh rechava)" - a man's want and desire is called "nefesh", as written: "and you shall say, I will eat meat, because your nefesh longs to eat meat; you may eat meat, whatever your nefesh desires" (Devarim 12:20), or "And you shall pay that silver for whatever your nefesh desires, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatever your nefesh desires" (Devarim 14:26).

"low spirit (ruach shefela)" - it was low because his mind overcame it and lowered it until the ground. And our sages expounded that he did not look at the beauty of Sarah (his wife)..

"spirit (ruach)" - the imagination (dimyon), from it comes the trait of arrogance which is called ruach, as written: "And what comes up on your spirit (ruach) shall not happen at all, that you say, We will be like the nations, like the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone" (Yechezkel 20:32).

"I will cause those that love Me to inherit substance (yesh)" - the olam Haba is the true "substance (yesh)". For all matters of this world, its good does not have any substance (yesh) at all but rather absolute inexistence. We only use the term "yesh" (substance) in passing. For really every physical thing disintegrates and eventually disappears completely..

Q Level 3

Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer, sof sefer vayikra - "the disciples of Avraham inherit (nochalim) the World to Come.. But the disciples of Bilaam the wicked inherit (yorshim) Gehinom and descend into the pit of destruction..." - by Avraham it says "NOCHALIM" (inherits/benefits).. while by Bilaam it says "YORSHIM" (inherits) gehinom and descend into the pit of destruction.

Why the change of language?

(answer:) Our sages taught: "every person has a portion in Gan Eden and a portion in Gehinom. A righteous person takes his own portion and his fellow's portion in Gan Eden while the wicked person takes his own portion and his fellow's portion in Gehinom.

For a great tzadik, even though his portion is much greater than the portion he takes of his fellow, nevertheless, G-d gives him the power to bear both pleasures and even in this world, he tastes of the next world..

But for the thoroughly wicked like the disciples of Bilaam, even though he takes the portion of his fellow in Gehinom, nevertheless he does not at all sit in that portion. Rather, he descends to be'er shachat (pit of destruction) which is the bottom of the pit, much lower than Gehinom.

Therefore this portion (of Gehinom he took) remains barren and a wasteland (since he is much lower down).

Thus he used the term "yerusha" (inherits). For a yerusha applies even though it never reaches his

hand. But for a tzadik he used the term "nachala" (inherits/benefits) which implies coming to his hand and benefiting from it..

Q Level 3

Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer, Drashot 3:38 - "they shall not live out half their days.." - for those who chase lusts do not live out half their days by nature since the lusts cause heartache and disease (since if he has 100, he lusts for 200, etc.) But for the tzadik, even though he also always lusts to reach the next higher spiritual level but nevertheless he says: "I will trust in You" that You will help me. Therefore the lust is sweet (and does not cause heartache and disease).

Q Level 3

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - this mishna parallels the mishna in chapter 4: "jealousy, lust, and honor remove a person from the world". "jealousy" - this is an evil eye. "lust" - this is nefesh rechava (a gluttonous soul). "honor" - this is ruach gavoah (a haughty spirit).

All these traits are found in the disciples of Bilaam the wicked.

On the opposite spectrum stands the disciples of Avraham, our forefather. "a good eye" - means being content with little. One with a good eye is content with what he has and even rejoices in what his fellow has. He is glad on the good of others.

In grace after meals we say: "may the merciful One bless us as He blessed our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, with all, from all, and all (bakol mikol kol)".

This seems a wonder. Is the aspiration of a Jew to be blessed with the good of the whole world? Is it not an exaggeration to request all of the good?

The answer is that it is not just a play on words. If we examine these words we will see that we also say: "as He blessed our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov".

We are not requesting plain good but rather as our forefathers were blessed. What is this referring to?

We find by Avraham it is written: "And Abraham was old.. and G-d had blessed Abraham WITH ALL" (Bereisheit 24:1). By Yitzchak, he said to his son Eisav: "I have eaten FROM ALL before you came, and I have blessed him" (Bereisheit 27:33). Also by Yaakov, he said to Eisav: "G-d has been gracious to me and has given me ALL [that I need]" (Bereisheit 33:11).

Thus, we find "with all" by Avraham, "from all" by Yitzchak, and "all" by Yaakov (bakol mikol kol).

When we look at the context of these verses we find that the verse of Avraham referred to when he returned sorrowful from the burial of his wife Sarah. After he was full of trials and had many hardships and was already an old man who sought a son who was born to him in his old age, etc. What does the torah say: "and G-d had blessed Abraham with ALL". How can this be said on such a man who just lost his wife?

We must say that the torah is testifying on Avraham that he truly felt he has all that he needs. This is the blessing of Avraham - perfection in character traits - the ability to rejoice in his portion and to see in this: "only goodness and kindness shall pursue me all the days of my life.." (Tehilim 23:6).

Similarly we find by Yitzchak his son. "and Yitzchak was old and his eyes dimmed" (Gen.27:1) - he was blind. Nevertheless, he told Eisav "I have eaten OF ALL" - i.e. I have all that I need. I merited

to taste everything and I lack nothing.

Yaakov was about to confront Eisav. He prepares for the confrontation by praying, sending gifts, and readying for battle. When the moment of confrontation comes, Eisav asks: "what are these gifts I received from you?" Yaakov answers him: "to find grace in your eyes" - this is a gift for you. Eisav replies: "I have much, keep what you have for yourself".

Yaakov replies: "please take my blessing that is brought to you, because G-d has dealt graciously with me, and because I have ALL; and he urged him, and Eisav accepted them" (Gen.33:11).

Eisav told Yaakov: "I have much", ie I indeed have a lot but there is room for more and in the end he is persuaded by Yaakov's words and he accepts all the gifts.

On the other hand, Yaakov said: "I have all" - I have everything I need. I lack nothing. The emphasis is not on a large amount but rather on being content with what there is.

This is a model of proper outlook - to be content with what there is. This is the blessed outlook we find in all three forefathers - a good eye. they rejoiced in their portion and thanked their Creator for their good.

Now we understand that this is the intent we should have when saying in grace after meals: "may the merciful One bless us as He blessed our forefathers, Avraham, Yitchak, and Yaakov, with all, from all, and all ("bakol mikol kol").

We want to be blessed with what our forefathers were blessed. We pray to have this wonderful trait, the true wealth of being content with our portion and never feeling that we lack something.... (see there for more)

According to the Magid of Koznitch there is a reason why the Tanna chose this order - a good eye, a humble spirit, and a lowly soul. There is here a logical order. One trait drags in the next trait. Once a person acquires the trait of "a good eye" - to know and recognize G-d's abundant kindness towards him done every second, then he will have "a humble spirit". He will be aware of his own lowliness relative to the greatness of the Creator of the Universe and this will lead to a nefesh shefala (lowly soul), he will feel always that he is not doing enough in the service of G-d (and therefore not fall into laziness, lusts, etc.)..

The reason is because "yearning" is connected to the ruach (spirit) and the ruach (spirit) can have only one yearning! "one thing have I asked of the L-ORD, that will I seek after; [that I may dwell in the house of the L-ORD all the days of my life, to behold the pleasantness of the L-ORD, and to enquire in His temple..." (Tehilim 27).

He who desires more than one thing - his ruach (spirit) is not healthy - "but a wounded spirit who can bear?" (Mishlei 18)". Therefore "an evil eye, a haughty spirit, and a gluttonous soul - he is of the disciples of Bilaam, the wicked". But the disciples of Avraham are the opposite: "A good eye, a humble spirit, and a lowly soul". For there is no room in their ruach (spirit) for more than one thing - "but as for me, the nearness of G-d is my good" (Tehilim 73:28).

Afterwards he said: "What is the difference between the disciples of Avraham our forefather and the disciples of Bilaam the wicked?" - ie one may think: "since the disciples of Avraham are far from yearning for matters of this world, if so, they are certainly suffering in matters of this world while the disciples of Bilaam harasha are enjoying them with all good".

Therefore the Tanna said that it is not so. Rather, the disciples of Avraham eat in this world, ie even without a previous yearning nevertheless they eat (enjoy) in this world and also inherit the next world, as written: "I will cause those that love Me to inherit a lasting possession; and their treasuries shall I fill".

On the contrary, the lack of yearning brings the full happiness for they lack nothing! For the primary lacking stems from the yearning - "and yet the soul is not filled" (Kohelet 6:7).

But the disciples of Bilaam the wicked inherit gehinom and descend into the pit of destruction - they do not feel any consolation in their souls and also their enjoyment is not full. For they always feel that they still have not attained anything...

Not so for the disciples of Avraham who don't change their state. This is what scripture says: "who shall ascend the mountain of G-d" and most importantly "who shall stand (remain standing) in His holy place? - he who has clean hands and a pure heart.." (Tehilim 24:3)...

Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - the matter of Avraham is that he was the head of the Jewish people. And just like Avraham was the head of the Jewish people, so too Bilaam was the head of the (gentile) nations. Bilaam was a prophet to the nations. This is because the head [of a group] has special elevation. For the head is above everything.

We find two things equally by Avraham and Bilaam.

(1) By Avraham it is written: "And Avraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his donkey" (Gen.22:3) and by Bilaam: "And Bilaam rose up early in the morning, and saddled his mule" (Bamidbar 22:21).

(2) by Avraham it is written: "and he took two of his young men with him" (Gen.22:3) and by Bilaam: "and his two servants with him" (Bamidbar 22:22).

The explanation of this is that since Avraham was elevated in that he was a head and "a father of many nations" (Gen.17:5), therefore it is written by him that he rides on the donkey (chamor)", that is to say, he is elevated above the level of physicality (chomer).

Likewise, by Bilaam it is written: "he rides on his mule".

But there is a difference between Avraham and Bilaam. For by Avraham it says "chamor" which is male. This shows that he had no association at all to the level of physicality (chomer). He just rides upon it and rises above it very much as is fitting according to his level.

Therefore, the chamor (donkey) was male. For he had no connection or association with it. For Avraham was divested and above the level of physicality.

But Bilaam rode on his mule which is female. Without a doubt, a male has a [natural] attachment to a female. This is from G-d. So too, at his level, Bilaam had an attachment to physicality (chibur el hachomri).

This is what our sages said: "Bilaam had intercourse with his mule" (Avodah Zarah 4b)..

Thus they hinted the great difference between Avraham and Bilaam. For Avraham was divested of physicality but Bilaam would attach to the physicality.

You should understand that a man's intellect (sechel) rides on the physicality of the body and there are two powers of physicality which serve the intellect, as we explained earlier (Avot 2:9).

Without a doubt, Avraham was like the intellect. For he fulfilled the entire torah through his intellect (conscience). This is what the torah says: "and his two servants were with him" (Gen.22:5) and he told them: "stay here with the donkey (chamor)" which our sages expounded: "a people similar to a donkey (chamor)" (Yevamot 62a).

For these powers which are powers of the body are the "people similar to a donkey (chamor)". And when Avraham would go to serve G-d, to sacrifice his son, to overcome his evil inclination which resides in the body - then he would divest himself of the physicality and powers of the body and tell them: "stay here with the donkey" - "a people similar to a donkey", "and I will go with the lad (Yitzchak and we will prostrate ourselves to G-d) and return [to you]" (Gen.22:5).

For all the time the bodily powers are with the intellect, they obstruct the prostrating to G-d, to submit/humble oneself before G-d, blessed be He.

But when one divests himself of the physicality and its powers, then he goes to serve G-d, blessed be He. But nevertheless he said: "and we will return to you" (Gen.22:5). For man does not become divested completely. Rather, he serves G-d and afterwards returns to his needs, his body and its powers.

Due to this it says by Avraham "[and he took two of his young men] with him (imo)" (Gen.22:3). For this term applies when two things are together but not completely together. They are merely with each other.

On the other hand, by Bilaam it says "and his two servants AT him (ito)" (Bamidbar 22:22) which is like "oto". This term applies when two are joined together completely as Rashi explained using the midrash in parsha Vayera. Regarding the older daughter (Moav), it says "she lied AT (et) her father" (Gen.19:33) while regarding the younger daughter it says: "she lied (im) WITH him" (Gen.19:35).

For the younger one did not begin this. Rather her sister taught her this. Therefore, the verse used a lesser term for her...

Similarly by Bilaam, since he was very connected and joined (to the physical), it is written: "ito". For he had the three (bad) traits which show his soul was drawn after the physicality.

On the other hand, Avraham had these three (good) traits which tend to the soul divested of physicality.

"A good eye, a humble spirit, and a lowly soul - he is of the disciples of Avraham our forefather" - we find these praiseworthy traits by Avraham.

Regarding a good eye, he would invite guests and do kindness. This is certainly from the trait of "a good eye".

Regarding "a humble spirit", he said: "I am but dust and ashes" (Gen.18:27).

As for "a lowly soul", which refers to being content with what one has and not pursuing the

superfluous at all, he said: "I will not take from all that is yours, not from a thread even to a shoestring..." (Gen.14:23). Thus, he did not desire even what he deserved and all the more so for what he did not deserve.

"an evil eye, a haughty spirit, and a gluttonous soul - he is of the disciples of Bilaam, the wicked" - but by Bilaam it was the opposite. The midrash explains on the verse: "he lifted his eyes and saw Yisrael encamped.." (Bamidbar 24:2) - (Midrash:) he sought to harm them by an evil eye.

"a haughty spirit" - he wanted Balak to send more honorable ministers [to honor him]..

"a gluttonous soul" - "if Balak gives me his palace full of gold and silver" (Bamidbar 22:18), as Rashi explained there.

These three traits stemmed from the soul of Bilaam who rode upon his mule and had relations with his mule as we explained. For since his soul was attached to physicality, he had all these traits.

It is known that inexistence/death clings to the physical as we explained in many places. Bilaam had an "evil eye" and inexistence/death clings to an "ayin" (evil eye) which destroys everything from the world..

Likewise he had a "haughty spirit" which indicates lacking which pertains to physicality.. And likewise that which he had a "gluttonous soul" to take in the money of others - this is a lacking. For one who is not lacking and is content/suffices on his own - he does not take in from others. He is whole on his own. Thus, these three traits all indicate lacking and inexistence/death which stems from the physical.

And since Bilaam had relations with his mule, he would adhere to the physical and therefore he had all these three traits.

The opposite of this was Avraham who rode on top of the donkey, divested of physicality and therefore he was whole and without lacking in himself. For a good eye is divested of evil which is lacking and of inexistence. He was humble and thus had no haughtiness which is a lacking and a defect.

He had a "lowly soul" content/sufficing with what he has and thus not lacking. For if he were lacking, he would desire the money of others.

This is what the mishna says: "What is the difference between the disciples of Avraham our forefather and the disciples of Bilaam the wicked?". Since for the disciples of Avraham, they do not have lacking and they have wholeness (Shleimut) and thus it is proper for them to eat in this world and inherit Olam Haba. For they do not have lacking and inexistence/death.

This is what the verse says: "I will cause those that love Me to inherit substance (yesh)". For the "yesh" (substance) is the opposite of inexistence and lacking.

"and their treasures shall I fill" - this refers to the treasury invisible to the eye, namely, Olam Haba. It will be filled for them due to their shleimut (wholeness) and temimut (perfection) without lacking.

But the disciples of Bilaam the wicked inherit Gehinom and descend into the pit of destruction.

This is drawn after their traits which are all lackings. Due to this Gehinom which is inexistence and

lacking is proper for them. Thus Gehinom is called "tziah" (wasteland) and "tzelmavet" (shadow of death)" (Yirmiyahu 2:6) and "avadon" (destruction). The term "tziah" reflects that it is lacking and removed from existence.

"descend into the pit of destruction" - ie on the great day of judgment where they descend further into the pit of destruction which is even worse than Gehinom..

"bloodthirsty men" - for they want to swallow other people. All this is due to the inexistence and lacking which clings to them.

"and deceitful men" - for they come out of the trait of justness.

"they shall not live out half their days" - like their traits whereby inexistence clings to them completely and thus it is not proper for them to reach half their days. And in the talmud: "Bilaam was 33 years old when he died, to fulfill the verse: 'they shall not live out half their days'" (Sanhedrin 106b).

Thus the verse says: "but You, O G-d, will cast them down into the pit of destruction" for there they are destroyed - everything according to their trait.. Bilaam who had relations with his mule. This itself caused the inexistence to adhere to him...

Bilaam's level was the polar opposite of Avraham. For the evil is opposite the good. Avraham's level was the complete good. But opposite him was a level of complete lacking and evil which is connected to Gehinom completely... (see there for more).

Q Level 4

☆ Chida

Chida, Sod Kise Rachamim - "I will cause those that love Me to inherit substance (yesh=310 Gematria); and their treasures shall I fill" - in the book Kos Yeshuot: there are 613 mitzvot and 7 rabbinical mitzvot (the others are just fences to the mitzvot). The wives of talmidei chachamim split with them and take 310 worlds, half of 620 (i.e. $620/2=310$). But in His mercy, G-d gives to the tzadik 310 worlds as a compensation gift for what his wife took.

And in the talmud: "a woman is built like an otzar (treasury), narrow above and wide below in order to hold the fetus. This is the meaning of "I will cause those that love Me to inherit substance (yesh); and their treasures shall I fill". If you ask: what is 310? It is 620 corresponding to the 613 mitzvot and 7 rabbinical mitzvot. Furthermore what is "to inherit"? They are already his, the work of his hands? On this he said "I will fill their treasures", ie their wives which are like an otzar (treasury) I will fill. For the wives split with them and thus I will give them an extra 310 worlds as compensation for what their wives took...

Q Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai, Birkat Avot - the Roshei Teivot of Ayin, Ruach, Nefesh is "Na'ar" and the Roshei Teivot of Tova, Nemucha, and Shefeila is Satan. Thus together it is "naar satan", hinting that whoever has these traits shakes off the Satan from himself. For then the Satan will be unable to prosecute and harm him at all.

On the other hand, the Roshei teivot of ayin raah, ruach gevohah and nefesh rechava is "naar gerar", hinting that he drags (gorer) and pulls the physicality of youth (naar) on himself. And even in his old age, it will not leave him.

Alternatively, the intent is to hint that he will be removed from Gan Eden and dragged to Gehinom and also he will be removed from a good portion and dragged to a bad portion...

Ben Ish Chai, Chasdei Avot - with this we will understand the verse: "and the herdsmen of Gerar fought with the herdsmen of Yitzchak saying 'the water is ours!'" . For Yitzchak was a disciple of Avraham and held on to the three good traits and thus he overcame the Satan. But the herdsmen of Gerar held on to the three traits of Bilaam whose Roshei Teivot is Gerar. Therefore, their eye was stingy and evil which caused them to quarrel and say: "the water is ours!".

 **Level 4**

Chida

Chida, Marit Ayin - when he has these three traits, he walks wholly to fulfill G-d's commandments. When you examine "ayin tova, ruach nemucha, and nefesh shefela" - the first letters (Roshei Teivot) spell "Satan". For with these traits, he rules over the Satan and the Satan does not rule over him. He studies torah and fulfills the mitzvot plentifully.

But for the opposite, he gives a hand to the Sitra Achra to rule over him.. They will cling to him and pull him down to the pit of destruction..

Chapter 5 Mishna 20 - Brazen As Leopard

Yehudah ben Teimah says: be brazen as the leopard, light as the eagle, swift as the deer, and mighty as the lion to do the will of your Father in Heaven.

יְהוּדָה בֶּן תֵּימָא אָמַר, הָוֵי עַז כְּנִמְרָא, וְקַל כְּנֶשֶׁר, וְרַץ כְּצִבִי, וְגִבּוֹר כְּאַרִי, לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹן אָבִיךָ שְׁבַשְׁמַיִם.

He would say: the brazen-faced [is destined] to Gehinom; the shame-faced to Gan Eden. May it be Your will Hash-em Our G-d that the Temple be rebuilt speedily in our days and grant us our portion in Your Torah.

הוּא הָיָה אֹמֵר, עַז פָּנִים לְגִיְהֵנִם, וּבִשְׁתַּת פָּנִים לְגַן עֵדֶן. יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְפָּנֶיךָ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ שְׁתִּבְנֶה עִירְךָ בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ וְתֵן חֶלְקֵנוּ בְּתוֹרָתְךָ:

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "be brazen as the leopard" - so too do not be embarrassed to ask your Rabbi on what you did not understand, similar to what we learned earlier: "a bashful person cannot learn" (Avot 2).

"light as the eagle" - to review your studies and not get tired, as written: "they shall mount up with wings as eagles; [they shall run, and not be weary].." (Isaiah 40:31).

"swift as the deer" - to pursue the mitzvot.

"mighty as the lion" - to conquer your evil inclination from [temptation of] sins.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "be brazen as the leopard" - to rebuke the sinners and toil in torah much without becoming weary or tired. Likewise, the prophet Isaiah said: "those who hope to G-d shall renew strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary.." (Isaiah 40:31). For those who hope to G-d will renew strength when tired to continue more.. They run like a deer to do a mitzvah and do not become weary..

"mighty as the lion" - to strengthen in the mitzvot, namely, that all your thoughts and acts be to do the will of your Father in Heaven..

Q Level 2

Chida

Chida, Devarim Achadim, Drush 16 - "light as an eagle" - if one's heart inspires him to do a mitzvah or rebuke - immediately he should be light as an eagle to do it and not cool down.

"run like a deer" - corresponding to acts of kindness..

"mighty as a lion" - corresponding to pity, to not pity the wicked. Rather, to rise up like a lion and break the shackles of wickedness..

Q Level 2

☆ Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan - "light as the eagle, swift as the deer.." - for the deer runs faster than other (common) animals.. the intent is that one should not engage in the service of G-d in laziness or laxness but rather with great enthusiasm and striving with joy and gladness of heart.

Let one consider that if he were lying in bed in the darkness of night and someone reported to him that there is a golden wallet on the road and no one sees it. How rushed and panicky would he be

to rise up fast. In his haste, he would confuse which garment to put on first and dash outside at full speed, unconcerned about the stones and obstacles on the road, not feeling any illness or wound.

All this panic in order to get a wallet that perhaps he will not find and even if he finds it perhaps it is fake and there is nothing inside it.

This is a kal v'chomer (argument) without any answer - how much more so are we under duty to run like a deer and move swiftly like an eagle to do the will of our Father in Heaven whereby all material valuables are worth as nothing and there is no doubt whatsoever.

"mighty as a lion" - just like the lion is the mightiest of the animals and does not run away from any man, so too one should not go back and be lax due to friend or foe in the service of G-d. One should contemplate the reward he stands to gain from the friend versus the reward in doing the will of his Creator.. Likewise, let him consider the loss he may get from his enemy versus the loss he gets from leaving the service of G-d...

Q Level 2

☆ **Daat Zekenim**

Daat Zekenim - likewise we find in other places. In the talmud: "Tanna debei Eliyahu: in order to study the words of the Torah one must cultivate in oneself the [habit of] the ox for bearing a yoke and of the donkey for carrying burdens" (Avodah Zarah 5b). The reason for the analogy to animals and beasts, and the main mussar in this is that by animals and beasts everything is nature.

For example a donkey to carry - the donkey does not need to conquer his evil inclination to bear the burden. For this is its nature and he does not know otherwise. So too man needs to acquire in his nature all the traits. For the powers of man can be conquered and changed - to change one's nature to the good through training and habit.. (R. Yitzchak Blazer).

Q Level 2

☆ **Matanat Avot**

Matanat Avot - this mishna is one of the most famous in pirkei avot. Fortunate is he who merits to say it every morning in the beginning of the prayer service (in the Sefardi prayer book, the entire mishna is quoted while in the Ashkenazi version only the end is said).

In my humble opinion it was carefully chosen to be said at the beginning of the prayer. For this is exactly what every person needs to know in the morning - that one needs to muster all his physical and mental powers for one purpose only - "to do the will of your Father in Heaven".

It is no coincidence that the Tanna chose animals which were exceedingly blessed with these special powers.

(Translator: "that the temple be rebuilt.." - how does one focus all his powers to "do the will of your Father in Heaven"? Perhaps by remembering constantly that the Temple shall be rebuilt and then all the material pursuit of this world (money, power, etc.), will become null and void. The only lasting good will be to know G-d and His torah.)

Q Level 2

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - *"brazen as a leopard"* - for sometimes the trait of brazenness is good in the service of G-d. But this refers to internal might in the heart and the brazenness needs to be hidden there, to be aroused only when needed in the service of G-d. On his face the brazenness should not be visible. This is what he said: "the brazen faced to Gehinom", as written: "the wicked man brazens his face" (Mishlei 21:29).

But "shame-faced" means that shame rests on the face while brazenness is hidden in the heart only for the service of G-d - such a person is (destined) to Gan Eden.

Q Level 2

Reishit Chachma, shaar ahava ch.11 - and when a man does the matter with zeal and joy, a new spirit and a lofty spirit of life will be added to him such that he will be light as an eagle. This thing depends on removing from his heart the spirit of sadness and laziness. For that is an outside power which weighs down on a man's limbs causing him to not have the strength to arise from his place or learn or do mitzvot, as if all his limbs are dead.

But if a man rouses his heart and removes the external power of laziness from himself through clinging to longing and desire in love of G-d, the Source of life - then his heart will learn [torah] and do mitzvot with zeal and joy to do the will of his Father in Heaven. Then a power will be added to him to be light as an eagle, mighty as a lion etc. On this it is written: "those who hope to G-d they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary.." (Isaiah 40:31). (Isaiah 40:30).

Q Level 2

Mareh Yechezkel, Vayechi - "brazen as a leopard" - for the yetzer (evil inclination) and his cunning is to lure away a man's heart from the service of G-d and distract him with matters of this world or with worry of his sins. The yetzer tells him he is not worthy to have kavana (intent) in his prayers that it should be a crown to G-d.

Therefore, a man must be mighty of heart and brazen faced.. For there is no greater Gehinom than this that a man wants and strengthens himself to serve G-d and pray before Him but the yetzer prevents him. For "better one hour of repentance and good deeds than all the life of the next world" (Avot 4:17)...

Q Level 3

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - in two ways it is proper for one to rectify himself in this world:

(1) through deeds and (2) through refraining from deeds.

Each of these subdivides to two: deeds of the body and acts of the soul.

Regarding rectification through deeds of the body, move yourself to do all good deeds and do not tell yourself: "who am I and what am I that I should strive after this mitzvah? This is only fitting for a big tzadik and not a lowly person like me". Rather, I tell you: "be brazen as a leopard" - the leopard does not turn back for anything even though it is not so strong by nature.

Regarding rectification through acts of the soul which rectify it, namely, thinking in torah study which is like the sun which shines on the earth and its inhabitants. When you come to a deep matter that you do not understand at first - do not give up. Rather, be light as an eagle which flies high up towards the light of the sun. So too for you, strive to toil and fly up towards this holy sun. Even if it is deep, turn it around again and again and in the end, G-d will open for you gates of His light and you will understand it well.

Regarding rectification through refraining from acts of the soul, namely, to not think on things beyond the powers of the mind to comprehend, he said run like a deer when the hunter chases it. Through running away like a deer, he will be saved from this. So too distance your ways from heresy. For these views of heresy have caused many to fall. Therefore "do not go near her house" (Mishlei 5:8).

Regarding rectification through refraining from deeds of the body, namely to not remove the muzzle from the evil inclination and to not transgress in deed any of the negative commandments. On this don a spirit of might like a lion to conquer all the lusts of the evil inclination with all your

might and do not say: "I am weak". Strengthen yourself and G-d will help you.

"the brazen faced [is destined] to Gehinom" - even though I told you to be brazen as a leopard, this is only in your inner self, against your imaginary smallness. But guard yourself from being brazen towards someone older or wiser than you. For by habituating in this, you will wind up also brazen against the torah, to deny it or its tradition thereby inheriting Gehinom through the trait of brazenness.

This trait is called "brazen-faced" (az panim) because it corrupts the soul to such an extent that it is recognizable on his face..

"the shame faced to Gan Eden" - for whoever is shame faced does not sin so quickly (Nedarim 20a).

Level 3

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - many commentaries ask that the traits in the mishna are not positive. How can the Tanna tell us: "be brazen" when at the end of the mishna he says: "the brazen faced [is destined] to Gehinom"?

Likewise, the comparisons are a wonder: "be brazen as a leopard"? "mighty as a lion"? Aren't leopards and lions symbols of cruelty?, as the prophet says: "therefore I will be as a lion to them; as a leopard by the way I will watch them; I will meet them like a bereaved bear, and will tear the lining of their heart. And there I will devour them like a lion..." (Hosheah 13:7-8)?

Furthermore on the Jewish people it is written: "there are three signs of this people - mercy, shame, and doing acts of kindness" (Yevamot 79a).

These traits are clear indications such that: "whoever has these three traits it is known that he is from the seed of Avraham" (Tractate Kalah, ch.10).

Evidently, pity is the opposite of the nature of the lion. Likewise shame is the opposite of brazenness. If so, how does the Tanna present us: "be brazen as a leopard and mighty as a lion"?

Likewise the rushed running of the deer appears impulsive and superficial. This rushing sometimes leads it to fall in a trap unwittingly due to lack of carefulness.

When we think of a "light" person it implies one who acts superficially and without patience, one who lacks seriousness and peace of mind.

If so, how can the Tanna tell us: "run like a deer.."?

The answer is found at the rest of the mishna - it depends on what is the goal. Every trait can be good if the goal is: "to do the will of your Father in Heaven".

If this is indeed the goal of a man, then all his traits are used for the good. Man's traits are like a utensil in his hand. He can use it for good or evil.

In the Shmonei Perakim (ch.4), the Rambam says that there are no good or bad traits. Every trait can be negative if one is excessive in it and every trait except for arrogance has some positive - provided one uses it in a proper way, for a good purpose, and in measured amount.

Thus character traits are called "middot" (measures) in Hebrew - everything depends on how they

are used and for what purpose.

"be brazen as a leopard" - a certain amount of brazenness is needed to fulfill torah and mitzvot properly. However, we must remember that brazenness is a negative trait. It needs to be used only for the purpose of "to do the will of your Father in Heaven".

In the Talmud: "why was the torah given to Yisrael? Because they are brazen" (Beitzah 25b). Rashi there explains: "the torah was given to them so they toil in it thereby weakening their strength and submitting their hearts".

Brazenness is a negative trait to such an extent that in order to submit it alone it was necessary to give the torah!

Therefore, after the mishna mentioned brazenness in a positive way ("be brazen as a leopard.."), the Tanna informs us how severe this trait is when not employed for the sake of Heaven: "the brazen faced to Gehinom".

A man who is brazen faced, chatzef and of hardened forehead, at first he speaks against those greater than him. Afterwards against his parents, against the upbringing he received, and so on, until he casts off himself all values.

With this reprehensible trait, he amasses for himself many sins. He stumbles from one trouble to another and in the end, he brings himself to Gehinom.

The Meiri explains how deep is the fall of the brazen faced person. At first he is brazen faced against a few mitzvot. When people come to rebuke him, he is brazen faced towards his rebukers. He refuses to hear or accept mussar under any circumstances. As a consequence of this, he develops hatred against his rebukers and sees them as his enemies.

Through this, he is disgusted by their ways - the good and correct way. Instead, he turns to corrupt ways and from there the path goes straight to Gehinom...

Rather, the proper way is as the Tiferet Yisrael said: "regarding your inner self, be brazen as a leopard to overcome the yetzer hara in you. But beware not to be brazen faced towards other people, especially those greater than you".

Brazenness should not be used on the outside. For one who is brazen faced towards one greater than himself will habituate in this until in the end he will also be brazen faced against the holy torah and thus inherit Gehinom.

🔍 Level 2

☆ Chida

Chida, Devarim Achadim, Drush 16 - "the shame faced to Gan Eden" - to be abashed of his sins and to be abashed of G-d who gazes at him, to not do against His will.

But it does not mean to refrain from doing a mitzvah out of embarrassment or to not rebuke big people who transgress the torah out of embarrassment. On that he said: "be brazen as a leopard".. For then [to refrain out of] embarrassment is a sin in his hand.

🔍 Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - Ahava b'Taanugim - "the shame faced to Gan Eden" - he is embarrassed of himself and of others if a bad rumor goes out on him. For even though he sinned, he is destined for Gan Eden since the shame will bring him back to the good.

 **Level 2**

☆ **Meorei Ohr**

Meorei Ohr - "the shame faced to Gan Eden" - the Lechem Shamayim brings that through shame-facedness, even for a sinner - he is rectified through this trait and goes to Gan Eden, as the talmud says: "whoever sins and is embarrassed - is forgiven for all his sins" (Berachot 12b). For the shame causes his face to pale and become white and turn towards the ground. This rectifies him. He no longer needs the rectification of Gehinom and it brings him to Gan Eden. For "better to throw oneself in a fiery furnace than to humiliate his fellow in public" (Berachot 43b).. Thus shame is equal to burning. For it burns body and soul together and therefore he no longer needs the fires of Gehinom to purge him since has been purged already.

But this requires intense purging of shame like Gehinom in order to burn out the filthy blood absorbed in the soul. Thus he wrote "shame faced" (boshet panim) and not just "shame face" (bosh panim) or bashful (bayshan). For this refers to an act of feeling of shame.. (and not just passive shame).

 **Level 3**

Bnei Yisachar, maamarei hashabatot, maamar 8 - "May it be Your will Hash-em Our G-d that the Temple be rebuilt speedily in our days and grant us our portion in Your Torah" - for it would seem proper for a man to be ashamed to pray before G-d for his needs since it is enough that G-d grants him life and food to eat and especially since he knows that he is a sinner. How could he possibly have the audacity to seek from G-d and especially for something so great as this that all the worlds depend on and long for, namely, the rebuilding of the Temple? Is this not a brazenness and a chutzpah of man?

As an analogy, a poor beggar walks with torn and worn out clothing begging for food. Would he have the audacity to come and enter the king's gate to ask for things relating to the kingdom and especially if this poor man is a criminal and committed many crimes against the honor of the king.

Therefore it would seem there is no opening for us to pray for the rebuilding of the temple, especially for one who recognizes how much he sinned against the omnipotent Creator of the universe. How could his heart inflate to ask for such a big thing?... (thus the mishna says it is not so, rather "may it be Your will...")

 **Level 2**

☆ **Ben Ish Chai**

Ben Ish Chai, Chasdei Avot - "May it be Your will Hash-em Our G-d that the Temple be rebuilt speedily in our days and grant us our portion in Your Torah" - for the Temple is a place of prayer, as written: "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations". And even though we need to ask many things, but when the Temple will be rebuilt speedily in our days, we will ask only one request, namely, "grant us our portion in Your Torah". Namely, torah lishma (for its own sake).. that You help us to learn torah lishma.

 **Level 2**

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan

Rabeinu Yosef ben Shushan - "May it be Your will Hash-em Our G-d that the Temple be rebuilt speedily in our days and grant us our portion in Your Torah" - for [part of] our efforts in the service of G-d is to pray to Him that He will teach us His ways and incline our hearts to His statutes and not to the bribes (of the vanities of this world). When we put to heart this prayer and supplication, our minds will straighten out and our aspirations will align to know the truth. This will be fulfilled fully when [the Temple of] Jerusalem will be rebuilt as the prophet said: "then the land will be filled with the knowledge of G-d" (Isaiah 11:9).

 **Level 2**

Sfas Emes

Sfas Emes on Avot - "May it be Your will Hash-em Our G-d that the Temple be rebuilt speedily in

our days and grant us our portion in Your Torah" - the foundation of the service of man is the yearning (hateshuka), as our sages said: "the service of the heart - this refers to prayer". Namely, yearning and fieriness of the heart to always to cling to G-d, blessed be He. This is the primary service (ikar haavodah)..

"that the Temple be rebuilt.." - for when the Temple stood, it was easy to acquire these traits (light as an eagle, etc.) But in our exile it needs a lot of work.

Q Level 4

☆ Maharal

Maharal - Rabbi Yehudah wanted to exhort on how a man can come to do a mitzvah. He began by saying that one should be brazen like a leopard. For if one does not have brazenness, he will not come to do anything in the service of G-d since one who is timid will not come to do anything. Therefore be brazen.

Afterwards he exhorted on the beginning. Namely, that he should not be heavy but rather with zeal (energetic) (zariz) at first. On this he said: "be light as an eagle". For on the beginning "be light" applies, namely, that one's nature not weigh down on him to get up from the place he sits. This is the special quality of the eagle. Its nature does not weigh down on it..

Corresponding to what is after the beginning he said: "run like a deer". For after getting up and running on the way, he approaches closer to the act itself. This should be with the greatest zeal.

Afterwards, corresponding to doing the act itself he said "be mighty as a lion". This is the explanation of Rabbi Yehuda ben Teima's words.

Now open your eyes more and know that Yehuda ben Teima comes to complete a man in the service of his Creator for which he was created. And since man is of physical body, therefore he is like an inanimate stone and does not want [to do] anything whatsoever.

For one who has brazenness is not like an inanimate rock which has no want and no yearning. Rather, he faces everyone due to the brazenness on his face and he does not shy away from anything.

On this he said that one should not be like a sleeping person in the service of G-d but rather to be brazen..

Some people are brazen but they lack the power of rousing themselves. Although they very much want but due to their natural heaviness they are unable to arise. On this he said: "light as an eagle" - that one's nature should not weigh down on him in the service of G-d. But rather he should rouse himself until he is light in the service of G-d.

Afterwards when he has the power to rouse himself he still needs another preparation, namely, to move towards the mitzvah. Then corresponding to doing the mitzvah, he said: "be mighty as a lion to do the will of your Father in Heaven". Namely to do all the things with power/strength and great zeal.

The Tanna exhorted man on all these things - that he strengthens himself over his physicality. For the physicality does not act and thus it obstructs man from the service of G-d...

"the will of your Father in Heaven" - that which he said "to do the will of your Father in Heaven" and not "to do the will of the Holy One, blessed be He", he comes to say that for this purpose man was created from the beginning of creation - to serve G-d. Thus, since He is your Father, ie

Creator and He created you for this, therefore you should do it...

"the brazen faced to Gehinom" - but for other things (besides the service of G-d), it is not so. Rather *"the brazen faced to Gehinom and the shame faced to Gan Eden"*...

"the brazen faced to Gehinom; the shame faced to Gan Eden. May it be Your will Hash-em Our G-d that the Temple be rebuilt speedily in our days and grant us our portion in Your Torah" - there is to wonder. What do these two things *"the brazen faced to Gehinom; the shame faced to Gan Eden"* have to do with *"May it be Your will Hash-em Our G-d that the Temple be rebuilt.."*?

The answer is that once he said: *"the brazen faced to Gehinom"* and thus the punishment of Gehinom is very near. For there are more people who are *"brazen faced"* than *"shame faced"*, especially in Yisrael, as the Talmud says: *"Yisrael is the most brazen of all nations"* (Beitzah 25b). Thus there is a concern that Gehinom will rule over the seed of Yisrael.

On this he said: *"May it be Your will Hash-em Our G-d that the Temple be rebuilt speedily in our days and grant us our portion in Your Torah"*. For these two things are especially suited to drive away Gehinom from Yisrael.. . For through the Temple which is the holiness of this world and the torah which ascends on high, both are like a ladder which stands on the ground and reaches above to the Heavens. Thus our sages said: *"when Yisrael are engaged in the Temple (prayer) and in the Torah, they are saved from Gehinom"*. For these two correspond to the heart and the mind which are the primary existence of a man. Thus they are saved from Gehinom which is the place where man is destroyed and is no longer in existence. For it is nothing but darkness and destruction.. (see there for more).

Level 4

Chasdei David

Chasdei David - *"the brazen faced to Gehinom; the shame faced to Gan Eden. May it be Your will Hash-em Our G-d that the Temple be rebuilt speedily in our days and grant us our portion in Your Torah"* - why did the Tanna add a prayer to this mishna? We don't find such a thing in all the mishnas. Likewise, what is the connection between *"the brazen faced.."* and this prayer?

We may answer that *"the brazen faced to Gehinom"* refers to one who is brazen to speak in the synagogue useless chatter when the congregation is praying. While *"the shame faced to Gan Eden"* refers to one who is careful to not speak in the synagogue... (see there for more).

Chapter 5 Mishna 21 - Five Years Old

He would say: at five years of age for [the study of] scripture, at ten years for the mishna, at thirteen for commandments (Mitzvot), at fifteen for the Talmud, at eighteen for Chuppah (marriage canopy), at twenty for pursuit [of livelihood], at thirty for [peak] strength, at forty for understanding, at fifty to [give] counsel, at sixty for old age, at seventy for elderliness, at eighty for might, at ninety to stoop, at one hundred years old he is as one who has already died and ceased completely from the world.

Q Level 1

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - the intent of the Tanna is to exhort a man on wasted time. For wasted time cannot at all be regained. Therefore he ordered the matters of a man and his deeds according to his age..

Q Level 1

☆ Sforno

Sforno - besides that man's life is short, one should also contemplate that within this lifespan, the times suitable for striving [to do] are very short and they come late and leave quickly. Therefore, a man needs to hurry. For he is not fit for Talmud until fifteen years. He will not be established correctly until the age of forty. After the age of fifty, his powers will have diminished as written: "from the age of fifty, he will return from military service" (Bamidbar 8:25).

With this, he rouses the ear on zeal to acquire eternal life while his strength is still with him as Shlomo said: "remember your Creator in the days of your youth before the days of evil come" (Kohelet 12:1).

Q Level 1



Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel on Avot - this mishna comes to teach the age of the beginning of learning and the proper levels in the different stages.

At age 5: it is proper for him to read scripture when he reaches the age of five. For when he is four years old, he starts with the letters and vowels and learns how to read.

A child is compared to a newly planted tree: "for three years [the fruit] shall be Orlah (forbidden).. and in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy to praise [G-d]" (Vayikra 19:23) - i.e. to enter in "torah tziva lanu Moshe" (Devarim 33:4) which is "praise of G-d".

At five he can read properly and should continue always for five straight years until he is ten..

When he is ten, he should enter into Mishna which includes Mishna and the explanations of the Torah; to know them well by heart - five straight years until age fifteen. In the middle of these five years, when he becomes thirteen, he will be Bar Mitzvah (obligated in the commandments)..

When he is fifteen, then he can enter in the study of the sharp logic (mepulpal) of Talmud Bavli, which is an explanation of all that he read and studied.

18 for marriage. For at this age, the power of lust (taava) is very strong and he will desire very much for sexual relations and thus he will need a wife..

20 for pursuit - and go to the army. For then he will be strong to pursue and run after enemies, as written: "from the age of twenty.." (Bamidbar 1:3).

30 for strength - as brought by the Levites to carry the burden of the Tabernacle. For then a man is in full standing and strength.

40 for understanding - for then he will contemplate what he learned and saw, as the verse says: "yet G-d has not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, until today" (Devarim 29:3), which Moshe said at the end of forty years since the Exodus from Egypt.

50 for counsel - after he read, studied and understood all his years until fifty, then he can give counsel to others. For his physical powers settle and quiet down.

60 for old age - he is called an old man (zaken) and goes out of the wickedness of the physical..

70 for elderliness - this is the time of elderly age, where he settles in speech very much and one is obligated to honor him, as the verse: "you shall stand up for an elder" (Vayikra 19:32).

80 for might - for he is strong in constitution to have stayed alive for eighty years, as written: "and if by might, eighty years" (Tehilim 90:10).

90 to stoop - "For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our belly holds fast to the earth" (Tehilim 44:26). For his body stoops down. Alternatively, from the term sicha (speech). For his powers have waned and he only has speech left.

100 is as one who has already died - for his powers and vitality are gone and his eyes have dimmed.

Thus since our time and destiny is disintegration and death of the body, it is proper to toil in the wellbeing of the mind and soul which does not die nor disintegrate - out of fear of G-d and honoring of His Name.

Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "at five for scripture" - he already started studying scripture.

"at 10 for mishna" - he already started mishna but without difficult question and answer so as not to strain his delicate mind.

"at 15 for Talmud" - his mind is now suitable to delve deeper in the matters.

"at 18 for marriage" - he is fit to marry a woman since his inclination (yetzer) has arisen.

"at 20 to pursue" - to toil after his sustenance.. he is also obligated to pursue mitzvot more since the heavenly court does not punish one less than twenty years old.

"at 30 for strength" - his bodily powers are fully developed.

"at 50 for counsel" - every advice has two sides. A fifty year old can weigh the better option of the two sides.

"at 60 for old age" - he can now give sound reasons and settled logic for his wisdom (torah). They

are sweet to those who taste them like ripe grapes and aged wine.

"at 70 for elderliness" - one is obligated to stand up before him.

"at 80 for might" - his spiritual faculties overcome the powers and lusts of the body which have weakened and it is very easy for him to fulfill the torah and its commandments.

"at 90 to stoop (suach)" - his body stoops down. Alternatively his power is only in speech (sicha), to speak words of torah and prayer. For his powers to action have waned.

"at one hundred years old he is as one who has already died and ceased completely from the world" - when he merits this, his soul clings to the upper realms and this world and its lusts have become annulled as if he already passed away from it.

Level 2

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - this order of study taught in the mishna appears to be given to everyone equally. And even our holy sages toiled as much as five years in the study of scripture alone. This seems to be a wonder and needs understanding. For as known, a sharp child can finish the entire scripture in about one year. What then did great minds like them do for five whole years?

It seems clear that learning of mikra (scripture) in its true form entails studying the whole torah using the thirteen (or thirty two) ways with which the torah is expounded from beginning to end. Only that in the learning of the torah itself there are many levels.

One level is called "mikrah" (scripture). Another level is called "mishna". Another level is called "Talmud"..

Our sages said (Berachot 61a): "Manoach was an am haaretz (ignoramus), as written: 'and Manoach went after his wife'... for even the study of school children (Rashi) he did not know, as written: 'and Rivka went after the man' - (implying) [after the man] and not before the man".

We see from here that when Manoach did not deduce from the verse to not go after a woman on the road, even if it is his wife, our sages already called him an am haaretz (ignoramus) who did not even read with the school children..

Level 3

Seder Hayom - "5 for scripture" - for this is the reality. Most children do not know how to read [scripture] properly until this age. Thus it is not proper to bring them to school [for that] before this time since it is a waste and one should not pain the child when there is not much benefit.. Before this time he can toil in knowing the letters and vowels and how to read them. Thus, one can bring him to school even at the age of two or three to teach him the letters and vowels and how to read them and whatever else he can grasp. This is the custom.

Some are careful not to bring him before the age of three and perhaps even four until he reaches the fifth year. Their proof is from the fruits of the tree which the torah says: "for three years they shall be Orlah (forbidden)" (Vayikra 19:23). For they still did not come out of the domain of Samael and it is not proper to benefit from them.

In the fourth year they need hilulim (praise) and in the fifth, one may eat its fruit.

So too regarding a child. The first three years, we should not at all make him toil in matters of

heaven, not even a little bit. For he is under the subjugation (shibud) of Sa-mael. But on the fifth year he is ready and one can "stuff him like an ox".

However, I do not find merit in these words. The proof from the fruit of the trees is not a proof. For the fruit of a tree was created only for the needs and pleasure of the body. This is a portion of Sa-mael. Thus it is proper to give him his own portion and not trespass his domain.

But the fruit of man was created to perfect his soul and serve G-d perfectly all the days of his life and please his Maker. And would that it were that he can start this already from the day he was born. But he grows and advances slowly slowly, as written: "surely a man walks about like a shadow" (Tehilim 39:7).

During these five years, one should not pain the child in any way. For he does not have any intellect at all. Everything he can take from his perspective and understanding let him take. But one should not hit him at all for anything or any matter. One who hits him sins. More than this, our sages said: "a child (katan) who eats unkosher meat - the Beit Din is not commanded to stop him" (Niddah 46b). Even though he is doing a forbidden act and all the more so for a small child who is not doing a [forbidden] act..

One needs to feed him what he asks for whether food or drink so that he does not become sick. The primary building is the foundation.. it was said of Rabbi Chanina that at the age of 85 he could put on or remove his shoe while standing on one foot. He attributed this to the care he received from his mother in his youth (Chullin 24b).

These are sound things which every man must know and teach his household.

Level 3

Maharal Tzintz

Maharal Tzantz - "at five years of age for [the study of] scripture" - in our days, the order of study is different. For the students do not dedicate 5 years to study scripture and 5 years to study mishna. Instead, from a young age they already begin to study Talmud.

But the Tanna arranged this order with intent. For the order in our times is faulty. When one arranges the order like the mishna, then if a youth is not successful in learning talmud, he at least has in his hands scripture. But if he is taught talmud and mishna before scripture, then such a youth is left to grow up boor and empty of everything.

Level 2

Bartenura

Bartenura - "at twenty for pursuit" - after his livelihood. After he studied Tanach, mishna, and talmud and married a woman and bore children, he needs to pursue a livelihood. Alternative explanation: "at twenty for pursuit" from Heaven and punish him for his deeds. For the heavenly court does not punish one less than twenty years old.

Level 2

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - "at twenty for pursuit" - to pursue the mitzvot. For most practical mitzvot are done with walking of the feet. And "study is not primary, rather observance is primary" (lo hamidrash ikar ela hamaase). And since a boor cannot fear sin, therefore the order of a man is to first study for twenty years. For one cannot pursue the mitzvot until he is proficient in mishna and talmud. He can continue in the matter of deeds for ten years until he is thirty. Afterwards it is proper for him to help others do good deeds and to rebuke the wicked at the gate. For then he has power and might. From thirty to forty - to bring merit to others.

When he reaches forty, G-d grants him understanding to deduce one thing from another. For since he is whole in his studies that he received from his teachers and also in deed, then secrets of the

torah are revealed to him and he can understand wise teachings until fifty.

Then all that he understood and his insights, he needs to teach it to others so that his wisdom does not die with him.

This is the meaning of "50 for counsel", ie that he counsels and teaches his insights in the torah to others..

"60 for old age" - for "an elder is only one who acquired wisdom" (Kidushin 32b).

"70 for elderliness" - then everyone is obligated to honor him, as written: "stand up before an elder.." (Vayikra 19:32)..

"80 for might" - even if one reached eighty he should not give up overcoming his inclination saying he has no more strength. For we find Yochanan Kohen Gadol served as high priest for eighty years and in the end became a heretic. Therefore he said eighty for might, ie he still needs to overcome his yetzer (evil inclination).

🔍 Level 3

Chafetz Chaim, Avot - "50 for counsel" - it is known that the seven days of the week hint to seventy years, every day one decade. When a man reaches the age of fifty, this hints that the five days have ended and friday begins which is near the Sabbath. In the Talmud: "on friday it is a mitzvah to get up early in the morning to prepare all the needs for the Sabbath".

So too when the days after fifty begin, one must cast off himself matters of this world which is hinted in the days of the work week and push himself more to torah and good deeds so that they are ready in his hands for the day of Sabbath.. When he reaches fifty, he increases understanding and people come to ask him advice. All the more so he needs to take counsel with himself regarding his own matters on how to prepare provisions for his eternal abode.

🔍 Level 3

☆ **Yachel Yisrael**

Yachel Yisrael - this mishna comes to teach the importance of utilizing the time. The job of life is to use the time properly. There is an old secular saying: "time is money". But this is a fundamental error - time is worth much more than money. For money that is lost, one can profit other money in its place. But a minute that is lost - it has no replacement. Those five minutes that were in the future - they are now in the past forever and will never return.

After teaching us in the previous mishna the need to muster all one's powers "to do the will of his Father in Heaven", the Tanna comes to teach us how to utilize the time for the service of G-d in the best way.

He teaches us that every age has its own purpose which is suitable to the abilities at that age. The proper way in the service of G-d is to not jump levels, to not try to do things beyond your current ability. Rather, to ascend in steps, like "a ladder whose end is fixed on the ground but whose top reaches the heavens".

On the other hand, one needs to guard from the opposite also. Namely, to not delay the time appropriate for each thing. For every person needs to stand his guard, to not delay the train...

"at 18 for chuppah (marriage)" - in the Talmud: "until the age of twenty, the Holy One, blessed be He, sits and waits. When will he take a wife? As soon as one attains twenty and has not married, He exclaims, 'blasted be his bones!'" (Kidushin 29b).

Why is it so important to marry until the age of twenty? Because at that age the yetzer hara (evil inclination) is so strong that it is very difficult to be saved from thoughts of sin. In order to be saved from thoughts of sin, he needs to marry. For "whoever is without a wife - he is without torah and without a wall" (Yevamot 62b) ie without a fence to protect him from sin.

"at 20 for pursuit" - for since he married at eighteen, at twenty he normally now has a family and must provide food for them. But he must not stop learning torah either. Rather he must find a way to balance the two.

"at 30 for strength" - at this stage he is in peak physical strength. He is also not a boor or ignoramus. Now he is knowledgeable and also has life experience.

"at 40 for understanding (Binah)" - what is Binah? Rashi says: "Binah is the ability to deduce one thing from another and to instruct in halacha". A man who developed his thoughts all his days should reach this age at the peak of his ability to grasp the depth of every matter. Thus this is the age to begin to teach others.

After forty years from the Exodus of Egypt, before their entry into Israel, Moshe tells them: "your eyes have seen the great trials, the signs, and those great miracles. Yet the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, until today" (Devarim 29:3).

What happened on that day? Rashi says there: on that day Moshe gave the torah scroll to be guarded by the tribe of Levi.

All of the Israelites gathered in protest to Moshe: why do you give the torah only to the tribe of Levi? We also stood at Sinai and received the Torah! Their words found favor in the eyes of Moshe Rabeinu and he rejoiced greatly..

What were they claiming? Not jealousy and honor, not even money but rather - "we also want the torah". This shows their eyes opened and their hearts understood the value of torah. Therefore he told them: "this day you have become a people". Today I realize you are sufficiently matured and are now ready to be the people of G-d.

From here the talmud learns: "from here you can learn that it may take one forty years to know the view/understanding of his Rabbi" (Avodah Zarah 5b).

"at 50 for counsel" - at this age he accumulated much study and life experience and all his senses are still in full power. Although he reached understanding at age forty but he still needs more time to be able to give good and beneficial advice.

Regarding Rechavam ben Shlomo (Kings I 12:6), when he became king he asked advice to the young men (who had grown up with him) and also the old advisers. The old advisers counseled him to lighten the taxes on the people while the young advisers told him the opposite would be effective. He took the advice of the young men which turned out to be disastrous. For "the advice of the young destroys while that of the elders builds" (Megilah 31b)..

The Chafetz Chaim adds (Torat Habayit ch.6) that the intent in the mishna is not only [to advise] the younger to seek counsel from those above fifty. For the Tanna turns first and foremost to the elder man himself and tells him: "you have reached the age of fifty whereby you can now give good advice. If so, first of all, think on yourself and seek an advice on how to escape from your own yetzer harah (evil inclination).

It was told on Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Barditchav that on his fiftieth birthday, his chasidim made a kidush for him for his reaching the age of counsel (50).

The Rabbi told them: it is indeed written that "at fifty years of age for counsel". However, am I really wiser than you today? Am I wiser than I was a year ago?!

Nevertheless, it was not for nothing that the Tanna wrote: "at fifty years of age for counsel". What does this mean?

I will give you a parable to what is this comparable: to a man who lost his way in the forest. Slowly, slowly the day turns towards nightfall and he is still without advice (how to find his way out). He walks here and there confused as to where to go.

Suddenly he sees from faraway a man walking towards him. As the man approaches, it is revealed that the man is of gruff appearance. His beard is grown, his hair is long and wild, his clothing is crumpled.

It is recognizable by his appearance that he has been in the forest for a long time.

The first man is happy to see the gruff stranger and runs toward him: "it is a miracle that I found you before nightfall. Perhaps you can show me how to get out of here?"

The veteran wanderer answers him sadly: if I knew how to get out of here, I would not stay a minute longer. It has already been several long months that I am seeking the answer of how to get out of here. However, in one thing I can help you. From my experience, I can tell you where it is dangerous to enter, which path goes nowhere.

Come, give me your hand and from now on we will go together.

Rabbi Yitzchak of Barditchav ends off: to advise you what is good I do not know. But in this I can advise you: I can tell you what is not good to do. I recognize the paths which do not lead to a good end.

This is the meaning of "at 50 years of age for counsel" - what the intellect fails to do, at least time succeeds in doing.

"at 60 for old age, at 70 for elderliness" - at this age, the powers (of the body) are already weak. The senses are not as sharp as they used to be. From here on, the deterioration of man's physical and spiritual powers are recognizable. According to Rabeinu Yonah (Shaarei Teshuva, shaar sheni): "at 60 for old age" - their intent is to rouse on repentance, that a man considers his end upon reaching the age of 60 if he did not merit to do this already in his youth... he should abandon the desires of the body and its lusts and should strive to rectify his soul. According to the few years remaining he should minimize his worldly pursuits and dedicate his time always in contemplating fear of G-d, rectifying his character traits and seeking torah and mitzvot"...

"at 80 for might" - king David said: "the days of our years are seventy years; and if by might they are eighty years (Tehilim 90:10).

Thus, he who has reached the age of eighty has reached the age of "might" (gevurot). What is the might (gevurah) here? The Midrash Shmuel answers in the way of mussar: an eighty year old man

is liable to think he already finished the stage of war with the yetzer hara (evil inclination) and that he is now immune and has no more reason to be concerned.

But the mishna says "at 80 for might" - even at the age of eighty he needs to strengthen himself like a lion against the yetzer hara (evil inclination). The proof is from Yochanan Kohen Gadol who was the high priest for eighty years and in the end became a heretic.

Thus if an eighty year old thinks the evil inclination has no longer any influence over him, he is making a big mistake. Although a man is tired and weak but it is not so for the evil inclination. He still has many ways to cause a man to stumble in sin and even an old man needs to gird strength to overpower him.

Another explanation is that since the man has passed the seventies he is living through the gevurah (might) of G-d, not his own. Thus he is under duty to strengthen himself and utilize the great gift of life granted to him.

"at 90 to stoop/speech" - at this age, all his powers have waned. He no longer has the power to sin. He cannot run to sin and the lusts of the body no longer have any taste. Thus, what does he have left? How can he serve his Creator? - prayer.

Rabeinu Yonah writes in Shaarei Teshuva: "it is proper for all his toil be in prayer and psalms to G-d and to speak of His wonders".

A man who merited to reach this age saw many things in his long life - he knows how to praise and glorify his Creator. He saw entire ideologies which seized the world and crumbled down. he recognized many wealthy people who stumbled and saw the downfall of powerful men.

He is also completely disconnected from the vanities of this world. Thus his vision penetrates farther out than most people - he can exalt G-d truthfully and wholeheartedly.

"at one hundred years old he is as one who has already died and ceased completely from the world" - the Tanna says here words of mussar.

Let us imagine what happens to a sinner when he dies and goes to the next world. There he sees the decree of the Heavenly Beit Din. Reward and punishment materialize before his eyes. Certainly he will then be full of immense pain and regret on his life which ended without him repenting. He begs to be given one more chance to return and repent. Alas but all his supplications are for nothing - it is too late.

So too for the sinner who tells himself that he will repent in his old age. For even if he decides to repent, his repentance is not so effective. For all his powers and lusts have left him and he is no longer tempted by sin. Thus, king David says in Tehilim: "fortunate is the man who fears G-d and desires much His commandments" (Tehilim 112:1). The extra word "man" hints to "fortunate is he who repents while he is still a man" (Avodah Zara 19a), ie while his strength is still with him.

Although repentance is always accepted but nevertheless it is not as strong when a man is standing at the edge of his grave and all his worldly desires are annulled.

Chapter 5 Mishna 22 - Turn It Over

Ben Bag Bag would say [regarding the torah]: turn it over and turn it over for all is contained in it, and you can view all matters through it; become old and worn with it; never move away from it for there is no better pursuit than it.

בן בג בג אומר, הפך בה והפך בה, דכלא בה. ובה תחזי, וסיב ובלה בה, ומנה לא תזוע, שאין לך מדה טובה הימנה.

Q Level 1

Bartenura

Bartenura - "turn it over and turn it over" - in the torah.

"for all is contained in it" - you will find everything in it.

"become old and worn with it" - even in old age do not abandon it.

"never move away from it" - do not say: "I studied the wisdom of Yisrael. I will now study greek wisdom". For it is not permitted to study greek wisdom except in places where it is forbidden to study torah, such as in the bathroom or bathhouse.

For Rabbi Yehoshua was asked: "can one teach his son greek wisdom?" He replied: "he may do so when it is neither day nor night. For it is written: "you shall contemplate in it day and night" (Yehoshua 1:8).

Q Level 1

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "turn it over and turn it over" - review the words of torah for all the wisdoms of the world are included in it.

Q Level 1

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "turn it over and turn it over for all is contained in it" - for example, from a teaching in Sukkah one can deduce a teaching to permit an agunah (woman whose husband disappeared). Even though it appears at first glance that many teachings are unnecessary and not relevant today. But it is not so. For one can deduce one teaching from another. This is familiar to those who study it [in-depth].

Q Level 1

Rambam

Rambam - "you can see all matters through it" - the truth, you will see the truth with your mind's eye.

Q Level 2

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai, Chasdei Avot - "through it you will see" - you will be able to gaze at the radiance of the Shechina in the world of souls. Alternatively, you will see and arrive at the truth in this world, to learn and arrive at the true halacha (leasukei shmaita aliba dehilchata), and as David said: "open my eyes and I will gaze at the wonders in your torah" (Tehilim 119:18).

Q Level 1

☆ Tosfot Yom Tov

Tosfot Yom Tov - "there is no better trait than it" - do not think that in studying greek wisdom you will learn from them good culture, conduct and character traits. On this he said "there is no better trait than it". For all the good character traits are found in it.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - "become old (sav) and worn with it" - "sav" from the term "Seiva" (old age), that one ages with it and toils in it all the days of his life.

Q Level 2

Rashi

Rashi - "turn it over and over" - to turn it over on all sides and all matters.. "turn the torah over and

she will elevate you" (Mishlei 4:8). For every time you will find chidushim (new insights) and taamim (new reasons).

"for everything is in it" - everything you want, you will find in it.

"in it you will look" - always always.

"never move away from it" - not day nor night.

Q Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - *"turn it over"* - in the torah, to understand and gaze wonders in it and you won't need the books of the philosophers and scholars of the gentiles.

"through it you will see" - you will see logical proofs on true outlooks on G-d, life after death, and other things which are the primary investigations proper to [come to] love and fear of G-d. For this is all of man and all the primary intent of the torah.

And since you will not see nor find this in the words of the torah without great effort and toil, as written: "if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures, then you shall understand the fear of the L-ord and find the knowledge of G-d." (Mishlei 2:4-5), thus Ben HaHa said to not hold back at all from this toil. For the more toil and effort, the greater will be the spiritual level in the next world..

Q Level 3

Ahava b'Taanugim

Rabbi Avraham Azoulai - *Ahava b'Taanugim* - *"turn it over.."* - since in the previous mishna, he arranged an order of study to learn scripture, mishna, and talmud, if so, one might think he already attained the whole torah and he can move on to study other wisdoms for the rest of his life. Thus he said "turn it over", etc. You won't need other foreign wisdoms. For everything is in it. One just needs to strive to toil to examine the torah many times. For then you will reveal and see that all wisdoms are included in it.

Q Level 3

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - *"Ben Bag Bag.."* - Ben Bag Bag was a righteous convert and thus his true name was not mentioned. Rather, only a nickname.. Why did he merit such a nickname? Because every convert is considered as the son of Avraham our forefather, since he is "a father of many nations (av hamon goyim)" (Gen.17:5) and because Avraham was the first convert.

As known, at first his name was Avram and G-d added the letter "Heh" to his name. Likewise for Sarah, she was called Sarai and G-d changed her name to Sarah (with a Heh). "Bag" is Gematria 5 = Heh. (likewise for Ben Heh Heh in next mishna. Both were converts).

"turn it over and turn it over for all is contained in it" - ie immerse yourself good good in torah study and that the torah be in your eyes like a precious diamond which a person gazes at. And due to great wonder, he turns it around and around on all sides. For this is exactly how I (Ben Bag Bag) did when I began to toil in torah.

Why was the torah so precious in my eyes? *"for everything is in it"*. Through it one can understand all the wisdoms of the world from a much better perspective.

Furthermore *"through it you will see"* - through it one can look and attain understanding in all matters in life.

"become old" - through the torah, one can merit to reach sevah tova (ripe old age) with a clear

mind.

"and worn with it" - as known, toil in torah can demand from a person great exertion and utilizing every free minute and one who learns all his days does not have much time to exercise and worry about his body's health. Therefore, there is a concern that some people will not want to immerse their entire life in torah out of worry it will ruin their health in old age.

Thus the Tanna promises that if you "wear yourself out in it", ie immerse all your powers in torah study, then you will receive a clear mind and be blessed in old age. This is worth a lot more than a bit more bodily health but with a ruined soul and lacking desire to live..

"do not move away from it" - for obviously, who is so foolish as to desire to lose the best life possible in this world and the next?!

"Ben Ha Ha" - when Ben Ha Ha was asked how he accepted on himself the yoke of torah with such dedication, for certainly it must have been very difficult for him in the beginning to learn diligently as "all beginnings are difficult"? And how did he find strength to overcome all the difficulties? He answered them "according to the pain/difficulty is the reward".

🔍 Level 3



Misgeret Zahav - "turn it over.. through it you will see" - ie there are three main types of mirrors:

One, a mirror which shrinks the object seen through it, making it appear smaller.

Two, a mirror which magnifies the object, making it appear larger.

Three, a mirror which shows the object in its actual size and quality, as it truly is and according to its true nature.

Behold, the torah is a divine mirror (aspaklia meirah Elokit) which shows a man the essence of his spirit and soul as it truly is, not smaller nor larger.

Our sages taught the torah has 365 negative commandments corresponding to the 365 sinews of a man and 248 positive commandments corresponding to the 248 limbs of a man. As brought in the Kabala, each commandment has a corresponding limb which supports it in a spiritual manner. Likewise for the opposite, each limb is damaged through neglecting the mitzvah.

And just like by a mirror it is necessary for the object observed to be aligned and standing in front of the mirror. He must not stand behind it or to its side. For then the rays of light do not reflect off the metallic coating of the mirror. So too, a man who wants to see himself in his true colors, form, and appearance through this divine mirror of the torah - he must stand aligned with the torah.

This is what the holy Tanna hints in measured words - turn it over and over, to all sides of life, turn this shiny mirror of the torah around in order that the rays of the torah reach your soul and life. And so your life stands before it, aligned before its radiance. Then its rays will not turn away for everything is in it.

Then when you complete this condition, you will find everything appearing visible in the holy torah.

"you can view all matters through it" - ie every human being that ever existed and everything that ever happened in the world since its first day until its old age and final existence and deterioration - it all stands with all its happenings in this great and awesome mirror.

"for there is no better trait than it" - ie than this divine mirror. It does not shrink nor magnify nor distort the things appearing in it. Rather, the pictures are true. It shows things as they truly are and as they should be according to the will of G-d.

Q Level 4

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "turn it over and over for all is contained in it" - this matter needs explanation. How can everything be found in the Torah?

This phenomena was hinted in the Midrash: " (the Torah says:) 'I was with Him (during creation), His master craftsman' (Mishlei 8:30) - [from here we learn that] G-d gazed into the torah and created the world" (Genesis Rabba 1:2). end quote.

We already explained that the torah is the spiritual order (seder hasichli) which G-d arranged for man's conduct. Thus it follows that this order (ie the torah) of G-d be [created] first. Due to this, the Torah is called Reishit (beginning), as written: "G-d acquired me at the beginning of His work, the first of His acts of old" (Mishlei 8:22).

According to the order of the torah, G-d arranged the order of the world such that everything follows from the Torah.

Thus it is proper for man to be higher over the whole world. For everything was created for man. Therefore G-d created the world according to what is needed for man.

This is the meaning of "G-d gazed into the Torah and created the world". For the order of the world stems from the Torah. This is "turn it over and over for all is contained in it", for when one grasps the torah, he grasps the entire order of existence, since the ways of the world come from and are bound to the ways of the torah. Thus, everything stems from the torah which is the order of man.

Even though when one toils in torah, he does not understand these things of how everything stems from the torah. But nevertheless he is toiling in something of sublime level - everything is in it.

We already explained that the importance and level of attainment is according to the level of the subject.

Namely, if a person toils heavily in the science of grinding with a mill, even though it is a wisdom and even though he becomes the greatest ever expert on the subject of mill grinding in world history, nevertheless certainly this is nothing compared to attaining small knowledge in the heavenly legions.

For according to the loftiness of the subject of wisdom will be its importance and the science of mill grinding engineering is not an important subject.

But when one studies the torah which is torah (wisdom/instruction) of man, then even for a small grasp, since everything is in it, it is an important subject..

For the view of our [torah] sages who are the true sages is that man is higher than the heavens and all their legions. We have already explained this at length in several places.

Another explanation of "turn it over and turn it over for all is contained in it" is that since "everything is contained in it", certainly you will find new insights every day. For everything is in it and thus

surely there will be new insights. He repeated the term twice to say that even though you turned it over and found an insight, nevertheless turn it over again and you will find another insight. For everything is in it.

"in it you will see (*ba techze*)" - ie that all your delight (*shaahshuav*) be in torah. This is the meaning of "*ba techze*" (there should be your gaze). For man seeks to see the words of the wise and understanding.

Some texts have "*uba tehevi*", ie that one's soul cleave to the torah.

"become old", ie even if you become old and weak do not turn away from the torah.

"for there is no greater pursuit" - the torah is above all. For it, more than anything else is what brings a man to G-d, blessed be He, to cleave to Him alone.

"and worn in it" - and even if your strength has completely waned, do not veer away from the torah.

But it is not so for other wisdoms. If human beings who sit in darkness knew what this sage is hinting to, they would not squander their days studying the books of the gentile wise men and abandoning the torah under whose shadow we live.

Q Level 2

☆ Chatam Sofer

Ktav sofer, Avot - "*turn it over..*" - the commentaries explain that one turns over and examines one matter many times and he will always find more than he found previously. He will see, understand, and many time even refute what he thought was truth in previous years. Then, he will understand its depth more. This is the meaning of "*turn it over*", that one turns it over always, sometimes this way, sometimes that way until G-d has mercy on him and graces him to arrive on the truth of the torah.

Q Level 3

Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer, Vaetchanan - know and believe that even though it is just a few handsbreath, nevertheless, "its measure is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea" (Iyov 11:9). And there is no wisdom in the world and even what is above and below, inside and outside (creation), which is not hinted in its words and letters.

Without a doubt, in the verse "this month is to you.." (Shemot 12:2) there is hinted all the wisdom of the new month, more than what the Rambam quoted from their books. One who knows how to use this verse will find everything explained there clearly.

See also the Ramban's commentary on the verse: "this is the book of the generations of Adam" (Bereisheit 5:1), that he found a book from Rabeinu Sherra Gaon who extracted from this verse all matters of reading the lines in the palm (palmreading) and the face. For the writing is from G-d.

And why shouldn't it be so? Do we not believe that G-d created the world using the Torah (Midrash Bereisheit Rabba 1:1). If so, perforce all the wisdoms of the world are rooted in the torah. And this is besides the secrets of the torah hinted in it which are beyond the [powers of the] intellect (*lemaala min hasechel*). We will not speak of those now.

Q Level 4

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - "*never move away from it*" - as Rashi explains: "not day and not night". And as the verse states: "you shall contemplate in it day and night" (Yehoshua 1:8).

And in the Talmud: "May one such as I who have studied the whole of the Torah learn Greek wisdom? He thereupon read to him the verse (Yehoshua 1:8): 'This book of the Torah shall not

depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate therein day and night' - Go then and find a time that is neither day nor night and learn then Greek wisdom" (Menachot 99b).

For its mitzvah is "always (Tamid)". See Shaarei Teshuva of Rabeinu Yonah who counts those things whose mitzvah is "always" (Tamid).

In the Talmud: " 'he that is crooked cannot be made straight' (Ecc.1:15) - this refers to one who annulled reciting the Shemah in the morning or evening" (Chagigah 9b).

For since its mitzvah is each and every day, then if he annulled it once, it is already called: "he that is crooked cannot be made straight" (Ecc.1:15).

It seems to me the explanation is that the purpose of man's service is to complete (mashlim) his limbs and sinews. Thus in the Torah, there are 248 positive commandments corresponding to the 248 limbs and 365 negative commandments corresponding to the 365 sinews. Thus each limb has a corresponding positive commandment and each sinew has a corresponding negative commandment.

Thus it seems that for those mitzvot which are "always", if one annuls it once, it is not just a one time lacking. Rather, it is a lacking in the completeness of the whole mitzvah. For the mitzvah is to be "always" and thus the intended purpose of the mitzvah already cannot come out to fruition and certainly the limbs of man which depend on and develop from this mitzvah cannot come out properly and complete. Thus this is undoubtedly "he that is crooked cannot be made straight" (Ecc.1:15).

Our sages expounded the verse: " 'he who commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding' (Mishlei 6:32) - this refers to one who learns torah at irregular intervals" (Sanhedrin 99b). Rashi explains there: "he does not learn always, always". For one who does not learn torah always is "lacking heart", ie is lacking a limb. For as mentioned, torah and mitzvot develop and complete man's (spiritual) limbs. And when one does not learn torah always (ie according to his ability and circumstances), he is lacking in the completeness of the mitzvah.

Rather, "do not move away from it".

"you shall speak in it (vedibarta bam)" - "and not in other things".

"make your torah fixed" (Avot 1:15).

For its matter is "always".

Level 4

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim - "do not move away from it" - ie that one's soul cleaves to the torah, without any interruption. For the essence and existence (metziut vemahut) of torah (study) is "ein od milvada" (there is nothing but it) - that a man cleave to it with all his thoughts and senses to the extent that he has divested of the physical (hitpashtut hagashmiyut), without any distraction or outside thoughts which cause loss of this cleaving.

Without this, ch'v it is not the holy torah. Thus this is what we have been commanded: "you shall contemplate in it day and night" (Yehoshua 1:8).

For this is the essence and existence (metziut vemahut) of the torah, to contemplate it day and night, to "always" be cleaving to it and not part one's thoughts from it. Rather, love and cleaving without any interrupting barrier in existence..

Man was created in the "tzelem Elokim" (image of G-d). The secret of the matter is that the Am

Yisrael (Jewish people) merited a higher level in the secret of the "Tzelem Elokim" - namely, that the holy torah planted among us is our Tzelem Elokim, it is the soul of Israel (nishmat yisrael). "For it is your life.." (Devarim 30:20), and "she (the torah) is worth more than fine jewels and nothing you desire has more value" (Mishlei 3:15).

For since the Torah is the Neshama (soul) itself, therefore certainly it is not conceivable to separate from it. For it is not possible to separate from the soul of life since the consequence of separating is death. And if he desires to live, certainly "do not move from it", not day nor night.

This is what we were commanded: "you shall contemplate in it day and night" - that one contemplates and clings to it always, without any interrupting barrier. For it is the soul of your life and without it is death.

And in the Talmud: "whoever guards his torah, his soul is guarded; whoever does not guard the torah, his soul is not guarded" (Menachot 99b).

And in the midrash:

The soul and the torah are compared to a candle, as written "the candle of G-d is the soul of man" (Mishlei 20:27) and "a mitzvah is a candle but torah is light" (Mishlei 6:23) - Says the Holy One, blessed be He: "My candle is in your hand and your candle is in My hand. If you guard My candle (the torah), I will likewise guard yours.. (Yalkut Shimoni Mishlei 938).

This is clearly like our words.

In the Talmud:

Our Rabbis taught: Once the wicked Government issued a decree forbidding the Jews to study and practise the Torah. Pappus b. Judah came and found R. Akiba publicly bringing gatherings together and occupying himself with the Torah. He said to him: Akiba, are you not afraid of the Government? He replied: I will explain to you with a parable. A fox was once walking alongside of a river, and he saw fish swimming in swarms from one place to another. He said to them: From what are you fleeing? They replied: From the nets cast for us by men. He said to them: Would you like to come up on to the dry land so that you and I can live together in the way that my ancestors lived with your ancestors? They replied: Aren't you the one that they call the cleverest of animals? You are not clever but foolish. If we are afraid in the place in which we live, how much more so in the place in which we would die! So it is with us. If such is our condition when we sit and study the Torah, of which it is written, "For it is your life and the length of your days", if we go and neglect it how much worse off we shall be! (Berachot 61b).

For the Torah is the soul of our life, "the place in which we live" and if we are idle from it, death is a certainty..

This is the explanation of the verse: "fortunate is the man.. but his desire is only in the torah ..he shall be as a tree planted by the river, etc. and all which he does will succeed.. but the wicked are not so, but are like chaff which the wind blows" (Tehilim 1).

For one who cleaves to the Torah, to his Neshamah (soul), to his Tzelem Elokim - he is always clinging to the root. Every situation cannot budge him from his place. For a root does not budge. He is like a tree planted by a river bank and succeeds in everything he does.

For all his deeds are deeds of the Tzelem Elokim (image of G-d). But it is not so for the wicked. For they have no handle on the root. On the contrary, they are completely cut off from the root, like a kaf hakela (sling), from one end of the world to another, like chaff which the wind blows..

Every Ben Torah needs to have this foundation laid down. Namely, torah study is not a mitzvah like the other mitzvot, as written: "nothing you desire has more value" (Mishlei 8:11), which our sages expounded: "even objects of Heaven (mitzvot)" (Moed Katan 9b).

This is because Torah is life itself. It is not just one of the 613 mitzvot, as written: "for it is your life" (Devarim 30:20).

As an analogy: for the body to survive, a man needs to eat and drink. Otherwise, he will certainly die. But nevertheless he can live for some time even without eating or drinking.

But what would happen if he were without air to breathe? He would die immediately. For life is intertwined with air and breathing. The two are inseparable.

Thus there is to understand the difference between torah and other mitzvot. The other mitzvot are like food to the nefesh (life force/body). Some mitzvot come once every seven years. Some are once a year. Some are once a week or every day.

But torah study does not depend on any specific time. Rather, "this book of the Torah shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it by day and by night" (Yehoshua 1:8). For the foundation of this mitzvah is that the torah is like air to breathe. It is life itself. Thus it is not tied to a specific time. This is what we say in the prayer: "for it is our life and the length of our days and we shall contemplate it day and night". Namely, since it is our life, then perforce we must "contemplate on it day and night".

And in the Talmud (Menachot 99b) there is a dispute whether the bread on the Shulchan (Table in the Temple) needs to be there literally always. The Torah says "always" and the first opinion is that the new bread must be slid onto the table at the same second the old bread is removed. But Rabbi Yossi holds one can remove the old bread in the morning and put the new bread in the afternoon. The table can be without bread for a few hours provided it is not left without bread all night. This also fulfills the verse which commands "always".

The Talmud learns: "from the words of Rabbi Yossi we deduce that even if a man studies one chapter in the morning and one chapter in the evening, he has fulfilled the mitzvah: 'this book of the Torah shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it by day and by night'" (Yehoshua 1:8).

Rashi there explains: "from the words of Rabbi Yossi who said that if the old bread is on the Table a bit in the morning and the new bread is on the table a bit at night - this is called 'always'. We learn from here: even if a man studies only, etc.". end quote.

It is clear from the Talmud that all opinions hold the mitzvah of torah study is "always". The foundation of the matter is as we explained that the torah is like air to breathe. It is life itself. Only that according to Rabbi Yossi, even if one studies one chapter in the morning and one chapter in the evening, this too is called "always".

This means that studying one chapter in the morning and one chapter in the evening is the minimum to be called "always". Through this too a man can survive.

But who is foolish enough to content himself with life of a few moments? As an illustration, let us say that in order to stay alive it is enough to breathe a little bit of air every five seconds.

It is not hard to understand that - yes, but what kind of life is this? Surely it is better for a man to be completely breathing in air.

So too regarding our matter. Since the Torah is life itself, who is foolish enough to content himself with a life of one chapter in the morning and one chapter in the evening when he can find himself all day inside the essence of life itself. This matter is awesome to contemplate.

 **Level 4**

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai, Chasdei Avot - "turn it over and turn it over for all is contained in it" - if a man repents and improves his ways to turn over the physical and transform it to form (spiritual) and to turn over his sins and transform them to merits, then all the curses in the torah to the sinner will transform to the good.

On this he said "turn it over", through the torah you will turn over your physicality and transform it to form (spiritual). Then you will transform the harsh words in the torah from bad to good. For everything is in it, ie all purity, repentance, rectification, etc. - everything is done through toil in torah. This is as our sages said: "just as a river elevates a man from impurity to purity, so too the [study of] torah elevates the soul and purifies it".

Chapter 5 Mishna 23 - Pain/Reward

Ben Heh Heh would say: according to the pain/difficulty is the reward. בֵּן הֵה הֵה אָמַר, לְפֹמִים צַעֲרָא אֲגָרָא.

Q Level 1

☆ Bartenura

Bartenura - "according to the pain/difficulty is the reward" - according to the greatness of the pain you bear in studying the torah and doing the mitzvot, so too will be the corresponding greatness of your reward.

Q Level 1

☆ Tosfot Yom Tov

Tosfot Yom Tov - this is referring to the reward on the pain and effort itself. Namely if the pain and effort is great, his reward is also great. But for the reward of the mitzvot themselves - "one cannot know their reward" (Avot 2:1).

Q Level 1

Rambam

Rambam - according to how much you pain yourself in torah will be your reward. The sages said that wisdom will not endure except from what one learned with exertion, toil, and fear (reverence) of the Rabbi. But readings of pleasure and comfort have no permanence and no benefit. And our sages said on the verse: "even (af) my wisdom stood with me" (Kohelet 2:9) - "the torah that I learned with af (difficulty) stood by me". Due to this, they said: "cast bile (fear) unto the students".

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Yonah

Rabeinu Yonah - since in the previous mishna he exhorted on torah study and that even in one's old age he should not move away from it and even if he suffers greatly and that it weakens his strength, etc. Now he comes to console a man and speak to his heart that he should not be concerned on the great pain he feels for "according to the pain is the reward".

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - Rabeinu ended this tractate with this teaching. Namely, whether in torah study, fulfilling mitzvot, or rectifying one's character traits - in all of them the reward is according to the pain you exert yourself to complete yourself in them.

Alternatively, according to the effort and toil you expend to attain wisdom, so too will be the resulting fruits. For "the words of torah endure only in one who slays himself over them" (Berachot 63b). And "in who do you find the butter of torah? In he who vomits the milk he sucked from his mother's breast" (ibid). Then the torah gives him life, wealth, and honor and it becomes like milk and honey on his tongue.

Q Level 2

☆ Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai, Zechut Avot - "according to the difficulty is the reward" - this hints to that which some people have in their nature to be murderers or adulterers, etc. Such a person is in constant battle with his evil inclination. If he overcomes it, his reward is many times greater than a man whose nature is pure, without impurities. This is as we find in the Midrash: "the Holy One, blessed be He, said to David: 'if it were not that he is Saul and you are David, I would have pushed off many Davids due to Saul'".

The Arizal asks on this: "but is there favoritism in the matter?". He answers that Saul's soul descended from a holy place. Therefore, his physicality was pure and clean. Due to this, it was not at all proper for him to sin on anything. But David's soul was impure, etc. and this was how it first came to this world. Therefore, he was prone to sin. For all the klipot (forces of evil) plagued him in

order to cause him to sin.

Q Level 3

☆ Maharal

Maharal - the Tanna began this tractate with Torah: "the men of the great assembly said three things.. make a fence for the torah" (Avot 1:1), and ended the Tractate with Torah and the reward of Torah. This is because Torah is the beginning of everything and the end purpose of everything. For through Torah man merits to his final purpose and reaches it, namely, the reward of Olam Haba. Understand this very very much...

A man should toil in torah. And even if he will live in this world in suffering, for his reward will be great in the end.

"according to the pain is the reward" - ie according to the greatness of the pain is the reward. It is proper to ask: "how does the sage know this"?

Certainly the explanation is not that all reward is only according to the pain and that only if there is exertion in the mitzvah does the reward increase and besides this all mitzvot are equal (in reward).

It is not so. For he wrote earlier "you do not know the reward of the mitzvot" (Avot 2:1)..

Rather that which he says "according to the pain is the reward" - it refers to within the same mitzvah. Namely, if he did the mitzvah with pain, the reward is greater than if he did the same mitzvah without pain.

But the reward for every mitzvah is known only to G-d..

The reason the reward is greater with pain is as the Talmud brings: "You have set the evil inclination before us only in order that we might be rewarded [for withstanding its allurements]?" (Sanhedrin 64a).

We see from here that because one fulfills the mitzvah with pain of the yetzer hara, his reward is greater.

The explanation is that G-d's reward for those who toil in His commandments and do His will is that one draws closer to Him through this.

For certainly one who serves a [human] king draws closer to the king. And when he draws closer to him, it is proper for the good of the king and of his kingdom to be bestowed on him. But it is not so for those far from the king.

So too, when a man fulfills the will of G-d [despite] pain - he is closer to G-d than someone who fulfills His will without pain.

Through this it is explained that the reward is according to the pain. For when man has a barrier preventing him from drawing closer to someone and he exerts himself and musters his strength and might to overcome the barrier and draw close - through this he shows his strength to cleave there and how close he is to the person he is drawing near. For he overcomes barriers and draws close.

So too when a man fulfills the mitzvot despite pain, he draws close to G-d through his strength and might despite the barriers. This demonstrates the great closeness he has towards G-d. And when he has great closeness to G-d, without a doubt his reward is greater.

For the reward itself is according to the closeness to G-d from which he receives the reward.

This is the meaning of "according to the pain is the reward" - according to the pain is the closeness to G-d. For when he is pained by the mitzvah and does it nevertheless, the reward (closeness) is greater.

But if one wants to do a mitzvah in pain even though he can do it also without pain, then it seems the reward is not greater. For "according to the pain is the reward" refers to pain in having a barrier obstructing him from doing the mitzvah and he nevertheless overcomes this barrier and draws himself close. This matter is clear.

Level 3

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "*Ben Ha Ha*" - Ben Hah Hah is called thus because he was a righteous convert. Some explain he was the Tanna Ben Bag Bag mentioned previously.

As known, when a gentile desires to convert. We try to discourage him and inform him of the punishments in the Torah and the difficulties in living as a Jew. Likewise, we explain to him the difficult lot of the Jewish people, the pains and persecutions in the exile. All this is to test his sincerity and to warn him ahead of time to weigh his desire carefully and seriously so that he can retract before it is too late.

Ben Ha Ha also heard all this and his response was "*according to the difficulty is the reward*".

I realize how difficult it is to be a Jew. But I look at the reward of those who take shelter "under the wings of the Shechina (Divine presence)". Yes it is hard to be a Jew - but it is worth it.

Ben Ha Ha did not say this only for himself. Rather he taught here mussar for all of us, mussar which summarizes and concludes the fifth chapter...

According to the Rambam, the mishna is not referring to reward of mitzvot but rather to matters pertaining to torah study: according to the toil, exertion and effort put into torah study will be the result (wisdom attained).

That which comes easy leaves easy. A man can remember what he learned with great exertion decades later but he does not remember a book he read a year ago. Only what he learned with great exertion remains by him and becomes a part of him. A man who puts his whole being to understand, hear, and learn - he strains and sweats and reviews - the torah becomes a part of him and does not leave him..

The talmud says: "be careful of the sons of the poor for from them will come out torah" (Nedarim 81a). Why? Because they work harder. The children of the rich have no worries and are free from any yoke. They learn in comfort and pampering.

But the son of the poor goes to learn and the family often makes a financial sacrifice. He learns out of hunger and in difficult conditions. His learning is with exertion and effort. Therefore the torah endures by him.

Another explanation is that this is not referring to meriting the torah but rather on the reward promised for effort in learning torah..

This is unlike the way of the world. A tailor or shoemaker cannot claim money for his efforts but

rather for the results. No shoes, no money.

But in torah it is not so. This is wondrous but also a great claim. For it means every person has the opportunity to merit the reward of torah study even if he is unable to understand much of what he learns.

This is a great claim on a person. For no man can claim he is exempt from torah study due to not being able to understand anything. For the reward is not according to the understanding but rather according to the efforts.

The torah is given to every Jew, wise or not, busy with work or free. "according to the difficulty is the reward".

Q Level 3

Maharal Tzintz

Maharal Tzantz - "according to the difficulty/pain is the reward" - regarding mitzvot, a man receives reward for a good thought, and also for toil and pain as written "according to the difficult/pain is the reward". And for any act done "l'shem shamayim" (for G-d), a man receives reward, even if he did acts that are not really mitzvot.

But when a man occupies himself in other vanities of the world, then he does not receive reward according to the toil and pain and certainly not on thoughts.

This is the explanation of the verse: "For what has man from all his labor, and from the troubling of his heart, in which he has labored under the sun?" (Kohelet 2:22). A man does not "have", i.e. a personal acquisition for himself from all matters of the world, not on his great toil nor on his good thoughts.

Q Level 3

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - these nicknames "Ben Bag Bag" and "Ben Heh Heh" teach that they were converts. Bag Bag is roshei teivot (acronym) ben ger ben giyuret (son of convert, son of female convert). Likewise for Ben Heh Heh where "Heh" is gematria beit-gimel. These names were a kind of code word to shield them from the malshinim (informers).

Some commentaries hold that this mishna was said as a completion of tractate Avot. Therefore, its words refer to what was said in this tractate. "turn it over and over.." - i.e. contemplate always tractate Avot, its chapters and mishnas "for everything is in it" - all possible words of mussar (ethics) are included in tractate Avot.

Whoever wants to rectify his character traits, let him review the words in this tractate over and over again until his old age and on. The words of wisdom in its pages will illuminate the straight path for him and guard him from straying away right or left.



Pirkei Avot
Ethics of the Fathers
Chapter 6

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Chapter 6 Beraitha 1 - Who Chose Them

The sages taught in the language of the Mishna. Blessed be He שְׁנוּ חֲכָמִים בְּלִשׁוֹן הַמִּשְׁנָה, בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּהֶם וּבְמִשְׁנֵיהֶם.
 who chose them and their Mishna (teachings).

Level 1

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel on Avot - as known, between Pesach and Shavuot, it is customary to read Pirkei Avot on the Sabbath (one chapter per Sabbath). And since there are always six Sabbaths and Pirkei Avot is only five chapters, therefore they added this chapter of Rebbi Meir which is a Beraita and not a Mishna.. It is called Beraita because it is outside (Bar) the Mishna. And since these things here are based primarily on the greatness (maalot) of the Torah, therefore it became customary to recite them on the Sabbath before Shavuot (the holiday of the giving of the Torah) in order to mention its greatness.

Level 1

☆ **Matanat Avot**

Matanat Avot - this chapter is called "kinyan Torah" (acquiring Torah). For it speaks entirely on encouraging and strengthening diligent Torah study. Thus, the beginning of the chapter describes the tremendous reward and great importance of those who learn Torah.

Level 2

☆ **Tiferet Yisrael**

Tiferet Yisrael - "Blessed be He.." - i.e. G-d, blessed be He.

"who chose them and their Mishna (teaching)" - for G-d chose also the study [of the Torah sages] for their intent is not to glorify themselves. Therefore be careful not to suspect them thinking that it is because Torah is their occupation that they praise Torah study in this chapter.

Level 2

☆ **Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)**

Siftei Daat, Daat Torah 1 pg.194 - "blessed be He who chose them and their Mishna" - from here we learn that when one goes to learn by a Rabbi, it is proper for him to say beforehand: "blessed be He who chose them and their Mishna". For wholeness in chinuch (education) depends on the student's giving himself over to the educator and having complete faith in him..

Level 3

☆ **Maharal**

Maharal - this chapter is not from the Mishnah. For the Mishna (of Pirkei Avot) is only five chapters..

You should know that these five chapters (of Mishna) correspond to the five books of Moses. For just like the Torah (Pentateuch) has five chumashim (books), so too there are five chapters in derech eretz (ethical conduct), which are words of mussar. For "if there is no Torah, there is no derech eretz and if there is no derech eretz, there is no Torah" (Avot 3:17).

Therefore, since the two depend on each other, it is proper for them to be considered equal. For this he set five chapters in derech eretz (Pirkei Avot) just like there are five books in the Torah. And just like the Torah begins the order of genealogy from Bereisheit (Genesis) and the order of the generations one after the other, so too correspondingly, Pirkei Avot begins "Moshe received the Torah from Sinai [and transmitted it to Yehoshua, and Yehoshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the Prophets, etc...]" and the rest of the chapter discusses the order of the transfer of the Tradition to the next generations.

Thus there are five chapters and all the five chapters speak only of words of mussar (ethics). And even though in a few places, they spoke on the matter of Torah, but this was not at all the primary

subject and was brought on the side.

Therefore this Beraitha comes to clarify the quality (maalah) of the Torah in order to connect Torah and derech erez completely. All of this Beraitha speaks on the Torah to make known the quality of the Torah over derech erez.

(for derech erez is the order of the world while Torah is the divine order which is above this world - R. Hartman)

But since the primary subject is on mussar which is derech erez, therefore he brought five chapters of words of mussar and the Beraitha which is an addition on the quality (maalah) of the Torah.. This is what he said: "the sages taught in the language of the Mishna" - that it is an addition to the Mishna.

Q Level 3

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "Blessed be He who chose them and their Mishna (teaching)" - first them and after their Mishnah. For words of ethics are pleasing and acceptable to the ear only when the speaker himself fulfills what he preaches.

It is thus important to know that the sages whose names are brought in tractate Avot were living examples of the conduct they preached to us. They lived by the light of these words and thus this obligates us more (to listen to them).

For example: "Hillel the elder would say..love peace, pursue peace, love the public and draw them closer to the Torah" (Avot 1:12).

Indeed the patience and humility of Hillel were legendary until our sages put him as a banner saying: "a person should always strive to be humble like Hillel" (Shabbat 30b). His sterling character traits are brought in several places and through them many gentiles converted to Judaism..

So too for all the sages in tractate Avot - they were living examples of their words.

Q Level 3

☆ Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - "Blessed be He who chose them and their Mishna (teaching)" - i.e. blessed is G-d who chose them and their Mishna. The beginning of acquiring Torah is kavod hatorah (honoring the Torah). Before one comes forward to learn something of Torah, he must precede on himself kavod hatorah (honoring the Torah). Namely, to know its holiness, loftiness, and worth (kedushata, romemuta, ve'ercha). For it is "the Chemda Genuza (hidden treasure) that the Holy One, blessed be He, delights in (mishtashea ba) every day" (Shabbat 89a). Thus, one needs to prepare and correct himself (yachin veyachshir atzmo) to receive it in holiness and purity. He must understand that Torah study is not like the study of other wisdoms of the world.

This preparation and honor/reverence fitting for Torah study is the true way to acquire the Torah.

But without this preparation, then ch'v the Torah becomes by him like any other wisdom and it is lowly in his eyes. How then can he acquire it?

This is what the Tanna teaches us: "Blessed be He who chose them and their Mishna (teaching)" as an introduction to the chapter of kinyan Torah. For with such an approach, with all the preparation and utmost honor it deserves through this he will come to acquiring the Torah.

Q Level 4

Chida

Chida, marit haayin - as known Rabeinu Hakadosh composed only five chapters in Pirkei Avot

corresponding to [the letter] Heh which hints to the Shechina (divine presence) in which is the oral Torah. And he who fulfills the words of Pirkei Avot will be able to fulfill the Torah and cleave to the Shechina.

Chapter 6 Beraitha 2 - Merits Many Things

Rabbi Meir says: whoever toils in Torah for its own sake merits many things, and not only so but the whole world is worthwhile for him [alone]. He is called a friend, a beloved, one that loves G-d, one that loves the public, one that gladdens G-d, one that gladdens the public. The Torah enclothes him with humility and fear (reverence) and fits him to become righteous, pious, upright, and faithful. It distances him from sin and brings him near to merit. People benefit from him counsel and sound knowledge, understanding and might, as written: "Mine are counsel and sound knowledge, I am understanding, mine is might" (Mishlei 8:14). The Torah grants him majesty, dominion, and ability to analyze the law. Secrets of Torah are revealed to him and he becomes as an ever-increasing wellspring and like an unceasing river. He becomes modest, slow to anger, and forgiving of insult. The Torah elevates and exalts him over all the works [of G-d].

רַבִּי מַעִיר אוֹמֵר כָּל הַעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה לְשֵׁמָה, זֹכֶה לְדַבְרֵי הָרַבָּה. וְלֹא עוֹד אֲלֵא שֶׁכָּל הָעוֹלָם כְּלוּ כְּדֵי הוּא לוֹ. נִקְרָא אֶת רַע, אֶהוֹב, אֶהוֹב אֶת הַמְּקוֹם, אֶהוֹב אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת, מְשַׂמַּח אֶת הַמְּקוֹם, מְשַׂמַּח אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת. וּמַלְבִּישׁוֹ עֲנֹה וְיִרְאַה, וּמְכַשְׂרֵתוֹ לְהִיּוֹת צַדִּיק וְיֹשֵׁר וְנֶאֱמָר, וּמְרַחֲקֵתוֹ מִן הַחַטָּא, וּמְקַרְבֵתוֹ לְיָדֵי זְכוּת, וְנִהְיִין מִמֶּנּוּ עֵצָה וְתוֹשִׁיָה בִּינָה וְגִבּוֹרָה, שְׁנֶאֱמַר (מִשְׁלֵי ח) לִי עֵצָה וְתוֹשִׁיָה אֲנִי בִּינָה לִי גִבּוֹרָה. וְנוֹתֶנֶת לוֹ מַלְכוּת וּמְמַשְׁלָה וְחֻקוֹר דִּין, וּמְגַלִּין לוֹ רְדֵי תוֹרָה, וְנִעְשֶׂה כְּמַעַן הַמִּתְגַּבֵּר וְכִנְהָר שְׂאִינוּ פּוֹסֵק, וְהוּי צָנוּעַ וְאָרֶךְ רוּחַ, וּמוֹחֵל עַל עֲלֻבוֹנוֹ, וּמְגַדֵּלְתוֹ וּמְרוֹמְמֵתוֹ עַל כָּל הַמַּעֲשִׂים.

Q Level 2

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "whoever toils (osek) in Torah" - that he makes his Torah a serious business (osek retzini) and thinks only on it all the time (just like every businessman thinks on his business all the time).

And likewise he needs to learn lishma, i.e. to cling to G-d and to know the Torah and understand it in great depth. Certainly, not every person who learns Torah merits to reach such a level and to receive the qualities brought here.

But nevertheless, the words here are meant to encourage a man to begin to learn and toil in Torah. For our sages said: "a person should always learn Torah [even] not lishma, for from not lishma, he will come to lishma.." (Pesachim 50b).. Do not think it's all or nothing, black or white. Rather, the more one learns Torah lishma, the more he will receive of these levels, whether a little or a lot...

Q Level 2

Chatam Sofer

Shevet Mussar, Toldot - "whoever toils in Torah for its own sake merits many things" - he did not say "whoever learns" but rather "whoever toils". For in Torah, the main thing is the strain and toil, in-depth learning and pilpul (sharp logic), give and take (maasa umatan) in halacha, to delve deeply in it. Thus the blessing on the Torah is "to toil in words of Torah" and not "to learn words of Torah". For the main mitzvah is the toil and strain and to learn in order to do, to reach the true halacha in order to know the path to walk.

Q Level 2

Chatam Sofer

Ketav Sofer, gitin hakdama - "whoever toils in Torah for its own sake merits many things" - he did not say whoever learns but rather whoever toils. Namely, he toils, investigates, and delves deeply. If this is lishma - he will merit many things. For the gates of Torah will illuminate for him and G-d enlightens his eyes every day "velo yiga le'rik velo yeled l'batala" (he will not toil for nothing..etc.)

Q Level 2

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "merits many things, and not only so.." - this implies that those "many things" are besides the honorable list of traits brought in this Mishna.

Why then were they not written explicitly?

Because for a person who still did not try to learn Torah lishma, it is impossible for him to understand them. But one who truly learns Torah lishma or if he merits to know up close one who learns Torah lishma - he already has a glimpse of what are these "many things".

Q Level 3

Maharal Tzintz

Maharal Tzantz - "merits many things.." - although the Torah lies in a corner in a narrow place, and appears to be a mere one handsbreadth by one handsbreadth, but nevertheless, it spreads out without limit. For its explanations, hints, and secrets are infinite. Thus, it spreads out to those who toil in it and those who do so lishma merit many things.

Q Level 4

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "whoever toils in Torah for its own sake (lishma) merits many things" - the primary matter of lishma is for love of Torah, to toil and stand on (grasp) its root (see Nefesh Hachaim shaar 4). But if one thinks that lishma means deveikut (clinging to G-d), if so according to his view and imagination he will think it is better to toil in songs and praises, especially tehilim which rouses love and closeness to G-d. This will be enough for him to live a pleasant life.

But it is not so. For we find in a midrash that David prayed that one who engages in tehilim should be considered as one who toils in tractates negaim and ohalot (of the Mishna).

Thus negaim and ohalot are more precious and we don't find that G-d accepted his request in this.

For the primary Torah study is not to toil only in devekut (clinging to G-d) but rather to grasp its mitzvot and judgments (dinim) and to know every matter to its depth - its general principles and fine details. And also to grasp His awesome deeds and investigate His glory (study of kabala).

For this one needs to learn with tremendous effort to grasp the Torah's intent according to one's ability. And the more he learns, the more he will want to learn more. He will delight in love of Torah and wish he did not need to eat and sleep so he could toil and delve deeply, thirstily drinking its words all his days, as written: "if you hear the old, you will hear the new.. a full vessel can hold more but not an empty vessel" (Berachot 40a), "in Your light, we will see light" (Tehilim 36) - i.e. in Your Torah, we will see more light of Torah.

For through the light we attained, we will see that there is more light and will hope to attain it.

This is as one who enters the chambers of the king's treasuries. The chamber is full of light and from there he sees a door to an inner chamber. He longs to enter inside and from there he sees more inner chambers. And the closer he gets to the chamber of the king himself, the more each chamber is vastly more beautiful and adorned than the previous outer chamber.

But if he did not enter the first chamber from the beginning he would not have known anything that there were more inner chambers and even more inner chambers than those etc.

So too for the Torah. Through the light he attains at first, he sees there is more and greater light than this and likewise further on.

Through this, he will lust to understand and attain more and more until he attains all the secrets of the universe.

Q Level 4

Sfas Emes

Sfas Emes on Avot - "whoever toils in Torah for its own sake merits many things" - for the Torah is

the life force (chiyut) of everything as the midrah says: "the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world with the Torah" (Genesis Rabbah 1:1). For the light of the Torah became en clothed in the whole creation. Thus the entire creation is a name of the Torah similar to "G-d is one and His Name is one".

Therefore, one who toils in the Torah lishma, i.e. to draw down the life force of the Torah to all things, through this the Torah enlightens him in all things and he can see and recognize the light of Torah contained in all things. And he merits many things. For holiness is one thing and the things of this world are many things. Thus, through the power of Torah one can join all things to the klal (one source) which is the Torah.

"whoever toils in Torah for its own sake merits many things" - for "man does not realize its worth..". For its light was en clothed in the words of the Torah we see but this is only a garment to the main Torah as written in the zohar (Behaalotcha). And in order to increase the honor of the Torah, G-d en clothed it in this garment (of words).. but in truth it is just an opening to come to the inner chambers of the Torah through guarding the Torah and mitzvot.. through our deeds we can open the wellspring of wisdom and root of its inner chambers...

🔍 Level 1

☆ Rashi

Rashi - "merits many things" - to become a tzadik, chasid, etc. as he continues.

🔍 Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "merits many things" - long life, blessings, success, wealth and honor as promised in the verses of the Torah.

🔍 Level 3

☆ Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - "merits many things" - as known from the book Pri Etz Chaim, one time Rabeinu Arizal was sleeping during the day on the Sabbath for the mitzvah of Oneg Shabbat (pleasure on the Sabbath). While he was sleeping, Rabbi Avraham Halevi came to him and saw that his lips were whispering. He drew close to try to hear what he was whispering and the Arizal awoke from his sleep.

Rabbi Avraham apologized for waking him up for he saw his lips whispering and beseeched the Arizal to explain to him what this was about.

The Arizal answered him that whenever he sleeps, his soul ascends above and is greeted by ministering angels (spiritual beings). They ask him where he would like to go, to the yeshiva of Rebbi Meir, or the yeshiva of Rebbi Shimon bar Yochai or Chikiyahu king of Yehuda, or other Yeshivas. He chooses what he chooses and receives from those yeshivas lofty secrets of the holy Torah.

"Just now I received lofty secrets on the parsha of the prophecy of Bilaam. Therefore, you saw my lips moving below while my soul was receiving great secrets above".

Rabbi Avraham said to him: "my master please tell me these secrets you received now". The Arizal replied: "I swear to you, if I were to sit with you for eighty years straight, it would not be enough to teach you what I just received this hour. For when the soul is above, divested of the physical body, it can learn in one hour what would not suffice a hundred years while attached to the body. end quote.

The Kabbalists wrote that if one toils in Torah lishma below in this world, he merits that his soul ascends above and receives lofty secrets. With this we will understand what Rebbi Meir said: "whoever toils in Torah for its own sake merits many things", i.e. that his soul ascends every night

and receives many things in one hour..

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "whoever learns Torah for its own sake (*lishma*)" - not out of fear of punishment. For he knows that G-d commanded us to toil in the Torah only for its great name, since the person realizes its glorious loftiness. For it is the entire purpose of man and the purpose of the whole creation.

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel on Avot - "for its own sake (*lishma*)" - not to elevate oneself (lo lehitgadel) nor to utilize it (lo lehishtamesh bo) but rather to fulfill it, which is *lishma* - he will merit many things.

For the Torah elevates him above others with wealth and honor and to be considered noble and elevated.

And even without wealth [he is elevated], for the true Torah scholars are higher and greater than the very wealthy as written: "she (the Torah) is more precious than rubies; and all the things you can desire are not to be compared with her." (Mishlei 3:15) and our sages taught: "a mamzer Torah scholar comes before a kohen gadol am haaretz" (Horayot 13a).

Q Level 2

Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer, nedarim 81a - "Torah *lishma*" - he did not say "l'shem shamayim" (for the sake of Heaven). For the intent is not just to fulfill the mitzvot and know the halacha so as to do properly. Such a form of Torah study is not greater than fulfilling the mitzvot themselves in that when he does not toil it does not save him.

Rather, the primary toil in Torah is a mitzvah by itself - to contemplate it day and night and to delve deeply and investigate all the consequences and implications. For its thoughts are deep. "if you walk in My statutes" (Vayikrah 26:3 - (Rashi:) "that you toil in Torah" - and not just to know the mitzvah for when it will be needed. Rather "derush u'kabel schar" (expound it and receive reward), i.e. the drasha (expounding) itself is the reward and nachat ruach before the Holy One, blessed be He.

This is "toiling in Torah *lishma*" (osek *lishma* shel Torah) and not for any other intent. This shields and saves.

Q Level 2

☆ **Chida**

Chida, Chasdei Avot - "Torah *lishma*" - "*lishma*" i.e. not on condition to receive reward from any side. Even though his intent is only to please his Creator, nevertheless he merits many things, more than one who learns Torah not *lishma*.

Furthermore "the whole world is worthwhile for him". The proof is that he is called "friend" (*reah*) to the Holy One blessed be He. Thus, since G-d fulfills the whole Torah, so to speak, and it is written there "love your fellow (*reah*) as yourself" then certainly "the whole world is worthwhile for him".

Q Level 3

☆ **Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)**

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz) - "Torah *lishma*" - i.e. in order to draw close to G-d (l'shem hitkarvut el H') (Daat Chochma u'mussar 1:67).

"whoever toils in Torah for its own sake merits many things..." all the things brought here are of the qualities (*maalot*) of the Torah. But only one who toils in the Torah *lishma* merits them. The reason is that the crown of the Torah is that it is absolutely pure (*tahor b'tachlit*) as written: "the words of G-d are pure words: as silver refined in an earthen furnace, purified seven times" (Tehilim 12:7)..

Therefore studying it needs to be completely and absolutely pure and refined of all impurities - Torah study lishma. Only such a person merits the qualities of the Torah. But if his study is not polished with very great cleanliness, this is not at all considered Torah study. For the Torah is absolutely pure. How then could he merit the qualities of the Torah? (Daat Chomah umussar 2:8).

 **Level 3**

Maharal

Maharal - "whoever toils in Torah lishma" - that which they said lishma specifically, this is since when one learns Torah lishmah, he has the quality (maalah) of the Torah. For he learns lishmah. But if his study is not lishma, he does not have the quality of the Torah at all. For his study is not lishma but rather to acquire honor or the like. Thus he does not have the quality of the Torah as is proper and all the qualities mentioned here stem from the quality of the Torah. Thus if his study in the Torah is lishma, he has the quality of the Torah itself...

 **Level 4**

☆ **Chida**

Chida roshei avot - (kabalistic) "lishma" - lishma means not in order to receive reward from any side, not in this world nor in the next. This is the pshat (plain meaning) of lishma.

In remez (hint), when he learns lishma, a nitzutz (spark) of Moshe Rabeinu shines on him. Thus lishma spells "l'moshe".

In Drosh, one needs thought, speech and action corresponding to nefesh, ruach, and neshama. Namely, pure and clean thought, uttering of the lips for speech, and "toil" with all one's might in deed.

In Sod, the Arizal explained that lishma spells leshem Heh (which represents the Shechina)..

Rabeinu Chaim Vital writes in his introduction to Etz Chaim: "if Torah scholars of our generation think they are learning Torah lishma, the great Tanna Rebbi Meir contradicts them. For he said: 'whoever learns Torah lishma merits many things, etc.' And every Chacham (sage) can see that he did not merit to attain even a little bit of these things Rebbi Meir mentioned. This testifies that he did not toil lishma.." see there for more and whoever has a heart will push himself to learn lishma, i.e. to please his Maker. (laasot nachat ruach leyotzro).

 **Level 3**

☆ **Chida**

Chida, Avodat Hakodesh, tziporen shamir 4:48 - "lishma" the plain meaning (pshat) according to Rabeinu Chaim Vital is that he intends specifically laasot nachat ruach leyotzro (to please his Maker) only, not for the benefit of his body or soul, not even to merit Olam Haba (paradise). (Midbar Kadmut, maarechet lemed).

All who hold on to the Torah should watch themselves and contemplate to learn Torah lishma specifically as Rebbi Yehuda said: "fortunate is he whose toil is in the Torah and who does nachat ruach to his Maker" (Berachot 17a). For this is the whole fruit of Torah study - to do nachat ruach l'yotzro (please his Creator) specifically. This is the meaning of lishma - that he has no other motive, not honor nor money nor in any other side or way in the world whatsoever. Rather, to rectify the root of Torah study above and to unify the dodim (beloved, this refers to kabalistic concepts).

He should think that there are supernal secrets in every Torah study. Generally speaking he should have intent to fulfill the commandment of the Creator specifically. And G-d who examines the heart knows the depth of his thoughts, and this should be done in fear/awe...

 **Level 3**

☆ **Yachel Yisrael**

Yachel Yisrael - "lishma" - not for personal motives such as to show off his sharpness or

demonstrate his proficiency or the like. For in that case, eventually he will twist the words of Torah since it is his own dark light which guides him and the truth is not a candle to his path.

Rather, only one who studies Torah with intent to know the divine truth - only he can attain it and therefore his study is very precious.

It is not easy to reach the level of Torah lishma. One must be at a high spiritual level of love of G-d in order to desire solely to fulfill His will. Likewise one must separate from matters of this world until he has no interest in its lusts and feels no importance for bodily pleasures.. Such a person does not long to amass money nor is he thirsty for honor or fame. "the Torah of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver" (Tehilim 119:72)..

Essentially one needs to nullify his ego. For if one learns for status, honor, money or even reward in the afterlife - this is not wholeness in Torah study lishma. Rather it is study with personal interest, with other goals and external considerations.

But nevertheless, one should not refrain from engaging in Torah study when he is not on these lofty levels as our sages said: "a person should always learn Torah [even] not lishma. For from not lishma, he will come to lishma.." (Pesachim 50b).

"one that loves G-d, one that loves the created beings" - this quality of one who toils in Torah lishma comes naturally. For he has removed his own personal interests and has no desire other than to do the will of G-d, cling to His ways, and grasp of His wisdom. Since he has abandoned desires of this world, he divested himself of jealousy, lust and honor. Thus there is no barrier left between him and his fellow and he lives in peace and brotherhood with everyone..

"the Torah elevates and exalts him over all the works [of G-d]" - he who learns Torah lishma, eventually the Torah elevates him above the physical and connects him to the infinite wisdom, the spirit of G-d which transcends space and time. Then G-d's conduct with him will be above the natural order and he is no longer ruled by nature. Rather all his life is guided in a miraculous way... and not only is he not ruled by nature but on the contrary the keys to nature are in his hands, as written: "the tzadik decrees and G-d fulfills" (Moed Katan 16b)..

Level 3

Chasdei David

Chasdei David - a story is told about an old villager who came before the great tzadik (righteous) Rabbi Meir of Parmishlan and was bemoaning that he is now an old man and that he prays the whole year without a minyan since in his village there is no minyan except for the high holidays. The villager was very bitter on what will be with him after 120 years.

The Tzadik answered him that last night he ascended up to Heaven (i.e. to the spiritual world). He saw there three people brought before the heavenly Beit Din, a Rabbi, a Chazan (cantor), and a Jewish villager.

First they asked the Rabbi what his deeds were in this world. The Rabbi answered that he learned Torah, his mouth did not stop uttering words of Torah. Then they asked him: "was your intent l'Shem shamayim (for G-d)?.. Let us open the book of remembrances to have a look". They opened the book and saw that everything was with arrogance and in order to receive praise. Then an angel full of darkness appeared and said that he was created through the Torah and sermons of this Rabbi. They sentenced the Rabbi to Gehinom r'l.

Afterwards, the Chazan (cantor) was brought and they asked him whether he served G-d, blessed be He. He replied that he was a chazan (cantor) and he prayed and sang to G-d and for the

Geulah (redemption).

They asked him whether he prayed l'shem shamayim. They checked the book of remembrances and found that his intent was to show off his beautiful voice to the congregation and to please the leaders of the congregation.

Immediately an angel full of darkness appeared and said he was created by the prayer of the chazan. He was sentenced to three years of wandering and afterwards Gehinom, r'l.

When the villager saw the judgments of the Rabbi and Cantor despite that they certainly prayed with a minyan every day - then what will be his lot? Due to this he panicked and started to run away. They asked him: "where are you fleeing? Don't you know that it is impossible to escape from here?"

They started to ask him like the previous two: "what did you do in your world?" Out of great fear he answered: "I did nothing all the days of my life!"

They asked him: "tell the truth, did you ever do some mitzvah?" He stuck to his words and replied that he did nothing. They reminded him: "perhaps you gave once charity to a poor person?" Then he remembered and told over: "I lived alone in the village among two hundred gentiles and when a Jew came to me asking for charity, I invited him to eat by me and did not let him leave my house alone at night. I gave him my bed to sleep on while I slept on the floor.

In the morning I gave him some bread and a sizable donation to rejoice his heart. Afterwards, I myself accompanied him to the second village where there were many Jews so that the gentiles would not attack him on the road. For I was a strong man and did not fear them. Thus I conducted myself all my life in the village".

Immediately, an angel full of light appeared and said: "this villager created me with his mitzvot." G-d ruled that He will bring the villager to Gan Eden for he did all in his power l'shem shamayim.

From here we see that the ikar (main thing) is to do everything l'shem shamayim. Specifically then the soul merits to what it desires.

🔍 Level 1

☆ Rashi

Rashi - "and not only so but the whole world is worthwhile for him [alone]" - i.e. it was created for him. Similarly it is written: "[this is the end of the matter; all having been heard: Fear G-d, and keep His commandments;] for this is all of man" (Kohelet 12:13).

🔍 Level 2

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - "friend, beloved" - I saw in the Midrash Raba (parsha Lech Lecha): "every craftsman hates his fellow craftsman (competitor), except for talmidei chachamim (Torah scholars). For they do not hate each other".

In the book "Nezer Hakodesh", the author wondered on this. For we see that sometimes Talmidei Chachamim do hate each other.

He answered:

That which the craftsmen hate each other, this is because each one thinks his fellow causes him a loss. For if he were the only craftsman, everyone would need to go to him.

But for talmidei chachamim, one does not diminish his fellow in his learning.

Therefore, why should they hate each other? And that which you see that sometimes they do hate each other, those are Torah scholars who do not learn lishma but rather to attain honor or money. Thus each of these scholars thinks his fellow diminishes him and if he were alone, he would have attained more honor or money. Hence, they are just like the craftsmen..

But one who learns Torah lishma and not for honor or money, he is not like the craftsmen who hate each other. Rather he is "a friend and beloved to every man and loves G-d". For he learns out of love of G-d not out of love of honor and money..

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "he is called a friend" - it is proper to befriend him and listen to his advice on all matters.

Q Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - "he is called a friend" - for when a man toils in Torah, he creates worlds and rectifies them, as our sages expounded on the verse: "I have put My Word in your mouth.. to plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth".. "My word" - this is the Torah. Through it you will also "plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth, and say to Tzion", i.e. Yisrael who are called Tzion. "you are My people (Ami)" - do not read "Ami" (my people) but rather "Imi" (with Me) - i.e. as a partner [to G-d in upholding the creation]..

Thus, man's work is like the work of Heaven (G-d) since G-d created the world with speech, as written: "by the word of G-d were the heavens made; and all their hosts by the breath of His mouth" (Tehilim 33:6).

This is what our sages said: "whoever toils in Torah for its own sake merits many things". For through Torah lishma, he rectifies many awesome worlds.. and thus he is called a "friend" so to speak with the Holy One, blessed be He...

Q Level 1

Midrash Shmuel - "He is called a friend, a beloved, one that loves G-d, one that loves people.." - he is called a friend of G-d and people because he brings joy to G-d and people. For a true friend, all his aspiration and desire is to bring joy to his beloved.

"one that loves G-d" - for through Torah study he will recognize his Creator and love Him. He will love people and it will be difficult in his eyes to see people going away from the mussar and he will teach them a book (of Torah) and draw them to the Torah. All this due to his love for them..

Q Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "a beloved, one that loves G-d, one that loves the created beings" - not only virtuous people but even those people who are crooked in character traits or in sins whereby there is no reason to love them except for the fact that they are "created beings", i.e. G-d's creatures.

Q Level 3

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "he is called a friend, beloved.. - for the main thing is that he is also beloved. For it is not enough that a man loves G-d. He needs to strive that G-d also loves him, namely, by guarding His commandments and going in the way of G-d. But if he does not do all that G-d commanded him. Then even if he loves G-d in his heart it means nothing if he is not also beloved by G-d..

Furthermore, in the blessing at a wedding: "rejoice beloved friends", the blessing is that the bride and groom should be beloved to each other. For as known, scripture states: "withdraw your foot from your neighbor's house, lest he be weary of you and hate you" (Mishlei 25:17). This is only for

plain friends. But for "beloved friends", such as a man and his wife, the more they are together, the more the love between them strengthens.

So too regarding one who toils in Torah. The more a person toils in the Torah, the more the Torah also cleaves to him. But if the opposite then: "you leave me one day, I leave you two days" (Yerushalmi Berachot 9:1).

But this is only for one who learns lishma. But if his intent is for honor or money, then even if he loves the Torah since it is his livelihood, but the Torah does not love him. This is as brought in the Talmud: "one who reads a verse as a song.. the Torah dons sackcloth and stands before the Holy One, blessed be He saying: 'Your sons have made me into a harp'".

All the more so if he makes the Torah into a spade to dig with (to make money) that the Torah dons sackcloth. For a spade is lower (less honorable) than a harp.

Thus he said here that one who toils in Torah lishma is called a beloved friend. For the Torah also loves him.

Level 4

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "one that loves G-d (*haMakom/the Place*)" - as known, G-d is the place of the world. Just like space contains objects inside it, so too G-d, so to speak, included all the worlds, mystical and physical in His speech of the ten sayings of creation (Genesis 1)... and the whole intent in the creation was for the holy Torah and its believers.. One who learns Torah lishma also upholds the world. Therefore he is called:"one that loves G-d and the created beings". For he desires in their welfare.

"one that gladdens G-d, one that gladdens the created beings" - for the Torah is the delight (shashuav) of G-d. and when a person toils in the Torah, it is a time of favor, mercy, and joy and good comes to the world.. as written: "as G-d rejoices to bestow good on you". This is the meaning of "one that gladdens G-d, one that gladdens the created beings".

Level 3

☆ **Chachma u'Mussar**

Chachma u'Mussar 2:34 - "one that gladdens G-d, one that gladdens the created beings" - i.e. all the creations. For all creations were created for one purpose - the will of G-d. And since the world was founded on one single purpose, therefore perforce whoever furthers the purpose is like a partner with all the creations to bring them all towards their purpose. Thus certainly he gladdens them.

This is the reason why animals and beasts all submit themselves before servants of G-d. For servants of G-d use the world for its purpose and thus they benefit all the creations in this. understand this.

Level 2

Chatam Sofer

Daat Sofer, derush 9 - "The Torah enclothes him with humility and fear" - for through the Torah, he will come to recognize that his service is only a little bit relative to his duties of gratitude towards G-d..

Level 2

☆ **Matanat Avot**

Matanat Avot - "the Torah enclothes him with humility and fear" - this we have heard and seen with our own eyes regarding the great scholars of our times. Namely, despite that they have reached very high levels of Torah knowledge, nevertheless they are unimaginably humble until they don't think anything of themselves and do not think they deserve any honor. Not only that but they are very concerned on their Olam Haba and on the judgments they will face there.

It seems to me obvious that such levels of humility are not possible in the natural order. It is impossible to be so big and feel so small. It is only because the Torah enclothes him with humility and yirah (fear). Thus he wrote "enclothes him" and not "he merits to humility and fear". For it is only because the Torah enclothes him with these traits. Without this, it would be impossible to get there.

"be tzanuah (modest)" - he did not write: "he becomes tzanuah (modest)" but rather "be tzanuah (modest)" as a command. For the tanna speaks to the Torah scholar who learns Torah lishma and tells him: "know that even though you have reached very great levels, nevertheless be modest and hide yourself from the eyes of others as much as possible. If G-d decides that you are worthy of being an example to the public, He will work to publicize you. But you yourself need to hide yourself and not try to show the people how many qualities you have attained".

Q Level 3

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "The Torah enclothes him with humility and fear (reverence) - for humility needs to be on a person always like a garment which he does not remove even before his household. He said humility and fear. For "on the heels of humility is the fear of G-d" (Mishlei 22:4). Since the end purpose of humility is in order to bring from this to fear of G-d. For all the time he does not have true and absolutely complete humility, his fear of G-d will also not be complete. And everything comes through the holy Torah as written "the beginning of wisdom is the fear of G-d" (Mishlei 9:10), i.e. the primary wisdom is fear of G-d (see Nefesh Hachaim 4:9).

Q Level 3

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Birkat Avot - "the Torah enclothes him with humility and fear" - since it enclothes him with humility, he knows his level and lackings. Thus automatically he is enclothed with fear - he fears the day of judgment. This is machshir (fits) him to become a tzadik, chasid, yashar, ve'neeman (righteous, pious, upright, faithful).

But the am ha'aretz (Torah ignorant), with a little good deeds he has in his hands, he thinks he is already perfect in his service and lacks nothing, and is fit to enter Gan Eden while alive. For since he is an am ha'aretz, he is unable to grasp his level and see his lackings.

Q Level 2

Einei Kol Chai - "it makes him fit (kosher)" - a man has in his body the letters of the Torah and he is like a sefer Torah (Torah scroll). And when he sins, he is pogem (damaging) the letters of the Torah and the sefer Torah becomes pasul (unkosher).

Q Level 3

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "The Torah fits him (machshir/makes him kosher) to become righteous, pious, upright, and faithful" - for when a person wants to cleave to G-d in a high level, he must first turn away from the evil defilement of his yetzer. This is like an unkosher pot. If one does not do hagala (immerse it in boiling water) to extract out the forbidden remnants absorbed in its walls then if one cooks food in the pot the food will become forbidden to eat. Thus one must put the pot in fire first to make it kosher and afterwards he can cook food in it.

So too for the impure (tamei) heart. Anything put in it will become impure (tamei). Rather the fire of Torah is machshir (makes kosher) the nefesh/soul to correct sin, remove iniquity, as written: "is not My word like fire?" (Yirmiyahu 23:9).. and if he does not toil in Torah, he will need to be brought in the fire of gehinom to extract the treifot and filth of tumah absorbed in him..

Thus the Torah is machshir (makes kosher) him and burns out the evil. This is what he writes afterwards "It distances him from sin and brings him near to merit". For it distances him from evil

and draws him to the good.. for a spirit from Gan Eden surrounds him also in this world and the evil is unable to touch him.. Furthermore in Torah lishma on the contrary sins flee from him. for he sees always the punishments and their severity and the greatness of the level of one who does not transgress them and thus mitzvot chase him. For he fears for his soul to do them properly..

"tzadik" - from the day he is born until he returns to the dust from which he came, man needs to drive away his yetzer so as to not become ensnared in his traps. This is within man's capacity to do if he strengthens himself all his days to wage this war and he does not slacken from gazing at all his ways so that the yetzer will not be able to trap him and capture his soul. For the yetzer is a seasoned warrior from his youth. Therefore one needs very much to strengthen himself.

If one strengthens himself over him and does not sway at all from the way of the Torah - he is called a tzadik.

If he becomes habituated in this and adds additional watchfulness (beyond the letter of the law) he is called a chasid.

"it distances him from sin" - it does not say G-d "overlooks his sins". For this does not apply. It is like when a person eats poisonous food. Forgiving him does not apply. So too here. G-d created all the worlds in such a way that their building or destruction depends only on man's deeds. For man includes all the worlds as written: "let us make man" (Gen.1:26) - all of them gave a portion in man.

If a man does good, he causes light to be drawn down to all the worlds according to his soul's root. And this will be his reward, namely, he is given all the worlds with the lights he added through his good deeds. He will delight in them and also during his life. While doing the good deed he is surrounded and enclothed with a surrounding light (ohr makif) from Gan Eden.

But if he corrupts his ways it is the opposite. Then he damages the mystical worlds according to his soul's root, as known from the Zohar.

Then during the sin, he is surrounded and enclothed with an impure spirit from Gehinom, and as our sages taught: "it (the sin) coils around him and brings him to Gehinom" (Sotah 3b).

He is thus forced to receive his punishment in Gehinom according to the greatness of the damages he caused until he is healed of his illness and rectifies the damage to his soul.. He receives the punishment through the Mazikim (evil forces) created by his deeds and then the Mazikim die out and disintegrate.

Thus "forgiving" does not apply here. For this is the natural order.

But for one who toils in Torah lishma, he does not need all this. For even though the yetzer chases after him to cause him to sin, the Torah distances the yetzer from him. Not only that but it also "brings him near to merit".

"people benefit from him counsel and sound knowledge, understanding and might" - a man needs to examine and investigate always all the deeds he does to ascertain if they are truly good and pleasing before G-d. Therefore he wrote here two things: etza (counsel) and tushia (sound knowledge). Etza is on how to conduct his deeds while tushia is a deeper counsel.. namely, to examine his deeds deeply to investigate if it is truly good or just it appears good to the eye.

Binah (understanding) means to understand one thing from another in this. Gevurah (might)

afterwards is to strengthen oneself over the yetzer with all one's might. All this will be through the Torah, as written: "Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have might" (Mishlei 8:14). These verses in Mishlei are actually the words of the Torah speaking. Namely, if the yetzer wants to entice him out of the path and deceive him that a sin is a mitzvah - through the Torah he will understand this. Likewise if the yetzer rouses him through lust, through the Torah he will have gevurah (might) to overpower him..

And even though this is the Torah speaking, nevertheless for those who toil in the Torah it is also so.. for every man who toils in it is connected to it and enclothes himself in its traits..

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "upright.. faithful" - "upright" (yashar) in derech erez (decent behavior) and faithful in money. Alternatively, "faithful" - steadfast in his emunah (faith) and bitachon (trust) in G-d.

Q Level 2

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "tzadik, chasid, yashar, v'neeman" - these four titles are different from each other. tzadik refers to one who does what is proper to do. For "the L-ord is righteous; He loves righteousness" (Tehilim 11:7). And as known it is proper to give charity to a poor man. For he is naked and lacking everything. How then can one not give him charity?

"Chasid" - he does beyond the line of justice. He does this out of chasidut (piety) and goodness. This is the trait of Chasid.

"Yashar" - on some things, honesty and justice requires a man to do them. This is called Yosher, the third trait.

"Neeman (faithful)" - he does not lie nor change in his faithfulness. These four traits include all traits..

Q Level 2

Midrash Shmuel - "fits him to become righteous, pious, upright, and faithful" - "upright" (yashar) is one who is never aroused at all to evil deeds. Rather, by nature he does what is proper.

"righteous" (Tzadik) is one who conquers his evil inclination (i.e. when he is roused to evil, he fights the impulse and overcomes it).

"Pious" (Chasid) is one who does beyond the obligation of the law (lifnim mishurat hadin).

It would seem that "upright" (Yashar) is included in "pious" (Chasid). If so, why did he mention Yashar after Chasid. It seems the answer is because the Chasid cannot always remain in his Chasidut but the Tzadik can. For example, one (Chasid) may strive to always be among the first ten people in the synagogue for the morning prayer. It is impossible for him to not miss this sometimes.

But the tzadik is one who prays every day and it is possible for him to stand up to this every day.

Thus he said the Torah will push him to be a Chasid Yashar (pious upright), i.e. that his Chasidut be fixed in him like the Yashar and become as second nature.

And this is what he says after "faithful". Namely, he will be a Chasid fixed in a faithful place.

"be modest.." - since he compared him to an ever increasing river whose way is to make a big noise and is heard from faraway, therefore he exhorted him to not publicize his matter but rather to

be modest.

"and forgiving of insult.." - if you ask: "he already said earlier: 'it enclothes him with humility'"? The answer is that humility has a beginning, middle and end (3 stages). The beginning is to be of lowly spirit before every man and to honor everyone accordingly. The middle is "those who are insulted but don't insult back" - they feel anger in their heart but don't answer. The end is "forgiving of insult", these do not feel any anger as if they are not human (but angels).

"The Torah grants him majesty" - that he rules over his yetzer (evil inclination).. as written: "if this wretched one (the evil inclination) encounters you, pull it into the study hall (of Torah). If it is a stone it will melt, and if it is iron it will break, as it is stated with regard to the Torah: 'Is not My word like fire, says the L-ord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?'" (Jeremiah 23:29)

"majesty.. dominion" - for there is no greater majesty (malchut) than Torah and likewise our sages said: "talmidei chachamim are called kings", "man malchei rabanan" (who are the kings? The Torah sages).

Q Level 2



Hon Ashir - *"counsel and sound knowledge"* - he is fit to give advice and guide others in the straight path. For he knows all this through Torah study lishma from which he receives siyata dishmaya (divine help).

"slow to anger" - that he does not get angry at all whatsoever. For anger especially for one who reached this level damages his soul very very much.

Q Level 2

Maharal

Maharal - *"counsel and sound knowledge (Etzah, ve'Tushia)"* - eitzah refers to very deep counsel. And likewise tushia refers to grasping deep things whereby grasping them weakens a man's strength. And likewise all deep wisdom sichlit (of transcendent intellect) weakens the bodily powers of man (mateshet koach gufani shel adam). Thus deep grasp (hasaga) is called tushia...

Q Level 3

Einei Kol Chai - *"people benefit from him counsel and sound knowledge, understanding and might, as written: 'Mine are counsel and sound knowledge, I am understanding, mine is might' (Mishlei 8:14)"* - for when a sage toils always in Torah lishma, certainly he becomes a merkava (chariot) to the Shechina and the holiness of the Shechina rests on him.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - *"the Torah raises and exalts him over all the works [of G-d]"* - under the sun.

Q Level 4

Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - *Birkat Avot* - (kabalistic) *"the Torah elevates and exalts him over all the works"* - we can understand this in the way Rabeinu Chaim Vital wrote in the name of the Arizal. Here is a quote:

Know that if a man toils only on the mitzvot (commandments) he will merit only a nefesh (lower soul) called Asiyah and not more.

He is like a woman whose husband journeyed faraway and left her unclothed, hungry and thirsty. She is like the Shechina who sits in the exile in darkness. Thus is the nefesh of man without the Ruach (spirit), its husband. She has no light nor (transcendent) intellect to contemplate.

But if this man strives further to toil in Torah and he studies, contemplates and reviews always the

oral Torah and he toils in Torah lishma - then he will merit also the Ruach (spirit) which is from (the world of) Yetzira.

Then he is like a woman whose husband came and lives in her house always. He clothes her, feeds her food and drink until she returns to her status. So too for a man when his ruach comes and settles in his nefesh.

Then his nefesh will be filled with a Ruach (spirit) of wisdom and it will ascend from Asiyah to Yetzira.

If this man toils further and studies the wisdom of truth in the secrets of Torah (kabala). Then he will merit also to the neshama which is from (the world of) Bria.

Then the neshama will shine on the ruach inside him and increase his level and wisdom. Then he is called "Adam Shalem" (whole man) on whom it is written: "and G-d created man in His image". end quote

Thus through Torah lishma, he will merit to the worlds above Asiyah. This is what he hinted "the Torah elevates and exalts him over all the works (Maasim)", hinting to the worlds of Asiyah for in details there are multiple worlds in Asiyah. But the Torah elevates and raises him on all of them to ascend higher and higher to Yetzira and Beriah. For he will merit to draw down from there a ruach and neshama.

Level 4

Einei Kol Chai - "the Torah elevates and exalts him over all works" - for through all attempts by deeds one cannot create a real creature. But with secrets of the Torah, one can create creatures as we find in the talmud that our sages created a calf every friday (Sanhedrin 65b). And likewise they created even a man (Golem) through joining letters of Sefer Yetzirah (the book of formation).

Chapter 6 Beraitha 3 - Mount Chorev

Says Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi: every day a Bat Kol (heavenly voice/echo) goes forth from mount Chorev and calls out: "Oy to the people for the insult to the Torah". For whoever does not occupy himself in Torah is called "nazuf" (reprimanded/outcast), as written: "as a gold ring in a pig's snout so is a beautiful woman bereft of reason" (Mishlei 11:22). And it is written: "And the tablets were the work of G-d and the writing was the writing of G-d, graven upon the tablets" (Shemot 12) - read not "graven" (charut) but rather "freedom" (cherut) [in order] to teach you that there is no free man except for him who occupies himself in Torah. And whoever is occupied in Torah becomes elevated, as written: "and from Matana to Nachaliel and from Nachaliel to Bamot (the Heights)" (Bamidbar 21:19).

אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי, בְּכָל יוֹם וַיִּזְעַק בַּת קוֹל יוֹצֵאת מֵהַר חוֹרֵב וּמְקַרְצֵת וְאוֹמֶרֶת, אוֹי לָהֶם לְבָרִיּוֹת מֵעֲלִבּוֹנָה שֶׁל תּוֹרָה. שֶׁכֵּל מִי שְׁאִינוֹ עוֹסֵק בְּתוֹרָה נִקְרָא נְזוּף, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (מִשְׁלֵי יא) נֶזֶם זָהָב בְּאָף חֲזִיר אֲשֶׁה יִפֶּה וְאוֹמֵר (שְׁמוֹת לב) וְהִלַּחַת מֵעֲשֵׂה אֱלֹהִים הָמָּה וְהִמְכַתֵּב מְכַתֵּב אֱלֹהִים הוּא חֲרוּת עַל הַלַּחַת, אֶל תִּקְרָא חֲרוּת אֶלָּא חֲרוּת, שְׂאִין לָךְ בֶּן חוֹרִין אֶלָּא מִי שֶׁעוֹסֵק בְּתַלְמוּד תּוֹרָה. וְכָל מִי שֶׁעוֹסֵק בְּתַלְמוּד תּוֹרָה יִרֵי זֶה מֵתַעֲלֶה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (בַּמִּדְבָּר כא) וּמִמַּתְנֶה נַחְלִיאֵל וּמִנַּחְלִיאֵל בְּמוֹת.

Q Level 2

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - after R.Meir depicted the qualities attained by one who occupies himself in Torah (in the previous Mishna), the words of R. Yehoshua ben Levi come to speak on the great evil of one who insults this wondrous gift and does not occupy himself in Torah.

For while a person who toils in Torah goes "from strength to strength" - he rises above the physical and draws closer to the Creator. On the other hand, one who does not toil in Torah distances more and more [from the Creator] until he becomes "nazuf", ch'v.

Besides the evil he causes himself, he also insults the Torah and its Giver. Thus his evil is seven fold.

Furthermore, he thinks that if he is freed from the Torah, he will be freed from the shackles of the service of G-d. But this is a big mistake in his hand. On the contrary, specifically one who toils in Torah and only such a person is a true free man..

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel on Avot - this beraitha is a support and proof to the words of Rebbi Meir previously. If you want know that: "whoever toils in Torah lishma merits many things.." come and see and I will teach you the word of G-d: "every day a bat kol goes forth from Mount Chorev". For the words of Torah are in our eyes as if they were given today, as written: "on this day they arrived at Mount Sinai" (Shemot 19:1). Therefore, every day you can hear her voice which screams out from Mount Chorev. He did not say Mount Sinai to teach that even if Mount Sinai is ruined and desolate (Charev) from those who abandon the Torah..

On this he said: "Oy Vavoy for people from the insult they do to the Torah". For it was given to contemplate and inherit it but they abandon it. And "whoever does not occupy himself in Torah is called nazuf - reprimanded and distanced from G-d and His Torah.. For one who toils in Torah is called a "friend" to G-d (Avot 6:2).. And just like he abandons the Torah and is disgusted by it, so too G-d nozef (reprimands) and distances him..

Q Level 2

☆ Chachma u'Mussar

Chochma u'Mussar 2:197 - not that a bat kol goes out from mount chorev, rather in the heart of every Jew a bat kol goes out from the emunah (faith) of mount chorev (sinai). This is as written: "I am asleep but my heart is awake" (Shir 5:2). For the depths of the heart roars out, like the roaring of the sea - for the truth. But because "I am asleep", a man does not hear the awakening of the heart and its screaming out also in the foundations of emunah (faith). Therefore, when a man wakes up a bit from his slumber, he will hear the bat kol of his heart which is literally prophecy placed in man's heart - to believe in G-d and strengthen in His religion and call out to Him. It is the depths of faithful knowledge implanted in us of faith in the Torah of Moshe rabeinu.

Level 3

Toldot Yaakov Yosef 96 - "every day a bat kol goes out" - The Baal Shem Tov asked on this: if the "Bat Kol" calls out, why don't people hear it? And if it cannot be heard, so what is it for?

He answered that above is the world of thought and hirhur of the heart. There is no speaker and no words. Thus the "call [of the Bat Kol]" (Kruz) is thoughts and hirhurim of the heart to good. Hence, there is no wicked man who does not have good hirhurim every day from the power of the "call" [of the Bat Kol].

But when these good thoughts come, he drives them out and removes them from his heart and turns to idleness. Certainly he is liable for his soul. For he was given a good treasure (the Torah) and he flees from the King..

Level 3

Divrei Yoel, Terumah - what is the benefit from this bat kol if people do not hear it? The holy Baal Shem Tov explained that when the Bat Kol goes out, thoughts of repentance enters in the heart of every Jew. One who has fear of Heaven and his soul yearns to do the will of his Creator, then when the arousal from above comes on him, he holds fast to it, as written: "I hold him fast, and will not let him go" (Shir 3:4).

And if he holds strong to it, it will bring him to thoughts of repentance to rectify his deeds and repent completely.

But for a man immersed in the vanities of the world, then when this arousal comes, he turns to his occupations and ignores it.

Greater than this, the holy books bring that sometimes a person will mistaken the arousal from above as a form of depression and sadness and he banishes it immediately from his thoughts. But he is boorish and does not understand that these are holy rishfei (fires) sent to him from above to rouse him from his spiritual slumber.

Level 3



Maharam Shik, chidushei agadot - for since G-d gave the Torah with (thunderous) sounds and lightning and the whole world trembled from this, thus the whole world recognized that its survival depended on the receiving of the Torah. Likewise G-d made a condition in the creation of the world that if the Jewish people do not accept the Torah, He will return the world to void and nothingness (tohu vavohu).

Hence, if a Jewish man does not fulfill the Torah, he can know for sure that his punishment will be very great. For he does not uphold the world. And from the time of the receiving of the Torah, it is incumbent on the Jewish people to uphold the world. Thus if he does not uphold the world, he should certainly be concerned that sufferings and punishments will befall him.

If so, from the sounds and lightning that G-d made heard at Sinai, from this every Jew should be

concerned of the sin of bitul (annulling) Torah. And the sounds and lightning are themselves the Bat Kol which tells that it is incumbent on us to study the Torah always... Furthermore, the Torah is the remedy for the yetzer hara. And thus one who does not toil in Torah makes himself ownerless (mafkir atzmo) and puts himself in a place of danger, a place of an evil dog, namely the yetzer hara who is disgusting, filthy and despicable. For a sin is called megoal as written: "I will cleanse you from all your filth (gilulechem)." (Yechezkel 36:25). Thus, automatically he is called nazuf and is like a gold ring on a pig's snout or a beautiful woman lacking reason.

Q Level 2

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "*bat kol*" - a "*bat kol*" is an echo formed from a previous sound, similar to an echo sound at a mountain side which continues to reverberate even after the original sound stops.

The "*bat kol*" R.Yehoshua ben Levi is referring to is the echo from the giving of the Torah at mount sinai - the voice of G-d who revealed himself before the eyes of Israel:

"the L-ord spoke these words to your entire assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the opaque darkness, with a great voice, **which did not cease**" (Devarim 5:19).

The Onkelos renders the words "which did not cease" as: "it did not end". Rashi comments on this verse: "kol shechina eino posek (the voice of G-d does not end)" (Sanhedrin 17a) - it continues to echo forever.

At Mount Chorev all Israel said together: "we will do and we will listen" (Shemot 24:7), so too the echo of this voice from Mount Chorev continues to echo all the time without interruption... this sound is not just in man's heart. Rather it reverberates in all directions until today.

Why don't we hear it? What need is there for this "*bat kol*" which no one can hear? The answer is that it is possible to hear it. But we must first sharpen our hearing.

The first step is to want to hear this *bat kol*. When a man wants, he will already hear the echos of the *bat kol*.

Sometimes it is felt in the soul like an inner voice which pushes one to wake up from his slumber. Thus sometimes out of nowhere thoughts of regret enters one's heart, thoughts of teshuva (repentance), of yearning and longing. If one is sensitive enough, he will feel the ringing of his soul; he will detect the *bat kol*.

Other times G-d will cause an event to occur near him which will leave a strong imprint. If a man wants, he will succeed in seeing the sign from Heaven that he must wake up from his slumber.

Waves which go out have many forms and spread out in many ways. Each wave has its frequency and whoever wants to hear it must tune into the transmitting signal sent to him - the sound which came forth for him from Mount Chorev..

Q Level 3

Sfas Emes

Sfas Emes on Avot - "*bat kol*" - from the day of the receiving of the Torah, there is no day without this *bat kol* going forth. And even if there are many Torah scholars who learn [Torah] properly such as the generation of Chizkiyahu, nevertheless it is impossible to fulfill this properly. For no man is saved from bitul Torah which has no shiur (minimum amount).

"*bat kol*" - this *bat kol* rouses every person accordingly. Sometimes it [his arousal] is completely due to this *bat kol*. For otherwise [if it did not rouse people] then either way, one who is able to hear it certainly already learns properly and does not need the *bat kol*, while one who does not

learn cannot hear it.

This bat kol is from the power of the calling of the Torah, as written: "the L-ord spoke these words to your entire assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the opaque darkness, with a great voice, **which did not cease**" (Devarim 5:19). For every day there is a revelation from this voice. On this it is written (in the Shema): "which I command you TODAY"..

Q Level 2

Midrash David, by David Hanagid, son of Avraham son of Rambam - "Oy to the people for the insult to the Torah" - Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says that every day a bat kol can be heard which goes out from the upper heavens and screams and yells on Mount Sinai saying: "Oy to the people for the insult to the Torah".. He said mount Chorev for when the Jewish people toil in Torah, it is called mount Sinai but when they annul the Torah it is called mount Chorev, i.e. churban (destruction).

For one who studies Torah but does not fulfill its laws is repulsive and disgusting. The Torah in him is like a gold ring on a pig's snout or like a beautiful woman who is mute and insane. Would it be proper for such a woman to boast of her beauty?

Q Level 3

☆ Sfas Emes

Sfas Emes on Avot - "Oy to the people for the insult to the Torah" - for the Torah was given to the Jewish people and even if they do not toil in it, the Torah does not leave them as written: "You have planted eternal life in our midst (chayei olam nata betochenu)". This is what is written: "as a gold ring [in a pig's snout] (Mishlei 11:22). For we have the Torah but we abandon it and cling to matters of this world (gashmiut). Through this, there is an insult (elbon) also to the Torah which is the gold ring, the crown of Torah..

For G-d has granted man special tools more precious than choice gold, namely, the faculty of wisdom and intellect. One needs to employ them for the service of G-d and to toil in Torah. But when he leaves these tools for other things, then it is "like a gold ring [in a pig's snout]". He added "freedom on the tablets (cherut al hauchot)" in order to remove the excuse of hassles (tirdot) of this world since for one who toils in Torah, all the hassles (tirdot) of this world fall off of him and he becomes a free man.

Q Level 3

Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer - "every day a Bat Kol (heavenly voice/echo) goes forth from mount Chorev and calls out: 'Oy to the people..'" - Mount Sinai has many names. Why did he use the name "Chorev"? The answer is that the primary "Oy" and sufferings that befall people and the main evil that comes on them and their labor is only due to the insult of the Torah, namely, there aren't people toiling and straining in the Torah. For only Torah study shields and saves us from all evil. It is a shield against all bad things (puraniyut).

And in the midrash (Pikudei 51:8): "the mountain was called by several names: Mount Sinai, Mountain of G-d, Mount Bashan, Mount Chorev.. Why was it called Mount Chorev? Because the Torah was given there and the Torah is called Cherev (a sword), as written: "the high praises of G-d is in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; [to carry out vengeance..]" (Tehilim 149:6). For the Torah alone is a sword for us to fight against our enemies. We have no other shield or weapon to fight against the evil. The Torah alone is the sword put in our hands to save us from evil, troubles, and afflictions.

Therefore, the "bat kol goes out from Chorev and calls out". For the sword is in our hands through the Torah to shield us from all evil and calamity. Thus, "Oy unto people from the insult to the Torah.." [of disregarding the Torah].

 Level 3

Chida

Chida, ruach chaim derush 12 - "mount Chorev" - in the talmud: "why was mount sinai called mount chorev? Because destruction (churva) fell (was decreed) on the nations for not accepting the Torah. And from this arouses judgment on a Yisrael who annuls the Torah..

Alternatively, as to why the bat kol goes out from Chorev (Sinai) - in the Talmud:

"Iyov/Job sought to exempt the world from judgment claiming they are forced by the yetzer hara (to sin and thus not at fault). His friends answered him: "you too cast away fear, and take away speech before G-d" (Iyov 15:4). says the Holy One, blessed be He, 'I created the yetzer hara and I created the Torah as its antidote (literally:spice)'" . (they are at fault for not taking the antidote, i.e. Torah).

But nevertheless there are still grounds to exempt him. For that which he is guilty (for sinning) is because he should have learned Torah thereby annulling the yetzer hara. Thus we are back to the same place for the yetzer hara does not allow him to learn Torah and thus it is not his fault and he should be exempt from judgment.

However if he were humble, the yetzer hara would not rule over him and thus he would be able to learn Torah as brought in holy books.. if you ask: "but G-d Himself said the Torah is the antidote (literally:spice), which implies one cannot annul the yetzer hara except with Torah. But according to you, humility also annuls the yetzer hara..?"

Answer: [humility annuls the yetzer hara] but it does not also transform the yetzer hara to good like Torah does. For Torah is like a spice which sweetens and makes it good..

And humility comes from yirah (fear), that one puts to heart that he stands before the King of kings who observes him. Then immediately, he will be lowly in his eyes as one standing before a king and how much more so before the King of kings..

This is what they answered Iyov: "you too cast away fear", you do not have yirah (fear) and therefore "take away speech before G-d (tigrasicha)", do not learn [Torah]. But if you had yirah (fear) you would be humble, as in the verse: "When I look at Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have established; what is man that You are mindful of him?" (Tehilim 8:4-5). For when a man recognizes his lowliness, he will be humble and then he will learn Torah and be saved from the yetzer hara and fulfill the commandments.

Thus from this the bat kol goes out from mount chorev. For he should have learned humility (since Sinai is a lowly mountain) and then the yetzer hara would not have ruled over him to not learn.

 Level 3

 ☆ **Chida**

Chida, Devarim Achadim drush 5 - "(literally) every day and day (b'kol yom v'yom)" - we can explain the double language according to the talmud (Yerushalmi Berachot 9:5, Bavli 68a) : "says Reish Lakish: (the Torah says) 'if you leave me one day, I will leave you two days'" .

There is to investigate whether a person is punished on the second day like the first since on the second day, the Torah distanced from him.

It seems to me that certainly he is punished. For the halacha is "if one started as negligent but the damage was accidental in the end, he is obligated to pay" (techila b'peshia v'sof b'ones chayiv).

Furthermore, here it is known that if he is negligent one day the Torah will distance from him [the

second day].

This is what he wrote "every day and day (b'kol yom v'yom)" whether for the day where he himself distanced or for the [next] day where the Torah distanced from him, the announcer proclaims: "oy on he who does not toil for he is guilty on everything.."

Q Level 1

Rashi

Rashi - "Oy to people for the insult to the Torah" - from the insult which they disregard the Torah. For she is insulted in that she has no toilers [in Torah].

Q Level 2

Chida

Chida, Kisei David, drush 26 - "Oy to people (Briot) for the insult to the Torah" - this refers to those who content themselves with the reading of the chazan (cantor) or reading of the weekly portion (shnayim mikra v'echad targum) and they consider themselves [honorable] creatures (Briot) for toiling in non Torah books which are sweet to their mouth. They also consider the Torah scholars foolish for not having knowledge except in Torah. On them the bat kol proclaims: "Oy to people (Briot)", i.e. those who consider themselves [honorable] creatures (Briot) for toiling in non Torah books. For in their eyes these books are words of wisdom. This is a great insult to the Torah which is the word of G-d.

"For whoever does not occupy himself in Torah is called "nazuf" (reprimanded/outcast)" - this refers to one who has free time to toil in Torah but instead wastes his time in hevel (vanities). Although he does not belittle the Torah by refraining from reading non Torah books but nevertheless "he is called nazuf".

He said "he is called nazuf" and not "he is nazuf" to hint that all the hosts of heaven call him "nazuf" for not toiling in Torah. And since he is called nazuf, all the mitzvot he does and all that he learns goes to the sitra achra (forces of evil).. This is what he continues: "like a gold ring in a pig's snout" which is dirtied by the pig until its splendor is lost. So too for one who can learn, who has free time to study Torah but he does not. He dirties his mitzvot with mud, dirt, and excrement and they go to the sitra achra..

Q Level 2

☆ Chida

Chida, ruach chaim sof drush 12, ot 2 - "Oy to people (Briot) for the insult to the Torah" - as the commentaries explain, G-d gave us the Torah as a gift. For if the Torah were given in the way of a sale, we would not be obligated to toil in it. For when a person purchases a precious object with his own money, if afterwards he belittles it, there is no claim against him. For it is his own property and a person is permitted to belittle his possession by leaving it on the end of his porch or the like.

But if a great man gave him an object as a gift publicly, then he is under duty to guard it like the apple of his eye and to honor it according to the honor of the giver. Therefore G-d gave us the Torah publicly as a gift so that we may guard it properly.. We can say this is the meaning of "for I give you good teaching; do not forsake My Torah" (Mishlei 4:2), i.e. I gave you [the Torah] as a gift, therefore "do not forsake My Torah".

Q Level 2

Chida

Chida, Devarim Chadim drush 26 - "Oy to people for the insult to the Torah" - oy on those people that belittle the Torah scholars and [instead] honor the rich. They are like the yetzer hara (evil inclination) who sees only what is before him, the vanities of this world and not the Olam Haba which is in [future] time. Thus they honor the rich for they see their money. But for the Torah scholars, their treasury of Torah is in the future. This is what is written: "who is wise? He who sees what is born" (Tamid 32a). Namely, he is not pleased with what his eyes see which is the claim of the yetzer hara. Rather he sees what is born (future consequence) like the claim of the yetzer tov...

 **Level 3**
Chachma u'Mussar

Chochma u'Mussar 2:278 - "Oy to people for the insult to the Torah" - as an illustration, a servant is in a place and time where there is much work of his master to do, such as in a hotel where there are many guests in need of service. This one for this, that one for that. All the servants run to fulfill the will of each guest, as instructed by the hotel owner who wishes to please the heart of every guest so that they will always return to him.

But despite all the great work that needs to be done, one of the servants of the master when searched for, was found to be sitting in a room playing dice.

Consider what would be the judgment on this brazen servant? Certainly from his deeds it is clearly recognizable that he cast off the yoke of his master completely.

So too for our matter. There is much work incumbent on a man to do as we learned: "the day is short and the work is much" (Avot 2:15) which Rabeinu Yonah explains this to mean the work of Torah, rectifying the soul and acquiring virtues.

Thus for one who has free time to toil in Torah.. and nevertheless he does not, this is certainly a sign he has cast off the yoke of his Master and on this it is written: "because he has despised the Word of G-d and has broken His commandment, that soul shall be utterly cut off. His iniquity shall be upon him" (Bamidbar 15:31). For there is so much to know and do but he sits in his room and plays games..

 **Level 3**
Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (Daat chochma umussar 2:71,3:2) - "Oy to people for the insult to the Torah" - he did not write: "Oy to the Torah". For certainly the Torah does not lose its importance... This is as the midrash says:

When the Holy One, blessed be He, gave the Torah to Yisrael, He put in it positive and negative commandments, etc. king Shlomo arose and said: "even though the Torah says: 'nor shall the king increase (Yarbe) many wives, so that his heart does not turn away' (Devarim 17:17), nevertheless, I will increase many wives and will not turn away.."

At that time, the letter Yud of "Yarbe" (increase) went before G-d and said: "Master of the world, didn't You say no letter of the Torah will be annulled forever...?" The Holy One blessed be He answered the Yud: "Shlomo and a thousand like him will be annulled and I will not annul even a tiny crown of you..." (Shemot Rabba 6:1).

For one who transgresses one thing of the Torah forfeits his existence. For the Torah is the true existence and the blueprint of the world (Genesis Rabba 1:1). Therefore it stays in its full power and its existence is strong and enduring forever and ever.

This matter is very awesome. How much a person needs to strengthen himself by his life to fulfill meticulously the words of the Torah, namely, to be aligned with the true existence (Torah). For if Shlomo and a thousand like him will be annulled for wanting to annul the Yud since he thought he ascended to a supernatural level above ordinary human beings and was thus acting in line with the Torah, what will we say of those who do against the will of the Torah? There is no greater annulment than this and with what will such a man exist? This matter is frightening to contemplate.

 **Level 4**
Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot (Daat chochma umussar 3:34) - "Oy to people for the insult to the Torah" - Rashi explained: "For she is insulted in that she has no toilers [in Torah]" end quote. And in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 99a): "R.Nechanya says whoever can toil in Torah but does not, this is (what

the verse refers to): "For he has despised the Word of the L-ord and has broken His commandment, that soul shall be utterly cut off. His iniquity shall be upon him" (Bamidbar 15:31).

That is to say, the explanation of the matter of insult (bizayon) is: to not recognize the need and quality of something. But if he recognized the maalot (quality) of the Torah, the benefit and need for it, then it would not be possible for him to have free time for toiling in Torah and not do so.

All this is due to not recognizing and not considering important the quality of the Torah. This is "For he has despised the Word of the G-d" and oy lo from its insult.

Q Level 3

Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer - "Oy to the people for the insult to the Torah" - i.e. bizayon (disrespect), belittling of the Torah and what is the bizayon (disrespect)? Those who annul the Torah for a little money of parnassa and they don't believe that there is power in the merit of Torah to fulfill their lacking many times over.

In my humble opinion, this kind of person is worse than one who does not toil in Torah at all.

For this is analogous to a shopkeeper whereby many buyers come to his store and he shows them his merchandise. One says he does not want to buy, while another says he wants to buy but the merchandise is of poor quality and has many flaws.

Without a doubt, the shopkeeper will be more angry at the latter than the former. For the former does not cause him any loss but the latter causes much loss as many other buyers will not want to buy when they hear what he says.

So too here, one who is far from the Torah does not damage so much. But one who learns Torah and hears about a possible opportunity to maybe profit a bit and then he immediately abandons the Torah, this is a great disrespect (bizayon gadol). For the Torah promises "if you will go in My statutes..you will have sustenance, health, defeating your enemies, etc etc." (Vayikrah 26).

Q Level 1

☆ Rashi

Rashi - "nazuf" - menudeh (excommunicated), as the verse: "his father reprimanded him" (Gen.37), which the targum renders: "venazef bei avuhi". Alternatively, for people honor and serve him [who toils in Torah]. But for a person who does not toil in Torah, people distance from him. Thus he is like a menudeh (excommunicated).

Q Level 2

Chida

Chida, Ruach Chaim drush 8 - "he is called nazuf" - they announce above: "distance from ploni who does not care about the honor of his Master.." as written in the Zohar (Acharei Mot 76a).

Q Level 3

Chida

Chida, Devarim Achadim, drush 5 - he is called nazuf by all the hosts of heaven "the announcer announces.. the 'nazuf' of his Master.." (Zohar). And all the air is full of angels of destruction and they and all the birds of the air hear the announcement. This is the meaning of "call him nazuf". And we learned in Taanit (12b) "they are forbidden to greet each other as people nezufim (reprimanded) by G-d".

We may also say as the Chasid Yaavetz wrote on: "there are three openings to Gehinom". The first opening is small for those who pass through there are the apikorsim and minim (heretics) which are few in every generation.

The second opening is medium size and is for sinners in forbidden foods, illicit relations, theft and the like. For these are many.

The third and great opening is for entering the mevatlei Torah (those idle from Torah). For this group is very very numerous and they don't realize it is a sin.

The Rambam writes in Hilchot Teshuva (4:19): "among the things which meakev teshuva (withhold repentance) are light things which a person does not consider sins and thus he does not put thought to repent from them" see there.

So too for bitul Torah, no man puts to heart that it is a sin and thus does not repent. This is an insult to the Torah that people think it is not a sin and do not repent. Furthermore the matter is so severe that "whoever does not occupy himself in Torah is called 'nazuf' (reprimanded)".

🔍 Level 3

☆ Chachma u'Mussar

Chochma u'Mussar 1:148 - "nazuf" - distant from G-d as in "For lo, those who are distant from You shall perish" (Tehilim 73:27). For all of man's coming close to G-d is through the Torah, as the matter: "the Holy One, blessed be He, has nothing in His world except the four cubits of halacha" (Berachot 8a). And the Mishkan (temple/tabernacle) proves this. For the primary mishkan is the holy of holies between the cherubin on the ark of the covenant (which contained the Torah). This is the "four amot of halacha".

On this comes the obligation of man that even when engaged in matters of this world, that his mind be free for Torah according to his ability as the Rambam and others write. On this it is written: "you shall contemplate therein day and night" (Yehoshua 1:8).

🔍 Level 1

☆ Rashi

Rashi - "as a gold ring in a pig's snout" - it does not guard it. Rather, it goes and rummages in the garbage heaps and dirties (the ring). So too, a talmid chacham who lacks these things is disgusting like this excommunicated person.

🔍 Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "as a gold ring in a pig's snout" - the ring refers to the power of intellect which G-d has graced to man. But when man uses it for lowly things, he is like a rummaging pig who uses the ring on his snout to begrime it in the garbage heaps.

🔍 Level 2

☆ Chida

Chida, Ahavat David, Drush 7 - "as a gold ring in a pig's snout" - the pig does not feel [the value of] what it has and filthies it. So too these people have the Torah but they do not know its nature and do not consider it important..

🔍 Level 3

Chida

Chida, Devarim Achadim derushim 5,19, Kisei David drush 26 - (kabalistic) "whoever does not occupy himself in Torah is called nazuf" - what is the "insult to the Torah"? We may answer that after the sin of the golden calf, all the nitzutzei (sparks) of the Torah fell in the klipot (forces of evil)..

Through the "nezem zahav" (gold ring) which they used to make the golden calf (Shemot 32:3), the Torah fell "in a pig's snout" and Yisrael was left as "a beautiful woman", i.e. the people G-d chose but "bereft of reason". For the taamei Torah (reasons of the Torah) and its parts fell into the klipot. This is the "insult to the Torah" and whoever does not toil in Torah is called nazuf.

This is the meaning of "whoever is occupied in Torah ascends (becomes elevated)". Namely, through toil in Torah one extracts the holy sparks (mevarer nitzutzot hakedusha) and he elevates and acquires additions to his nefesh, ruach and neshama, "ascends" specifically. For he ascends

level after level and advances..

Therefore one needs to strain himself much to extract the parts of his Torah which fell into the klipot, to ask difficulties and break (resolve) them - to break the klipot (shell) and extract the fruit, namely, the good light as the Arizal wrote. For as known, each person received a portion in the Torah fitting to the root of his nefesh, ruach, and neshama in Pardes and according to the lights in his nefesh, ruach, and neshama, he received a corresponding portion in the lights of Pardes in the Torah which are now in the klipot.

This is the meaning of "fortunate is he who comes here with his Torah in his hand" (ashrei mi shebah lekan v'talmudo beyado), his Torah specifically, the sparks of Torah connected to his soul which no other Torah scholar could have extracted. But if he is lax and idle from the Torah, these nitzutzot (sparks) remain in the klipot..

Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - "as a gold ring in a pig's snout so is a beautiful woman bereft of reason" - i.e. the gold ring is something very praiseworthy. But if it is on the snout of a pig, then despite the gold ring's importance, it is disgusting from the aspect of the carrier, namely, the pig. Likewise for "a beautiful woman bereft of reason", i.e. this beauty and its value, when it is by one who is "bereft of reason", it is disgusting and repulsive. Even though the woman is absolutely beautiful, nevertheless, her beauty is disgusting. This "beautiful woman" is an analogy for man of intellect. He is called a beautiful woman, for he has beauty, namely, the "shine" (of the intellect).

Light refers to wisdom in all places. For wisdom is light and shine, as written: "the wisdom of a man illuminates his face" (Mishlei 8:1). And in the talmud: "he extinguished the light of the world (killed the sages), let him go and toil in the light of the world (Torah)" (Bava Batra 4a).

He called the physicality of man: "bereft of reason". For rot is lowly such as excrement or the like and the physicality of man has a lowliness.

The summary of the matter: "the gold ring" is very clean and pure. But when it is placed on the snout of a pig which digs in garbage heaps and is disgusting and repulsive. Through this the gold ring becomes repulsive. So too: "a beautiful woman bereft of reason", i.e. thus is a man who has the (transcendent) intellect but does not toil in Torah. The intellect stands in the body of physical man which has lowliness and it toils in lowly physical matters. Through this the pure intellect becomes disgusting. But if he toils in Torah, then the intellect is divested of the physical and does not have the lowliness of the physical.. But if man just goes after physical things, he is like a pig with a gold ring who digs in the garbage heaps..

The pig is a creature which very much chases after matters of its body and lusts. There is no equal to it in this. Other animals are not as disgusting. For they seek a bit of honor in nature, as our sages said: "there are four proud, the ox by the animals, the lion by the beasts, etc. and likewise brazenness is attributed to certain creatures. But the pig seeks only bodily eating in a disgusting and dirty way.

So too is man when he abandons the [transcendent] Torah intellect and goes only after his bodily lusts. Likewise earlier in chapter three, a table whereby no words of Torah were said on it when eating is compared to vomit and excrement (Avot 3:4).

This is what is said that one who does not toil in Torah is called nazuf, i.e. distant. For due to the lowliness of the physicality inside him he is distant (from G-d)...

Q Level 1

☆ **Tiferet Yisrael**

Tiferet Yisrael - "to teach you that there is no free man except for him who occupies himself in Torah" - for his soul is not enslaved by the bodily lusts. This alone is true freedom and not when his lust roams freely and his soul is enslaved to lust.

Q Level 1

☆ **Sfas Emes**

Sfas Emes on Avot, Parsha Pinchas 5634 - "free man" - to remove the distractions of the yokes (tirdot) of this world. Since for one who toils in Torah, all the yokes (tirdot) of the world fall away from him and he becomes a free man.

Q Level 2

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "freedom" - another freedom which the Torah bestows - freedom from turmoil of the soul and from inner doubts. A man who is not connected to Torah, when he considers his steps and thinks on his purpose [in life] - he is full of emotions and torn by doubts. He lives in uncertainty. He seeks meaning and strives to reach the truth in his investigation.

On the other hand, one who toils in Torah lishma - i.e. for arriving at the truth - his eyes will open and he merits to reach this truth. He finds answers to all his doubts in the Torah and a response to all his wonderings. Over time, the secrets of the Torah and of the creation become clear to him. He understands the purpose of things and merits to true freedom - freedom of the soul. There is no greater happiness than this..

Q Level 2

☆ **Chida**

Chida, Devarim Chadim drush 26 - "there is no free man except for him who occupies himself in Torah" - he used a negating term. For in the first tablets there was complete freedom to all Israel, freedom from the angel of death, the subjugation of the nations (shibud malchuyot). But after the sin of the golden calf, there is no free man except he who toils in Torah. For it avails to save him from shibud malchuyot (oppression from governments) and also if he toils in Torah lishma, to know what to do, he will be free from the sitra achra (forces of evil), that his body will be pure and clean.. And since this is remote and is found only in the gedolei hadorot (very great Torah scholars), for this he ended "And whoever is occupied in Torah becomes elevated,". For even though he may not reach the level of being lishma but nevertheless whoever toils in Torah, will attain some degree of freedom.

Q Level 2

☆ **Chida**

Chida, ruach chaim derush 12 - "no free man" - he used negative tense for there are many kings and ministers and rich men who appear free. They themselves have many slaves and thus how can he say: "there is no free man except for him who occupies himself in Torah"?

The answer is that these rich men are slaves sold to their evil inclination who overpowers them. Every day they lust for pleasures of men and ways of women and their yetzer renews over them daily. Thus he said there is no true free man whereby the yetzer hara does not rule over him except one who studies Torah lishma which annuls the yetzer and he is lowly and humble. There is none like him.

Q Level 3

☆ **Chachma u'Mussar**

Chochma u'Mussar 2:119 - "there is no free man except for him who occupies himself in Torah" - i.e. in Torah like its halacha, as we learn later in Mishna 4: "this is the way of the Torah, eat bread with water, etc." - without worry. For he lacks nothing. And the true freedom is freedom of the mind, i.e. to remove worry. This is the true free man.

Q Level 3

Michtav M'Eliyahu, chelek 3, avdut vcherut - a slave is someone who is forced to work and the

fruits of his labor will not be his. Thus man's deeds for matters of this world are deeds of slavery. for the fruits of his labor will not be his.

Even if he increases wisdoms, authors books, and teaches his Torah to others, it is all deeds of slavery which are not his. But if he acquires them in his heart in the way of "doing l'shem shamayim", then it is his. Otherwise, he remains a slave as he was. Only this person who contemplates his Torah, namely, that he acquired it through true inner longing, without mixture of personal interest - he is a free man. For our sages said: "there is no free man except for him who toils in Torah", the explanation of "toils" means in the way of inner longing.

🔍 Level 1

☆ Rashi

Rashi - "And whoever is occupied in Torah becomes elevated, as written: "and from Matana to Nachaliel and from Nachaliel to Bamot (the Heights)" - in the previous verse: u'miMidbar Matana (and from the desert a gift). Then u'miMatana Nachliel, for since the Torah was given to them as a gift, Nachalu El, i.e. G-d took them as His portion. And since one's portion is G-d, he ascends to greatness, as written: and from Nachaliel to Bamot (the Heights) (Eruvin 54b, Nedarim 55a).

🔍 Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "and whoever is occupied in Torah becomes elevated" - do not think: "not every man merits the crown of Torah, rather only a man who fulfills two conditions: that (1) he has a great/powerful intellect and (2) that he employs it for Torah". On this he said: "whoever is occupied in Torah becomes elevated..", i.e. even if he does not have a great/powerful intellect.

Chapter 6 Beraitha 4 - Honor Is Torah

He who learns from a colleague one chapter, one halacha (law), one verse, one word, or even one letter needs to treat him with honor. For thus we find by David, king of Israel, who learned only two things from Achitofel, yet he called him his master, his guide, and close friend" as written: "but it is you, a man my equal, my master and close friend" (Tehilim 58).

Can we not infer a kal va'chomer (logical inference)? If, David, king of Israel, who learned nothing from Achitofel except for two things alone and still called him his master, guide, and close friend", how much more so for one who learns from his colleague one chapter, one verse, one word, or even one letter that he must treat him with honor. And there is no honor but [for] Torah, as written: "the sages shall inherit honor, and the whole/perfect shall inherit good" (Tehilim 3). And there is no good but Torah, as written: "I have given you a good acquisition; do not forsake My Torah" (Tehilim 28).

הַלּוֹמֵד מִחֵבֵרׇוֹ פָּרַק אֶחָד אוֹ הֵלְכָה אַחַת אוֹ פְּסוּק אֶחָד אוֹ דְבַר אֶחָד אוֹ אֶפְלוֹ אוֹת אַחַת, צְרִיךְ לְנַהוֹג בּוֹ כְּבוֹד, שְׁכַן מְצִינּוֹ בְּדוֹד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל, שֶׁלֹּא לָמַד מֵאַחִיתֶּפֶל אֶלֶּא שְׁנֵי דְבָרִים בְּלִבָּד, קָרָאוּ רַבּוֹ אֱלוֹפוֹ וּמִידְעוֹ, שְׁנַאֲמַר (תְּהִלִּים נה) וְאַתָּה אָנוּשׁ כְּעַרְכִּי אֱלוֹפִי וּמִידְעִי.

וְהֵלֵךְ דְּבָרִים קָל וְחֹמֶר, וְיִמָּה דּוֹד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל, שֶׁלֹּא לָמַד מֵאַחִיתֶּפֶל אֶלֶּא שְׁנֵי דְבָרִים בְּלִבָּד קָרָאוּ רַבּוֹ אֱלוֹפוֹ וּמִידְעוֹ, הַלּוֹמֵד מִחֵבֵרׇוֹ פָּרַק אֶחָד אוֹ הֵלְכָה אַחַת אוֹ פְּסוּק אֶחָד אוֹ דְבַר אֶחָד אוֹ אֶפְלוֹ אוֹת אַחַת, עַל אַחַת כְּמָה וְכְמָה שֶׁצְרִיךְ לְנַהוֹג בּוֹ כְּבוֹד. וְאֵין כְּבוֹד אֶלֶּא תּוֹרָה, שְׁנַאֲמַר (מִשְׁלֵי ג) כְּבוֹד חֲכָמִים יִנְחָלוּ, (מִשְׁלֵי כח) וְתַמִּימִים יִנְחָלוּ טוֹב, וְאֵין טוֹב אֶלֶּא תּוֹרָה, שְׁנַאֲמַר (מִשְׁלֵי ד) כִּי לֶקַח טוֹב נִתְּתִי לָכֶם תּוֹרָתִי אֵל תַּעֲזְבוּ.

Q Level 1

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "needs to treat him with honor" - after the previous words on honor of the Torah, the Beraitha adds and exhorts on the need to honor those who learn Torah. For honoring them is honoring the Torah.

Q Level 1

☆ Rashi

Rashi - "who learned only two things from Achitofel" - Achitofel found David learning alone. He told him: "why are you learning alone? For it was said: "'a sword on the badim' - which means a sword on talmidei chachamim (Torah scholars) who learn alone.

"there is no honor but for Torah" - i.e. no honor comes to a man except on matters of Torah.

alternatively, "there is no honor but for Torah" - i.e. that which we require a person to treat his fellow with honor, this refers only to his Rabbi who taught him Torah. But if he taught him a different matter such as carpentry, then no [it is not required].

"the sages shall inherit honor" - it is proper for sages to inherit honor. Which sages? Temimim (perfect) who inherit good, namely, Torah. But sages in other matters, then no.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "even one letter" - such as "Vav mosif al inyan rishon (Vav adds on the previous matter)", or other drashas (expoundings) on one letter such the "heh" of habetulot.

David was great in Torah and chief (mufla) in the sanhedrin. For as our sages expounded the verse: "'G-d is with him' - the halacha is like David in every place" (Sanhedrin 93b). Nevertheless, he called Achitofel his teacher (Rabbo). Thus, even a gadol (big man) who learns from a katan

(small man), there is a chiyuv gamur (complete obligation) and not chasidut (extra piety) to call him his teacher (Rabbo). For otherwise, king David would not have been permitted to do so since [as king] it is forbidden for him to forego his honor.

"there is no honor but for Torah" - no honor is proper for a man except for the Torah he learned. For the honor he gets for wealth or beauty depends on that and is only for that. But the honor granted to a man for his Torah is fitting for the man himself since the Torah is attached to him like the flame on a candle wick.

Q Level 2

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - *"even one letter"* - many things are deduced in the talmud from just one letter. This is in the plain meaning (pshat) and besides the fact that every letter in the Torah contains endless hints and secrets. It is then no wonder that a sefer Torah missing one letter, whichever letter it may be - is invalid (pasul).

Q Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - *"there is no honor but Torah"* - i.e. the Torah itself is honor, not just the cause of honor.. He brought a proof on this that the Torah itself is honor from the verse: "the sages shall inherit honor" (Mishlei 3:35). For the word "inherit" is going on the Torah which is called honor.

"the whole/perfect shall inherit good" - for the complete good for the soul of intellect (nefesh hasichli) and that which grants it existence and eternal life is the Torah of intellect (hatorah haiyunit). He brought a proof of this from the verse: "I have given you a good acquisition" and this good is the Torah as the verse continues "do not forsake My Torah".

Q Level 2

Sfas Emes

Sfas Emes on Avot - but from one's student, even though our sages said: "from my students I learned the most", but nevertheless, this general principle does not apply. For it refers only to one's peers as the talmud brings: "the talmidei chachamim (Torah scholars) of Bavel would honor each other (nohagim kavod).."

Q Level 2

☆ Pirkei Moshe

Pirkei Moshe - *"needs to treat him with honor"* - he did not say "is obligated to honor him" but rather "needs to honor". For it is merely proper to do so for the people looking, so that people see the greatness of Torah and that the receiver is not ungrateful. But one is not obligated in this like the obligation of a student to his rabbi..

Q Level 2

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - *"he who learns from a peer one chapter"* - i.e. only for a peer one is obligated to grant him special honor. But if he is not a peer, but greater than him [in Torah], then even if he is not a famous Torah scholar - one must treat him with honor even if he did not learn anything from him. Thus our sages taught: "from where is it derived that one who knows about another that he is greater than him, even in one matter, that he must treat him with honor?.." (Pesachim 113b).

Even for one's students one must guard their honor as brought in chapter four "let the honor of your student be precious as your own" (Avot 4:13). But nevertheless it is not proper for the rabbi to honor his students as much as his own teacher. For the rabbi's honor is the honor of the Torah and thus he should not downplay his own honor.

Q Level 3

Ohr Hachaim on the verse: "you shall rejoice on all the good" (Devarim 26:11) - this also hints on the Torah as our sages said: "there is no good but Torah" for if people were to feel the sweetness and pleasantness of the good of Torah, they would become crazed and impassioned after the Torah and the whole world of gold and silver would be as nothing in their eyes. For the Torah

includes all the good of the world.

Q Level 3

☆ Chachma u'Mussar

Chochma u'Mussar 2:68 - "there is no honor but Torah" - in his book, sefer hamidot, Aristo explained much how the purpose of man is happiness in of itself and not due to something external. For if a person intends to be happy due to something external, such as one whose intent and purpose in his study is to become wise in order to become a big chacham (wise man) and to receive honor from the public. For such a person, the "something external" is more precious to him than happiness itself. But really there is nothing more precious than happiness. For all things go after the purpose and who is truly called a chacham (wise man)? He whose intent and purpose in his studies is for love of wisdom, happiness itself.

This is what we learned in the Mishna: "there is no honor except Torah", i.e. the happiness itself of wisdom is the honor due to those of deep minds (hakavod hanidrash lebaalei hadaat haamukim). This is not as the public thinks. Namely, the public thinks that one who is honorable in the eyes of people - this is called honor.

It is not so. For this is not honor but disgrace - to desire gifts of flesh and blood to be honorable. For such a person, gifts of flesh and blood are more precious to him than happiness itself. This is a tremendous foolishness. He loses all of his great virtues, from the highest tower to the deepest pit. This is what the Tanna ends off: "as written: 'the wise shall inherit honor'". i.e. they don't need to be honored by the gifts of flesh and blood. For this is a disgrace. Rather, they will inherit the inheritance they deserve.

But the fools, i.e. those who want to exchange their wisdom for gifts of flesh and blood, to be honorable in their eyes, even if they attain this honor, nevertheless it is a disgrace for them to seek gifts of flesh and blood and to exchange the enduring happiness for this passing matter.

This is what the verse continues: "[the wise shall inherit honor;] but shame shall be the promotion of fools" (Mishlei 3:35), i.e. their elevation (honor) is a disgrace. But the true chachamim, they learn wisdom out of love of wisdom. On the contrary, they inherit both worlds, happiness itself out of love of happiness and inheriting honor. This is what our sages said: "one who flees from honor, honor chases after him" (Tanchuma, Vayikra 3). This is the natural order and also in the spiritual it is so. (chochma umussar 2:68).

"there is no honor but Torah" - i.e. acquiring virtues through the ways of the Torah, to become "man that is in honor (haadam bayekar)" (Tehilim 49:21). For thus the nature of honor was created in the world. It was not created for nothing. To seek honor from oneself and not from others. But those who seek honor from other people - they switch it from its proper place. Such an honor "removes a person from the world" and he will not attain what he seeks. But the truth is that honor was implanted in the creation for a person to seek it from himself, through acquiring for himself Torah and its virtues. And since there exists a matter of honor in its proper place, then: "the sages shall inherit honor", he will perforce inherit honor even from other people even against their will (chochma umussar 2:178).

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - for since he said in the previous Mishna: "whoever is occupied in Torah becomes elevated", thus he brought afterwards how great this elevation is. For one who learned from his fellow even one letter (of Torah), it is relevant to conduct oneself towards him with honor. This is without a doubt an elevation.

He brought a proof from what we find that David, king of Israel, learned only two things from

Achitofel. These two things are brought in the midrash as Rashi explains: Achitofel found David sitting and learning alone. He told him: "why are you toiling alone? Is it not written: 'a sword is upon the baddim (loners), and they shall become fools' (Yirmiya 50:36).. Another time David entered the beit midrash in upright posture. He told him: "is it not written: 'you shall fear My temple' (Vayikra 19:30) - that one needs to enter there in reverence so that the fear of the Shechina be upon you as written "in the house of G-d we shall walk with reverence" (Tehilim 55:15)...

And that which honor is proper to the Torah sages, we have explained this in a few places. For honor is fitting for the Sechel (transcendent intellect). For it is divested of the lowliness (pechitut) which clings to the physical. Therefore, he said: "the sages shall inherit honor". For since they are divested of the lowliness of the physical which is petty (shafal), therefore honor is befitting them.

And since from the aspect of Sechel, he is divested of lacking which clings to the physical, therefore the sages are temimim (perfect) and shlemim (whole). Due to this, they will inherit good. For they are divested of lacking which is evil.

🔍 Level 3

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "... or even one letter needs to treat him with honor" - this is a bit difficult for David actually learned two things from Achitofel. Thus how can we deduce a kal vechomer (inference) that even for one thing or one letter that one needs to treat him with honor?

The answer is simple. The Tanna is coming to teach us here a famous principle - in spiritual matters there is nothing which is light or insignificant. Even the tiniest thing in the spiritual domain is worth immeasurably very very much.

(as brought in the beginning of chapter 2: "be careful of a minor mitzvah just like a major mitzvah..")

This is what the tanna comes to teach us here: "know dear Jew that not only if you learned a whole chapter in Shas or a matter in halacha to its full depth is it important before G-d. But even if you learned only one verse or one small matter or even one letter (i.e. to explain one letter in the Torah, why it was written) - this too is very very important before the Holy One, blessed be He.

And even a simple teaching like this which does not advance you in proficiency in halacha, nevertheless it is a very big and important matter and you need to honor the person as if he taught you the whole Torah.

Why in truth is every small detail in Torah very very important even if it does advance you to any place? Because the Torah is the innermost will of G-d. And since we in our small world are unable to grasp the true will of G-d, therefore when the Torah descends down to our world, it enclothes itself in the garment of stories, commandments and laws as we see in the Torah familiar to us. But inside, it conceals a revelation of the innermost will of G-d (see nefesh hachaim).

Thus even the simplest and most seemingly insignificant matter in the Torah is a revelation of the will of G-d translated according to the existence in our world. And even one who learns this small matter clings to a revelation of the will of G-d and he receives another understanding and connection to His infinite wisdom.

He also merits that the most powerful lights in existence (Torah) clings to his soul which is the light of G-d and a revelation of His glory to all the worlds.

Furthermore, the study of this small matter in Torah merits the person to the intense and eternal reward in Gan Eden where he merits to cling to the Holy One, blessed be He and to understand

Torah and mitzvot in their highest upper root.

After this introduction, it is understood why: "he who learns from a colleague one chapter, one halacha (law), one verse, one word, or even one letter needs to treat him with honor". For there is no difference between one letter and the whole Torah. Both are clinging to G-d and connecting to the supernal and eternal light of the Torah.

For this he brought a kal vechomer (inference) from David, king of Israel. For even though he was a great and honorable king and also a tremendous Torah scholar, for "the halacha was like him everywhere" and also he was very much clinging to G-d which led him to compose Tehilim (Psalms), nevertheless even he the giant of giants felt the need to honor Achitofel due to learning two things from him.

For only one who is truly great in Torah knows how important every small thing of Torah is. Therefore, he does not belittle any tiniest matter of Torah nor the person who taught him this tiny matter.. For every knowledge and understanding in Torah is another advance in the spiritual and more connection to G-d and understanding in the revelation of His divine will...

Chapter 6 Beraitha 5 - Bread With Salt

This is the way of the Torah: bread with salt you shall eat, and water by measure you shall drink, and upon the ground you shall sleep, and a life of pain/difficulty you shall live, and in the torah you shall toil. If you do thus, "fortunate are you and it will be good for you" (Tehilim 128) - "fortunate are you" - in this world, "and it will be good for you" - in the World-to-Come.

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "this is the way of the Torah" - this is the way in the beginning of the torah study, even though in the end he will inherit all the good of the world. But he will not merit these good things if he begins to learn out of indulgences and laxness.

Q Level 1



Choshev Machshavot - "this is the way of the torah.." - for it was given in the desert, a desolate place. This was in order to teach that one who wants to study torah must make himself into a desert, i.e. [abstain] from pleasures of this world. Thus the road which the torah itself passed through in coming to this world is this road which is far from all indulgences...

Q Level 1

☆ Machzor Vitri

Machzor Vitri - "bread with salt.." - if a man has nothing but plain bread to dip in salt, even so, do not refrain yourself from toiling in torah. And if he is rich then all the more so should he toil in torah and it is good for him.

"water in measure" - no man drinks water in measured amount unless there is a shortage of water. Even so, strengthen yourself to learn torah.

Q Level 2

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - we may say that the primary [point] of this exhortation is also to the wealthy who have the means to enjoy the pleasures of this world. Nevertheless, one should not habituate himself in them. For then he will not be able to learn properly due to being pampered and soft. A second reason is that if he habituates himself in them, he will be forced to annul his time for learning in order to profit money for his great expenses. Therefore, he exhorted generally to the rich and to the poor saying: "eat bread with salt..".

"water by measure you shall drink" - even though one who eats salt becomes thirsty for water and much water will not extinguish his thirst, nevertheless he commanded and said: "water by measure you shall drink" which is a small amount.

In this he hinted on two things. One that he drinks water and not wine. Two "by measure" and not to satiate.

And even if the water is cold, especially in winter, whereby one who drinks them would need to at least not lie on the ground but rather on a bed to warm up a bit. Nevertheless he exhorted and said to sleep on the ground and not be concerned at all.

Q Level 2

Meorei Ohr

Meorei Ohr - "bread with salt.." - in the book Mili d'Avot: man is a composite of a physical power (koach chomri) and an intellect power (koach sichli). The physical power is very much opposite to the intellect power. Scripture calls the physical power of lust: "yetzer hara" (evil inclination)..

And since this physical power has many subpowers under it and its numerous powers outnumber and defeat the power of intellect and rule over it, therefore a man needs to submit this power which goes after physical lusts and which is lax in toiling in the intellect.

Furthermore, this physical power already strengthened first in a man for many years since his birth, before the power of intellect began to come out from potential to actual, as written: "for the inclination (yetzer) of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen.8:21)...

Therefore, one who wants to make his occupation in torah primary in deed and study must first strongly break this physical power and submit it absolutely - to the furthest extreme of submission. And then it will be easy to restore it to only what is proper and necessary in such a manner that it will no longer obstruct and distract a man from delving into the wisdom (muskalot) of the torah and from toiling in fulfilling its commandments.

On this he said: "this is the way of torah..", ie the way of one who toils in torah is to first submit his yetzer to the opposite extreme in such a way as to subjugate it to the power of intellect and no longer obstruct it...

Then when you weaken the body [by abstaining] from these pleasures, the physical powers will weaken and the intellect powers will strengthen and you will toil in torah.

"If you do thus 'fortunate are you' - in this world". For one who chases after money and pleasures [of the body] is not happy, ie not satisfied with them. For he always lusts for more than what he has.

But if he lives in the way we mentioned and he is happy with his portion - he is happy, satisfied and rich in this world..

Q Level 2

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "you shall eat.." - this is as explained in the midrash ne'elam (Zohar Chadash 138b).. for when a man thinks thoughts to cleave to G-d, the yetzer hara comes and says "but what will you eat?.." Know that if you lust for tasty foods and pleasures of the world - you will be distracted all your days and will not be able to do without them. And then when will your torah [study] be done?

For this, take on yourself to learn torah even if you won't have anything but simple bread, salt and water..

This is why he said: "you shall eat", "you shall drink" in future tense while "and in the torah you toil" is in present tense. That is to say: to take upon yourself in the future to eat [even] bread with salt, etc. while toiling in torah..

Another explanation for the change from future tense to past tense is that eating and sleeping is a "falling" for man, as our sages expounded (Bereisheit Rabba 17:5) on the verse: "and G-d fell slumber on the man" (Bereisheit 2:21). Likewise for eating. Therefore, the more one can minimize this "falling" the better, and he will have more time to learn torah.

Thus if he eats bread with salt, etc. which is something ready to eat and there is no need to work to prepare it. Thus he can toil in torah during the time he would have needed to prepare a [cooked] meal. Furthermore, for a meal of bread and salt, a person will not push himself so fast to go eat immediately. Thus he will not abandon his studies immediately when he starts to get hungry. For

there is much time in the day and he will have time to eat later.

Thus he wrote "you shall eat" in future tense while "and in the torah you toil" is in present tense. For do not delay it since every second which passed can never be returned.

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "a life of pain you shall live" - ie [even] with emotional pain like anger, anguish, and worry. If in spite of this [pain] you cling to the torah, "fortunate are you.." then you will be the man we spoke on earlier who is crowned with all good of heaven and earth.

Q Level 2

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "and a life of pain/difficulty you shall live" - but isn't eating bread with salt, etc. already "a life of pain"? Rather, the intent is that until now he specified only those things most necessary, namely, food, drink, and sleep. But there are many other things and thus he said a great general principle saying: "and a life of pain/difficulty you shall live"..

Alternatively, by nature one who lives a "life of pain" considers himself as dead and his life is not a life. But this is not the way of chasidut (piety). Rather a man needs to rejoice in sufferings. Thus he said "life of pain you shall LIVE". ie this life of pain be considered in your eyes like life and not death.

Alternatively, a man may think that if he does this he will become sick immediately and die in midlife. On this he is promising a man that even if it is a "life of pain" - know that you will live and not die. For that is not what causes death.

Q Level 3

Chachma u'Mussar

Chochma u'Mussar 1:64 - "a life of pain/difficulty you shall live" - he who wants to take upon himself the yoke of torah and its regimen which is for his own good, let him train himself in these things: "bread with salt you shall eat, etc." ie to be free from the distractions of the world and to delve deeply in wisdom with peace of mind and sharp intellect and even to live with great hardship, "a life of pain/difficulty you shall live, and in the torah you shall toil", specifically. The explanation is that this will not distract you from toil in torah. Such a person is the true chacham (wise man).

Therefore one who wants to train himself in the way of wisdom, let him train himself in this path slowly slowly and then certainly he will come to a high level.

The intent of the mishna is not to say that specifically one must live a life of pain. Rather the explanation of the matter is that the mishna teaches us the philosophical path needed to study wisdom. For as is known what our sages said (see Rambam hichot talmud torah 3:12): "a man should not say: 'I will merit the crown of torah out of [physical] pleasures'. Rather only out of minimal derech erez and [physical] pleasures".

For the beginning of all bad things is lust.. Thus our sages who love wisdom devoted themselves (masru nafshem) to conquer lust in order to merit wisdom. And as Rabeinu Yonah wrote in Shaarei Torah (1:31): "one who is pure from lust, his acts are upright (yashar) but one who lusts, his acts are not upright".

Q Level 3

Chatam Sofer

Shevet Sofer, chelek beit Derush Dalet shabbat hagadol - "a life of pain.." - for in the beginning it will be difficult on a man to serve G-d with joy and gladness of heart. For he still does not understand and know that man's primary purpose is to serve G-d as written: "the end of the matter, all having been heard, fear G-d and keep His commandments for this is all of man" (Kohelet 12:3).

The Rambam explained this (in Mishna sanhedrin, chelek) that from serving G-d out of fear, he will ascend to serving G-d out of love. Then his eyes will illuminate and he will understand how much good is hidden in the torah and mitzvot until he will find that all of his reward itself is in serving G-d.

This is what the sage said: "this is the way of the torah", ie this is the path for one who begins in torah, "bread with salt you shall eat.. and a life of pain..".

For in the beginning of the path, he will consider his life as one of pain (tzar) since he does not find what he seeks.

But "if you do thus" if you toil for some time in torah then "fortunate are you in this world" because "it will be good for you in the next world". For all the pleasures of this world are as nothing in his eyes relative to the mitzvot of G-d.

Q Level 3

Chida

Chida, Zeroa Yamin - "this is the way of the torah.." - we can explain that the intent is for one to have such great and intense desire in torah that all of his affairs and [worldly] possessions are removed from his eyes. And due to his great desire he does not know to eat and sleep. For all of his heart and mind is in the torah.

If he merits to this, then without being forced, he will find that he will eat a small [quantity of] bread with salt and a little [amount of] water and he will sleep on the ground in order to toil in torah. Not that he will do this to afflict himself but rather out of love and desire in torah, along the lines of what is written in Reishit Chachma (Gate of Love, chapter 4) in the name of R. Yitzchak from Akko, of blessed memory, regarding the person who desired to marry the princess, see there. For one who desires something causes himself to remove all other things from his mind. This is what was said: "this is the way of the torah. He who wants to merit her (the torah), his desire to cleave to the torah will be very great and from there he will come to "bread with salt, etc. and in the torah you toil" and then the torah will certainly reveal her secrets to him.

Q Level 1

Rashi

Rashi - "bread with salt you shall eat" - he is not speaking on a rich man and not saying to place oneself in a life of pain/hardship to learn torah. Rather, the intent is that even if a man has only bread with salt, etc. and he does not have a mattress and pillow and sleeps on the ground - even so do not refrain from toiling in torah. For in the end he will learn torah as a rich man.

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - "this is the way of the torah.." - Rashi explains: this is not speaking on a rich man and telling him to live in pain/suffering in order to learn torah. Rather, it means that even if a person [is so poor that he] has only bread and salt, etc. [he should not refrain from learning torah].

However, Rashi's explanation is difficult. For the term: "this is the way of torah" needs clarification since it implies that this is proper.

Hence it seems the explanation of "this is the way of torah" is as what our sages said:

"Says Reish Lakish: the torah does not endure except on one who slays himself over it, as written (Bamidbar 19:14): 'this is the torah of a man who dies in a tent'" (Shabbat 83b).

The explanation of this is that the torah is [transcendent] intellect while man is of physical body and without a doubt the intellect and the body are opposites and antagonistic to each other.

Therefore, the torah has no [way to] endure in the physical body. For how can the torah which is [transcendent] intellect endure in a physical body? Both are opposites and thus cannot co-exist

together. Thus, he said that the torah cannot endure except in a man who slays himself on the torah until he divests of the body completely for the torah and his primary [existence] becomes intellect and not body.

Then the torah can endure by him. For the physical body does not obstruct at all the torah when it is as if it does not exist.. Thus he said here: "this is the way of the torah.." For thus is proper for the torah in that it is [transcendent] intellect - to not be drawn at all after the [physical] enjoyments (taanugim) which are lusts of the body. And then the torah can endure.

But nevertheless, this is talking about a person who can bear [the harsh discipline] and the weakening of his [bodily] strength does not prevent him (from learning torah).

(R.Hartman - ie the Beraitha is giving a constant instruction to avoid being drawn after [physical] enjoyments (taanugim). But nevertheless, only one who is able to bear this and does not come to weakening of strength.. the Shulchan Aruch writes similarly (Orach Chaim 571:1) : "one who sits in a fast, if he is able to bear the fast - he is called holy. But if not, i.e. that the fasting causes him to not be healthy or strong - he is called a sinner. A talmid chacham (torah scholar) is not permitted to sit in a fast because he then diminishes the work of Heaven, unless the congregation fasts in which case he should not separate from them. Teachers of children are as torah scholars [in this regard]"..)

🔍 Level 3



Seder Hayom - regarding what [pleasures] are considered "needed for learning (torah)" - all the time he is not doing this thing for [physical] pleasure but rather in order to strengthen his heart. And especially if he is sickness prone and is afraid of becoming sick if he waits alot. In that case, certainly it would be a sin in his hand if he does not eat and strengthen his limbs. For it is a big mitzvah for a person to seek ways to make his body healthy in order to be strong and healthy in torah study and doing mitzvot however he could, even if there is an aspect of bitul (annulling) torah or prayer.

For the mitzvot were not given for a man to kill himself and depart from this world at midlife. For what gain is there to profit one hundred mitzvot and lose one thousand? Chalila (woe) to one who thinks like this. He is but a "crazy pious" (chasisd shoteh) and he destroys himself on something the torah did not command. Not only will he not receive reward for this, but he is destined to be judged for what the torah commanded "you shall live by them" (Vayikra 18:5) and not die by them, "guard yourself and guard your soul" (Devarim 4:9), "you shall guard your soul (life) very much" (Devarim 4:15), and other similar verses.

Thus we are commanded to guard our health in order to be healthy and strong to survive on the earth and toil in torah and fulfill mitzvot.

Included in this is one who fasts a lot and his heart is weak and he does not have strength to stand up thus annulling his torah study. This will be considered a sin and not a mitzvah. And if because he wants to repent from his sins he is forced to afflict himself (fasting), he should not do this in such a way that he fulfills one mitzvah of repentance and annuls torah study which weighs like all the mitzvot.

Rather he should do in such a way that he fulfills both such as not eating to fill his stomach but rather a little amount to maintain his soul and his spirit can stand with him and he will not annul his torah study.

And that which our sages said: "the words of torah endure only in one who slays himself over

them, as written: "this is the torah of the man who dies in a tent" - the intent is not to say one should afflict himself until he causes his own death, G-d forbid. Rather, it means that the torah will not endure in he who chases after the pleasures of the world and its desires. For if he chases those things, certainly he will not chase after the torah and its commandments.. Rather he should not pursue the superfluous and he eats to maintain his health and subsists with the necessary. This is called "death" relative to other people who go after the darkness and chase after the lusts and pleasures.

Through this, not only will he not shorten his life but on the contrary, he will be healthy and strong all his days. For he does not burden his body with heavy food and drink.

This is what the Tanna says: "this is the way of the torah, bread and salt you shall eat..", ie do not chase the superfluous and things difficult to attain. Rather after that which is easy to find and light and does not weigh heavily on you and distract your mind; "salt" refers to anything of taste which accompanies bread, whatever it may be, something light. "and water in measure" means to not drink water to fill his stomach and weigh down on him. This will come on its own. For since he does not eat a lot, he won't drink a lot. And since he does not drink a lot, it will not be heavy on him and he will be able to toil in torah as he wishes.

"a life of pain/difficulty you shall live" - not that he should afflict his body such that he will become ill. Rather the pain that he afflicts himself is that his soul lusts to eat and drink the enjoyments of people and he pains himself to diminish his lust in this but not completely chalila due to the reasons mentioned above. When the intelligent person sees these things, he will find them sound and easy to understand..

Level 3

Hayom yom (Chabad 5703, mishpatim) - one of the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov on the verse: "when you see the donkey of your enemy crouching under its load and would refrain from helping; you shall surely help him" (Shemot 23:5).

"When you see the donkey (chamor)" - when you examine deeply your physicality (chamor), namely, your body, you will see "your enemy". For the body hates the soul which longs to G-dliness and spirituality. You will also see that it "crouches under its load" which G-d gave to the body to purify itself through torah and mitzvot but the body is lazy to fulfill them. Perhaps you will consider "refraining from helping it" to fulfill its mission by starting with afflictions (fasting, etc.) to break the physicality.

Behold, this is not the way leading to the light of torah. Rather, "you shall surely help him" - to refine and purify the body but not to break it with afflictions.

(translator: in our weak generation, afflicting the body through fasts, etc. may break a person so it may be better for most people to focus instead on helping the body by learning mussar and training the body to be disgusted by evil and to feel joy in good.)

Level 2

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "and in the torah you shall toil" - even though I told you that this is the way of torah, do not think that if you conduct yourself in this order I set for you that the learning will come easily and immediately without toil and effort.. thus he said "and in the torah you shall toil". For nevertheless the torah study needs to be with great toil and effort - all this and maybe.

"and in the torah you shall toil" - even at those times when you are in pain (btzar) and in suffering (yisurim), do not be idle from toiling in torah.

"if you do thus" - I know full well that not many people will listen to my words in this matter. But if you, ie you the [rare] individual do thus, "fortunate are you..".

Parenthetically, he also spoke to the hearts of those who study torah and are poor or destitute, who seek bread but there isn't - do not suspect G-d's ways saying: "I am serving G-d for nothing" For they will recognize that this is the way of torah. Her children are poor.

"fortunate are you" - for he did not waste his days chasing the superfluous and seeking imaginary honor.

And it was said in the way of mussar: "he who did not see or worry on that which did not reach his hands - his soul is tranquil, his mind is pure, and he lives a long life."

Q Level 2

Toldot Yaakov Yosef, emor - "fortunate are you in this world" - for there is no path for the evil inclination to start up (mitgareh) with a man except through eating and drinking. There is no need to bring a proof on this as it is clear from the torah, prophets, and holy writings (Tanach)..

The yetzer hara (evil inclination) goes and stirs people always trying to find an opening to entice them.

But for this person who conducts himself in the way of the torah, there is no path at all for the yetzer to come to him. Due to this, the person is quiet and rests from the great war of the yetzer hara (evil inclination) and thus fortunate is he also in this world for the yetzer does not start up with him at all.

But for the person who wants to go in the ways of G-d and also eat and drink fully - certainly the yetzer hara will start up with him and he will not rest nor be quiet from the great and incessant war of the yetzer hara..

Q Level 3

Chelek Yaakov, avot - "fortunate are you in this world" - for the chomer and taanug (physical pleasures) will crouch like a lion on the soul of man and incline him to everywhere it desires. Then like clay in the hands of a potter, so too man will be in the hands of his yetzer hara. But if he toils in torah, he will be free from everything..

"fortunate are you and it is good for you" - "bread with salt..and a life of pain" ie even though you do this, you must tell yourself "fortunate are you and it is good for you" (and not complain). Then it will be good for you in this world and the next. This is "tzadik vetov lo", when asked he says: "it is good for me", then he is a tzadik gamur (completely righteous)..

Q Level 4

Maalot hatorah - a person needs to pain himself and his body on the torah. For the body is from the sitra achra and through breaking the sitra achra, the sitra of kedusha will rise. Through painning his body in torah study as written: bread with salt..and in the torah toil..."

Q Level 4

☆ Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - (kabalistic) "fortunate are you - in this world" - the plain meaning (pshat) is difficult. For "it is good for you in Olam Haba" is understood. Certainly there it will be good since he eats the reward of torah and mitzvot which he toiled in this world, the eternal good which cannot be imagined.

But when he says: "fortunate are you - in this world" - what "fortunate" is there in this world to live a

life of pain, bread with salt, etc.

It seems to me, with G-d's help, that in truth the pain and strain which a man bears in torah in this world - it grants him tranquility and great good also while in this world.

For besides the eternal reward of Olam Haba, he is saved from Chibut Hakever (the beating of the grave) which is enormously great. And the wicked man who does not toil in torah and mitzvot in this world, he enjoys himself through eating and drinking and he sits like a king in this world.

But from this grows out and stems enormous pain in this world, besides the pain of Gehinom he suffers in the next world. Namely, the enormous pain which is unimaginable of chibut hakever (the beating of the grave). And the greater the pleasures he enjoyed in this world, the greater the zuhamat hanachash (impurity of the primordial serpent) will take hold on him more and the greater will be the enormous and awesome pain of chibut hakever. For they beat him in order to separate out the klipah (spiritual impurity) from him.

But for the tzadikim who weakened their physicality through afflictions in this world, the zuhamat hanachash (impurity of the serpent) which had strengthened and seized them melts away. And the tiny little bit which remains in them is separated out through a little bit of pain in the grave as known.

Thus, for the tzadikim who toil and exert in torah in this world, the exertion causes them great tranquility in the chibut hakever. But for the wicked, the enjoyments of eating, drinking, etc. in this world causes them enormous pain in the chibut hakever which happens in this world (in the grave). And also for his soul (nefesh), it will have in this world gilgulim in domem, tzomeach, vechai (inanimate, animate, animal reincarnations) which are very very difficult on the soul. All this is in this world, before he goes to Gehinom which is in the next world.

This is analogous to two donkeys carrying loads. One donkey carries a heavy load of salt while the second donkey carries a load of sponges which are very light and it does not feel the load at all as if there is nothing on its back.

The second donkey rejoices and jumps on the hills and sprints the meadows as if it has no weight. But the first donkey with salt goes heavily and is pained by the load for it is very heavy.

After they travelled several hours, they reached a very wide river which they both needed to cross with the loads on their backs. When the donkey laden with salt entered the river, the salt began to melt. After a few minutes, all the salt melted and dissolved and nothing was left and the bag was empty.

The donkey crossed the river happy and delighting. For no load was left on its back.

But for the donkey laden with sponges, when it entered the river, the sponges absorbed huge quantities of water and were very very heavy on its back until it could not bear the burden of weight and its limbs collapsed and the donkey drowned.

So too regarding man in this world. The exertion in torah and afflictions on his body diminish and remove the zuhamat hanachash stuck on him until it melts off slowly slowly. And after his soul leaves and his body goes to the grave, he will not be pained by the enormous pain of chibut hakever.

But if he removes the yoke of torah and goes after the lusts and enjoyments, not only the zuhamat hanachash does not melt off but it increases, widens and thickens more than what it was in the beginning and becomes a great bright leprosy on him.

This is what the tanna says: don't think that in the way of torah you will lose this world completely and will have only olam haba. It is not so. Rather "fortunate are you in this world". For there will come a time in this world where you will have happiness from this.

Level 3

Yadot Ephraim, avot - "fortunate are you in this world" - we can understand this according to what is written in the book "Panim Yafot" parsha Lech Lecha. Namely that which our sages said: "there is no reward for a mitzvah in this world" (Kidushin 39b), this applies only to those mitzvot which do not have any bodily pleasure such as tefilin, tzitzit or the like.

But for mitzvot which do have bodily pleasure such as oneg shabbat or eating kodashim (offerings), mitzvot whereby the yetzer entices a man to have intent for pleasure of the body - if a man purifies himself to have intent only for the mitzvah of his Creator as the talmud says regarding two people who roasted the passover lamb, one ate for the mitzvah and the other ate for lust (the talmud initially calls the former righteous and the latter wicked). Then, one who ate with intent for the mitzvah receives reward also in this world, measure for measure since he conquered his bodily pleasure.

Perhaps we can say this is the intent in the mishna here: "bread with salt you shall eat", ie if you eat all delicacies of this world on Shabbat and Yom Tov, etc. and you put to heart to feel it as if it is just bread with salt and water in measure, thereby annulling the bodily pleasure of the tasty food then "fortunate are you in this world". For due to this, you will receive reward also in this world as written in "Panim Yafot"...

Level 3

Michtav M'Eliyahu, part 1 - "fortunate are you in this world..." - there is no material happiness only spiritual happiness. He who is wealthy in the spiritual - he is the happy person and no one else under any circumstances. This is the matter we can see, those bnei torah who put all their mind, desire, lust of the heart, and enthusiasm (meretz) into torah and wisdom - they are the ones who will feel true happiness. Not only in the next world, but even in this world.

Without a doubt, a person who has no aspiration (sheifah) and no enthusiasm (meretz) is not happy. For aspiration and enthusiasm are the foundation of happiness, they are life. But when? When the aspirations are fulfilled and their fulfillment is not dependent on other people, such as jealousy and pursuit of honor.

Namely when the aspiration is from love of torah, love of wisdom, mussar, etc. Such an aspiration's fulfillment depends only on us. And the more we increase enthusiasm and aspiration, the happier we become.. This is the explanation of the mishna: "this is the way of torah.. bread with salt, etc.", ie if you are prepared even for this due to your desire for torah, then whether you are rich in money or poor "fortunate are YOU in this world" - YOU and no one else under any circumstances. These are true things regarding attaining happiness in this world.

Level 2

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel on Avot - "this is the way of the torah.." - that a man needs to habituate himself to subsist with the necessary and flee from (superfluous) foods and pleasures.. Through this he will establish his body and purify his intellect (nefesh maskelet) and incline it to good traits as explained that the torah enclothes those who study it lishma all the virtues mentioned earlier.

"fortunate are you in this world" - and when the body minimizes lusts and pleasures which are arrows and bitterness to the intellect, the reward drawn from this healing conduct is *"ashreicha vetov lach"* - fortunate are you in this world. People will call you fortunate for separating from bodily lusts in order to attain torah.

Likewise they will praise you for guarding your body in this world from the superfluous which ruin and cause illness to the body and you will not get sick.

"it will be good for you in Olam Haba" - the soul will pass on clean and pure for having fled from bodily pleasures while attached to the body and for having attained some perfections.

Q Level 3

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - *"this is the way of the torah.... in the next world"* - it is impossible to say the mishna is literal, that those who study torah are obligated to be poor and destitute living on bread with salt and measured water, etc.

Rather, the explanation is that this is the way and outlook which the torah drills into those who study torah. Namely, even if your physical situation is unbearable and you live in a situation of "bread with salt, sleeping on the ground..", and not only you are financially poor but additionally you are in a situation of "a life of pain/deprivation" and you are surrounded by troubles and sufferings besides financial poverty, nevertheless you do not need to be depressed and feel death is better than life.

Rather, you have a way to escape from all the troubles and sufferings through "and in the torah you shall toil". For the torah is the only thing which can bring joy to a man in all the worst possible situations which can occur throughout one's life, as king David said: "if not for Your Torah which had been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction" (Tehilim 119:92).

"if you do thus" - the tanna promises us "if you do thus, ie this is something impossible to teach theoretically or through a mussar lecture. Rather, only through personal life experience. Only if you truly do this, to train yourself to learn torah despite all the hardships, will you eventually reach a situation of "fortunate are you and it is good for you". Namely, despite that your life in this world is full of troubles you will reach a situation of "fortunate are you in this world".

The tanna did not say "it is good for you in this world". For in truth you have troubles and sufferings which do not appear so good. But even that it is not "good for you" in this world, nevertheless you will feel happy and joyful without limit for learning torah and will not at all feel the troubles and sufferings as if they are just passing over you without touching you at all.

How is it possible to feel happy in this world if you have so many troubles? Through strengthening yourself in torah study, you will live with the knowledge of "it will be good for you in the next world".

And since you know that tremendous happiness awaits you in the next world for every second of torah study (and all the more so for torah in difficulty which is 100x more) then automatically this knowledge will fill you with happiness already in this world and you will not need additional means to attain happiness in this world.

For by us from childhood until old age our education is based on the principle that in the end, after all the life in this world, the next world awaits us above and there is the primary life. And one who has merited to attain Olam Haba (through torah and mitzvot), then for him he has already attained the primary in his hand! And thus even if he does not have wealth and pleasures in this world, it is not so critical.

This is as one who won the lottery and runs to receive his check for millions on a hot day. If he sweats it will not bother him at all. For since he is a millionaire, who cares if he is a millionaire with a little or a lot of sweat? He will soon have enough money to change the bathtub in his apartment or even the whole apartment.

So too for one who knows that Olam Haba awaits him for toiling in torah and doing the will of G-d. Thus it should not bother him any trouble or problem in this world. For he thinks to himself: "at a certain stage I will reach Olam Haba. There I will have a beautiful home with an awesome panoramic view of the radiance of the Shechina". When one dreams of his home there, he will not care about his home here and certainly on the surroundings and the problems with the neighbors.

🔍 Level 4

☆ Siftef Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftef Daat on Avot (Daat chochma umussar 2:71,3:2) - "a life of pain.." - the explanation of the matter is that we find in the torah by the blessing of Yaakov to Yissaschar: "he saw the tranquility that it was good.. and he bowed his shoulder to bear" (Bereisheit 49:15). For since Yisaschar was the tribe of which it is written: "who knew how to give counsel appropriate to the time (yodeah binah l'eitim)" (Divrei Hayamim 12:33) - "who sit and toil in torah", therefore he saw and recognized the trait of tranquility that it is good. For the trait of tranquility is a primary condition for acquiring the torah and acquiring tranquility is only through "bowing his shoulder to bear". This is because true tranquility comes specifically through breaking the body and diminishing its needs.

Despite this, he will not be distracted by anything and will remain in a state of tranquility.

But tranquility which stems from bodily comfort and fulfilling all its needs - on the contrary, this is the source of inner confusion (mekor habilbul). For he is used to tranquility only on conditions that nothing is lacking for him of the bodily needs.

On this we learned: "bread with salt you shall eat, etc." For in breaking the body and minimizing its needs, through this he will come to the true tranquility and then "and in the torah you shall toil" (Daat Torah 1:280).

Another explanation is that the secret of the whole torah is tzimtzum (constriction), tzimtzum in your eating, tzimtzum in your drinking, tzimtzum in your sleeping, tzimtzum in all matters of your life. This is the foundation of the trait of Perishut (abstinence) whose matter is to not do any action, deed or movement without complete need and necessity. Through this, certainly fortunate are you in this world and the next (Daat Torah 4:195).

This Beraitha is brought by the Rambam in Hilchot Talmud Torah (chapter 3 halacha 6). And in halacha 12 there, he writes:

The words of Torah will not endure by a person who applies himself feebly [to obtain] them, and not by those who study amid pleasure and [an abundance] of food and drink. Rather, one must give his life for them, constantly straining his body to the point of discomfort, without granting sleep to his eyes or slumber to his eyelids.

The Sages alluded to this concept, [interpreting Bamidbar 19:14:] "This is the Torah, a man should he die in a tent..." [to mean that] the Torah cannot be firmly acquired except by a person who gives his life in the tents of wisdom.

And in halacha 6 regarding the 48 ways to acquire the torah, he lists "kabalat yisurim" (accepting sufferings). And in the talmud: "if he bears sufferings, what is his reward?.. and not only that but his torah study endures in his hand" (Berachot 5a). And likewise: "three good gifts G-d gave to

Yisrael and all of them are given only through sufferings. They are: torah..etc." (Berachot 5a).

Thus it is. But the secret of the matter is that a life of pain and suffering is essentially a remedy (segulah) to grow and ascend in torah. Through this the torah is acquired and endures in his hand.

Come and see how the oral torah was revealed to our holy sages - in times of the worst troubles and tortures, in the pitch black darkness of the great galut (exile)!

Through those lives of pain and sufferings, specifically then came out the light of the talmud! Thus I found in the book of the pious Yavetz: "we merited this great light due to the darkness of the galut (exile)".

For darkness is a cause for light, as Rabeinu Yonah writes in Shaarei Teshuva (shaar beit ot heh). See there where he brings the verse: "although I will sit in darkness, G-d is a light to me" (Michah 7:8) which our sages explained: "if I did not sit in darkness, He would not have been a light to me"! Understand this. (Daat Torah 4:141).

"if you do thus, fortunate are you.." - if you ask: "but is this considered happiness in this world?" Know that if you would contemplate on true life, the life of torah, "you shall therefore keep my statute, and my judgments, which if a man does, he shall live in them: I am the L-ord" (Vayikra 18:5), you would certainly understand that "bread with salt, etc. and in the torah toil" - this is without a doubt the happiest and best life possible. (Daat Toorah 3:271).

Level 3

Shevet Sofer, chelek aleph Beshalach - "fortunate are you.." - for this is the great primary matter and the cornerstone of receiving the torah - to be content with what one has, to not be frenzied to become rich or increase wealth and honor and go after the pleasures of this world. For this is among the things which prevent a man from toiling in torah and fulfilling the mitzvot.

Therefore David said: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Your statutes" (Tehilim 119:71). And our sages taught: "this is the way of the Torah: bread with salt you shall eat..". For if his aspiration is to increase his wealth and possessions, then he will not be able to delve deeply in the torah. And the Rambam already said: "the destruction of the body is the upholding of the soul (hirus haguf hu kiyum hanefesh) (Maamarei HaRambam, maamar al hanefesh). Likewise the torah warns: "Lest your heart will inflate and you will forget the L-ord your G-d which brought you out of Egypt, from the house of bondage" (Devarim 8:14) and "Yeshurun (Israel) became fat and kicked" (Devarim 32:25).

One needs to believe that each and every day G-d will give him his sustenance and livelihood allotted for him and trust in G-d and not worry on tomorrow.

This was also during the manna. It fell down every day and G-d commanded them to gather only what they needed for that one day even if more than that fell.

They learned from the manna to trust in G-d that tomorrow also He will give them enough of what they lack and to be content with what they have every day.

This is what G-d commanded them: gather of it one omer per person and do not leave over until the morning. This was "in order to test them if they will go after My torah" - if they will trust in G-d and be content only with what they gathered in one day. This will be a trial and through this they were tested if they will go and fulfill the torah.

This is what our sages said: "the torah was given only to those who ate the mana" (Mechilta dRashbi 13:17).

For only one who is like those who ate the manna, that what he has for today is enough for him and he does not squander his time to increase and gather possessions - to such a person the torah was given and also he will be able to fulfill it.

Q Level 4

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - "this is the way of torah.." - the primary thing is histapkut - to rejoice in one's portion. This is what our sages brought: "[G-d says:] the whole world receives sustenance in the merit of Chanina, My son, and for Chanina, My son, it is enough for him one kav (small measure) of carobs from one friday to the next" (Berachot 17b, Taanit 24b).

Notice it was not said: "Chanina, My son has only one kav of carobs" but rather "it is enough for him one kav of carobs". For the primary thing is "what is enough for him". For "there is no lacking for those who fear Him". Understand this. (R.Yitzchak Blazer).

we find similar sayings by our sages such as (Berachot 63b):

"attend (hasket) and hear, Israel (hasket u'shema yisrael)' (Devarim 27:9) - cut yourselves to pieces [kitetu atzmechem] for words of torah".

"the words of torah endure only in one who slays himself over them, as written: 'this is the torah of the man who dies in a tent'". (Berachot 63b)

Likewise on the verse: "black as ravens" - "in whom do you find words of torah? In he who arrives early morning and leaves late night from the Beit Midrash (house of study).. in he who blackens his face on them like a raven.." (Eruvin 21b).

We imagine that these things are just extra piety, mida chasidut. But know very well that these things are completely halacha as we see that the Rambam brought them as halacha in Hilchot Talmud Torah. Here is a quote:

"He whose heart has moved him **to fulfill this mitzvah properly** and to be crowned with the crown of torah, he should not interrupt his thoughts to other matters. He should not think that he can acquire torah with wealth and honor together. [Rather,] this is the path of Torah: Eat bread with salt, drink water in small measure, sleep on the ground, live a life of difficulty, and toil in Torah, etc".. and "the words of Torah will not endure by a person who applies himself feebly [to obtain] them, and not by those who study amid pleasure and [an abundance] of food and drink. Rather, one must give up his life for them, constantly straining his body to the point of discomfort, without granting sleep to his eyes or slumber to his eyelids. The Sages alluded to this concept, [interpreting Bamidbar 19:14:] "This is the Torah, a man should he die in a tent..." [to mean that] the Torah cannot endure except by a person who gives up his life in the tents of wisdom...

Thus, this is the mitzvah of talmud torah from the aspect of primary halacha, fulfilling the mitzvah properly".

And earlier in chapter 1 halacha 8, the Rambam writes:

Every Jewish man is obligated to study Torah, whether he is poor or rich, whether his body is healthy and whole or afflicted by difficulties, whether he is young or an old man whose strength has diminished.

Even if he is a poor man who derives his livelihood from charity and begs from door to door, even

if he is a husband and [a father of] children, he must establish a fixed time for Torah study during the day and at night..

We don't find the Rambam brings such a halacha in other mitzvot such as tefilin or the like. This implies the mitzvah of talmud torah is different in this than other mitzvot. For in the mitzvah of talmud torah, there is no patur (exemption) of *oness* (accidental/unable). Rather in all cases one is obligated to fix times for talmud torah, even when under the biggest burdens (*tirdot*) and under the most enormous difficulties. This is what the Rambam is teaching us on this and this needs explanation.

It seems the explanation is as follows. In the midrash (*Vayikra Rabba* 14:1): "you have formed me behind and before" (*Tehilim* 139:5, *achor v'kadem tzartani*) - if a man merits/refines himself, he is told: 'you are first (purpose) in creation' but if not, he is told: 'a mosquito preceded you!'

Thus man was created "before" all creation (in purpose) and likewise "behind/last" of all creations. And in order to merit to be "before", man's job is to refine (*lezakech*) himself always. And as we learned at the end of the tractate:

"the Holy One wanted to refine/merit (*lezakot*) Yisrael, therefore He increased on them torah and mitzvot.."

And likewise in the midrash: "'the word of G-d refines' - the mitzvot were given only to refine people" (*Bamidbar Rabba* 44a). And to refine one needs to change his whole nature to the good. It is certainly obvious that there is no other advice than through torah study, the "precious vessel used to create the world" (*Avot* 3:17). Thus the torah has a special power to change one's nature (see *Daat Chochma umussar* 1:41-42).

And in truth, this is the root and purpose of the mitzvah of talmud torah - to change man's natures, to refine and purify him.

What comes out of our words is that the purpose of talmud torah is to change man's nature. If so, perforce the way of study must be against man's nature. For if the way of study is in line with one's nature, then it is not possible for this to produce a change of nature and the man will not become purified.

This is actually the opposite of the purpose of the mitzvah and in this manner the mitzvah of talmud torah is different than other mitzvot. For in the mitzvah of talmud torah there is no patur of *oness* (exemption of "unable"). Rather even in the biggest distractions and difficulties there is an obligation of talmud torah.

On the contrary, in this is the root of the mitzvah and the true obligation of talmud torah - when the study runs contrary to a man's nature.

On this foundation is built all the sayings of our sages which we brought: "this is the way of the torah..", "cut yourselves in pieces (*kitetu*) for words of torah.." (*Berachot* 63b), "to slay oneself", "to rise early..", "to blacken.." all of them are the ways of the mitzvah of talmud torah.

For its true regimen is when it runs contrary to man's natures. But one who sees to it that his torah study is in line with his natures, he should know that he has gone out completely from the bounds of the mitzvah of talmud torah.

Ben Ish Chai - Chasdei Avot - (kabalistic) "this (kach) is the way of torah.." - as known, through toil in torah, a man does a yichud elyon, Havaia E-hey, in the Sod of Chochma and Binah and a yichud tachtan, Havaia A-donai in the Sod of tiferet and malchut. These two yichudim are hinted in the letters kach (kaf, kaf sofit) which are kaf open and kaf closed as Rabeinu haArizal wrote in Shaar Hakavanot in the sod maamar kach alah bemachshava.

On this the Tanna hinted, as is his way, in saying "this (kach) is the way of the torah", ie the way of the torah is to do these two yichudim elyon and tachtan in the Sod (secret) of "Kach"...

Chapter 6 Beraitha 6 - Table Of Kings

Do not seek greatness for yourself and do not covet honor. אל תבקש גדלה לעצמך, ואל תחמד כבוד,
 Practice more than you learn and do not desire the table of יותר מלמודך עשה, ואל תתאוה לשלחנם
 kings. For your table is greater than theirs and your crown is של מלכים, ששלחנך גדול משלחנם, וכתרך
 greater than their crowns. And faithful is your Employer to גדול מכתרם, ונאמן הוא בעל מלאכתך
 pay you the reward of your work. שישלם לך שכר פעלתך

Q Level 1

☆ Rashi

Rashi - "do not seek greatness for yourself" - to chase after positions of dominion/leadership (sherara).

"do not desire honor" - to be honored for your torah. For then you appear as one who serves "shelo lishma" (i.e for personal gain).

"your table is greater than theirs" - the reward you will receive for learning torah.

"practice more than you learn" - do good deeds and fulfill mitzvot more than what you learned, as we learned: "one whose [good] deeds exceeds his wisdom - his wisdom will endure" (Avot 3:11).

Q Level 2

☆ Sforno

Sforno - "this is the way of torah.. bread with salt.. do not seek greatness for yourself.." - he exhorted on two matters. For in most cases, these are undoubtedly what prevents a man from toiling in torah. The first is desire for physical pleasures. Thus he said one who toils in torah must subsist with the necessary for temporary life [of this world] and not waste his time seeking the superfluous.

The second is yearning for honor and status in this temporary world. Thus he said to not desire to increase honor in this world more than his learning, i.e. more than what he is used to getting presently according to his status in this temporary world. He also said that in torah, he will find life and honor more than anywhere else.

Q Level 2

☆ Meorei Ohr

Meorei Ohr - "do not desire the table of kings.." - after exhorting on afflicting the body [by abstaining] from [superfluous] foods and pleasures and by not chasing after honor, he now clarifies the great pleasures and great honor he will attain in Olam Haba. For this is greater than delights of kings and their exalted glories.

This is what he said: "do not desire..kings", even though their table includes delights and honor. For your table regarding pleasures is greater than theirs and your level and honor is greater than their crowns in Olam Haba..

Q Level 2

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel

Rabeinu Avraham Pritzel on Avot - "do not seek greatness for yourself" - ie since Rebbi Meir said earlier that among the segulot (powers) of the torah is that it grants kingship and rulership to those who study *lishma* (for its own sake), he warned and exhorted to not seek for yourself greatness and honor. For that is not torah *lishma* but "a crown to inflate oneself". Rather from torah [*lishma*], automatically greatness and virtues (maalot) will come to you.

And likewise "do not desire the table of kings" who eat the fruits of their merits in this world and

benefit from their crown of royalty. Rather just learn.. certainly your crown is greater than theirs.. and if the reward does not appear to reach you in this world, know and understand that "faithful is your Employer to pay you the reward of your work" (in the afterlife).

Q Level 3

Yismach Moshe - "do not desire the table of kings" - for the yetzer tells a man who toils in torah: "if you take on yourself the yoke of torah, you will not make a good livelihood. For you will not be among the merchants". Likewise, "if you will have only for yourself stale bread and water it is good for you but what about other people? How can you feed others, to satiate the starving and that 'poor people should be guests in your house' (Avot 1:5) and anyone hungry can come in, etc. as the wealthy and important people do... they have on their table fattened chickens and good wines. This is a tremendous mitzvah without limit, to feed the poor and destitute but you cannot do this even a little bit. Therefore it is good for you to drop this torah study and toil in business. Then you can come to their level and have both this world and the next". On this he said: "do not desire the table of kings.. for your crown is greater than theirs"...

Q Level 2

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "do not seek greatness for yourself and do not covet honor" - likewise Yaakov our forefather asked G-d only for bread to eat and clothing to wear, things necessary immediately. For Yaakov divested himself of this world and took for himself Olam Haba as written in the Midrash (Tanna dBei Eliyahu zuta ch.19)...

But when Yaakov sought to sit quietly (leshev shalva), immediately the troubles with Yosef befell him as written in the Midrash (Ber. Rabba 4:6). For it is not for him to seek also this world as before. Likewise for R. Chanina ben Dosa it was enough for him to eat one kav (measure) of carobs from one Sabbath to the next. For he did not want to take more from this world. For this is not his portion. This is the meaning of "do not seek greatness for yourself", ie he should not seek this [world] as before. And if he does not seek it, then eventually honor and greatness will come by themselves.

"do not desire the table of kings/noblemen" - for the yetzer hara (evil inclination) entices a person to seize matters of this world and [strive to] become wealthy saying: "is it not so that rich people acquire for themselves Olam Haba through the tzedaka (charity) they do? And they also delight in this world. So too if you were like them and not as one imprisoned in the Beit Midrash".

On this he said: "do not lust to become rich" in this world. "for your table is greater" since the Holy One, blessed be He, will pay you as "according to the pain is the reward" (Avot 5:22).

And likewise our sages said: "in Olam Haba the tzadikim sit with their crowns on (literally:in) their heads" (Berachot 17a). For the crown in this world is taken from one person - to another. But in Olam Haba each person has his own independent crown. This is what he said: "their crowns" - each person according to his level is the greatness of his crown..

He said "crown IN their heads" and not "crown ON their heads". For a crown on the head can be taken off. But in the head is fixed always.

Q Level 2

☆ Chida

Chida, Zeroa Yamin - "do not desire the table of kings.." - for matters of the body - food, drink, clothing, a man should not look at the great wealthy people of the generation. For though this, he will lose his world, never be satiated, always lust for more, and all day sigh to attain things not suited for him, as written: "jealousy, lust and honor remove a person from the world".

Rather he should look at those less fortunate than him, as R. Akiva told his wife: "see there are

some people who do not have even straw" (Nedarim 50b).

Through this he will be happy and joyful, quiet and secure.

But for spiritual levels, toil in torah, fear of sin, humility and the like, he should put his eyes and thoughts to those greater than him, to ascend higher and higher every day..

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - "do not desire the table of kings. For your table is greater than theirs.." - the table is a symbol of wealth. For a king owns cities, countries, silver and gold. On this he said: "do not desire the table of kings". Even though a king has much wealth, nevertheless the torah has greater wealth..

The wealth of torah is greater for the torah lasts and is eternal but physical wealth is not eternal.

On this he said: "your table", ie your wealth is greater than the wealth of kings. For all the wealth of kings is something which is eventually lost. But for torah, loss does not apply. Thus since the wealth of kings is destined to be annulled, it is not called "wealth" relative to the wealth of one who has torah.

Q Level 3

Maharal Tzintz

Maharal Tzintz - "your table is greater than theirs" - for even though a whole and rich man bestows good to others. But nevertheless the torah scholar bestows good to the whole world through his torah as the talmud brings: "the whole world is sustained in the merit of Chananiah.." (Berachot 17b).

Thus your table is greater than theirs. For through your torah, you bestow all good and blessing.

Likewise, the torah scholar bestows of his torah to others which is food for the soul, namely, to his students who sit and listen at his table. This is more valuable. For the soul is eternal. While bestowing food for the body is only a temporary bestowing.

Q Level 4

☆ Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - "do not seek greatness or yourself.. - on one side there is the trait of humility, namely, to be completely lowly/humble (b'tachlit hashiflut) as we learned earlier: "be very very lowly of spirit" (Avot 4:4) and "be of lowly spirit before every man" (Avot 4:10) until "as dust which everyone treads", and Moshe said: "but [of] what [significance] are we?" (Shemot/Ex.16:7).

But on the other hand, there is the trait of "pride/uplifting of heart" (gavhut halev) as written: "and his heart was uplifted in the ways of G-d" (Divrei Hayamim II 17:6). This trait is completely the opposite. For the trait of gadlut and gavhut (greatness and highness) of heart does not have even one hair of lowliness. Rather "everything is as nothing", "all are annulled completely against me".

Without having this trait, there isn't even a beginning of fulfilling the torah (ein af hatchala lekiyum hatorah). For this is the introduction (hakdama) to torah.

This is as our sages said: "before Rabba began (his class) to the Rabbis he would say words of jest" (Shabbat 30b), ie he would joke and jest on all that came to his hand, annulling the whole world completely in order to elevate and enter the students in the secret of gadlut (greatness) which is an introduction to torah.

Likewise, this is what our sages taught: "A favorite saying (margala) of the Rabbis of Yavneh was:

I am G-d's creature and my fellow is G-d's creature. My work is in the town and his work is in the country. I rise early for my work and he rises early for his work. Just as he does not presume to do my work, so I do not presume to do his work" (Berachot 17a).

For this is a necessary margala before learning torah. For one who approaches to learn torah with all his lowliness/humility - he will not succeed.

Rather, one must immediately have the consideration of: "I am G-d's creature.." and "I do not presume to do his work". Rather "and his heart was uplifted in the ways of G-d".

Thus after the mishna of "this is the way of torah, eat bread with salt, etc." comes our mishna. For the trait of gadlut and gavhut halev (greatness of heart) is the way and introduction to the torah. Therefore: "do not seek grandeur, etc." to chase after dominion and "do not covet honor.. and do not lust for the table of kings".

Rather, know certainly that "your table is greater than their table and your crown is greater their crown".

And do not limit yourself to what they have. Rather, clarify and verify to yourself the greatness of your table and crown and let your heart be uplifted in the ways of G-d. If you do thus, "fortunate are you and it is good for you (ashreicha v'tov lach)".

Chapter 6 Beraitha 7 - 48 Ways

Greater is torah than priesthood and than kingship. For kingship is acquired in 30 ways and priesthood in 24, but the Torah is acquired by 48 things.

These are: talmud (study), listening of the ear, ordering on the lips, understanding of heart, reasoning of the heart, awe, fear, humility, joyousness, purity, attending to the sages, examination with peers, pilpul (fine argumentation) with students, settling [of the mind], [knowledge of] scriptures, [knowledge of] Mishna, minimizing business dealings, minimizing derech eretz (worldly affairs), minimizing pleasures, minimizing sleep, minimizing talk, minimizing laughter, slow to anger, good heartedness, emunah chachamim (faith in the sages), accepting suffering; recognizing one's place, rejoicing in one's portion, making a fence around one's words, not claiming merit for oneself, being beloved, love of G-d, love of people, love of righteousness, love of uprightness, loves reproofs, distancing from honor, not having his heart swell on [account of] his learning, not delighting in giving halachic (legal) rulings, bearing the yoke with one's fellow, inclining him to the side of merit, establishing him on the truth, establishing him on peace, settling one's heart in his studies, asking and answering, listening and adding, learning in order to teach, learning in order to do, making his teacher wiser, noting with precision what he has heard (mekaven shmuato), and saying something in the name of him who said it. Thus we have learned: one who says something in the name of him who said it brings Geulah (redemption) to the world, as written: "And Esther told the king in Mordechai's name" (Esther 2:22).

גְּדוּלָהּ תוֹרָה יוֹתֵר מִן הַכֹּהֲנָה וּמִן הַמְּלָכוֹת, שֶׁהַמְּלָכוֹת נִקְנִית בְּשָׁלְשִׁים מַעֲלוֹת, וְהַכֹּהֲנָה בְּעֶשְׂרִים וָאַרְבַּע, וְהַתּוֹרָה נִקְנִית בְּאַרְבָּעִים וְשָׁמְנָה דְבָרִים.

וְאֵלוּ הֵן, בְּתַלְמוּד, בְּשִׁמְיעַת הָאָזְן, בְּעֵרִיכַת שְׁפָתַיִם, בְּבִינַת הַלֵּב, בְּשִׁכְלוֹת הַלֵּב, בְּאִימָה, בְּיִרְאָה, בְּעֵנְוָה, בְּשִׁמְחָה, בְּטְהוּרָה, בְּשִׁמּוּשׁ חֻכְמִים, בְּדִקְדוּקַת חֻבְרִים, וּבְפִלְפּוּל הַתְּלַמִּידִים, בְּיִשׁוּב, בְּמִקְרָא, בְּמִשְׁנָה, בְּמַעוּט סְחוּרָה, בְּמַעוּט דְרָךְ אֶרֶץ, בְּמַעוּט תַּעֲנוּג, בְּמַעוּט שִׁינָה, בְּמַעוּט שִׂיחָה, בְּמַעוּט שְׁחוּק, בְּאַרְךָ אַפִּים, בְּלֵב טוֹב, בְּאַמוּנַת חֻכְמִים, וּבִקְבֻלַת הַיְסוּרִין, הַמְּכִיר אֶת מְקוֹמוֹ, וְהַשְׁמִיחַ בְּחֻלְקוֹ, וְהַעוֹשֶׂה סִיג לְדַבְּרָיו, וְאִינוֹ מַחְזִיק טוֹבָה לְעַצְמוֹ, אֶהוּב, אֶהוּב אֶת הַמְּקוֹם, אֶהוּב אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת, אֶהוּב אֶת הַיְמִישֵׁרִים, אֶהוּב אֶת הַתּוֹכְחוֹת, מְתַרְחֵק מִן הַכְּבוֹד, וְלֹא מְגִיס לְבוֹ בְּתַלְמוּדוֹ, וְאִינוֹ שְׁמִיחַ בְּהוֹרָאָה, נוֹשֵׂא בְעַל עִם חֲבֵרוֹ, מְכַרְיעוֹ לְכַף זְכוּת, מְעַמִּידוֹ עַל הָאֵמֶת, וּמְעַמִּידוֹ עַל הַשְּׁלוֹם, מְתִישֵׁב לְבוֹ בְּתַלְמוּדוֹ, שׂוֹאֵל וְיִמְשִׁיב, שׂוֹמֵעַ וְמוֹסִיף, הַלּוֹמֵד עַל מְנַת לְלַמֵּד וְהַלּוֹמֵד עַל מְנַת לְעֲשׂוֹת, הַמְּחַכֵּים אֶת רֵבּוֹ, וְהַמְּכַנֵּן אֶת שְׁמוֹעָתוֹ, וְהַאֹמֵר דְּבַר בְּשֵׁם אוֹמְרוֹ, הָא לְמַדַּת שְׁכַל הָאוֹמֵר דְּבַר בְּשֵׁם אוֹמְרוֹ מְבִיא גְּאֻלָּה לְעוֹלָם, שְׁנֹאֲמֵר (אֶסְתֵּר ב) וְתֹאמֵר אֶסְתֵּר לְמַלְךְ בְּשֵׁם מְרַדְכֵי

Priesthood and Kingship

Introduction to the 48 Ways

#1 - Talmud (study)

#2 - listening of the ear

#3 - ordering on the lips

#4 - understanding of heart

#5 - awe

#6 - fear

#7 - humility

#8 - joyousness

#9 - purity

#10 - attending to the sages

#11 - examination with peers

#12 - pilpul with students

#13 - settling [of the mind]

- #14-15 - knowledge of scripture and mishna
- #16 - minimizing business dealings
- #17 - minimizing derech eretz (worldly affairs)
- #18 - minimizing pleasures
- #19 - minimizing sleep
- #20 - minimizing talk
- #21 - minimizing laughter
- #22 - slow to anger
- #23 - good heartedness
- #24 - emunah chachamim (faith in the sages)
- #25 - accepting suffering
- #26 - recognizing one's place
- #27 - rejoicing in one's portion
- #28 - making a fence around one's words
- #29 - not claiming merit for oneself
- #30 - being beloved
- #31 - love of G-d
- #32 - love of people
- #33 - love of righteousness
- #34 - love of uprightness
- #35 - loves reproofs
- #36 - distancing from honor
- #37 - not having his heart swell on his learning
- #38 - not delighting in giving halachic (legal) rulings
- #39 - bearing the yoke with one's fellow
- #40 - inclining him to the side of merit
- #41 - establishing him on the truth
- #42 - establishing him on peace
- #43 - settling one's heart in his studies
- #44 - asking and answering
- #45 - listening and adding
- #46 - learning in order to teach
- #47 - learning in order to do
- #48 - making his teacher wiser
- #49 - noting with precision what he has heard
- #50* - saying something in the name of him who said it

* note that some ways are included in other ways and there are also different versions of this mishna. Thus it is not so clear how to arrive at 48 ways and not 49 or 50

Priesthood and Kingship

Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "For kingship is acquired in 30 ways.." - 30 ways which the king is elevated above the rest of the people. All of them are listed in Sanhedrin chapter 2 from mishna 2 until the end of the chapter (ex.a king is not judged [in court]).

"and priesthood in 24" - 24 ways which a Kohen is elevated. These are the 24 gifts of the Kohanim (see end of parsha Korach).

"the torah is acquired by 48 things" - he did not call them "ways/virtues" (maalot). For they are not similar to each other like those of the king and the kohen. For in malchut (kingship) and Kehuna (priesthood), they are distinctions and laws which are acquired with the kingship or priesthood. But the 48 things of the torah are obligations which one who wants to acquire torah must acquire them firmly through guarding them properly.

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - "kingship is acquired in 30 ways" - Rashi explains that it is those things written in the book of Shmuel I 8:11-17 when the Israelites requested a king and Shmuel replied to them that such and such are the laws of kings. When you examine there, they are thirty things along with those in the mishna of Sanhedrin (2:2-5) ex. "the king cannot be judged (by a court)..etc."

However, in a Beraitha (Kallah Rabbati 8) is listed thirty levels through which kingship is acquired: silver, gold, wives, male and female slaves, houses, vineyards, gardens and orchards, a treasure house of kings, provinces, male and female officers, fields, shadit, horses, chariots, sword, clothings, weapons, soldiers, spices, watchers, spies, judgment (mishpat), kindness (chesed), charity (tzedaka)".

This explanation seems [correct]. For when one has all these things, he is a king. These things are his kingship and are relevant to a king. But not all those things in the mishna (Sanhedrin) are the importance of a king.. such as "not to have too many wives, silver and gold, or horses". Likewise to write two torah scrolls for the king. These are not "levels" (maalot) [of a king] unlike the matters here (in the Beraitha). Rather, these are just mitzvot (commandments) of the king and it is not proper to count them as "maalot" (levels).

Likewise for the 24 "levels" of priesthood. Certainly, these 24 things are all levels and importance of priesthood. For this they are counted.

Thus regarding torah he said 48 "things" (devarim) but for priesthood and kingship, he said "levels" (maalot). For the latter are all levels of importance and authority (sherara).

The tanna did not list the 24 levels of priesthood nor the 30 of kingship because this whole chapter is speaking only on torah and he brought this only to say that torah is greater than both of them..

For the king has an important and exalted level. Thus the king has 30 important things. Kingship is greater than priesthood and torah is greater than kingship.

And in the talmud: "the torah scholar is before the king, the king is before the Kohen Gadol (high priest)" (Horayot 13a)..

You should understand: that which the torah is acquired with 48 things, corresponding to this, our sages said: "the parchment of a torah scroll must not have less than 48 lines" (Sofrim 2:6). For torah is the wisdom which is in the brain/Moach (spelled Mem-Chet=48 gematria) of a man. Understand these things.

(R.Hartman: in Ner Mitzvah he writes: "the torah is sublime wisdom; it is more lofty than human wisdom.. For it is wisdom over everything.." And in Netiv Hateshuva: "for torah is Chochmah.. Torah is the higher wisdom (chochma elyona) of which there is nothing after".)

The 30 levels of kingship correspond to the three negative commandments of a king: "he shall not multiply wives to himself" (Devarim 17:17), "he shall not multiply horses to himself" (Devarim

17:16), and "nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold to himself." (Devarim 17:17).

Corresponding to each mitzvah are 10 levels/qualities. You should also know that the level of the king is 30. As you can see the letter Lamed (gematria=30) is the tallest of all the hebrew letters. For 30 is fit for the elevation and raising up of kingship. The reason is that until ten is considered below. Twenty is considered middle while thirty is considered completely above. Thus, the letter whose gematria is 30 is taller than all the others.

If you ask: if so the rest of the letters whose gematria is greater should be even taller?

It is not so. For specifically 30 has proper elevation. But above that is considered a lacking. This is as our sages expounded on the verse: "why do you leap O high mountains" (Tehilim 68:17). - this was said on mount Tavor and Carmel which are considered baalei mumim (blemished) compared to mount Sinai.

For mount Sinai did not go out of the proper measure (height). But Tavor and Carmel were more than what is proper. Such a thing is called a "Mum" (blemish). For "every extra is as removed" (Chulin 58b). Therefore the primary elevation is specifically Lamed, not the other letters. Thus, kingship is acquired specifically with thirty levels. For through thirty the king is elevated.

Likewise the word "Melech" (king) has a Lamed in the middle hinting the king is elevated above his brothers Yisrael. It also hints that he should not be separated from his brothers as written: "his heart should not be proud over his brothers".. Thus the letters Mem and Kuf which are the brothers (adjacent in hebrew alphabet) to Lamed are joined to it. This hints the king should be joined (amongst) to his brothers and not be separated from them.

Furthermore it is proper honor for the king that he be in the middle and the people around him..

Likewise, we have clarified elsewhere that whatever is elevated is in the middle. A siman (sign) of this is: "the land of Israel is higher (spiritually) than other lands" (Kidushin 69a) and "it is in the middle of the world (Tanchuma Kedoshim 10) (between africa, europe and asia). Thus, the letter Lamed is in the middle of the Hebrew alphabet.

From this you will also understand that it is proper for the king to have specifically thirty levels. For he is above all in level.

There are two great levels (besides king): one, kohen gadol (high priest) and two, the prophet while the king is greater than both. Thus our sages said: "the king is before the Kohen Gadol and the Kohen Gadol is before the prophet" (Horayot 13a). And the kohen gadol is on the right, the prophet on the left and the king in the middle above both.

Thus, the king is elevated to the third level and therefore he has three commandments, as explained and thirty levels. Understand this.

Level 3

Pirkei Moshe - as known, malchut (kingship) is not acquired in the essence of the king. For it is an incidental property in him and depends on other people. Namely, the people accept him and agree to make him king over them.

If they suddenly agree to depose him of being king, they will take him down and he will become an ordinary person. Thus the crown of malchut is something that depends on the agreement of other people.

But the crown of torah is an essence matter in those who merit it. The intellect, thinker, and knowledge become one (naaseh sechel, maskil, vemuskal davar echad), as the Rambam explains in part 1 chapter 68 of his book (Moreh Nevuchim). And no creature in the world has the power to remove it from him.. For it is acquired in the soul of the person..

Introduction to the 48 Ways

Q Level 2

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "with study, with listening, with verbalizing... one who recognizes his place, one who rejoices in his portion.." - Rabbi Moshe Almoshino wrote: I noticed in the mishna that the first 24 ways are written with a prefix of the letter "Beit" (i.e. "with") while the last 24 ways are written not with a prefix of the letter "Beit" but instead with a prefix of the letter "Heh" (i.e. "one who") .. The difference is that the first 24 ways are causes to acquire (the torah) in the soul and are thus like vessels. Therefore, he wrote them with a "Beit" (with).

But the latter 24 ways are causes to guard and preserve the kinyan (acquiring) in the soul after it has been acquired. Thus he mentioned them with a "Heh" (one who) since they are not like vessels but are rather perfection in the soul through which the kinyan torah is guarded and preserved.

Q Level 2



Reisheit Chochmah, gate of holiness, ch.4 - "the torah is acquired with 48 ways, listening of the ear, etc., with awe, with minimal sleep, minimal pleasures, minimal derech erez.." - all these preparations are distancing love of this world from a man's heart. The reason is that due to its spiritual nature, the torah cannot rest in man's heart until he distances from love of this world and divests himself of the garment of physicality and becomes like an angel in terms of purifying his body and soul.

He used the term [the torah is] "acquired" (niknet) unlike by malchut and priesthood.. For the torah is called "the daughter of the King" and the halacha is "a woman is acquired (niknet) in three ways" (Kidushin 1:1) and the acquisition is kidushin. For the existence (mahut) of the torah is that it is called "daughter of the king" and her kidushin is that a man gives to her until she is married to him and reveals her secrets to him. This is through the 48 ways mentioned. When a man merits the torah by acquiring these things, then he merits to the neshama (higher soul).

Q Level 3



Be'er Mayim Chayim, Shemot - before learning, a man needs to examine well the 48 ways with which the torah is acquired and to see to it to fix all of them in his heart and to learn torah with all their details. For if one does not look first at these 48 ways, to fix them in the depths of his heart in truth - he will never acquire the torah, that it be wholly favorable before G-d.

For our sages said: "the torah is acquired with 48 ways". And from "Yes" one can infer "No" - without the 48 ways, one will not acquire the torah.

Behold, some of them are: fear/awe, humility, purity, joy, receiving sufferings, minimal enjoyments, minimal sleep, love of G-d, love of people, love of righteousness, love of rebuke, distancing from honor, not having his heart swell on [account of] his learning, not joyous to render judgment, to bear the yoke of one's fellow with him, to incline him to merit, to stand him on the truth, etc.

These alone require great preparation, much zeal, intense strengthening, and overcoming one's

lusts in great detail. All the more so for standing up to all of them..

When a man learns with these ways, in truth this is "torah lishma". For the whole intent in torah study is to divest oneself of all levels of physicality as much as possible and to cling one's soul and spirit (nefesh, ruach, v'neshama) to G-d who is hidden in the torah. For all of the torah is G-d's will; He wanted that things be done thus and thus and that the judgment and law be thus and thus. It is known that He and His will are absolutely one as brought by the Rambam (Yesodei Torah ch.1).

Thus it is called "Torah". For it teaches on the Hidden which is G-d. For it is impossible to cling to G-d except through the torah and the mitzvot (commandments). For the torah is the intermediary between Yisrael and their Father in Heaven, that Yisrael cling to G-d through the torah. And everything in order to please G-d (nachat ruach) who created the world and everything in it for this purpose - that Yisrael should cling to Him after great distancing from the light of His face at creation through being enclothed in this earthly physicality and to return to our root above.

When a man learns in this way, he merits many things and the torah grants him life and dominion and reveals to him secrets of the torah. He becomes like a powerful wellspring (mayan hamitgaber), etc. But if a man learns torah for himself, to answer people when they come to him with questions, or to not need to ask others himself, or other foolish reasons not for the true intent for G-d of clinging to Him and pleasing Him, then the torah becomes a death potion. For he takes the secrets of G-d, as known every letter of torah is divine names of G-d, and he pulls down everything to the side of the Sitra Achara, ie the "other side" which is not "leshem Hash-em" (with intent to G-d)...

🔍 Level 3

☆ **Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)**

Siftei Daat on Avot - "the torah is acquired (niknet)" - "niknet" means with her knowledge and consent (midaata u'retzona) (just like acquiring a woman in marriage as the mishna in kidushin 1:1 begins "the woman is acquired (niknet)..").

And it is not easy for a man to merit that the holy torah would want to join with him. For the torah is its own master (baalim al atzma).

(see Menachot 99b where the torah is compared to a bird of the field (tzipor dror). The Maharal (Netiv Hatorah ch.5) explains that the torah is called a free bird of the field because a bird of the field does not accept ownership (marut), to be subjugated under man. For it is a bird of the heaven and flies in the air of the sky. The torah is similar to this as it is separate (nivdal) from man..)

One needs to engage with the torah full negotiations just like between human beings, in which ways and conditions she will accept to join with a man! (Daat Torah chelek 3, pg.267, Daat Chomah ummussar chelek 2, 70).

🔍 Level 3

☆ **Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)**

Siftei Daat on Avot - "the torah is acquired with 48 things" - besides these 48 things listed by the Tanna, one should know that the beginning and start of entering the torah through which one merits to acquire the torah is iyun and amelut (in depth study and toil). Toil (amelut) in torah does not mean diligence (hatmada) but rather "toil" by itself, to strain (lhityageah) in torah. Through this it is possible to merit acquiring the torah. For specifically through toil (amal), the holy torah wants to reveal herself to a man and be acquired to him. And our sages said: "(if a person says): 'I toiled and found, believe him'" (Megilah 6b). The more toil, the more praiseworthy (kol hamarbe beyegiah harize meshubach). And when there is toil from man's side, then the torah reveals herself to him.. to give to him the reasons of the torah. A person can feel this tangibly. For he may be toiling and thinking in something and receive insights into something else entirely. A person

should pay attention to this.. (Daat Torah 3, pg.267-8).

🔍 Level 4

☆ **Sifte Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)**

Sifte Daat on Avot - "48 ways.." - the Beraitha is teaching us a great secret regarding grasping and acquiring torah.

The pious "Yavetz" wrote (on Avot 3:14 "R.Akiva says: 'beloved is Yisrael for they were given...Torah'"):

"Rabbi Akivah informed us on our quality (maalah) above the other nations. For G-d created man and granted him dominion over the animals through the power of the intellect in him, as written: "let us make man in our image and form.." (Gen.1:26). This image (tzelem) which man was created with is the carrier (nosseh) of all wisdoms. For through it, man can attain all of them.. We the Jewish people share this quality with the other nations.

However, we have been singled out among them.. with one thing which is much greater. It is a divine matter which activates on us (inyan Eloki chal alenu).. From this we have merited that the divine torah does not fall under intellectual analysis (chakira sichlit). Rather, the torah is above this. Therefore, it can only be grasped through prophecy. This divine matter I mentioned is the carrier of the torah just like the tzelem is the carrier of all wisdoms.." end quote.

It is clear from his words that the divine torah does not fall under intellectual analysis. The "aleph" of torah is not grasped by thought of the tzelem Elokim (image of G-d, ie man's intellect). For it is above this. It is impossible to grasp it except through prophecy. For the secret of the torah is that it is the "word of G-d" (dvar Hash-em) and the word of G-d cannot be grasped by any thought but rather through the power of prophecy which reveals to man a revelation of torah.

(this is what our sages said (Eiruvim 65a): "night was created only for girsah (torah study).. R.Acha would sleep by day and learn by night". For the power of prophecy is greater at night. This is because the physical body blocks (chotzet) and at night its senses weaken and it withdraws to some extent. Thus a man is somewhat divested of his body and then he attains great revelations. see Daat Torah, part one pg.252)

And even though the torah is not graspable without study, namely, that man must study, toil and labor in it. But this is not a difficulty at all. For in truth, to attain prophecy there is also study to know it similar to what is written by the prophet Yirmiyahu: "and the Word of G-d came to me, saying, Jeremiah, what do you see? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree. And G-d said to me, You have seen well; for I will watch over My Word to perform it.." (Yirmiyahu 1:11-12).

Thus he needed to learn and contemplate to know what G-d was showing him in a prophetic vision. But certainly without the power of prophecy, he would not have grasped the devar Hash-em (word of G-d). This too is the secret regarding the whole torah.

Prophecy itself has many levels such as "face to face" (panim b'panim), "clear mirror" (aspaklaria hameira), "unclear mirror" (aspaklaria sheino meira), "in a dream at night" (b'chalom layla). So too regarding the torah as explained above. It is written: "G-d spoke to you face to face at the mountain from the fire" (Devarim/Deut.5:4).

For the Jewish people at mount Sinai were on the level of "face to face" (panim b'panim), "a clear mirror" (aspaklaria hameira), receiving the torah from peak truth of the secret of its level to the lowest level of torah (b'si amitat sod dargata ad hadarga hatachtona shel torah). For the torah is attained only through the power of prophecy.

Along these lines, we will understand well what our sages said (Bava Batra 12a): "from the day the temple was destroyed, prophecy was taken away from the prophets but it was not taken away from the Chachamim (torah scholars).. Says Abaye: 'know that one great torah scholar says one thing and another great torah scholar says the same thing' Rava objects: what is difficult? Perhaps both torah scholars are from the same Mazel (spiritual root)".

These words of the talmud seem very difficult. If they are not from the same Mazel, it is impossible for one great torah scholar to understand the same thing as another great torah scholar??

Rather, certainly the secret of the matter is that it is impossible to grasp torah except through the power of prophecy. For is it conceivable for a human being to arrive (lekaven) at the view of the Master of the world?

If one indeed arrived to know the view of the Master of the world, certainly and certainly, this is none other than the power of prophecy, whereby G-d revealed His secret to those who fear Him (gilah sodo lireiav). So too when a great torah scholar says something and grasps knowledge of the word of G-d, it is not conceivable for another scholar to say like him without the power of prophecy.

This is a clear proof that "prophecy was not taken away from the Chachamim (torah scholars)".

Later there in the talmud: "rather, Rav Ashi says: 'know that a great torah scholar says something and there was already a Halacha from Moshe at Sinai like him'. 'But perhaps he is like a blind man groping his way through an attic?' [answer:] 'does he not give reasons [for his opinions]'".

Rashi explains there: "since he said a taam (reasoning), this is not like a blind man who by chance descends from the attic with intent. Rather, it is a reasoning of the heart (svara halev) which comes to him by prophecy and he merits to arrive at the 'halacha to Moshe from Sinai'".

Behold, explicitly like our words - the grasping of torah is a 'reasoning of the heart' (svara halev) which comes through prophecy.

What comes out from all this is an awesome matter. A man should know that when he approaches the torah, he should consider in his thoughts that he is preparing himself for prophecy. And to attain prophecy, it is evident that great preparations are needed. So too for one who steps forth to study the torah.

Without a doubt this is what the mishna teaches us that the torah is acquired through 48 levels - awe, fear, humility, joy, purity, bearing the yoke of his fellow, and the like. For to acquire the torah, one needs those same levels needed to attain prophecy.

In my view, this is the matter of the counting of 49 days before the giving of the torah. For they are preliminaries (hakdamot) to acquiring the torah in one's nature (b'tevah) so that a person and his torah are one. This is as our sages expounded (Avodah Zara 19a): "at first the torah is called by the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He. Afterwards, it is called by his name, as written: 'fortunate is the man.. who desires G-d's torah and toils in his [own] torah day and night'.." (Tehilim 1:1).

During the 48 days, they would toil in one level per day and on the 49th day they would join all the 48 traits together into one form.. Then it would be easy to enter the inner chambers of torah.. (Chochma u'Mussar 1:236).

#1 - Talmud (study)

Q Level 1

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "with talmud (study)" - the first and most basic way to acquire the torah is simply to study the torah. First of all - start to learn and immerse yourself. Even if you still don't know anything on the ways to acquire the torah - start to learn and G-d will help you to draw in all the other ways. Likewise in the famous Beraitha of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair: "torah brings to watchfulness, watchfulness brings to zeal, etc.", the big question is "what brings to torah?"

The answer is: nothing at all. Simply start to learn. Nothing brings to torah besides torah study. This is the most basic beginning! And only with one who learns torah is there what to talk about to advance further in the other ways to acquire torah.

Q Level 2

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "talmud (learning)" - i.e. to be learning always. Another explanation, to not have any other business (esek) besides torah. But if he wants to succeed in this and that, to toil in a business career and also learn - he will not acquire a kinyan of torah.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "talmud" - words of torah need to be received from a Rav. It is impossible to deduce them from intellect like other wisdoms.

Q Level 3



Chelek l'Olam Haba by Shaoul Brach - "talmud (study)" - the commentaries ask: is it not obvious that if he does not study, he will not acquire the torah? There is to answer that torah study is different from study of all other wisdoms in the world. For in torah, even if one studies diligently, but nevertheless if he had the power to learn more time but he did not - the torah does not reveal itself to him. For example, one person is busy all day in earning his livelihood and he has only one hour to learn, but he is careful on that hour and does not waste a second or he pushes himself and learns two hours. Another person has free time to learn ten hours but he learned only nine hours.

The first person will attain more in torah than the second. For only if the torah is very important in his eyes does it then reveal itself to him. For knowledge of torah is a segulah and gift of G-d to those who fear Him. Therefore it is given to he for whom it is precious in his eyes and he rejoices in it. This is the intent of "b'talmud (with study)", that one needs to learn always without wasting even one second. And this is not so for any other wisdom in the world.

#2 - listening of the ear

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "listening of the ear" - ie great [attentive] listening, that one needs to concentrate his ears to the words.

Q Level 2

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "listening of the ear)" - as written: "hear and your soul shall live" (Isaiah 55:3). For what a person hears with his ears from another person - this will have a greater effect on him than what he sees written in books. This also includes listening to the words of his fellow and accepting the truth from whoever says it.

#3 - ordering on the lips

Q Level 1**☆ Tiferet Yisrael**

Tiferet Yisrael - "ordering on the lips/arichat sefatayim" - that he can say them over easily (shegura b'piv) as he received them from his Rabbi or as the words of the book he learned.

Q Level 2**☆ Midrash Shmuel**

Midrash Shmuel - "ordering on the lips/arichat sefatayim" - for all that he learns, he must review it always and utter the words with his lips, as written: "they are life to those who utter them verbally". He said "ordering on the lips (arichat sefatayim)" and not "uttering with the lips" as the language of the verse. For it is not enough to utter them verbally one or two times. Rather, one needs to review the matter many times until it is "arucha bpiv ubsefatav" (on the tip of one's tongue). Likewise we find in the talmud such as "he reviewed the teaching forty times until it was like in his pocket" (Ketuvot 50a).

Q Level 2**☆ Ruach Chaim**

Ruach Chaim - "ordering on the lips" - as written: "for they are life to those who find them (motzehem)" (Mishlei 4:22) which our sages expounded: "to those who utter (motziehem) them verbally.. But it is not enough to speak out loud. Rather it needs to be with proper understanding. And even what one reviews several times, one needs to think and understand it like the first time.. When speaking it out verbally, one tends to sense the errors in logic. Nevertheless, the main thing is sound understanding.

Q Level 2**Maharal**

Maharal - "ordering on the lips" - if he utters in clear language it helps to understand the matter well unlike when he learns in thought only. And all the more so then is the lesson not swiftly forgotten as they expounded: "ordered in all things and guarded" (Shmuel II 23:5) - if it is ordered on one's lips, it is guarded in one's 248 limbs.

Q Level 3**☆ Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)**

Siftei Daat on Avot - "ordering on the lips" - Rashi explains: "words of torah do not endure except through uttering them verbally, as written: 'for they are life...' to those who utter them" (Eiruvim 54a).

The reason is because of the secret of deed (maaseh) in the world of deed (maaseh). For "the main dwelling of the Shechina (divine presence) is below [in this world]" (ikar Shechina b'tachtonim - Midrash Bereisheit Raba 19:7).

Futhermore, scripture says: "the matter is very near to you, in your mouth and heart that you may do it" (Devarim 30:14).

According to Rashi, the verse is speaking on the torah. Thus, the torah is split into three parts: mouth, heart, and deed. And just like there is a part in torah in the secret of deed, so too there is a part in torah specifically in the secret of mouth and not other. Let this not be a wonder in your eyes. For it is written: "man became a living soul" (Gen.2:7), which the Onkelos renders "a speaking spirit". Thus all man's being, his soul and life, it is made whole by his mouth and speech. This is certainly a secret. (Daat Torah 2, pg.33-34).

#4 - understanding of heart

Q Level 1**☆ Tiferet Yisrael**

Tiferet Yisrael - "understanding of heart (binat halev)" - to contemplate the things he heard and be able to deduce one thing from another.

Q Level 2**Midrash Shmuel**

Midrash Shmuel - "understanding of heart (binat halev)" - when one reviews his studies by heart, it should not be without understanding like rote practise. For then he will forget it quickly. Rather, he should arrange it on his lips with intent and contemplation of the heart, to understand the words being uttered..

🔍 **Level 2**

Maharal

Maharal - "understanding of heart" - that he puts his mind and heart (daato v'libo) on the matter studied. Then he will understand in his heart well.

🔍 **Level 3**

☆ **Yachel Yisrael**

Yachel Yisrael - "understanding of heart (binat halev)" - to exert all one's mind in study such that his study will be deep, inner and alive (amok, pnimi, ubaal chiyut). This is as the Chatam Sofer testified on his teacher, Rabbi Natan Adler who was a Kohen (Meir Netiv): "if the Temple were rebuilt in his lifetime, he would have been fit to serve as Kohen Gadol (high priest) on that day in all its details". For he learned with all his heart and might. Therefore he knew all the halachot (laws) and all the intricate details of the mitzvot (commandments) of the Kohanim in a living and tangible manner. Thus one should learn and thus one acquires torah.

#5 - awe

🔍 **Level 1**

☆ **Tiferet Yisrael**

Tiferet Yisrael - "awe" (b'eimah) - that awe/reverence of his rabbi be upon him (eimat rabbo alav).

🔍 **Level 2**

☆ **Midrash Shmuel**

Midrash Shmuel - "awe" - ie that the "eimah" (awe/reverence) of his Rav be upon him and also that the eimah (awe/reverance) of the Shechina (divine presence) be upon him. For the Shechina is there, as we learned: "two people who sit and learn torah - the Shechina abides between them..etc. and it is so for even one person who learns torah..etc." (Avot 3:2).

Thus, since he is standing before the Shechina, he must stand with awe/reverance. As reward for this, secrets of the torah will be revealed to him.

🔍 **Level 2**

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "with awe and fear" - for how could one not be seized by fear and trembling when considering that even the Kohen Gadol (high priest) did not have permission to enter the holy of holies except on Yom Kippur. For there was the primary place of the Shechina. If so, in the four cubits of Halacha which our sages said there the Shechina abides (Berachot 8a). Certainly he will learn with fear and not interrupt his mind for useless talk (lo yasiach daato l'davarim betelim).

🔍 **Level 3**

☆ **Matanat Avot**

Matanat Avot - "with awe" - one needs to approach to study the torah with awe. Not like the feeling one has when reading a suspenseful story or book, but rather with awe of the greatness and vastness of every thing in the torah. R.Noach Weinberg zt'l explained that "awe" is shock and wonder of something especially big and powerful.

So too when one approaches to learn torah, even the "easiest" sugyah (topic), one must think: "I am about to study G-d's torah which is so vast that it is endless and beyond grasp (ein la sof vecheker). "its measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea" (Iyov 11:9).

And every thing in the torah is aligned with the loftiest spiritual roots in all the worlds and every verse in the Tanach (Bible) and every halacha in the Oral Law bestows immense spiritual flow to the world in that matter through the person toiling in that. And everything written is the will of G-d, the King of kings.

And according to this din (law), G-d created the world and the whole system was created so as to be fit and connected to the laws of the torah. There is much to elaborate but the main point is understood. Torah is not some children's game. Torah is the root of all the worlds!

"with fear (b'yira)" - in addition to the infinite greatness of the torah mentioned previously, there is another very important matter. When a man comes to learn torah, he should consider that the torah is so exact and true, and every thing in the torah has [spiritual] roots and roots of roots without limit in the upper worlds. Thus whoever comes to learn and inquire some matter in the torah and especially in halacha, he needs to sit on this in serious fear and to be afraid telling himself: "if I err, ch'v in some matter of the torah, I damage and make crooked all the upper worlds connected to that matter of the torah".

On this Rebbi Yishmael said to Rebbi Meir (who was a scribe): "my son, be careful in your trade. For it is heavenly work. If you miss one letter or add an extra letter, you destroy the whole world" (Eiruvin 13a).

For each letter of the torah has roots in the upper worlds and all divine flow from above to below passes through the letters of the written torah. Thus, if there is an error in the sefer torah, then the divine flow from above is blocked/tarnished to some extent.

This realization should awaken great fear/reverence by every person who comes to learn and inquire of what is the intended meaning in some matter and all the more so if it is connected to practical halacha..

Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - *"awe and fear"* - one needs to sit with eima (awe/reverence) before his Rabbi, as they said: "any talmid (student) who sits before his Rabbi and his lips do not drip bitterness - he will not see a good sign (siman tov) in his learning, as written: "his lips drip myrrh. " (Shir 5:13), do not read "drip myrrh" but rather "drip bitterness (mar)" (Shabbat 30b).

The reason is because there needs to be preparation to receive (hachana lekabel). And when one has awe of his teacher/Rabbi then he has the attributes (mishpat) of a "receiver" (Mekabel) from his teacher/Rabbi. For when he has awe of his teacher/rabbi, he is considered a "receiving student" (talmid mekabel).

But if the talmid does not sit with awe, he does not have the attributes (mishpat) of a talmid which receives. Then he does not see a siman tov (good sign) in his studies to receive. For he is not prepared to receive. Thus he said "with awe".

"fear" - the difference between awe and fear is that when one sees the greatness of his Rabbi, due to this he has awe of him. But fear is when he looks at his own smallness and lowliness, then he fears.

For it is proper to fear a great man even if one is not small. But one who is small fears even a man who is not very great. Thus, the talmid needs to sit with awe and fear, that he recognizes the greatness of his Rabbi and also his own smallness.

Furthermore, and even more so, it is proper to explain also that "awe" and "fear" means that one has awe and fear of G-d. Namely, that one recognizes the exalted loftiness and greatness of G-d and also that one recognizes his own lowliness and worth. And by the angels, it is written "they do with awe and fear the will of their Maker" (siddur, yotzer ohr).

This is likewise the explanation here. For a man needs to be prepared to receive. This occurs when he considers himself an effect (of G-d who is the Cause). Through the awe and fear he is considered an effect.

But one who considers himself of importance and possessing levels (baal maalot) - he does not at all have preparation to receive.

#6 - fear

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "fear" - that he has fear of Heaven in his heart. Through this he will pay close attention to the words of his Rabbi in his studies.

Q Level 2

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "fear" - this refers to fear of Heaven. For as we learned: "one whose fear of sin precedes his wisdom, his wisdom endures" (Avot 3:11), and "the beginning of wisdom is the fear of G-d" (Mishlei 9:10)..

Q Level 3

Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot - "fear and awe" - Rashi brings the talmud: " 'you shall make known to your sons and grandsons.. the day you stood before your G-d at Sinai' - just like then was with fear, awe, quaking, and sweating, so too here (when learning torah) with fear, awe, quaking, and sweating. From here we learn that Zavim, etc. are permitted to read torah, prophets and holy writings, but Baal Kerim (men who had a seminal discharge) are forbidden" (Berachot 22a).

The reason is that Keri comes from lightheadedness and zachut hadaat (nonseriousness), and he does not have awe and fear. The secret of the matter is that without fear it is not torah. This is as the mishna says: "if there is no wisdom, there is no fear; if there is no fear, there is no wisdom" (Avot 3:17). For wisdom and fear are the same thing. This is due to the lofty level of torah. For the essence (etzem) of torah and "what it is" (mahuta) is "with awe and fear", etc. (Daat Chochma umussar 2:51).

Q Level 3

☆ Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot - "fear and awe" - in the book "Be'er Avraham" on Tehilim 20:3 "from Tzion He will support you" he writes: "because 'from Tzion will come forth torah' and torah brings a man closer to his Creator. The torah supports a man so that he will be able to come before the King. For he toils in the hidden treasures of the King (ginzei hamelech) and he is among those who "see the King's face" (roeh pnei hamelech) first, before the angels." end quote.

We learn from here a great principle (yesod gadol). For since through the torah, a man approaches his Creator and enters the inner chambers "among those who see the King's face first" - then torah [study] is just like prayer. For the essence of both is that one who toils in them is standing before the King! And both are called "avodah" (divine service).

Not only that, but the level of torah is even higher than the level of prayer, "among those who see the king's face first".

This is what our sages said: "the chaverim (scholars) who toil in torah (like R.Shimon bar Yochai and his peers whose occupation was torah) must interrupt their torah study for reciting the Shemah but not for prayer" (Shabbat 11a).

For the torah scholars whose occupation is torah, at the utmost level of true torah, - for them the avodah of torah was at the peak level. Therefore it was higher than the level and closeness of prayer. Therefore, for them certainly one must not interrupt torah even for prayer.

Thus, just like by prayer there is a halacha: "even if a [human] king greets you, you must not interrupt". For while praying, one is standing before the King of kings.

If so, certainly and all the more so that while learning torah "even if a [human] king greets you", it is forbidden to interrupt the study. For one who studies torah is as one who stands in prayer.

How much shame should enter a person when considering that this matter has become hefker (common) for us. And we do not know to be careful of not interrupting torah study like prayer. For both are the same thing - standing before the King! And this is what our sages taught: "whoever interrupts words of torah to engage in mundane speech is fed burning coals" (Chagigah 12b).

It comes out from this that certainly "awe and fear" is among the ways to acquire the torah. For according to what we explained, the essence of torah is that one who toils in it is as one standing before the King. Thus in truth it would be proper that when one sits to learn torah, he should don a tallit and tefilin just like during the Shemah and prayer. (Daat Torah, chelek beit, pg.244-5, 247).

And the Ramban writes: "our sages said in Sifri.. 'you shall serve Him' - serve G-d through His torah, serve G-d through His temple. - the explanation is that service of the temple is fulfillment of the verse 'you shall serve Him'. For this is called Avodah (service of G-d). They further said: 'serve G-d through His torah', to study and contemplate His torah. This too is an Avodah (service of G-d) before Him" end quote.

According to our words this is clear. For the secret and essence of the holy torah is specifically "Avodah" (service of G-d). For the essence of it is for one to be completely cleaving to her (the torah) with all his thoughts and senses until one is divested of the physical (ad kedey hitpashtut hagashmiut) and the power of one's thinking and heart is entirely before G-d. Without this, ch'v, it is not the holy torah. (Daat Chochma umussar, chelek 2:77).

Q Level 4

☆ Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - "awe and fear" - in the midrash (Shir Hashirim Rabba 1): "your name is as oil poured out" - just like oil does not mix together like other liquids, so too words of torah do not mix with words of frivolity (letzanut). And just like for a cup full of oil in your hand, if a drop of water falls inside, a corresponding drop of oil will fall out, so too if words of torah enter the heart, a corresponding measure of frivolity (letzanut) will come out, or if words of frivolity enter the heart, a corresponding measure of words of torah will come out." end quote.

The explanation of the midrash is as we learned that the torah is acquired with awe and fear. The foundation of the matter is that the essence of torah is "with awe, fear, quaking, and sweating", as we learned earlier: "if there is no wisdom, there is no fear; and if there is no fear there is no wisdom" (Avot 3:17). For wisdom and fear are one and the same, without any separation at all. Without fear, it is not torah. Thus, words of torah and words of frivolity are complete opposites of each other and antagonists of each other. Certainly then words of torah do not mix with words of frivolity.

Behold, a man's body is like a long pouch to receive and store things inside, as the talmud says: "all human bodies are pouches; fortunate are they who are worthy of being pouches (derafteki) of the Torah" (Sanhedrin 99b). Rashi explains there: "derafteki" - a long pouch used to store money.

Fortunate is he who merits to be a vessel for words of torah." end quote (i.e. and not of useless things).

#7 - humility

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "humility" - towards G-d. Through this the words of torah will be precious in his eyes and he will watch over them very well.

Q Level 1

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "humility" - that one needs to be of humble spirit before every person. For thus Moshe merited that the torah be given through him. Namely, because he was the humblest person on the face of the earth. Furthermore, a humble person learns from every man, even a small person, and as written: "from all who taught me I grew wiser".

Q Level 2

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "humility" - when a person comes to learn torah, he should realize no matter how wise he thinks he is or other people around him see him, nevertheless, he is still as less than nothing compared to the giants of torah in previous generations. Namely, starting from Moshe rabeinu, to the Zekenim (Elders), the judges, prophets, tannaim (mishnaic sages), amoraim (talmudic sages), geonim, rishonim, and acharonim (later sages).

Then he will very quickly merit to reach humility in realizing what his greatness is relative to these lofty mountains.

Thus he will gain several things:

1. to treat with honor every statement of our sages and their commentators. And he will not annul their words like dust if he does not understand them.. Through this, he will merit to annul himself to the sages of the generation, the transmitters of the torah. and be able to accept all their instructions. And he will not come to challenge and dispute with them on every thing which does not appear [correct] to him, as our sages brought: "even if he tells you left is right, you need to listen to him" (Devarim 17:11, Rashi).

Q Level 3

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "humility" - for humility is the first cause (sibah rishona) to torah. And like by Moshe, of all his many virtues, the only cause to his torah was his humility. And our sages said: "a sign of arrogance is poverty" (Kidushin 49b), which they explain to be poverty in torah. From this we learn the opposite, namely, a sign of humility is torah.

And in Tractate Taanit (7a): "why are words of torah compared to water? For just like water abandons high places and flows to low ground, so too words of torah only endure by one who is of lowly spirit". We will explain this later (in Netivot Olam, torah ch.2 and humility ch.8).

(R.Hartman: in Drush alHatorah 19b, the Maharal writes: the torah does not endure by one who considers himself in his eyes as something (devar mah). For every "thing" has a boundary and limit which bounds it. Then he has no comparison to the torah due to his being bounded by his dimensions.. when G-d went to Moshe (to appoint him), Moshe said "who am I that You want to give the torah through me?" (Talmud Shabbat 89a). Thus in his eyes he did not see himself as anything at all. And since he said: "who am I?" G-d told him to call the Torah on his own name. For it is proper to call the torah on his name due to this humility.. For Moshe did not limit himself by any measure or boundary completely to the extent that he said: "what am I?" But if he considered himself as something, he would be limiting himself with boundaries and dimensions and then he

would not be fit that the torah be called on his name. For the torah is (transcendent) intellect (sichlit) which is not bound by limits and boundaries like physical things. Thus, since he did not limit himself at all and considered himself in his eyes as completely simple (pashut) until he said "what am I?", therefore he was fit to receive the torah of transcendent intellect which has no limits... end quote.)

Q Level 4

☆ Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot - "humility" - our sages brought: "every place you find the greatness of the Holy One, blessed be He, you also find His humility..." (Megilah 31a).

The intent is not that even though the Holy One, blessed be He, is exalted and holy, nevertheless He is humble and is with the downtrodden and humble of spirit. Rather, the secret of humility is that greatness lies specifically in the secret of humility.

Thus we find in the words of our sages (Shemot Rabba 34:1): "He who sits in concealment" (yoshev b'seter elyon..) "elyon" - He is above all His creations. "in the shadow of Sh-adai he will dwell". For the truth of G-d's existence is specifically in "concealment", in "shadow", in "nothingness" (b'ayin).

The secret of the matter is that "nothingness" (ayin) is the true existence. On the contrary, the existence of "substance" (yesh) does not exist in the creation. Rather, it belongs to the merkava of tumah (side of evil forces). The secret of the merkava of kedusha (side of holiness) is in the existence of "nothingness" (ayin).

Likewise for the matter of torah and this is what we learned that one of the 48 ways the torah is acquired is "humility".

Our sages said: "why are words of torah compared to water? To teach you that just like water flows out of high places and goes to low places, so too words of torah endure only in one of lowly/humble spirit" (Taanit 7a).

They further said: "what is meant by 'the curves of your thighs are like jewels' (Shir 7:2)? Why is the torah compared to a thigh? To teach you that just like a thigh is in concealment, so too words of torah are in concealment" (Sukkah 49b). For the torah dwells only in "concealment", "by one of lowly/humble spirit", "in a low place", in the secret of the existence of "nothingness". For this is the true existence. (Daat Torah, chelek 2, pg.144-6).

Q Level 4

☆ Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - "humility" - our sages said (Eiruvin 55a): " 'it (the torah) is not in the Heavens' (Devarim 30:12) - you will not find it among those of haughty spirit."

And in Bava Metzia 99a: "the holy ark (miraculously) did not take up any space (in the holy of holies)".

Without a doubt, all the miracles done for our ancestors in the temple were for a purpose. This particular miracle appears to be in order to teach people the way of torah. For those of haughty spirit take up a large space and are recognizable from far away.

Conversely, the humble person does not take up any space at all. For he is as if he does not exist. This is what the miracle is hinting at. The ark and tablets took up no space at all (if one measured the length between both sides of the ark and the walls it was miraculously equal to the length

between the two walls). For the torah is not found among the haughty of spirit.

Rather, a man needs to conduct himself as if he does not exist at all. See the talmud (Sotah 21b): "R. Yochanan says: words of torah endure only in one who makes himself as if he does not exist, as written: 'but wisdom, from nothing (ayin) you will find it' (Job 28:12)".

Then fortunate is he and it is good for him (Kochvei Ohr pg.157).

🔍 Level 4



Ohr Yitzchak - "the torah is acquired through 48 things (devarim)" - he did not say "maalot (levels)" (like by malchut-kingship). For a man who thinks of himself as having attained "levels" - certainly he has not fulfilled the "48 things". For the torah is not acquired through "levels" (maalot), that a man thinks he has attained a level.

This is what the midrash (Bamidbar Rabba) states that the torah is acquired only by someone who makes himself into a desert. Thus, the torah is compared to water (Taanit 7a), just like water flows from a high place to a low place, so too the holy torah goes from its lofty source above to the humble man. And it endures only in someone who makes himself into a desert. But this person who stands tall and thinks himself as having attained levels - the torah does not endure in him. The name "torah" does not fulfill in him and does not act at all on a man who has a "level".

For our sages said: "why is it called torah? Because it teaches/instructs (moreh) a man the path of truth to G-d". But this person who considers himself as having attained a level, it is a sign that he did not learn lishma, namely, lishma of the torah, in order that it teaches him the torah. For this that he wants for himself some level to acquire torah- then it is not called torah but rather just like any other study.

#8 - joyousness

🔍 Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "joyousness" - through learning with joy, the words of torah will be firmly grasped in his heart.

🔍 Level 2

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "with joy" - for if he does not learn with joy and the torah is a burden on him, in the end he will become weary and abandon the study. But when he learns with joy, with joy and song, then he will "be constantly intoxicated in her love" (Mishlei 5:19). For torah and joy are two inseparable brothers . For "the statutes of G-d are right, rejoicing the heart" (Tehilim 19:8). Furthermore, the torah itself was the delight of G-d, as written: "I was His delight from day to day" (Mishlei 8:30).. Thus it does not abide in a place of sadness but rather in a place of joy.

🔍 Level 2

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "with joy" - for one who learns with joy will attain more than several hours in sadness. Furthermore, the torah is the delight (shaashuim) of G-d. One needs to rejoice at such a great privilege.

🔍 Level 2

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "with joy" - for joy and sadness come to a man if he attains or loses something truly important to him. One who is told that he profited a million dollars will certainly rejoice greatly. For money is important to him. Thus, if he does not at all rejoice in torah and mitzvot, this shows they are not valuable in his eyes. But if one realizes that torah is worth billions and billions, etc. etc. of years of happiness and eternal spiritual pleasure, how can one not rejoice even as much as

winning the lottery?

Q Level 2

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "with joy" - it is clear that one who learns out of love and joy will succeed more in his study. He strives to utilize all his time for toil in torah. He is interested, he checks, delves deeply, he draws out more and more joy from the wellspring of torah..

Q Level 3

☆ Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer, drashot 2:400 - "with joy" - our sages teach (Shabbat 30b) that the Shechinah (divine presence) rests [on a person] only when there is joy and likewise [the Shechina rests] on words of Halacha.

The talmud asks there: "but we have learned: 'if a student sits before his Rabbi and his lips do not drip bitterness - he will not see a good sign (siman tov) in his learning'" (Shabbat 30b).

The talmud answers: "this [joyousness] refers to before he started learning and that [awe/fear /seriousness] refers to after he started learning".

The explanation is that a man needs to rejoice for meriting to toil in torah. Namely, the blessing on the torah BEFORE learning. But not that the toil in torah itself needs to be in order to rejoice his heart. For on the contrary, then he needs to sit in awe (b'eimah).

But nevertheless, through this (awe/seriousness) he merits to reach the truth in the halachah and the bitterness becomes sweet. However, his joy should never be [directly] through the halachah (study) itself.

Q Level 4

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "with joy" - for simcha (joy) is a great midah (trait). For when a man is with joy, he is in shleimut (wholeness). And through this, he receives the torah which is the shleimut (wholeness) of man. But when a man is in pain, then he is in [a state of] lacking, and he does not receive the torah which is shleimut (wholeness) of man.

The general principle is that a man is not fit for this divine wholeness, ie the torah, except through simcha-joy which is wholeness of the soul.

But when a man's soul is joyous, then his soul is fit to receive the shleimut (wholeness/ perfection) of the torah.

(R.Hartman: and in Chidushei Agadot, Gitin 70a, the Maharal writes: fear (pachad) weakens the power of the soul (machlish koach hanefesh). For the soul's power is when it is in a state of joy. This matter is known. Joy is the power of the soul while fear weakens the soul. end quote.)

Furthermore, due to the depth of the torah, it requires a clear mind.. This matter does not need any proof. When a man's mind is clear, his heart is more open.. However this point is more connected to the 12th level "yishuv-settling".

#9 - purity

Q Level 2

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "purity (taharah)" - for one needs to purify himself from bad thoughts. We find that when our sages said: "at age sixteen for talmud", they also said right after that "at eighteen for chupa (marriage)". For one needs to marry right away so as not to have bad thoughts and come to

tumah at night. For the torah is holy and pure. It does not rest on an impure place. and as the sage said: "I married at age sixteen. If I had married at fourteen, I would have said: 'a thorn in the eye of the Satan'". Thus he wished to marry at fourteen, even before entering the study of talmud. for it is a great benefit to learning in purity.

Q Level 2

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "with purity" - the importance of learning torah with purity of heart and body is well known. The midrash says: "torah is compared to oil - just like in a barrel of oil, if one adds drops of water, a corresponding amount of oil will flow out, so too for words of torah, if one enters useless talk (devarim betelim) in the mind, corresponding words of torah come out".

As known, all the great sages of the generations at all times were always specifically scholars who occupied all their days only in torah and not anything else. For one who occupies himself also with other things besides torah, then even if he learns much torah, but torah with tahara (purity), he will not have.

Likewise for tahara of the body. It is known how meticulous the great torah scholars were in guarding the Takana Ezrah (immersing in a mikveh when needed), even in difficult times. I once heard in the name of Rav Schach zt'l that all the Rabbis whose books were accepted by Klal Yisrael (all the Jewish congregation) were only those who were very meticulous in the Takana Ezrah.

I used to think that the whole matter of tumah and taharah was something completely virtual and relevant only to matters of terumah and kodashim (temple offerings) and it has no practical connection to matters of this world. But then I was shown that Rabbi Chaim Vital wrote that Eliyahu Hanavi sprinkled on his teacher, the Arizal ashes of the red heifer. And due to this, he attained what he attained. And if tumah and tahara do not change anything, why was it necessary to sprinkle the ashes on him?

Rather, we must say that a pure man attains much more in torah than a tamei man, even if the tamei man became impure accidentally. For tumah is not a sin but a kind of lacking.

Q Level 3



Mishnat Chachamim, maharam chagiz - "purity" - know that even though they said: "words of torah do not receive tumah-impurity" (Berachot 22a), nevertheless go and see that the sages were very stringent in its tahara-purity to the extent that they expounded the verse: "for he disgraced the word of G-d [that soul shall be utterly cut off]" (Bamidbar 15:31) saying "this refers to one who reads words of torah in dirty places and alleyways" (Berachot 24b). Notice that here it uses the double language "hikaret tikaret (utterly cut off)", unlike other sins with penalty of Karet (cut off).

And if it is so severe for one whose body is clean and only that he reads in unclean surrounding, how much more so for one whose body and soul is contaminated by the sins in his hand.

For then the torah becomes as a "death potion" (sam hamavet) instead of being an elixir of life (sam chaim). Thus, I heard and learned that it is good for a torah scholar to first think thoughts of teshuva (repentance) and to recite Tehilim (Psalm) 51. Both will combine to prepare and purify oneself to study G-d's torah.. It is also good and wonderful that one's body be clean of all filth and that one's clothes be clean and his table be pure (tahor)..

Q Level 4

Chida

Chidah, Pituchei Chotam, on devarim 14:1-2 "you are sons to G-d... for you are a holy people to the L-ord your G-d" - G-d chose the Jewish people to be to Him a holy nation. Through torah and good deeds that they do, they strengthen and make soldiers of holiness to fortify and exalt the

machaneh Shechinah (encampment of the Shechinah/powers of holiness). For through toiling in torah lishma and through mitzvot and good deeds done leshem shamayim, good angels are created as known.

So too, G-d forbid, for the opposite. When people do bad deeds, evil angels are created which become soldiers for the sitra achra (forces of evil).

That which causes this or that is: if a man always places G-d before his eyes and knows clearly that G-d observes him in all details and fears Him - through this certainly he will be abashed and embarrassed and will not stray away from G-d. This is as king David said: "I have set G-d always before Me; because He is at My right hand, I shall not be shaken" (Tehilim 16:8).

But if a man removes the veil of shame from before his face and does not think that G-d is watching him - then he is given over to the hand of the Sitra Achra and he sinks into all bad traits.

The word "ayin" (eye) has gematria with kollel of Samael. This hints that if a man guards his eyes from seeing bad, he places G-d before his eyes - through this Samael does not rule over him. But if his eyes are open to see bad, he gives Samael control over him and is given over to Samael to do with him as he wishes..

The holiness depends primarily on your eyes. If you think always in G-d before your eyes, through this, holiness is recognizable upon you. But if not, then no. Therefore, be very careful and guard your soul very much..

#10 - attending to the sages

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "attending to the sages" (*shimush chachamim*) - through being around them always when serving them, he will learn a lot of practical halacha from their deeds and as our sages said: "serving torah [scholars] is greater than learning" (Berachot 7b).

Q Level 2

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "attending to the sages, examination with peers, pilpul (debate) with students (*shimush chachamim, dikduk chaverim, pilpul talmidim*)" - the intent is that a person becomes whole in torah through these three. Namely, his teachers, peers, and students, as brought: "I have learned much from my teachers and even more from my friends, but from my students I have learned more than from all" (Taanit 7a)...

Q Level 3

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "attending to the sages" - it is not for nothing that our sages said (Berachot 7b): "the service of the Torah is greater than the study thereof.." For even if one learns the whole torah, nevertheless it remains by him as theoretical only. In order to learn how one conducts himself practically (l'maaseh) according to the torah one learned, one needs to attach himself to a great Rabbi and learn from his ways and conducts, and to observe how he translates the torah to practical life.

The Chazon Ish already wrote in his letters something like: "it is impossible for a man to attain the light and wisdom of torah except through the soul of a living Rabbi in his generation".

For even if one reads holy books all his life and he has absorbed much torah in his brain but nevertheless his body will remain inanimate just like the books he reads.

For in order to live according to the torah it is necessary to learn from someone who lives according to the torah and not just to learn from the torah itself.

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - "attending to the sages" - that he is meshamesh chachamim (attending/serving the sages). Then he is fit to receive the torah. And in the talmud (Berachot 7b): "the service of the Torah is greater than the study thereof. For it is written (Kings II 3:2): 'here is Elisha the son of Shafat, who poured water on the hands of Eliyahu'".

The explanation is that one who is meshamesh (serving) a talmid chacham, the talmid connects to the Rav through shimush (serving) of torah and through this he receives from the Rav. For without a doubt, when the wick is brought close to the candle, the candle ignites the wick.

So too, when the student draws close to the Rav through serving him, the Rav bestows (mashpia) torah on him. But when one merely learns from the Rav, he does not draw as close as when he serves the Rav himself..

#11 - examination with peers

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "examination with peers" (dikduk chaverim) - in order to hear what they deduced from the words of the rabbi.

Q Level 2

☆ Chatam Sofer

Shevet Sofer, ohel Rachel 16 - "examination with/of peers" (dikduk chaverim) - a man needs to be very meticulous in the friends around him that they be upright, G-d fearing and whole. A young man who exiles himself from his home to a yeshiva and needs to live in a place with other young men, he must be very careful that there not be among them a bad friend who will try to push him away from the way of torah. For a person's friends have very great influence on him.

#12 - pilpul with students

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "pilpul (fine argumentation) with students" - through the questions and answers between them, the subject broadens and also they will come to new insights (chidushim).

Q Level 2

Maharal

Maharal - "pilpul (fine argumentation) with students" - for friends (chaverim) sharpen each other and the Rav in wisdom. And in Taanit: "why is the torah compared to a tree? Because just like small pieces of wood kindle big pieces of wood, so too in torah, the students sharpen the Rav... Thus the Halacha is broadened through the questions. This matter is clear.

Q Level 3

David Bimetzuda - "pilpul (fine argumentation) with students" - when he merits to have students, pilpul (sharp logic) is more found among the young men than older men. The young men debate with each other in pilpul (sharp logic) before their Rabbi. Through their pilpul, he gains insight in many things and extracts many judgments (dinim) from the torah in the way of (Taanit 7a): "I learned most from my students".

Q Level 3

☆

Etz Avot (yaakov emden) - "pilpul (fine argumentation) with students" - as written: (Taanit 7a): "I

learned most from my students". For since the students are not yet whole in wisdom, and also since they try to show [off] their powers to listen and understand, thus they debate in sharp logic whether in truth or falsehood and confusion. They are more heated with very sharp logic than the elders who are whole in wisdom. Through this the Rav also sharpens. For he needs to stand on their error, as "a man does not stand on words of torah unless he first erred in them" (Gitin 43a). By understanding their error, the truth is clarified. For every thing becomes known through its opposite. Evil is distinguished from good and likewise truth is distinguished through falsehood. And since error and confusion is common by the students, the doubts and views increase with more students. Through this the Rabbi extracts darkness to light of truth.

#13 - settling [of the mind]

Q Level 1

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "settling" - ie settling of the mind (yishuv daat). For if his mind is not settled (meyushevet), he is unable to learn.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "settling (b'yishuv)" - that his mind be settled and not rushed in his words. Some explain that he be proficient in the settling of the world (yishuv olam), whether in derech erez (ways of the land) or in knowledge and study of the wisdom in nature. This will help him understand the torah which includes everything and also esteem him in the eyes of the public.

Q Level 2

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "settling [of the mind]" - the intent is that if one is asked a question, he should not answer hastily but rather wait until the matter has settled down and been deliberated, similar to "be deliberate in judgment"..

Q Level 3

☆ Sifte Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Sifte Daat on Avot - "settling (yishuv)" - ie with calmness of mind (yishuv daat). For searching and inquiring in matters of intellect and likewise in study of torah and arriving at the halacha - the first condition for this is serenity and calmness of mind (menucha v'yishuv daat). For one needs to investigate well the matter from all sides and to establish patiently and with peace of mind the correct premises and conclusions which necessarily follow from this matter.

Behold, one who is afflicted with the disease of impulsiveness (behilut), and not just one impulsive in his deeds. For it is possible for him to walk calmly and nevertheless, be impulsive and stormy in his mind. Behold, impulsiveness of the mind (behilut hadaat) is what wears out and destroys all good contentment (nachat tov). For the impulsive person is incapable of having peace of mind, to contemplate an intellectual matter for even a short time due to the scattering of his mind.

Not only is such a person incapable of studying a torah matter and arriving at the halacha, but so too for all wisdoms and knowledge. For he is the opposite of the first condition for seeking wisdom.

This is what scripture says: "lust seeks separation" (Mishlei 18:1), ie one who seeks lust is always rushing back and forth, jumping over thorns and thistles. He moves from one lust to another and one will to another. He is a man of scattered mind. "he who is separated seeks lust; in all sound wisdom, he is exposed" (Mishlei 18:1). For he and wisdom are two opposites.

The wise man said: "there is no scattering like scattering of the mind and no tranquility like tranquility of the mind". Tranquility of mind is the pinnacle of virtues and the purpose of the whole creation.

But scattering of the soul and impulsiveness of the mind - through this, man's heart turns from composure of the mind. This is a general lacking that goes against the whole torah. For the torah is built only on peace of mind as our sages said: "whoever deliberates his ways in this world merits and sees the salvation of the Holy One, blessed be He" (Sotah 5b). But the impulsive of mind is far from G-d and every matter of holiness. (Chochma umussar 1:11, 152-53)

Q Level 3

David Bimetzuda - "settling" - ie after there was already pilpul (sharp logic/analysis), to not leave the matter as kushia or teiku (unresolved) if he has the ability to toil more and resolve the difficulties and not leave them as teiku (unresolved). He should not say "let us leave this now, and next time we will look into it". Rather, at this time to toil and try resolve the matter till the end. For now he is proficient (baki) in all sides and details of the topic and if he just toils some more, he can resolve it. This is a big manner in acquiring the torah.

#14,15 - knowledge of scripture and mishna

Q Level 1

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "scriptures and mishna" - ie one needs to be proficient in them. For scripture and mishna are the foundation upon which the house of the talmud stands. How can one build a house with no foundation?..

Q Level 3

Mishnat Chachamim, maharam chagiz - "knowledge of Scripture and Mishna" - for without a doubt, Scripture and Mishna are the two pillars upon which the talmud is built from which halacha (Jewish law) is derived. Go and see regarding their importance: "whoever lacks Bible, Mishna, and derech erez (secular pursuits) does not belong to civilization" (Mishna Kidushin 40b)...

One should also learn Midrashim and Agadot which draw the heart of man to the service of G-d. He should be used to reading them and books of mussar like "Duties of the Heart", "Reisheit Chochma", or the like, at least two hours per day. This should be with condition before deed - "in order to do" (al menat lekayem). For I have seen one person who goes all day with the book "Reisheit Chochma" and nevertheless peddles slander (holech rachil), instigates disputes and arguments, takes revenge and bears grudges like a snake. He is not a torah scholar (talmid chacham) but considers himself wise. And if we examine him, we will find all bad traits and afflictions (kol mum vkol negah), an evil eye, an evil heart, "a friend of the destroyer".

I saw another similar person who considers himself the head of the lamdanim (sharp scholars) but he possesses all these bad traits. May G-d save us from them and all evil troubles, an evil neighbor and an evil eye.

Q Level 3

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "mishna" - as known, the talmud brings: "with who do you find the war (milchama) of torah? With he who has amassed bundles of mishna" (Sanhedrin 42a). And in Horayot: "every one needs wheat merchants" (ie those who know many mishnas).

For the mishna is the foundation of the entire oral law and the intent is that the more a person has knowledge in all the parts of torah, the more his torah will be deeper and reach closer to the truth. I heard in the name of Rabbi Aharon Y.L. Shteinman zt'l that one who lacks knowledge in torah, not only does he lack what he does not know but also in what he knows he lacks. For his knowledge is not whole before he is baki (proficient) in the whole torah. Everything is relative. Thus, one who knows half of the Shas, then he has only half knowledge even on what he learned..

#16 - minimizing business dealings

Q Level 1

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "minimizing business, minimizing derech erez (worldly affairs), minimizing pleasures, minimizing sleep, minimizing talk, minimizing laughter" - all the six "minimizing" brought now are things that on one hand, it is impossible to do without them completely. For they are part of the welfare of society (chelek miyishuv olam). But on the other hand, they form a contradiction to acquiring torah. Therefore, too much of them can cause one to stray from torah study.

In all these things, one needs great wisdom and judgment. The "minimal" needs to be enough so that one does not annul them completely. But the "minimal" must not drag one into a destructive and dangerous excess in these matters.

Q Level 1

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "minimizing business" - the intent is that man needs to find for himself a source of livelihood. It is impossible to not do anything. For thus G-d decreed that the divine flow (shefah) which comes down from Him to the world needs to manifest on some sort of effort (hishtadlut) according to the natural order and not begin and end in a miraculous manner. This is as the torah says: "and the L-ord your G-d will bless you in all that you do".

But on the other hand, in order that a man not do excess hishtadlut (efforts) in his livelihood which removes him from torah study and peace of mind, one needs to place before his eyes always the powerful saying of the Chazon Ish: "excess efforts do not help at all" (ribui hishtadlut einu mo'il meuma).

Q Level 2

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "minimizing business" - for the torah is not found with the merchants and dealers who descend to the sea in ships, as scripture states: "it is not over the sea" (Devarim 30:13).

He wrote "minimizing business" (miut sechora) and not no business. For it is impossible without any business dealings at all since "all torah without work will in the end be annulled [and drag sin]" (Avot 2:2). Rather, let him minimize work and toil in torah.

That which he said "minimizing business" and not "minimizing work", this is because work is labor of the body which weakens strength. Thus it is evident that one needs to minimize this. But even for business which is not [physical] labor and on the contrary a man enjoys it, even so, he exhorts to minimize this.

Q Level 2

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "minimizing business (miut schora)" - ie to not be a businessman who chases after merchandise. Thus they said on the verse: "the torah is not on the other side of the sea" (Devarim 30:13) - "you will not find the torah by merchants and businessmen" (Eiruvim 55a). We explained this already in Netivot Olam (NetivTorah ch.2) and also earlier (avot 2:5) and this is not the place to elaborate.

#17 - minimizing derech erez (worldly affairs)

Q Level 2

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "minimizing derech erez (way of the land)" - I once heard from the Gaon, Rabbi Rachamim Nikravish that one who learns torah does not need to be excessively courteous

(menumas). For if he feels obliged to every person who knocks on him during his torah study and to join every occasion (wedding, etc.) where it seems his presence is important there, there is no hope that he will have much free time left to learn.

Thus it is evident that here too it is necessary to minimize and it is impossible to annul it completely. For almost no man can be disconnected from all his surroundings and live without speaking at all to any friends. And likewise every person needs to show affection sometimes to his friends and neighbors and to politely show interest in their affairs and welfare. But just like all "minimizing", one needs to know how to guard this "minimizing" and not be drawn into long drawn out conversations in the name of "derech erez" and "friendship".

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "minimizing derech erez (way of the land)" - marital relations which weakens one's energy and memory..

Q Level 2

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "minimizing derech erez (way of the land)" - this refers to marital relations. For the land depends on this for all creatures.. and it is known what our sages said: "there is a small organ in man. If he satiates it, it is hungry. But if he starves it, it is satiated".. Thus our sages set times such as torah scholars on sabbath nights etc. This is derech erez to restrain oneself and not approach the woman besides the fixed times.

Now the Tanna is teaching us for one who wishes to sanctify himself by [refraining from] what is permitted to him and minimize even that which is "the way of the land"..

Q Level 3

Chida

Chida, chasdei avot - "minimizing derech erez, minimizing pleasures.. minimizing laughter" - some explain minimizing derech erez to refer to the way of men (marital relations). We may say according to the talmud which says if the wife artzui martze before him, chayiv lepokda (if the wife shows desire in him, he is obligated to engage in relations with her), even if he is a talmid chacham.

Thus he said: minimizing laughter, minimizing pleasures. For through not laughing with her and not indulging in food and drink, he will not come to "dance in the circle". And then he will be minimizing derech erez.

Q Level 2

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "minimizing derech erez" - i.e. good character traits, as written: "if there is no derech erez, there is no torah".

Derech Eretz also refers to work. Even though he brought earlier "all torah not accompanied with work will in the end be annulled" (Avot 2:2), but nevertheless one should not make his work primary as brought in the talmud:

"The early generations made their torah [study] primary and their work secondary and they succeeded in both. But the later generations made their work primary and their torah [study] secondary and they succeeded in neither" (Berachot 35b).

And even though he said earlier "minimizing business dealings (miut sechora)", this is not difficult. For I may think work is different since he said earlier: "if there is no work there is no torah" (Avot 3:17). Therefore it was needed to say "minimizing derech erez (work)".

And "minimizing business dealings" teaches that even though it is only business dealings, nevertheless he should not do (excessively). And even though business dealing is not always like

[manual] labor, nevertheless he should likewise not make business dealings primary.

#18 - minimizing pleasures

Q Level 2

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "minimizing pleasures" - as written in Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu (Rabba ch.26): "before a man prays that words of torah enter inside him, let him first pray that indulgences of this world not enter inside his innards.

Q Level 3

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "minimizing [physical] pleasures (taanug)" - the pious author of "Duties of the Heart" wrote that love of this world and love of the next world cannot exist simultaneously in one's heart. For they are like two wives and are completely contradictory to each other.

The reason is that a person cannot run in two opposite directions simultaneously. For in order to run in one direction, he needs to flee from the other direction. So too for chasing after physical pleasures (taanugim). Even though certainly all the pleasures G-d created in His world were not created in order to make us suffer. Namely, that we see them and strengthen to flee from them. But nevertheless, running and chasing after them necessarily causes one to flee from the torah which is found in the opposite direction.

The main thing incumbent on us in the service of G-d is to rule over this hungry horse (the body) and give it what it needs. But we must also fix the right amount on every thing so that we don't cause a situation where the horse controls the rider.

It is impossible for one to abstain completely from any physical pleasures and tell oneself each time "not now". But on the other hand, if one does not muzzle his lusts at all, the end of his spiritual life is very near.

Therefore, it is proper for every man to take on himself certain fixed times whereby he abstains from certain pleasures. For example, to not eat any sweets one day of the week or one day of the month or the like. Similarly for other matters. The purpose of this affliction is only so the matter does not go out of control, in order to ensure that one rules over his lusts and not the other way around.

Q Level 2

Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "minimizing pleasures" - G-d created man with different inclinations in order to maintain the body which is a vessel for the soul (neshama). It is man's duty to examine which of his deeds are done in order to strengthen his body and guard his health and which are done just for pleasure.

Excess pleasure beyond the needs of the body is detrimental to torah study. These two, torah and [physical] pleasures are unable to dwell together. Thus is written in Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu (ch.26): "before a man prays that words of torah enter his body, let him pray that [physical] enjoyments not enter his body".

Nevertheless, the Tanna was careful in his choice of words "minimizing pleasures". For few people are able to live like Rabbi who before his death raised his ten fingers above and said: "Master of the world, it is revealed before You that I toiled in torah with ten fingers and did not benefit from this world even on my small finger" (Ketuvot 104a).

An average person needs to minimize enjoyments in order to attain the peace of mind needed to learn torah. The Rambam in his introduction to chapter five of Avot explains that it is permitted for a man to enjoy the pleasures of this world in order, and only in order, that he will be able to serve his Creator with more strength. Therefore, even when one enjoys physical pleasures, he should try to minimize them, as much as he can, to what is necessary and not more..

Q Level 2

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "minimizing pleasures" - this seems difficult for earlier he said: "this is the way of torah: eat bread with salt, measured water, sleep on the ground and live a life of pain". Those things are all afflictions, not just minimizing pleasures.

From here is a support to those who explain that mishna (ex.Rashi) to be referring to the poor and not the rich.

Namely, that even if one cannot afford more than bread with salt, etc. nevertheless, he should not refrain from torah study.

But for one who is rich and eats meat and drinks wine in order to increase strength to toil in torah, then it is good for him on condition that he does not enter the domain of excess pleasure (ribui tanugim). Thus he said minimum pleasure. For a bit is good but too much is bad.

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - "minimizing pleasures" - for one who chases after bodily enjoyments is a bodily and physicality person (baal guf u'baal chomer). Thus it is not proper for him to acquire wisdom which is the opposite of the body, as we explained earlier regarding "this is the way of torah" (Avot 6:5).

There is to ask here. For here it implies one needs to avoid much pleasures (taanug) implying some pleasures (taanug b'alma) which is not much is permitted. But earlier regarding "this is the way of the torah, eat bread with salt, etc" (which implies no taanug).

This is not at all difficult. For we already explained there that the intent is not to afflict oneself. For when our sages said: "the torah endures by one who slays himself over it" (Shabbat 83b), the intent is that he does this for torah. Namely, if he can only learn torah if he subsists on just bread and salt as we explained. Then he should do so. But not for nothing.

Nevertheless, for taanug more than needed he should not do. For then he turns to the bodily lusts and this is the opposite of torah.

Q Level 3

Yosher Divrei Emet, ot 4 - "minimizing pleasures" - in truth, to cling to G-d through torah and mitzvot, many conditions are necessary. On this the people of our generation, even great torah scholars, closed their eyes from these conditions which are said in the mishna (Avot 6). They imagine themselves possessing part of them or all of them and think that they are truly baalei torah (scholars). Due to this, they speak against the tzadikim Olam (very righteous).

But in truth, if they wanted to examine a bit on the conditions and to look at themselves frankly, they would realize that they did not merit even a tiny bit of a tiny bit of even the smallest condition. Then they would certainly repent to G-d and seek the word of G-d how and what is the path to go.

The conditions are many. The smallest of all of them is to be divested of the lust for food, drink, sleep, marital relations, and to break the bodily powers until even at the time one must do one of these things, he will not consider anything of this worldly pleasure due to the great fire in his heart for torah and service of G-d out of love of G-d. This is like one who is so joyous at a great business profit that he does not feel at all the small pleasure of eating.

This is the meaning of "minimizing pleasures". He did not say "minimal pleasures" but rather "minimizing". For that which one needs to have minimal goes without saying. Rather even the necessary, one needs to minimize. Namely that he increases pleasure and desire of clinging to G-d in his heart through torah until the physical pleasures are as extinguished like a candle in broad daylight...

#19 - minimizing sleep

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "minimizing sleep" - for besides wasting time, excessive sleep dulls the mind and weakens one's enthusiasm (charitzut). However, insufficient sleep also greatly damages mind and body..

Q Level 2

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "minimizing sleep" - this is clear and requires almost no explanation. For it is impossible for almost everyone to learn until he has no strength at all (like the Chazon Ish who would learn until he had just a drop of strength left, enough to go on the bed near his chair).

On the other hand, one who sleeps late until he "slips out of bed" will evidently waste large chunks of his life. Therefore, every person needs to evaluate how much sleep he needs and to give himself this sleep gladly and without worry - but not more than this.

As known, it is also possible to train oneself slowly, slowly, to reduce the hours of sleep. For example, to decide that for one year he will try to reduce his sleep time by one hour. It is worth trying. I am speaking from experience!

Q Level 2

☆ Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer, drashot 1:212 - "minimizing sleep" - a man should give two thirds [time] for his soul and one third to his body. For he must not muzzle his body completely since then he would die. Nor should he divide equally since the soul is greater than the body.

Therefore they said: "I should have slept. Then (AZ) I would have been at rest" (AZ=8 gematria)" (Iyov 3:13) - that one sleeps eight hours. And we explained elsewhere that all needs of this world are called "sleep". Thus one third of the day for them and two thirds for toil in the service of G-d.

Q Level 3

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "minimizing sleep" - for if he sleeps excessively he does not learn his studies properly, as written: "you shall contemplate in it day and night" (Yehoshua 1:8). For this is the way of the torah - to toil in it day and night.

(R.Hartman: in Netiv Hatorah ch.3 the Maharal writes: in Eiruvim 21b on the verse "black as a raven" (Shir 5:11) the talmud there says: "on who do you find torah? on he who rises early and leaves late night on them in the Beit Midrash.." For a man needs to cleave to the torah completely until he does not separate from it. If he does not do thus, he will not merit the torah. For he needs to become one with the Sichli (intellect). Furthermore, a man needs to have great diligence. For the torah is not like other physical things which are under time. If a man conducts himself with the torah as if it is something in time, and his torah study is according to hours and times - he will not acquire the torah. Therefore, one must rise early and leave late on them. For this is the matter of the intellect which is not under time. It is always, without time. end quote.)

Know also that sleep is a very bodily matter as we explained earlier (Avot 3:10) by "morning

sleep..". An when a man is drawn after sleep, he is drawn very much after the body and he distances from the Sichli (intellect)..

Q Level 4

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "minimizing sleep" - that he rises at midnight to toil in torah, as the verse states: "at midnight I will rise to give thanks unto You, etc." (Tehilim 119:62). And the Zohar exhorts on this many times. For the Shechina (divine presence) and all the tzadikim (righteous) in Gan Eden listen to his voice, as hinted in the verse: "you who sit in the gardens, the friends hearken to your voice" (Shir 8:13). And this time is especially successful for torah study.

Furthermore, when a man sleeps he is holding on to the tree of death (ilana d'mota). For sleep is one sixtieth of death and the torah is the tree of life.. Thus the two are opposites of each other. And if a man loves to sleep, it sticks to him also after he wakes up from his sleep. He will not be able to hold on to the tree of life.

On this scripture says: "do not love sleep lest you become poor, open your eyes and be sated with bread" (Mishlei 20:13). The intent is that there is no wealth like torah wealth. And if he loves sleep, he will be annulled from torah study and become poor in torah..

Q Level 4

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "minimizing sleep" - for sleep is 1/60th of death (Berachot 57b) and is called Ilana d'Mota (tree of death), while the torah is called a "tree of life" and scripture says: "the fear of G-d prolongs days; but the years of the wicked shall be shortened" (Mishlei 10:27). For day was created for action and night for rest. Our sages said: "he who does not add learning [at night] in winter.." (Taanit 31a).

Thus one who extends night into day is as if he made the day longer than it is.

This is "the fear of G-d prolongs days" - it increases the day from night. "but the years of the wicked shall be shortened". For that which the wicked sleep [even] during the day, they reduce their life. For when sleeping they are as dead.

We may explain further that since sleep is 1/60th of death, then the 1/60th is according to each person's level at death, whether for good or bad.

The tzadik cleaves to the Shechina when he dies. So too when he sleeps, his soul ascends to the Metivta d'Rakia (heavenly academy). But this is only 1/60th, not like the level after his death. For it is impossible while his soul is attached to the physical body.

But for the wicked since when he dies he goes to Kaf Hakela (slingshot of the soul), so too when he sleeps his soul travels in the world and is pushed away from all places. This is sufficient for the understanding person.

Thus for the wicked, when he sleeps, he lacks the wholeness (Shlemut) of a man. Rather he is considered like an animal or a dead man.

But the tzadikim increase wholeness in their sleep. Thus "the fear of G-d prolongs days" for he lives when asleep like when awake. But "the years of the wicked shall be shortened" - his lifetime is shortened.

#20 - minimizing talk

 **Level 1**

☆ **Tiferet Yisrael**

Tiferet Yisrael - "minimizing talk" - i.e. unimportant words, but a bit is good for torah so that his mind rests a bit from this.

 **Level 2**

☆ **Midrash Shmuel**

Midrash Shmuel - "minimizing talk" - i.e. mundane speech (sichat chulin), as scripture says: "you shall speak in them (vedibarta bam)" (Devarim 6:7) which our sages expounded "in them" but not in idle speech.

And even regarding study, we find our sages brought: "all my life I grew up around the sages and I found nothing better for the body than silence". And if words are silver, silence is gold. And even if it is impossible without speech, nevertheless minimize it as much as possible.

This is the way of the torah itself, to minimize and reduce its words. For we find many judgments and Halachot which the torah reveals through one extra letter "Vav" or some other letter, not wanting to lengthen and increase speech.

So too for a man who toils in torah, he should do like the torah. And even when he learns, let him minimize his words and when teaching, to use clean, concise and clear words.

 **Level 2**

☆ **Ruach Chaim**

Ruach Chaim - "minimizing talk" - as our sages said: "for every idle talk that enters the ears of a man, corresponding words of torah come out" (Shir Hashirim Rabba 1:3).

 **Level 3**

Metzach Aharon, in name of Vilna Gaon - "minimal talk" - ie to speak a bit (of mundane speech). For if one learns a lot without interruption, his mind will become confused (burnt out). Therefore in order to succeed, one needs light talk sometimes.

 **Level 3**

☆ **Maharal**

Maharal - "minimizing talk (miut sicha)" - we explained this earlier (Avot 1:17). For "one who increases words increases foolishness". We elaborated in its place regarding "I have not found anything as good for the body as silence" (Avot 1:17). For silence is a sign of wisdom and one who increases speech does not have a sign of wisdom, since speaking annuls the work of the intellect. Therefore this matter of minimizing talk (miut sicha) is a great foundation to wisdom.

(R.Hartman: in Netiv Hashtika 2:97a: it is written in Mishlei/Proverbs: "he who has knowledge keeps back his words; he whose breath is dear is a man of understanding" (17:21) - Shlomo wants to say that one who refrains from talking is a man of knowledge. Therefore, he abstains from speech.. for when one increases speech, the main thing by him is the nefesh medaberet (speaking soul) which is connected and joined to the physical and is not completely divested. Therefore he speaks excessively. For his intellect is not divested from the physicality... but by the Chocham (wise man), the intellect is primary and the power of intellect annuls the power of speech which is a physical power.." end quote. And in Chidushei Agadot (Kidushin 49b), he explains according to this why women, fools, and gentiles talk a lot.. and there in Sanhedrin 101a: "go and see, when a man thinks a deep thought he shuts his mouth and does not speak")

 **Level 2**

☆ **Matanat Avot**

Matanat Avot - "minimizing talk" - as mentioned earlier, it is not possible for one to be disconnected from all those around him and to not speak to anyone, not even one's wife. Thus, a person needs to draw a line somewhere between what is the forbidden and dangerous "excessive" and what is needed.

Another matter to consider is for each person to fix times which is kodesh kadasim (holy of holies) for torah study. And in these fixed times, even one word of mundane speech is excessive for him. While for other times, he can permit himself some talk according to his strength and knowledge of himself and the person he is speaking with so as not to offend him.

#21 - minimizing laughter

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "minimizing laughter" - a bit of humor (milta d'biducha) is also good in order to bring joy to the mind and strengthen enthusiasm and memory.. (Pesachim 117a).

Q Level 2



Nachalat Avot, Abarbanel - "minimizing laughter" - in the talmud: "it is forbidden for a person to fill his mouth with laughter in this world, as written (Tehilim 126:2): 'then our mouths will fill with laughter'" (Berachot 31a).

That is to say, when will our mouths fill with laughter? When the nations will say: "G-d has done great things with them" (Tehilim 126:2). I already mentioned that a happy life is with joy but not laughter. For joy is from the soul (poal hanefesh) while laughter is a pleasure of the body and its lightness (taanug haguf vekaluto). On this Shlomo said: "of laughter it is silly" (Kohelet 2:2), ie for laughter he said of a man who is entrenched in it that he is silly and foolish in it. But for joy it is not so. For what evil and damage are caused from it? Thus he said: "what does it do?"

Q Level 3

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "minimizing laughter" - every person needs a bit of humor and laughter sometimes to release tensions and pressures or the like. But on the other hand, one who chases after laughter all his life, then when he no longer has what to laugh on, he will begin to busy himself in letzanut (mockery, making light of important things) which is completely forbidden. Then he will "merit" to belong to "the group of letzim (scoffers) who do not receive the face of the Shechina" (Sotah 42a).

Many good people fell into this thinking that "minimizing laughter" gives them a license to make a mockery of everything around them near or far..

Q Level 3

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "minimizing laughter" - [this implies some laughter is not bad. if so] there is to ask: in the talmud it says: "it is forbidden to fill one's mouth with laughter in this world, as written: 'then (in the future) our mouths will fill with laughter'.." (Berachot 31a).

This is not difficult. For only to "fill one's mouth with laughter" (is forbidden) which means excessive laughter. But for basic laughter, he did not say.

Regarding torah however, one needs to minimize laughter completely.. For if one laughs often, he will not merit torah. The reason is that laughter is the opposite of thought which is the intellect. Therefore, laughter annuls the intellect.

You can understand this for laughter originates from frivolity (letzanut) and mockery (hitul) only. And without a doubt, frivolity and mockery are the opposite of intellect. For frivolity has no substance. It is just mockery/nonsense (hitul). But intellect is what is proper according to truth. Therefore, laughter annuls the intellect.

(R.Hartman: earlier in Avot 3:10 he wrote: "speech of children is the opposite of speech of elders.

The latter is wisdom but the speech of children is all frivolity, laughter and nonsense. Therefore speech of children is going out of wisdom")

Laughter is not similar to joy. For joy is primarily in the heart only. But laughter is not only in the heart. It is also in deed.

(R.Hartman: in Be'er Hagolah, be'er 4 he wrote: michol (musical instruments) is found among women and especially young women. This is because women and especially young women are not thinkers like men who think much. And all thought prevents joy from going out to action completely. For thought opposes (mitnaged) joy. Therefore for men, joy is in the heart since they have an opposition (mitnaged) which prevents the joy from going out to action. But for young women, there is nothing preventing this for she is not a thinker and thus has joy in action... For joy comes from [feeling] wholeness while thought shows a person how much more he needs to perfect himself.. Man's thoughts are on what is incumbent on him to do. Therefore thought and joy oppose (mitnagdot) each other..." end quote. and in Even Shelema 7:5, the Vilna Gaon writes: "the wise man will not be heard laughing. For due to the heaviness of his wisdom, even all the winds of jest in the world wil not budge him from his place.. but for the fool, even a tiny wind will move his heart and fill his mouth with loud sounds of laughter..")

Q Level 4

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "minimizing laughter" - for laughter is from the Techol (Berachot 62b) and it is the Sitra Achra as explained in the Zohar (Tikunei Zohar 21) and it is the opposite of torah.

#22 - slow to anger

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "slow to anger" - for anger also weakens enthusiasm and memory. It also weakens the body.

Q Level 2

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "slow to anger" - to distance from anger. For "anger rests on the bosom of fools" (Kohelet 7:9) and on it scripture says: "you shall not have a strange god in you" and anger is like idolatry and our sages said "whoever gets angry, if he is wise, his wisdom departs from him"..

We may also say that it refers to torah study, that the student not kick at the rebukes of his Rav. And if the Rav casts wrath on the students, let them bear it on their shoulders and not get angry on the Rav who rebukes them. Thus the next trait is a good heart, to not have any grudges in the heart.

Q Level 3

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "slow to anger (orech apayim)" - for if he gets angry, his wisdom departs from him as the Talmud says: 'whoever gets angry, if he is a Chacham (wise man), his wisdom departs from him" (Pesachim 66b)..

Q Level 3

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "slow to anger" - the plain meaning is to rule over one's anger. For "whoever gets angry, if he is a wise man, his wisdom departs from him" (Pesachim 68b). Thus, evidently, the only path to not lose one's wisdom is to overcome anger.

But anger on whom? On every person who angered or angers me. But also and no less - on self anger!

Every person has certain goals in life and he builds some kind of outlook upon which he bases all his conduct. Sometimes he commits a small or big mistake and all of the ideals and outlooks he built up for himself come crumbling down in front of his eyes like the Twin Towers of New York.

What should he do now? Should he get angry at himself saying: "why did I do that? why did I think like that? what a hopeless fool I am!"

Evidently, such anger will get him nowhere. On the contrary, it will cause him deeper foolishness and total loss of will power to rouse himself and try again from the beginning.

Instead he should tell himself: "everything is from Heaven. Certainly, G-d brought me to do this mistake so that I learn from it and change my path in life and previous outlooks".

On this our sages said: "a man does not stand on words of torah unless he first stumbled on them" (Shabbat 120a).

Why does G-d make it like this? To teach a man that no one is perfect. Even the greatest sage who is proficient in the whole torah - he also erred again and again. Despite this, he did not give up and become broken out of great disappointment. Rather, he got up again, dusted off his clothing from the fall and tried again to walk the right path until he reached where he reached. (i.e. minimizing anger also includes minimizing self-anger and self-disappointment).

#23 - good heartedness

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "goodheartedness" - that his nature be soft, full of favor and kindness to joyously bestow good to others.

Q Level 2

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "good heart" - for a man has two hearts, a good heart and an evil heart as our sages expounded: " 'with all your hearts' (in the Shema) - ie with your two yetzers (inclinations), the good inclination and the evil inclination".

Therefore, a man needs to afflict and eradicate (yasir v'yibaer) the evil heart within him. And then the torah will reside in him.. as our sages said: "the ways of G-d are upright, the righteous will walk in them but the wicked will stumble in them" (Hoshea 14:9)...

Q Level 2

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "good heartedness (lev tov)" - for the torah is called "good" and since the torah is called "good", you will find the torah only by someone who is good, namely, he who has a good heart. And when he has a good heart, then he receives the torah which is good. For how can the torah which is good abide in someone who has an evil heart?

Q Level 3

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "good heartedness" - the main thing is to where the heart is drawn. For all the limbs and powers of body and soul are drawn after the heart. Thus one who has a good heart will certainly run with all his strength to do the will of his Maker and to cleave to His torah and commandments.

How does one turn the heart in the right direction? There is only one medicine: to study mussar every day diligently, with feeling of the heart and putting to heart (hitpalut halev ubehashava el halev). After studying mussar, to ask oneself: "what will I do with this? How will I advance with this

new knowledge?"

It is not easy work to turn one's heart but only thus does one acquire the torah. It is worth trying!

#24 - emunah chachamim (faith in the sages)

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "faith in the sages (emunah chachamim)" - that he does not believe everything he hears outside. But he believes the sages in the wisdom of the torah even in what he is unable to understand.

Q Level 2

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "emunah chachamim (faith in the sages)" - i.e. to believe all that our sages said as if it were given to Moshe at Sinai. On this it is written: "do not sway from what I tell you right or left" (Devarim 17:11). For if a person does not believe even one thing, the secrets of the torah will not be revealed to him. For in the end, he will become a tzaduki (heretic) because "a sin brings another sin".

Perhaps also he is hinting on the matter of emunah (belief/faith) in G-d. Namely, to not enter oneself to try to reach it through logical inquiry (chakirat hasechel). For then he will tire to find the door. Rather, his emunah (belief/faith) should be like emunah chachamim which is a faithful faith transmitted orally from one man to the other up to Moshe from Sinai.

Through this, the Emunah (faith) will be fixed in his heart. For the path of intellectual grasp is impossible to reach as the wise man said: "if I knew/understood Him, I would be Him".

Q Level 3

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "faith in the sages (emunah chachamim)" - for when one believes in the words of the Chachamim (sages), then he has a cleaving (devekut) with the Chachamim and it is proper for him to acquire their wisdom and be included in them.

But if he does not believe in the words of the Chachamim, how can he become a Chacham (torah sage)?

Thus they said in the talmud (Shabbat 23b): "he who fears (reveres) the Rabbis will himself become a talmid chacham (torah scholar)..

Q Level 3

☆ Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot - "emunah chachamim (faith in the sages)" - the words of our sages need to be believed by a man as if he saw them with his own eyes (Daat Torah chelek aleph, pg.52).

The secret of emunah chachamim is "drawing after you" (mashcheni acharecha/draw me after You) (Shir Hashirim 1:4), in the secret of "obedience" (tzaytanut). R.Yitzchak Blazer would say that "drawing after you" is as the talmud says: "what is [the acquisition of] meshicha (drawn)? One calls it (the donkey) and it comes" (Kidushin 22b). This is the secret of absolute obedience (tzaytanut b'tachlit)!

A man should know that this matter of "being drawn" is built into human nature, as the Rambam writes: "it is man's nature to be drawn [after the people around him].." (Deot 6:1).

For it is a power implanted in man's nature. Either way, a man is drawn by this power. Only that if he merits, he uses this power to be drawn after our sages, the tzadikim and chasidei olam

(righteous and pious of the world). But if a man does not merit, then he is drawn by the rest of the world, to all the reshaim (wicked people) of various sorts. Fortunate is he who merits. (Daat Torah chelek dalet, pg.32).

#25 - accepting suffering

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "accepting suffering" - this is the trait of forbearance (savlanut). He does not suspect the ways of G-d and guards His commandments with simple faith (derech tumo).

Q Level 2

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "accepting suffering" - ie that one longs so much for the torah that even if he is afflicted with sufferings, the sufferings will not distract him from learning torah due to his great love for the torah. Such a person will acquire torah...

Also, he said "accepting suffering" (kabalat yisurim) and not just "sufferings (yisurim) to hint that he is not referring just to sufferings that come on him from Heaven but rather also on sufferings which a man takes upon himself willingly. For example: "this is the way of the torah, eat bread with salt..etc. if you do thus..etc." (Avot 6:4)...

Q Level 2

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "accepting sufferings" - for "sufferings wash/scrub away the sins of a man" (Berachot 6a). If a person is intelligent, he does not wait until G-d sends sufferings upon him. Rather, he takes sufferings upon himself through the yoke of torah, such as "minimizing pleasures" and diligent study which weakens his strength.

Thus, he will gain that the sufferings themselves will be considered a mitzvah by him, besides their segulah to wash/scrub away his sins...

Q Level 3

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "accepting suffering (kabalat hayisurim)" - for when one accepts sufferings, he is fit for torah. Thus they said in the talmud (Berachot 5a): "three good gifts were given to Yisrael and all were given only through sufferings: torah, as written: "fortunate is the man whom You chasten, to teach him of Your torah" (Tehilim 94:12)...

For torah is the intellect and wisdom which is not of bodily measure. Therefore, a man cannot attain the non-body (non-physical) level without minimizing the bodily.

Sufferings diminish the bodily. One can even reach the level of Sichli (intellect) through sufferings. This is what he said here: "accepting suffering", that he accepts on himself to diminish the body of physicality and remove its pettiness. For sufferings remove the pettiness of the body..

Q Level 3

☆ Siftei Daat on Avot (R.Yerucham Levovitz)

Siftei Daat on Avot - "accepting suffering" - ie suffering to fulfill the torah. This is likewise the explanation for what our sages said: "the Holy One, blessed be He, gave three gifts to the Jewish people and all of them were given only through sufferings. They are: torah..." (Berachot 5a).

For in truth a man is not worthy to receive the torah until it is called "his torah" as our sages expounded the verse (Tehilim 1): 'and in his torah..' (Kidushin 32b). and this occurs only when he is able to bear much for the service of the intellect. Namely, that he trains himself to listen to the advice of his intellect, even if he will suffer greatly due to this. If it is the good path, then he will follow it no matter what and won't budge from the decree of his intellect to not stray from the

Cause of causes (G-d). Then he is prepared to receive the torah which is above the intellect. (Chochma umussar 1:245).

#26 - recognizing one's place

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "knowing one's place" - ie the trait of lowliness (shifluto). Through this he will be humble and toil to increase wisdom.

Q Level 2

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "recognizing one's place (*hamakir mekomo*)" - for when a man is among the wise, he should recognize his place and not say his mind before one greater than him. This also hints that a man must always recognize his true place. For this world is not his place. He is but a stranger in a strange land, a sojourner on the face of the earth, destined to be swallowed by it.

A man needs to always remind himself of the day of his death. To where he is going - to a place of dust, rot, and worms. For that is his true place. Then his heart will be humbled and his sin will be atoned and knowledge, wisdom and understanding will reside in his heart.

One can also explain "recognizing one's place" (*makir mekomo*), the place appointed for him in Gan Eden. Through this he will strive always to acquire shleimut (perfections), to return to his original place from which he was hewn. This is an opening to the gates of torah...

Q Level 2

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "recognizing one's place" - he knows that his body will return to the dust and his soul to heaven. If so, who is it better to serve, body or soul?

Q Level 3

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "recognizing one's place" - each person needs to realize the tremendous potential within himself. On the other hand, one needs to know his current level and what is fitting for him. He should not think he is already a great torah scholar and can be a leader to the public..

As known. R.Yerucham Levovitz of Mir once said: "it is a great lacking for one who does not recognize his own lackings but no less than this is the man who does not recognize his own virtues".

On the other hand, a chassidic master once said: "each person needs to have on him two notes at all times. One note reads: 'I am but dust and ashes' while on the second note: 'the world was created for me'. All the time, one needs to use one of the notes according to the situation".

This too is an aspect of "recognizing one's place" - to know when to use which note and not mix up the times of the other note. For that can destroy a person completely.

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - "recognizing one's place (*makir mekomo*)" - that he knows his virtues and lackings. But if he errs on himself and considers himself more important than he is, the torah is not fit to be in a place of error. For it is solely "a torah of truth" (Malachi 2:6).

Therefore, one must recognize his place and not fool himself. Furthermore, if he is mistaken on himself, then so too he errs on words of torah. But if he recognizes himself and his qualities and he sees his lackings, so too he will recognize the lackings in his learning and he will not feel insulted for anything (if he errs).

(R.Hartman: this is a bit difficult. For there are many possible areas to err. Why specifically error in recognizing oneself is what brings in its wake error in words of torah? Why avoiding this error alone was fixed as one of the 48 ways the torah is acquired? There is to answer: since this error is the most difficult to recognize. For "a person is family/near to himself" (Sanhedrin 9b) and "a person does not see fault in himself" (Shabbat 119a) and likewise "a person cannot see blemishes on himself" (Bechorot 38b). Therefore, if despite all this he is able to avoid this error, then certainly he will avoid other errors and he will not feel insulted (mekabel onah) on any matter...)

Q Level 3

Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - "recognizing one's place" - i.e. that he recognizes his weaknesses and strengths. For if a man does not recognize his weaknesses, certainly he is in big trouble. But even worse than this if a man does not recognize his virtues - he does not recognize nor appreciate the "greatness of man" inside him. On this it is written: "but man, though high in honor, does not understand; he is like the animals.." (Tehilim 49:13). Thus it is certainly evident that such a person is not at all relevant to acquiring the torah. (Daat Torah chelek beit, pg.126).

#27 - rejoicing in one's portion

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "rejoicing in one's portion" - through this his heart will be always joyous and thus he will understand and remember his torah study well. Also through this trait of being content with what he has, he will be energetic (zariz) always in diligent study. For there is nothing more damaging to enthusiasm, memory, and diligence than sadness and worry.

Q Level 2

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "rejoicing in one's portion" - the intent is that he is not in a rush to make money (nivhal lehon). He will not annul his studies due to lust for money. For one who loves money will never be satiated by money and he will annul his studies and go after the vanity.

Perhaps this also hints for one to rejoice that his lot fell among those who study torah, even though it may be painful toil and weakens his strength. For "he that increases knowledge increases pain" (Kohelet 1:17). Even so, he should rejoice in his portion.

Q Level 2

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "rejoicing in one's portion" - he is not rushing to become rich. He also is not trying to do grand things in his study. Rather, he learns slowly slowly until he is baki (proficient) in them. And he is not arrogant to try to know a lot at once whereby he forgets everything.

Q Level 3

Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer, end of Vayikra - "rejoicing in one's portion" - ie to rejoice greatly in one's portion in life, that one's portion was not placed among those who sit on street corners (idle men). He should thank G-d very much on this, more than his gratitude for wealth, possessions and honor.

But nevertheless, one should not inflate his heart and consider himself like those greater than him. For in their eyes, he is like one who sits on street corners. Rather he should recognize his place and level and not err on himself thinking he is the gadol hador (greatest scholar). Then he will be able to rejoice in the portion he merited.

Q Level 3

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "rejoicing in one's portion" - this comes as a continuation of "recognizing one's place". For even if a man realizes that his spiritual level is still low, nevertheless, he should not be

sad on this. He should not feel like a loser all his life for being worthless. Rather, he should rejoice on his portion and understand that this is the level G-d gave him. And here G-d wants him to serve Him.

For G-d created many trades in the world and also implanted every working person with a liking for a particular trade. This is so that there would be people who accept to toil in all the trades needed for the welfare of the world.

So too in matters of torah and service of G-d. He does not want that everyone be great sages (Gedolei hador) and wise scholars proficient in all chambers of the torah.

Rather, there are some people that G-d wants them to be specifically weak and simple and not so much sharp scholars (lamdanim). And despite all this, they serve G-d with all their problems. On this we learned: "whether a lot or whether a little provided he directs his heart to Heaven" (Berachot 17a).

Thus, he should not feel sadness that he has nothing. Rather, let him rejoice at what he has merited to attain and at the same time, aspire to attain more.

Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - "*rejoicing in one's portion*" - as we explained earlier (Avot 4:1).. for such a person will not receive wholeness in torah (hashlama b'torah) since torah is given to man to make himself whole.. But this person will always be lacking.

These two traits were placed next to each other: "one who recognizes his place" and "one who is content with his portion". For torah is to make man whole. Therefore it is proper for man to be fit for becoming whole. Namely, that he is lacking beforehand and then he becomes whole.

But if he does not recognize his place, why does he need wholeness from the torah? According to his view, he is already whole (shalem) and as we said earlier only one who is previously lacking is fit to become whole.

(R.Hartman: n.780: for he lacks yearning (hishtokekut) for torah since he does not perceive that he is lacking without it.. and in the Maharal's Drush al Hatorah (23): "the preparation needed to receive the torah is to desire and long greatly to receive it, drinking thirstily its words as a thirsty man drinks water.. that it be in his eyes like: "cool waters to a tired soul" (Mishlei 25:25)... For to acquire the torah, a man must be prepared to receive it beforehand. For it is divine intellect (sechel eloki) which is not found and attached to a man like other possessions which are with him. Rather, it is divested.. Therefore one needs to be prepared for it completely.. a man himself must have longing and preparation for it before he can receive it and G-d does not give the torah to one who is not prepared beforehand, as written: "He gives wisdom to the wise" (Daniel 2:21).. and in Netiv Hatorah ch.5 Maharal writes: "longing for wisdom is a condition (tanai) to receive it as they said: "who is wise? he who learns from every person". For he can only be called a wise man if he longs and desires to learn from every person.." and in Netiv Hatorah ch.2: "for the torah is the Sechel Elyon - transcendent intellect and thus difficult to acquire. Therefore man needs preparation to receive the torah without which he will not receive it and the preparations needed are very many until one is fit for the torah. For man is of physical body while the torah is divine intellect. Therefore man needs to be far from physical traits and cling to the trait of intellect".)

And if he is not content with his portion, then even if he becomes whole in torah, he will not become whole by this. For he is not content with his portion. Thus for what is this wholeness [in torah]?

As we said earlier, one who recognizes his place is a man of truth. For even on himself he does not err and lie, all the more so for other things. Certainly this trait is fitting for the torah. For only truth is fit for the torah.

Afterwards the trait of "happy with his portion" was brought. For as we explained earlier (Avot 4:1), this trait is very much fit for the torah. It is a trait of intellect (midah sichlit) like truth. Therefore, these two traits were brought together.

#28 - making a fence around one's words

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "creating a fence around one's words" - so that he does not stumble in sins.

Q Level 2

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "creating a fence around one's words" - in all his matters and things, he makes fences "to sanctify himself with what is permitted to him" (kadesh atzmo bmutar lo). This is in order to distance and not touch the forbidden (each person according to what he needs). And this is besides the fences (ie rabbinical prohibitions) which our sages instituted for everyone...

Alternatively it refers to one's words - namely, to guard one's tongue. That one chooses silence over speech and talks only when necessary..

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - "making a fence to one's words" - ie that he makes a fence for his words in order to not err in his speech. For all fences and hedges (siyag) are so that one does not err. This is proper for the intellect so that one's words will not be mixed up. And in the talmud: "the people of Yehuda were meticulous in their words - their torah endured in their hands. But the people of Galil who were not meticulous in their words, their torah did not endure in their hands" (Eirubin 53a).

The reason is that unclear words brings to an unclear mind. Thus the mishna said: "making a fence to one's words", to not say something that may cause error. For if he does not act like this, eventually it will come to error and forgetting. This is a very great fence to the torah.

Q Level 3

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "making a fence around one's words (things)" - every man who wants to grow significantly in life must makes limits for himself in every matter in his life.

This applies not only regarding physical pleasures as mentioned earlier regarding "minimizing pleasures" but also in all things. One must recognize his powers and abilities as well as his weaknesses and limitations - how much time can he learn and how much time he needs to go outside to air himself out. How much food he needs to eat and how many hours he needs to sleep. So too for all things in life.

Then he needs to put limits and borders on every matter in his life and tell himself: "I will not cross this border no matter what!"

Self discipline is the most necessary power needed for one who wants to build himself up and achieve significant things in life.

On this the verse hints: "you shall appoint judges and officers for yourself in all your gates" (Devarim 16:18) - you are responsible for judging and guarding yourself. Do not wait for someone to volunteer to help you do this. see also our commentary on the mishna: "if I am not for myself,

who will be for me?" (Avot 1:14).

#29 - not claiming merit for oneself

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "not claiming merit for oneself" - on the good things he did.

Q Level 2

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "not claiming merit for oneself" - ie even if he attained wisdom to the highest degree humanly possible, nevertheless, he does "not claim merit for himself", in the way of: "if you learned much torah, do not claim merit for yourself for you were created for this.." (Avot 2:8)

Alternatively, whatever good he does, he does "not claim merit for himself" and considers that he did it. Rather, he knows faithfully that without G-d's help, he would not be able to overcome his evil inclination..

Q Level 2

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "not claiming merit for oneself" - ie in his torah study. Rather he thinks that which he understands and has insights - it is all from G-d. And it is proper to serve G-d all his life out of gratitude.

Q Level 3

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "not claiming merit for oneself (*machzik tovah l'atzmo*)" - for if he claims merit for himself, eventually he will cease from studying torah. For he thinks that which he learns torah is beyond his duty (*lifnim mishurat hadin*). But if he does not claim merit for himself and he tells himself instead "for this I was created - to learn torah". Then he will not come to cease from learning..

For in learning torah one also needs this trait. One who claims credit for himself for toiling in torah thinks he is not obligated to toil in torah and to take upon himself the torah. For that which one is not obligated in, he does not make it incumbent upon himself. Therefore he does not receive the torah.

But one who is not claiming merit for himself and thinks he was created to receive the (whole) torah, then he will come to receive the torah.

#30 - being beloved

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "is beloved" - he straightens his ways with favor, kindness and mercy. Through this everyone will like him.

Q Level 1

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "is beloved" - for in being beloved to all creations, they will all desire to teach him.

Q Level 1

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "is beloved" - he sees to it that G-d loves him.

Q Level 2

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "beloved" - the explanation is that he is beloved to G-d and also to people. For certainly, if he is not beloved in G-d's eyes, G-d will not give him of His torah.

Likewise it is necessary for him to be beloved and accepted by people. For this too brings him close to the torah since "one with whom people are pleased, G-d is pleased" (Avot 3:12).

And when G-d is pleased with him, then G-d will bestow of His wisdom upon him..

Q Level 3

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "beloved" - how can a person make himself "beloved" since this does not depend on himself? Rather it means to act in ways that others will like him. Namely, by always sending to others joy and a smile and by being tolerant and nice to all.

This way teaches that in order to acquire torah properly it is not enough to treat only the ways of learning or the proper outlook. Rather one must also be a "[proper] human being" and to treat with honor all those around him.

This is not like all those people who think they can mock others because they know a lot of torah, as our sages said: "one who says 'I have only torah' - even torah he does not have".

Q Level 3

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "beloved" - is there anyone who does not want to be loved? Even so, many people are not included in the term "beloved". Why? Because they love themselves more than other people. Selfishness causes a person to see only himself - to desire that everyone adapts to his wants and serves him for his honor and benefit.

The trait of selfishness distances a man from the love of others. People do not like the feeling of arrogance surrounding this person who sees himself as the center of every circle. He too distances from friendship of people. For they do not provide his wants.

Even the Holy One, blessed be He, says on the arrogant person (gass haruach): "I and him are unable to dwell in the world together" (Sotah 5a).

Thus before the trait of "beloved" was the trait of "not claiming merit for oneself". For such a person does not inflate himself over others. He does not think: "I deserve!". On the contrary he feels gratitude towards others. Such a person is beloved to people and G-d.

Why is it needed to be beloved in order to acquire the torah? Firstly, ""one with whom people are pleased, G-d is pleased" (Avot 3:12). And when G-d is pleased with him, G-d bestows wisdom to the man. Likewise, that which he is beloved on people indicates he has good character traits and is fit for the crown of torah.

Furthermore, people will desire to be around him and learn with him. Thus he will merit to serve great teachers, cling to good friends, and expound to many students..

#31 - love of G-d

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "love of G-d, love of people" - the matter of love forms through recognition and conciliation (hashvaah). Namely, that the lover recognizes (makir) the beloved and seeks to conciliate/equalize (lehashvot) himself to the beloved. Thus "love of G-d" means he recognizes G-d's ways and seeks to conciliate/equalize/connect himself to G-d.

Similarly, "love of people" is that he recognizes the joys and pains of his fellow and conciliates himself towards him by feeling his trouble as if it happened to himself.

 **Level 2**

☆ **Midrash Shmuel**

Midrash Shmuel - "love of G-d" - for when he loves G-d, he learns out of love and then secrets of the torah will be revealed to him..

 **Level 2**

☆ **Matanat Avot**

Matanat Avot - "love of G-d" - this one is very simple. For if a man does not love G-d and does not want very much to please Him, how could he desire to do the mitzvot (commandments)? Even though we said many times that in all matters of service of G-d, one needs to think that it is for his own good and he is not doing G-d any favors, but this is not always enough. For sometimes a man needs to do very difficult acts of self sacrifice (mesirut nefesh), whether in material or spiritual matters.

Not always does one have so much will power to do for himself. But one who loves G-d and wants to please Him (laasot lo nachat ruach), he will accept to do everything to please G-d...

 **Level 3**

☆ **Maharal**

Maharal - "love of G-d, love of people" - that he loves G-d, blessed be He, and cleaves to Him and [then] it is fitting for him to acquire G-d's torah.

Likewise, he needs to love people. For then he is inside the congregation (klal) and fitting for the torah which was given to the congregation (klal).

But if he does not love people, he is then separated from the congregation. Thus how can he acquire the torah which is for the congregation? For he is an individual by himself and the torah was not given to an individual.

Furthermore, the torah is the Sechel (transcendent intellect) and the Sechel is not prati (individual). Rather, its attainment is klali (universal/encompassing). If a man is separated from people until he is prati (individual), he is not fit for the attainment of the Sechel which is klali and not prati (individual).

(R.Hartman - for the torah is the thing completely separated from the physical. For the torah is all Sechel (transcendent intellect). . for G-d is the Sechel existence (Hash-em hu hamahut hasichli) and the Sechel is not prati but klali.. for all prati is gashmi/physical...)

#32 - love of people

 **Level 2**

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "love of people" - for when he loves people, this is a cause to draw them closer to the torah, as the Tanna said: "loves people and draws them to the torah" (Avot 1:12). And when he draws them closer to torah, to teach them, this will be a cause that he too will acquire the torah in the way of: "I learned from my students most of all".

 **Level 2**

☆ **Matanat Avot**

Matanat Avot - "love of people" - essentially this is almost the same as "beloved". But here the wisdom is to truly love every person and not only to act nice and pleasantly to people in order to be beloved to them.

This virtue is essentially the fulfillment of "love your fellow as yourself" (Vayikra/Lev.19:18).. The

main acquisition of this way is to love every Jew, even if he is not your type or your group and even if his views are completely different than yours, or you "don't hold of him". One needs to love all of them - like himself.

This is a consequence of "loves G-d". For only one who truly loves G-d can love the creations. For he knows that every Jew is very important since G-d created him and granted him a divine soul. Thus "how can I hate someone G-d loves" (as brought in the book Tomer Devorah).

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - "brings joy to G-d and people" - For he brings joy to G-d due to his [spiritual] level. Therefore, he is worthy of the torah. The difference between "beloved" and "brings joy" is that "beloved" is one who does deeds pleasing to G-d and G-d loves him. Likewise he does deeds pleasing to people and thus they love him.

But "brings joy" is an independent matter. For it is due to the [spiritual] level he has that he brings joy to G-d that there is such a person in His world. Likewise people rejoice that there is such a person among them.

Therefore, he is also worthy of receiving the torah. For everyone benefits from such a person and everyone is close to him. Therefore, the torah is also close to him and he receives it.

#33 - love of righteousness

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "love of righteousness" - not only that the obligations of others towards him are light in his eyes while his obligations towards others are great in his eyes but he also loves righteousness. It will bother him very much when he sees people oppressing others and he will rise up like a lion to save the oppressed and he will lend a hand and support those who benefit others. This is as what we found by Moshe who saved even the daughters of idolaters from the hands of their oppressors.

Q Level 3

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "love of righteousness, love of uprightness, loves reproofs" - for the torah is built on these three foundations, (as written): "the ways of G-d are just (yesharim)" (Hosheah 14:10). There are rebukes in the torah such as those transgressions which entail lashes, temple offerings, capital punishment, or exile. This is a rebuke. There are also many mitzvot which are "tzedaka" (righteousness) such as the obligation to honor one's father and mother, and give charity.

These three things encompass all the ways of the torah.. Therefore, if he does not love these three things, he will not succeed in torah. For they are the foundations of torah and the ways of torah. (R.Hartman: these three are the right, left, and middle lines [of the Sefirot])

#34 - love of uprightness

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "love of uprightness" - this refers to words of wisdom.

Q Level 2

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "love of uprightness" - ie he does not flatter any man no matter who. Rather he loves uprightness/integrity (yosher) and cleaves to it. This also hints that one loves sound deep study (iyun hayashar) and not be among those whose ways are stubborn and crooked. Rather he

loves the genuine/rightful (mesharim).

#35 - loves reproofs

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "loves reproofs" - when someone rebukes him, he rejoices in this.

Q Level 1

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "loves reproofs" - to hear rebukes and also to rebuke other people. Thus he said "rebukes" in plural.

Q Level 2

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "love of reproof" - when his Rabbi rebukes him, he does not kick like "a child who flees from school" (tinok boreach mibeit hasefer).. Alternatively, that he be among those who rebuke the public and that he loves rebuke - to rebuke others. And that he does not say "shalom will be on me" (ie who cares about others). For "to those who rebuke will be pleasantness and on them will come blessings and good" (Mishlei 24:25), namely, torah. For as reward for this, secrets of the torah will be revealed to him.

#36 - distancing from honor

Q Level 1

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "distancing from honor" - ie he does not learn torah in order to be called a Rabbi or Chacham (wise man) and receive honor. Rather he learns out of love of G-d.

Also, this hints that if he sees people sitting on the path he wants to walk, he goes around them in order that they do not need to stand up for him and honor him. Such a person merits torah.

Another explanation, distancing from honor is a great opening to torah study. For sometimes, an older man who did not acquire wisdom does not want to lower his pride and learn from a younger man. Thus, distancing from honor is a cause to learn from others, even those smaller than him. Through this he will acquire torah.

Q Level 2

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "distancing from honor" - he distances from honor and does not chase after honor. This is clear from what they said. For "one who chases after honor, honor flees away from him and one who flees away from honor, honor chases after him".

And "there is no honor except torah" (Avot 6:4). For through torah, man inherits complete honor. Therefore, if he flees away from honor, he inherits the honor of torah which is the primary honor. But if a person does not flee from honor, he is not worthy of the honor of torah and it flees away from him. We already explained this at length by: "one who honors the torah.." (Avot 4:6).

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "distancing from honor" - although if he does all these things he is worthy of honor, but nevertheless, not only does he not seek honor, but even when people want to honor him, he distances from them out of modesty (tzniut). For he recognizes well his own lackings, and his lowliness is always before his eyes. Through this his heart is broken within him.

#37 - not having his heart swell on his learning

Q Level 1

☆ **Midrash Shmuel**

Midrash Shmuel - "not having his heart swell on his learning" - not only does he distance from honor, but even within himself he is not arrogant in his torah learning. Rather, he always considers himself the smallest of the sages (katan shebechachamim) and through this he strives more. Perhaps this also hints that one considers that what he learned today is only little, so that he always strives to increase..

Q Level 1

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "not having his heart swell on [account of] his learning" - as our sages said: "whoever prides himself, his wisdom departs from him" (Pesachim 67b). This they learned from Hillel who was extremely humble and nevertheless was punished for this one time.

Q Level 2

☆ **Maharal**

Maharal - "not having his heart swell on [account of] his learning" - for "one who eagerly judges is a fool, wicked, and arrogant of spirit" (Avot 4:7). And from that which he is a fool, it is clear that he is not fit for wisdom. We already explained this earlier. For one who rushes to judge, to render judgment quickly is a fool. For he demonstrates lack of modesty and one who is modest in his ways does not rush to render judgment. For his wisdom is modest within him and it is written: "to the modest is wisdom" (Mishlei 11:2). Thus, if he is not modest, he is a fool and hence not fit for wisdom. Furthermore, he is in the category of "one who hastily increases words increases foolishness" (see Avot 1:17, Kohelet 5:2).

(R.Hartman: Rabeinu Yonah on Mishlei 11:2 - "to the modest is wisdom" - to minimize words is from the trait of modesty and modesty leads to wisdom. For it is a trait of the wise.. For they listen and hearken but do not crave to reveal their view"..)

Q Level 3

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "not having his heart swell (gass) on [account of] his learning" - this does not mean that he is not proud of his learning. For that is not a [positive] virtue.. thus what praise is there in this? Rather, it means he is not "gass" (gross) in learning torah. He does not consider himself as one used to her (the torah). But rather like one who speaks to his engaged bride, respectfully, for he does not recognize her yet. Thus when he toils in torah he is shame faced to send out his thoughts freely to matters of emunah and mitzvot he learned from the torah which are beyond the human mind to grasp. This is like Moshe rabeinu who "was abashed to gaze at the vision of G-d".

#38 - not delighting in giving halachic (legal) rulings

Q Level 1

☆ **Tiferet Yisrael**

Tiferet Yisrael - "not delighting in giving halachic (legal) rulings" - does not rejoice when a question reaches him. For he fears that perhaps he is not worthy and perhaps he will err due to its fine details and depth.

Q Level 2

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "not delighting in giving halachic (legal) rulings" (eino sameach b'horaah) - for one who rejoices in horaah (ruling) this comes from pride in the heart. Such a person is a "fool, wicked, and arrogant (shoteh, rasha, vegas ruach)" (Avot 4:7).

Perhaps also this hints that for a judge, when a case comes to his hand to rule actual halacha, he should imagine as if Gehinom is open under him (Sanhedrin 7a). Through this he will examine the judgment well with fear and awe and he will plumb the depth of the judgment and his heart will not rejoice. We likewise find that the great sages were in fear when going to judge a case.

#39 - bearing the yoke with one's fellow

Q Level 1

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "bearing the yoke with one's fellow" - when he sees his fellow in pain, he pains himself on this... Alternatively, he bears the middot (character traits) of his fellow even if they are like a heavy yoke/burden on him. Nevertheless, he bears them. And if his fellow has a bad trait and the fellow angers him, he judges him to the side of merit telling himself "his heart had only good (intentions)".

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "bearing the yoke with one's fellow (nosseh b'ol)" - whether in toil of the body, or monetary burdens, or feeling pain on troubles that befell his fellow. Likewise to advise his fellow when the latter lacks knowledge/reasoning, whether in secular or religious affairs. He should not be concerned of making efforts to advise him and teach him what is good for him in this world and the next.

Q Level 2

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "bearing the yoke with one's fellow" - the torah is called a yoke as our sages expounded on the verse "it is good for a man that he bear a yoke in his youth" (Eicha 3:27). Namely, among the things the torah is acquired is to learn with other people and carry the yoke with his fellow and not learn alone.

Q Level 2

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "bear the yoke of his fellow" - to show merit to his logic as we find: "Rava explains according to Abaye.. (targema Rava aliba d'Abaye)" or the like in the Talmud.

Q Level 3

☆ Chachma u'Mussar

Chochma u'Mussar 2:197 - "bearing the yoke with one's fellow (nosseh b'ol)" - to be pained by the troubles of his fellow and to rejoice at his joy. This virtue is impossible to attain without mental imagery (machshavat hatziur) and tangible perception of matters of his fellow. Namely, that one thinks/imagines as if all that is happening to his fellow is happening to himself and that which he would have sought that his fellow do to himself, thus he should seek of himself towards his fellow.

(for without thinking and contemplating until it is as if the matter is standing before his eyes tangibly, it is not considered knowledge- Chochma u'Mussar 1:222)

Chochma umussar 1:2 - you will not find this trait except by one who has a hand in the trait of humility. For arrogance is self-love and considering everyone else as zero. Such a person does not feel the pain of others, to share the burden of his fellow.

From here we can understand why our forefathers chose to be shepherds. For one, they chose a humble occupation to provide their livelihood in the way of humility. But furthermore, through the work of sheep herding, to have pity on sheep and to lead them gently and kindly as is good for them, through this they trained themselves in the trait of "bearing the yoke with one's fellow". Thus they taught themselves to be able to guide the treasured people to go in the ways of G-d.

Q Level 4

☆ Chachma u'Mussar

Chochma u'Mussar 3 - the explanation is to be always contemplating the yoke of his fellow, to be actually sharing his burden with him.

The trait of "bearing the yoke of his fellow" rises above all virtues (oleh al kol ma'lot). It seems to rise even above "love your neighbor as yourself" which our sages called: "this is the general

principle of the torah" (Midrash Bereisheit Rabbah 24:8). For "bearing the yoke of his fellow" reaches also to deed or the like.

Furthermore, it is the foremost trait for guiding others (1:1).

One who has a heart to contemplate this trait which our sages included in such concise words and which encompasses such vastness - he will understand well that it wondrously includes the entire torah. And likewise he will understand that one who lacks this trait is not fit for society (eino min hayishuv mamash). (ibid 5)

Go and see what is the path a person should choose? It is to be "bearing the yoke of his fellow" and then he will merit all blessings (ibid 2).

Chochma u'Mussar 10 - for on the torah it is written: "acquire truth" (Mishlei 23:23). One can only grasp it through the power of truth and self-love is the power of falsehood to the utmost extreme.

Thus one who bears the yoke of his fellow distances slowly slowly from self-love, the epitome of falsehood and draws closer to the truth and he will merit to acquire the torah.

As before, the torah is the absolute truth.. while self love is the absolute falsehood which erects a wall to block the light of truth. And it impossible to stand on the torah and enter its gates except through the power of truth. Thus one who is immersed in chasing self love, he is hopelessly distant from entering the gates of torah. Thus our sages, the healers of the soul, advised us to work on the trait of "bearing the yoke with one's fellow". For this is the opposite of self love. Thus when one increases in this, the power of self love will weaken and he will distance from it and he will be more fit and closer to the truth.

Thus the trait of "bearing the yoke.." was counted among the definitions of acquiring the torah.

Level 4

☆ Chachma u'Mussar

Chochma u'Mussar - the trait of "bearing the yoke with one's fellow" (nosseh b'ol im chavero) is a special trait. It is not part of the mitzvah of "love your fellow as yourself". Not only that, but all mitzvot are included in this trait. It is the foundation of the torah and the foundation of the mitzvot. The way to grasp and acquire it is itself a whole torah:

1. "to put one's eye" to contemplate with one's eyes at the sufferings of his fellow. This is as written by Moshe: "and Moshe went out and saw their sufferings" (Shemot 2:11). Rashi there: "he put his eyes and heart to be pained on them".
2. "to put to heart" - to delve deeply with all the power of one's thought and examination into the pain of his fellow.
3. to actually feel tangibly the yoke of the pain of his fellow. (Daat Chochma u'Mussar 1:12).

In truth, we should contemplate what a tremendous disgrace and embarrassment is upon us. For it is possible for one to be constantly with his fellow and be almost always together and nevertheless one does not know him in the least. (Daat Torah g.232-5)

Level 4

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "bearing the yoke of his fellow" (noseh b'ol) - if something happened to his fellow and the thing is a burden on him and he needs to toil to be saved from this burden, then he bears the burden with his fellow and enters with him in that yoke to save him from the ordeal.

This that he entered in the yoke with his fellow to save him from trouble indicates that he is a good man (adam tov). This also indicates that he is not separated from the congregation (klal) and thus he is fit for the torah which is for the congregation (klal) as we explained.

"inclining him to the side of merit, establishing him on truth and peace" - furthermore, the 39th, that he bestows good to his fellow and inclines him to the side of merit (machrio l'kaf zechut). Namely, if he sees in his fellow something which inclines him to the side of guilt, he strives with his fellow to incline him to the side of merit.

And even more than this, the fortieth, he strives with his fellow to establish him on the truth. And more still the forty-first that he strives with his fellow to establish him on peace (shalom) which is more [than the previous].

All these traits, namely, that he increases in the world merit, truth, and peace. For one who bears the yoke with his fellow, ie if troubles befell his fellow, he carries the yoke with him in order to remove the troubles. For he desires the good. And he inclines him to merit and brings him to truth and peace as is fitting for a talmid chacham (torah scholar) to increase peace in the world as our sages said: "torah scholars increase peace (Shalom) in the world" (Berachot 64a).

And not just Shalom but all that is good such as knowledge (daat) and truth. Such a person is fit for the torah which is good as written: "for I give you good teaching; do not forsake My torah" (Mishlei 4:2).

And when he conducts himself with his fellow with these traits, he demonstrates that he himself is good and is worthy of inheriting the torah which is good. For similar things always join together. But if he is not good, how can he inherit that which is good?

And that which he said earlier "a good heart", that referred to doing good and benefiting his fellow due to being good hearted. But this that he increases good in the world shows that he loves the good. Therefore, he said these four things which include everything. Namely, he bears the yoke [of his fellow], inclines him to merit, establishes him on the truth and the peace.

#40 - inclining him to the side of merit

🔍 Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "inclining him to the side of merit" - when his fellow's mind leans between good and evil, he should make efforts to incline his thoughts to the side of good. Alternatively, to judge his fellow favorably.

#41 - establishing him on the truth

🔍 Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "establishing him on the truth" - he brings him arguments and proofs until he establishes him on the point of truth.

🔍 Level 2

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "establishing him on truth and peace" - to do a compromise which is Shalom (peace) between the two litigants. Also, when learning/debating with someone, let not the purpose be to defeat the person and tear him down (lekanter) but rather to arrive at the truth and establish

the fellow on what appears to his mind to be the truth. And likewise to always establish peace and not to refute (lekanter) chalila. For then their debating will be for service of G-d and an acquisition of wisdom.

#42 - establishing him on peace

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "establishing him on peace (Shalom)" - he causes Shalom-peace to come on the soul of his fellow by opening for him the windows of the secrets of G-d according to how much he can handle. This is the essence of sheleimut (perfection) Alternatively, it refers to peace itself, namely, he establishes his fellow on the level of Shalom, namely, that his fellow not be in doubt over his friendship towards him.

Q Level 2

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "establishing him on truth, peace" - He thinks perhaps the truth is with his fellow even though it is clear to him that he is correct and not his fellow. He is not like one proud over his fellow with his words. But rather as one who peacefully establishes him on the truth, without embarrassing him.

#43 - settling one's heart in his studies

Q Level 1

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "settling one's heart in his studies" - ie he does not learn in a temporary (araiy) manner but rather he is settled (mityashiv) in a fixed manner in his studies. Also, he learns in a settled and calm state, not in a rushed manner. After he learns he settles down with it and reviews it so that it is not forgotten..

Q Level 1

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "settling one's heart in his studies" - he does not jump to do pilpul (elaborate logic) before he is firmly established in his learning. And he does not toil in learning in a swift (superficial) manner. This is called that he is "settling in his studies". And this matter does not need explanation.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "settling one's heart in his studies (mityashev libo b'talmudo)" - when he teaches other people G-d's torah or the ways of G-d in his speeches, he first deliberates well how to present the teachings..

#44 - asking and answering

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "asking and answering" - for only through questions and answers are the matters inscribed in the heart of the listener. He asks and answers relevantly and does not divert to remote things to show off his wisdom..

Q Level 2

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "asks on the matter (shoel k'inyan) and answers like the halacha" - for one who is on one subject and asks from a different subject will confuse his mind with the two matters and remain empty in both...

"answers like the halacha" - this does not refer to someone who can answer correctly on any matter. For then he already acquired the torah. Rather, the intent is that he is able to question and rouse all the proper questions which fall on the subject. Through this, he will come to acquire the torah. For through the strong questions, the subject will be investigated and clarified.

Q Level 2

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "asking and answering, listening and adding" - it is all one thing. For if he has a question but does not ask, then he is not makpid (interested) in the question. Likewise, if others ask and he does not seek to answer, he will not reach the level of torah. Rather, the main thing is to ask and answer those who ask.

"listening" - that he puts to heart on what his fellow says.
 "and adding" - on his words.

Through this that he asks and answers, he broadens the torah. Likewise, when he listens and adds on. All these things are broadening and adding to the torah. Through this they reach the torah. But if he does not ask, he will not reach the level of torah.

#45 - listening and adding

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "listening and adding" - he listens to the words of his students and does not reject them. And when he senses that his words are not sufficient, it will not be a burden for him to add onto his words until they are well understood.

Q Level 2

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "listening and adding" - he always hears words of torah from the mouths of chachamim (scholars) and nevertheless is not fed up (eino katz ba). Rather he increases to listen due to great love and cherishing.

Likewise, when he hears something from his teacher, he strives to add to it of his own, Shlomo said: "the wise man hears and increases lessons" (Mishlei 1:5). For it is not enough for the Chacham to merely hear. Rather, he toils and strives to increase lesson (lekach) and to deduce one thing from another and examine further..

Q Level 2

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "listening and adding" - when the chief wise man sits in yeshiva, it is proper for him to listen to the words of all the colleagues first. For if he speaks first, he will not leave any room for the colleagues and students to say anything. Thus it is proper that he hears first all that they say and afterwards he adds wisdom on all of what they said.

Q Level 3

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "listening and adding" - if you want to convey an idea, argument (svara), or question while you are learning with your study partner, do not begin immediately by making heard your own views and ideas. For it is almost certain that in this way, your study partner will not want to hear you at all. For most people are far more interested in having their own views heard than they are prepared to hear the views of others. So what should one do so that his study partner will listen intently to his words?

For this, one needs to first be "a listener". Namely, to hear him and his view until the end, without interrupting him in the middle. And afterwards to say to him: "know that you thought a wondrous insight and I enjoyed it very much. Just that I have one little comment to add. According to your

insight in ... it is possible to also explain ...". Here you can insert your idea and the person will gladly listen since he does not see this as your insight but rather as your addition to his insight. And who is not happy to hear an insight of his own with some improvements and additions?

Thus one can convey his ideas to his study partner with a gold spoon by hearing his views and adding one's idea as an "addition" to his words.

#46 - learning in order to teach

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "learning in order to teach" - even though he is already great in torah, even so, he toils even in things without practical deed such as matters of faith and outlook (emunot vedעות) in order to teach them to others.

Q Level 2

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "learning in order to teach" - for it is known that one who prays for his fellow (before himself) is answered first. Thus one whose whole purpose in learning is in order to teach others, he is likewise answered first and from Heaven he is taught and the gates of torah open before him.

Also, when one learns in order to teach, the torah endures by him and he does not forget it. For since he reviews and teaches it to others, each time he remembers it [more] and his torah (knowledge) endures by him.

Q Level 3

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "learning in order to teach" - for this is the essence of torah (etzem hatorah) to also teach others. The torah was not given in order that it stays by him but rather to teach others. We explained this earlier many times. For the essence of torah is to teach it to others.

Q Level 3

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "learning in order to teach" - when a man learns something without anything drawing him to this subject but rather only because this is what his torah group is studying, then, there is not much hope that he will remember what he learned long term. For his mind is not so interested and one remembers only things that are interesting or important to him.

Therefore, if you want to remember your studies well, you need to make it into some sort of goal. Namely, if you tell yourself: "I am coming now to learn a certain subject and I need to learn it in order to give a class to one person or many people".

Certainly, you will then learn it properly so that you will know how to teach and explain it. This will also help you to remember it well. For your mind will guard everything you learned until the time you teach it to others.

#47 - learning in order to do

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "learning in order to do" - for things with practical deed (maase), he reviews them for he is concerned of forgetting them. And he desires to do them fully (b'shlemut) and wants to teach others to do them properly.

Q Level 2

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "learning in order to do" - this hints to what Shlomo said: "my son, do not forget my teaching, and let your heart keep my commandments" (Mishlei 3:1), ie in order to not forget my torah, you need to guard my mitzvot in your heart. For as known, "the fear of G-d is one's storehouse".

He said "one who learns in order to do" and not "one who learns and does". This teaches that even if one did not do yet, nevertheless, if he took on himself to do when the opportunity arises - this is enough.

Shlomo also had intent on this. For he did not say "keep my commandments" but rather "let your heart keep my commandments" (future tense). Since from the day he resolved in his heart to do, that is already enough..

This also hints on the torah study itself. For sometimes a person learns in order to sharpen his mind with pilpul (sharp and elaborate logic) in order to become wise. Such study does not endure in a man's hand.

Only the study which man learns in order to do - to know the dinim (laws), their details and fine points, how to fulfill them to serve one's Creator. This torah endures in one's hands.

Q Level 3

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "learning in order to do" - this too is a primary matter of the torah. For the learning is not primary. Rather the doing is primary. Therefore, if his torah study is not to teach others or to do, he is not fit for the torah. For the torah was given to man in order that he teaches it to others as G-d gave it to Moshe and Moshe taught it to the Jewish people.

For due to its loftiness, an individual is not worthy of the torah. Therefore, the primary torah study is to teach it to others as the talmud expounds: " 'see I have taught you laws and judgments' (Devarim 4:5) - just like I taught for free, so to you [teach] for free" (Nedarim 37a).

Hence, a man is commanded to transmit the torah to others for free. And all the more so to learn in order to do. For as before the learning is not primary, rather the doing is primary. If he does not do, he is not fit to receive the torah.

Q Level 3

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "learning in order to do" - this too is almost the same as the previous way. But here there is an additional chidush (idea) regarding remembering one's learning. For when one learns a certain subject (sugya) in order to know how to conduct himself in this area (such as learning the laws of baking matzah due to starting a group of matzah baking), then he forces himself to remember all the details he learned. Additionally, he also integrates in his mind and applies his studies to practical action and thinks all the time how he will act in this case, what he will do when this question comes up, and how to prepare himself well to avoid any problems.

The result is that he not only remembers his studies much better than one who learns without a goal but he also knows well how to conduct himself in those halachot (laws) that he learned and he does not forget them due to needing to know them imminently in real life situations.

#48 - making his teacher wiser

Q Level 1

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "making his teacher wiser" - this hints that for the student to always desire to

learn from his Rabbi, he must make and consider his Rabbi wise and knowledgeable. Then he will desire to learn from his wisdom. But if the student does not consider him a Chacham (wise man), then he will not try to chase after him to learn from him and he will be lax and remain lacking in acquiring the torah.

Another explanation is that the student needs to try to always ask questions to his Rabbi so that through this he makes his Rabbi wise in the way of "from my students I learned the most". Such a person will certainly acquire the torah and the matters will take root within him. For in making his Rabbi wise he will also become wise himself..

Q Level 2

Maharal

Maharal - "making his teacher wiser" - ie that he sharpens his Rabbi. This too is as we said earlier.. For a small [piece of wood] ignites a big [piece of] wood. And since this is the way of torah, if he does not do like this, he is not fit for the torah. And that which he said earlier (#43) "asking and answering (shoel umeshiv)", the explanation is that he asks what there is to ask of the doubts [in the subject] but it is not at all referring to pilpul and chidud (elaborate sharp logic).

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "making his teacher wiser" - even if he has become great in torah, nevertheless when he remembers something his Rabbi taught him which now appears difficult, he will not think that his Rabbi did not know what he knows. Rather he tells himself: "my Rabbi was a big chacham (wise man) and thought deeper than me". Thus he strives to resolve the difficulty.

#49 - noting with precision what he has heard

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "noting with precision what he has heard (mekaven shmuato)" - even when the words of his rabbi appear to contradict each other, he toils to resolve them.

Q Level 2

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "noting with precision what he has heard (mekaven shmuato)" - the intent is that one needs to not be like those students who chirp and think but without understanding the root intent of the teaching and halacha.

And even if they know the material by heart. But nevertheless, since they cannot delve into understanding the underlying intent of the teaching, immediately it will sprout wings and be forgotten.

But it is not so for one who is "mekaven shmuato" and knows the primary intent of the teaching and its foundation. Through this the teaching will remain implanted in his heart..

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - "grasping with precision what he has heard (mekaven shmuato)" - ie when he hears something in his learning, he understands it and he does not receive (mekabel) it until he understands it. This is not like some students who receive something even though they don't understand it and then say "thus I received". This is not proper. Rather one needs to understand what he heard.

And that which he said earlier (#4) "understanding of the heart (binat halev)" that refers to putting to heart when receiving from his Rabbi. Without that, he will not receive wisdom. But here he said: "one who understands what he heard" - that one needs to stand on the matter heard and not receive it until it is in his hands, until it is understood.

These are two things. For if it is something difficult to understand, then even if he puts his mind on this and he fulfills (#4) "understanding of the heart (binat halev)", but nevertheless, he still needs this trait to not receive the matter until he stands on it.

And if he has this trait to not receive any teaching until he understands it, nevertheless, if he does not put his mind and heart to understand when receiving from his Rabbi, he will not understand. Therefore, they are two things.

#50 - saying something in the name of him who said it

Q Level 1

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "saying something in the name of him who said it" - for if one hears two contradictory teachings, he can know that they were not said by the same Rabbi and it will not be difficult to resolve the difficulty. He can say simply this was said by Rabbi X who holds like this and that was said by Rabbi Y who holds like that..

Q Level 1

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "saying something in the name of him who said it.." - not only does he not wear a garment that is not his, but he honors his teacher so much that he does not just say: "thus I heard". Rather, he mentions the name of his teacher..

Q Level 2

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "saying something in the name of him who said it" - for one who does not do like this but rather steals from others and says things in his own name - certainly he will not acquire a kinyan torah. But when he always says things in the name of him who said it, then this will force him also to strive to some new insight (lechadesh) in the torah to say in his own name. This will cause him to strive to make himself whole and to acquire a kinyan (acquisition) in torah.

Furthermore, this also has the benefit of bringing Geulah (Messianic era) to the world as you know from the story of Esther and Mordechai.. It is known that at the time of the Geulah will be the true revelation of kinyan torah. For then the land will be filled with knowledge of G-d like water on the sea.. Thus, he finished his words on the 48 ways to acquire torah with a teaching on the Geulah..

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "one who says something in the name him who said it brings Geulah (redemption) to the world" - for one who does good, G-d desires the person and his ways to be publicized so that others will learn from him..

Q Level 2

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - "this teaches one who says something in the name him who said it brings Geulah (redemption) to the world, as written: 'And Esther told the king in Mordechai's name'" - for that night when king Achashverosh was unable to sleep, he had the book of Chronicles read to him which recorded that Mordechai saved his life. Due to this he decided to honor Mordechai and decreed on Haman to ride him on the royal horse, etc. and the rest is known. Now if Esther did not tell the king about the attempted assassination in the name of Mordechai and instead said it in her own name, then what would have happened? It would have been written in the book of Chronicles that Esther saved king Achashverosh's life and not Mordechai. Then what would have caused the king to command Haman to ride Mordechai on the horse and what would have prevented Haman from carrying out his wish to hang Mordechai on the tree, etc.?

Thus, specifically because Esther said in the name of Mordechai that the sequence of events

resulted in the miracle of the saving of the Jewish people.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "And Esther told the king in Mordechai's name" - for Mordechai sanctified G-d's Name by showing how a Jew is faithful to the king. For he put himself in great danger with the two big ministers (who plotted to kill the king) in order to save the king. He was not concerned that the foolish and hasty king Achashverosh may pardon them and then his life would hang by a thread. And through Esther's telling him in the name of Mordechai, the matter turned out to bring geulah to the world..

Q Level 3

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "saying something in the name of him who said it" - this too is very much connected to the torah. For one needs to say a teaching in the name of he who said it and not steal the torah from him.

We find even G-d says a teaching in the name of he who said it. In tractate Gitin (6b): "My son Evyatar says thus". And in the midrash: "when Moshe ascended above, he heard the voice of G-d who was toiling in the matter of Parah Aduma saying: "My son Eliezer says thus: Para bat Shtayim.." Moshe said to G-d: "Master of the world, the upper and lower realms are Yours and You sit and say a halacha from the mouth of flesh and blood?" G-d replied to him: "a tzadik will in the future arise in my world and he will open first with the parsha of Parah"..

This teaches that they are according to the Sechel (mind) of each person. Therefore G-d said that this attainment was designated for R.Eliezer according to his great Sechel (mind). For Para Aduma is deep and this attainment was fitting for R.Eliezer hagadol and thus he opened with its first saying "Parah bat shtayim" (red heifer 2 years old).

G-d ordered the world and granted an intellect to each person according to what is proper for him. Therefore, He said the halacha in the name of R.Eliezer, ie I created in My world a tzadik and Chacham whose mind is specially designated for attaining Para Aduma to its depth".. Due to this, G-d said the matter in the name of R.Eliezer. For just like He created all the creations and gave each one its essence, so too He gave each person his mind and intellect...

And that which the midrash says that G-d said this halacha specifically in the name of R.Eliezer, unlike the other halachas where not one person alone was designated but rather many speak and G-d would say the halacha in the name of many.

This was due to the great difficulty of Parah Aduma which R.Eliezer specially excelled in. For he was a descendant of Moshe (Midrash Tanchuma chukat 8). To Moshe alone was the secret of Parah Aduma revealed as written: "take for yourself" (Bamidbar 19:2) and from him R.Eliezer inherited until he was singular in this.

In any case, every halacha is designated for the one who says it . Therefore, it is proper to attribute every attainment in torah to he who said it. For that attainment is fitting to he who said it. And if he does not do so, he is changing the torah of what was ordained for each person. Rather, one should attribute each thing to he who said it. Then, he is not changing in the torah..

And there is a midrash: "whoever changes the words of R.Eliezer with the words of R.Yehoshua or vice versa - it is as if he destroyed the world".

This teaches what we said. For the attainment (hasaga) of R.Eliezer is designated (meyuched) for R.Eliezer and the attainment of R.Yehoshua is designated for R.Yehoshua. The two are divided in

their attainments and G-d ordained this view to R.Eliezer and this view to R.Yehoshua. And when one switches their words, he is changing the order of the torah which G-d ordained for the sages. Such a change in the order of the torah is a destruction to the world.

Another explanation: if one is not careful to attribute each thing to he who said it, he will also not be careful in the main teaching and become mixed up in that also.

Q Level 3

Maharal

Maharal - "one who says something in the name him who said it brings Geulah (redemption) to the world, as written: 'And Esther told the king in Mordechai's name'.." - there is to ask here: "how do we know that the Geulah happened through Esther because of this?"

Furthermore, all the traits of G-d are measure for measure (midah kneged midah - Sanhedrin 90a). Thus, why does one who attributes something to he who said it merits to bring Geulah?

You should know that when G-d brings Geulah, He wants that it be known that He did it and not that people say: "it was not G-d who did this but rather it was due only to the victor's wisdom and physical might".

Thus you will find in the Geulah of Egypt it is written: "And they shall know that I am the L-ord their G-d, who brought them out of the land of Egypt" (Shemot/Exodus 29:46).

Therefore if Esther did not have this trait of attributing something to the person who said it and she had instead said to the Israelites: "I did this through my own ingenuity" in order to inflate her pride, then she would not have been worthy that the Geulah come through her.

For G-d wants to make known the kindness and good He does for Yisrael. But after Esther told king Achashverosh in the name of Mordechai (Esther 2:22) instead of telling him that she did it herself to find favor in his eyes, then she became fit to bring the Geulah to the world. For then people will attribute the matter to G-d for certainly Esther knew that everything that happens is from G-d.

The verse says: "Esther told the king in the name of Mordechai" (Esther 2:22). It could have said simply: "the king was told in the name of Mordechai". For the verse is mainly coming to teach that the king was told in the name of Mordechai and it was not necessary to say who told him.

Thus the verse is hinting why Esther merited that the Geulah came through her - since she said a thing in the name of the one who said it and did not attribute it to herself.

It was specifically in this Geulah (redemption/salvation) that scripture hints that Esther was worthy to bring the Geulah because of this trait. This is as we said. For G-d wants to make known that the Geulah came through Him.

In the Geulah of Egypt, this was certainly made known through the great miracles. But in this Geulah (of Esther) there were no miracles at all. Thus there was room to say the Geulah was not from G-d and Esther could have said it was from her. And even during the Chashmonaim where G-d saved them from the Greeks, there was the miracle of the candles in order to make known that G-d strengthened them over the Greeks so they won't attribute it to their own might and ingenuity.

But here by Esther, there were no open miracles.. And thus the savior was called "Esther" for the Geula was with "hester" (concealment) and not at all visible. Therefore if Esther did not say in the

name of he who said it, she would not have been worthy to bring the Geulah.

Thus you will not find G-d's Name mentioned explicitly in Megilah Esther. For it was a miracle with "hester panim" (concealment of G-d).

(R.Hartman: G-d's Name is only hinted as the Midrash (Esther Rabba 3:10) says: "wherever it says in the Megilah Esther 'the king' (without 'Achashverosh'), it refers to both G-d and Achashverosh...")

According to [all] this, it will not be difficult for you [the question]: "but many people say things in the name of the person who said it, and they do not bring Geulah?"

For the explanation is not that he will certainly bring Geulah. Rather, when G-d needs to bring Geulah to the world, He brings this through one who says a thing in the name of he who said it due to the reason we explained.

Furthermore, Yisrael needs Geulah (redemption/salvation) all the time, and G-d brings it through one who says a thing in the name of he who said it...

 **Level 1**

☆ **Matanat Avot**

Matanat Avot - "48 ways" - note that some ways are included in other ways and thus it is not so clear how to arrive at 48 ways and not 49 or 50. There are also different versions of this mishna. I followed the writings of R.Noach Weinberg who researched the different versions.

Chapter 6 Beraitha 8 - Tree Of Life

Great is the torah for it gives life unto those that practice it, in this world and in the World-to-come, as written: "*for they are life unto those who find them, and healing to all their flesh*" (Mishlei 4:22); and it is written [also]: "*it shall be healing to your navel and marrow to your bones*" (Mishlei 3:8); and it is written: "*she [the torah] is a tree of life to those who lay hold upon her, and happy are those who support her*" (Mishlei 3:18); and it is written: "*for it will be a wreath of grace upon your head and necklaces about your throat*" (Mishlei 1:9); and it is written: "*She will give to your head a graceful wreath, a crown of glory will she bestow upon you*" (Mishlei 4:9); and it is written: "*with me your days shall be increased and years of life shall be added to you*" (Mishlei 9:11), and it is written: "*in her right hand is length of days, in her left riches and honor*" (Mishlei 3:16), and it is written: "*for length of days, years of life, and peace shall be added to you*" (Mishlei 3:2).

גְּדוּלָהּ תוֹרָה שֶׁהִיא נוֹתֶנֶת חַיִּים לְעוֹשֶׂיהָ
בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה וּבְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (משלי
ד) כִּי חַיִּים הֵם לְמַצְאֵיהֶם וְלִכְל בְּשָׂרָם
מִרְפָּא. וְאֹמֵר (שם ג) רַפְאוֹת תְּהִי לְשֵׁרֶךְ
וְשִׁקּוּי לְעַצְמוֹתֶיהָ. וְאֹמֵר (שם ג) עֵץ חַיִּים
הִיא לְמַחְזִיקִים בָּהּ וְתַמְכִּיָּה מֵאֲשֶׁר. וְאֹמֵר
(שם א) כִּי לַיִּת חֵן הֵם לְרֹאשָׁךְ וְעֵנְקִים
לְגַרְגְּרֹתֶיהָ. וְאֹמֵר (שם ד) תִּתֵּן לְרֹאשָׁךְ
לַיִּת חֵן עֲטֹרַת תְּפָאֶרֶת תִּתְמַגֵּן. וְאֹמֵר
(שם ט) כִּי בִ יָרְבוּ יָמֶיךָ וְיִוָּסְפוּ לָךְ שָׁנוֹת
חַיִּים. וְאֹמֵר (שם ג) אֲרָךְ יָמִים בְּיַמֶּינָהּ
בְּשִׂמְאוּלָהּ עֶשֶׂר וְכְבוֹד. וְאֹמֵר (שם) כִּי
אֲרָךְ יָמִים וְשָׁנוֹת חַיִּים וְשְׁלוֹם יִוָּסְפוּ לָךְ.
וְאֹמֵר (שם) דְּרָכֶיהָ דְרָכֵי נֵעַם וְכָל
נְתִיבוֹתֶיהָ שְׁלוֹם

Q Level 1

Rashi

Rashi - "*it gives life unto those that practice it, in this world and in the World-to-come*" - he eats of its fruits in this world and the principal is reserved for him in the World-to-come.

"*for they are life unto those who find them*" - do not read "lemotzehem" (those who find them) but rather "lemotziehem" (those who utter them) by mouth (i.e. verbally) in this world.

"*she [the torah] is a tree of life to those who lay hold upon her*" - a tree of life in the World-to-come. And if you say: he merits life but who says he merits wealth? For there are people living in poverty who would rather die than live.

Thus he adds: "*for it will be a wreath of grace upon your head and necklaces about your throat*". What thing brings a man favor in the eyes of people? Money.

Perhaps you will say. So you will be given money, but perhaps you will not be honored by people? Thus he adds: "*She will give to your head a graceful wreath, a crown of glory will she bestow on you*".

Perhaps you will say: even if one learns shelo lishma (for ulterior motives) he merits these things? Thus he added: "*in her right hand is length of days, in her left riches and honor*", as brought (Shabbat 88b): "*l'mayminim ba*" (to those who veer right, i.e. those who learn lishma) will have length of days and life and needless to say also wealth and honor. But those who veer to the left (learn shelo lishma) will be given wealth and honor but not long life".

Perhaps you will say: so he merits life and wealth but perhaps not peace. Thus he adds "*and peace shall be added to you*"

Q Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "*Great is the torah for it gives life unto those that practice it*" - i.e. to he who does as he learns in the torah.

Qualities (maalot) such as wealth, might (gevurah), and honor can also be acquired through other wisdoms and knowledge. But life in this world and the next world can only be attained through the torah. These qualities include all others. For without life, all the other qualities are worth nothing since: "skin for skin, all that a man has will he give for his life" (Iyov 2:4).

Furthermore, the torah heals all ailments as he continues... and the torah is like a tree of life, as written: "lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" (Gen.3:22).

So too, through torah, a man acquires life which does not end in death. For "the righteous are called living even after death" (Berachot 18b). Then they begin to truly live. For their souls illuminate in the light of life and they ascend there endlessly. Thus not only will your soul merit life, but you will ascend higher and higher endlessly...

Q Level 2



Yosef Alav - "Great is the torah for it gives life unto those that do it.. - it is proper to understand that which he said "to those who do it" and not "to those who learn it". Furthermore, why the need for all these verses. It seems to me to answer as written in many places. Namely, one who does not know and did not attain the levels of torah, he can merit in this world and in Olam Haba like one who learns torah. How? By supporting (machzik) those who learn torah and they will learn for him. Then certainly he has an equal portion (chelek kechelek beshavei).

For this he did not say "to those who learn it". For he wanted to teach us that even if one did not study but rather supported those who learn torah, even so, he merits life in this world and the next.. As written: "she (the torah) is a tree of life to those who lay hold upon her", as our sages expounded. And since the verse says "machzikim" (hold), certainly the intent is not [only] to those who learn mamash but rather the machzikim (supporters) are also included..

Q Level 3

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "she (the torah) is a tree of life to those who lay hold upon her" - for this world is a raging sea and its stormy waves rise to drown a person in the depths of lusts (for money, pleasures, etc). But he who comes to be saved, let him hold on to the Tree of Life, which is the Torah. It is the elixir against the yetzer hara (evil inclination) and his lusts. One who separates from the torah is like one who separates from life. For it is our life. One who learns in this way, namely, that which he holds on to the torah is in order to be saved from the yetzer hara - then the torah will truly be a tree of life.

In footnote 126 there: in his writings (ketav yad) it is written: a man needs to have in his thoughts always that every time and every moment he is engaged in the vanities of the world, he is like a person drowning in a river. To illustrate, if a person drowning in a river sees before him a tree, certainly he will immediately take hold of it with all his might and not let go for even one second. For who is so foolish as to not realize that if he lets go of the branch, he will drown in the river? So too, the torah is called a "tree of life". For all the time a man is clinging to the torah, he is clinging to eternal life. But if he lets go of her, he immediately drowns in the raging waters, r"l.

Q Level 3

Chida

Chida, marit haayin, ruach chaim drush 12 - "Great is the torah for it gives life unto those that do it" - we may say like in the introduction of Rabeinu Chaim Vital z'l that every word a person utters diminishes a part of hevel (breath) from his neshama (soul), and his neshama is reduced. This is the reason for the severity of the prohibition of devarim batalim (useless talk), and all the more so for forbidden words (ex.lies, slander etc.)

However, for words of torah - on the contrary, a person increases life. This is what he wrote: "Great

is the torah for it gives life". ie not only that when a person speaks words of torah, it does not reduce his life. But on the contrary, it increases life, as the verse states: "with me your days shall be increased and years of life shall be added to you".

Level 3

Chachmat Hamatzpun, Beracha - "Great is the torah for it gives life unto those that do it.. - for one who does not learn torah, life does not give him any satisfaction. For (as he ages) the powers of the body diminish and then the powers of the neshama (soul) strengthen. But the neshama is not satiated from all the pleasures of this world since it is from the upper realm. Therefore he remains hungry.

But it is not so for one who learns torah lishma. The more the body weakens, the stronger the soul becomes and he finds taste, pleasure, satisfaction, and hope in our holy torah.

This is what scripture says: "The fear of G-d prolongs days; but the years of the wicked shall be shortened" (Mishlei 10:27). For the wicked man in his old age does not feel any taste in his life. But "fear of G-d increases days" (ibid). And our sages said: "Great is the torah for it gives life unto those that do it". Toil in torah without any cheshbonot (calculations) grants a person life, pleasure and hope.

This is as R.Simcha Zissel of Kelm explained the verse: "Blessed is the man who trusts in G-d, and G-d shall be his refuge" (Yirmiyahu 17:7). The intent is not that blessed is the man who trusts in G-d because G-d will be his refuge. But rather blessed is the man who trusts in G-d. By this alone he feels blessed. The man who trusts in G-d and is close to G-d - he is already blessed without any additional thing. "and G-d will be his refuge" this is an additional matter. G-d will grant him everything he wants. But his trust does not depend on this.

One who trusts in G-d does not suffer from the bad traits of jealousy, hatred and anger. And one who does not have bad character traits - he is the most happy in the world and his life is a happy life. For by removing evil, absolute good comes in its place. But the wicked are like the raging sea. All their days are anger and vexation. They are constantly under dominion of the yetzer hara and the bad middot (traits) which embitter their lives.

Level 4

Maharal

Maharal - "Great is the torah for it gives life..." - there is to ask: why did he bring these seven verses here and it was not enough to bring just one verse? What proof is there from the verse: "for it will be a wreath of grace upon your head and necklaces about your throat" (Mishlei 1:9)? Likewise for the verse: "She will give to your head a graceful wreath, a crown of glory will she bestow on you" (Mishlei 4:9) - what proof is there from this?

Know that he brought seven verses and in these seven verses he comes to clarify that the torah has the eternal life. For there are different levels of life. There are brief and longer [levels of life] and there are longer still until there is eternal life.

He comes to explain that through the torah, a person will acquire the eternal life.

Therefore, he brings seven verses corresponding to seven levels, each one higher. And when there are seven this teaches that there is no higher [than the seventh].

For whenever one finds seven successive levels, this teaches that there is nothing higher than this. For G-d is "He who is higher than the highest" (Kohelet 5:7), there is nothing higher and He "sits high and exalted (ram v'nisa)" (Isaiah 6:1).

Likewise, there are "seven firmaments (rekiim)" each higher than the next until the final [seventh] firmament.

For the number seven teaches on the highest level. Thus you find always that the levels which are one on top of each other are seven. This is clear and we explained this elsewhere.

These seven levels and stages begin from life of this world in that which is the bottom level and they end with the final level of eternal life in Olam Haba (the World-to-Come).

Thus, the first three verses teach on life of this world and the last three on life in Olam Haba (the world-to-Come).

The middle verse refers to the level between this world and Olam Haba as we will explain.

Why does one attain life through the Torah?

First there is to clarify what is the reason why the torah is special that through it a man attains life in this world and life in Olam Haba?

You should know that this matter is something we clarified in previous chapters in many places. Namely, that G-d alone is truly one and there is none other. Therefore, the existence and life that man and other existing things has is due to G-d being the "living G-d" (Elokim Chaim) granting life to those who cleave to Him. But the creations themselves have nothing on their own. Rather only what G-d bestows to them.

In this G-d is one (singular) and there is no other. This is what scripture says: "For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we shall see light" (Tehilim 36:10). For the mekor (source/fountain) does not stop at all.

And this Source bestows to all that exists and this is from that they cleave to Him, blessed be He. But if one removes this cleaving through a sin or transgression, this is the Karet (excision) written in the torah (Vayikra 18, 29, and other places).

It is called by the term "Karet" (cut off) because it refers to what we said earlier. For life is bestowed to existing things only through the aspect of the cleaving they have to G-d, blessed be He. But through a sin, a person becomes cut off from this cleaving.

Therefore, by the word "cleaving" in the torah, the word "life" (Chayim) is mentioned, as written: "and you who cleave to the L-rd your G-d are all *alive* today" (Devarim 4:4). For G-d is the Elokim Chaim (living G-d), and the cleaving [to G-d] causes life. For He is called "ikar" (root/primary) as our sages said (Sanhedrin 38b) "kofer b'ikar" (he denies the Ikar, ie G-d). And as known, when a tree and its branches are attached to the ikar (root/base), they have life from the ikar (root/base). But if the tree is separated from the ikar (root/base), it immediately no longer has life.

This is the explanation of the verse: "it is a tree of life to those who hold onto it" (Mishlei 3:18). For it is through the torah that a man cleaves to his Creator.

We have explained this matter already in a few places. For there is nothing that is close to G-d like the torah. For it is emanated (Atzula) from G-d, blessed be He. Thus the torah is called a "tree". For a tree goes out from the trunk/base and emanates from the trunk/base.

So too the torah emanates from G-d, blessed be He. And a tree which is attached to the trunk receives from the trunk. So too the torah receives from the Trunk, ie G-d, blessed be He. Therefore, when one holds on to the torah, it is a tree of life to him. Through this, he receives flow of life from Hash-em, blessed be He. This matter is clear.

Thus he said: "Great is the torah for it gives life unto those that practice it, in this world and in the World-to-come". Understand the expression: "great is torah" said here. For it comes to teach on the qualities (maalot) of the torah.

He first brought a proof from the verse: "for they are life unto those who find them, and healing to all their flesh". The explanation is that one who finds words of torah finds life since through this he receives life

That which he said: "unto those who find them" and not "to those who study them", this teaches on the qualities of torah. When one says "Ploni found this thing". This implies the thing was not prepared for him. For if it was prepared for him, the term "found" does not apply.

So too the torah is not with man. For it has an exalted level above. Thus it is called he "found words of torah" and he reached something that is not with him.

R.Hartman: our sages said: "one who says 'I toiled and found, believe him'". Thus after toiling, the torah is still "something found", a "metziah" (found object).

Due to this level and quality, the torah is life to man. For it brings life to him from above, from G-d, blessed be He, who is the "Source of life" (Mekor Hachaim - Tehilim 36:10).

However in the Talmud (Eirubin 54a), "it is life to those who find them (motziehem). do not read "find them" (motziehem) but rather 'motziehem' - those who utter them out of their mouth".

(R.Hartman: it seems his intent is that according to the exegesis (drasha) of the Talmud, the verse is not referring to "finding" but rather to uttering verbally. Nevertheless even according to the talmud, the verse is referring to that which the torah gives life to a man.

And in Netiv Hatorah (end of ch.4) the Maharal writes: he comes to explain how torah study should be. He said that it is not proper for torah study to be only in thought but rather it needs to be with speech. This is because man is a "speaking living being" (Chai medaber), as written: "and man became a living soul" (Gen.2:7) which the Onkelos renders: "a speaking spirit". And the torah of which it is written: "it is your life and the length of your days" (Devarim 30:20), when one utters torah in speech which is the chiyut (life force) of a man, then the speech which is the life of a man cleaves to the torah which is the length of his days and through this he lengthens his days. But if he toils in torah through thought alone, the thought receives the torah. But thought is not life by man such that he will receive through the torah lengthening of life. Rather only when he speaks the torah [words] with his mouth"). end quote.

Levels of Life

And since the first verse he brought said only: "for they are life unto those who find them, and healing to all their flesh", certainly this is a bit of life. Namely that some life is granted. But it is only to his flesh as the verse states: "and healing to all their flesh", namely, that some spark of life is bestowed on a man due to the torah. But this is life to his flesh alone.

Therefore, he continues and adds another verse afterwards: "it shall be healing to your navel and

marrow to your bones" (Mishlei 3:8). This includes the life of all of man. For the tibur (navel) is the root of the whole man and the beginning of his formation is from there, as the talmud brings (sotah 45b). Thus when the verse says: "it shall be healing to your navel", it means the torah is a healing for the beginning of man. Through this, the whole body receives healing. For when the beginning receives healing, the whole body receives healing since everything follows from this.

The verse adds: "and marrow to your bones". for the bones do not receive so much healing from the tibur (navel), since they have marrow inside. On this he added "and marrow (Shikui) to your bones". Shikui is the marrow of the bones (see Rashi on Mishlei 3:8). For the torah is like the marrow of the bones, ie the torah gives life to all of man.

And so you do not say: "although the torah gives life such that a man is healthy and whole all of his days on earth but we don't find in scripture that the torah grants long life.."

Thus he added the third verse: "she (the torah) is a tree of life to those who lay hold upon her.." (Mishlei 3:18). This teaches the torah is "a tree of life". For a tree has exceptionally long existence, as written: "for like the days of a tree are the days of My people" (Isaiah 65:22). This teaches that a tree has long existence. This matter is an additional quality.

And since we still do not learn from these verses that the torah grants good spiritual life for the soul in Olam Haba, thus he brought the next verse: "for it will be a wreath of grace upon your head and necklaces about your throat" (Mishlei 1:9). ie the torah grants the soul a spiritual level. This is what he said: "for it will be a wreath of grace upon your head". For the head in which the divine soul rests, the torah will grant "a wreath of grace", ie a connection of grace (Chen, Rashi there).

Chen (grace) is not a physical thing. It is completely divested. For it is not something tangible. Rather it is [a perception] in the eye. It is not at all physical.

(R. Hartman: chen/grace is said regarding finding favor in the eyes of another. In scripture it appears mostly associated with the eyes. For example: "Noach found favor in the eyes of G-d" (Bereisheit 6:8), "if I have found favor in your eyes" (Bereisheit 30:27), and more verses like this. And in Netiv Yirat Hash-em (ch.3), he writes: for favor is in the eyes of the beholder only, as written: "Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her" (Esther 2:15). Whether it is so in truth or not. For favor is not in the receiver himself but rather it is favor in the eyes of the beholder).

The verse continues: "and necklaces about your throat (gargerotecha)". The explanation of "gargerotecha" is the throat. From there goes out man's speech. And as we explained many times, man's speech is his life force (chiyut) in this world. For man is a speaking creature (baal chai medaber) and as the Onkelos rendered the verse: "and man became a living soul" (Bereisheit 2:7) - "man became a speaking spirit". From this you will know that the essence (ikar) of man is that he is a speaking creature.

Thus the verse says that the torah will grant a man two things: one, to the neshama (higher soul) which resides in the head, the torah will give a "divested level" (madrega nivdelet, ie a spiritual level). This is "wreath of grace" (livyat chen). For through this, a man has a connection to G-d (chibur el Hash-em), blessed be He. Thus it is a "wreath of grace" (livyat chen).

Two, that the torah gives strength to the "speaking power" in man, which is his life force, also a "divested level" (madrega nivdelet). Thus the verse says: "and necklaces about your throat". For a "necklace" is an ornament (tachsheet) and as we explained earlier regarding "your crown is greater than their crown", an ornament (a crown) teaches on a "divested level".

For that which is physical has pettiness and lowliness (pechitut veshiflut). But that which is

divested (nivdal) is the opposite. It has elevation and honor (kishut vekavod). This is clear.

Understand that he said: "for it will be a wreath of grace upon your head". For by the head where the divested neshama (soul) is he said: "a wreath of grace". For "chen" (grace) is something completely divested. And by the throat where the "speaking power" is which is not on such a level (as the head) he said "and necklaces about your throat" and not "a necklace of grace to your throat".

This level which the torah gives a man in this world is "m'ein olam haba" (a taste of the World-to-come). For just like by Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov G-d granted them a life of good and tranquility as the talmud says: "G-d granted them a taste of the World-to-come in this world" (Bava Batra 16b). So too for other tzadikim one can say this. For that which it says Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov this was because he granted them a taste in all things (Tosfot there).

See that the Sabbath is called "mein Olam Haba" (a taste of the world to come. Thus, there is such a concept in this world)...

This verse "a wreath of grace upon your head.." is the fourth verse brought. It is in between the first three which speak of life in this world and the last three which speak on life in the World-to-come. This fourth verse is like something intermediary between them. These things are very clear before you. Understand them.

Afterwards he brought another verse so that you will not say that the torah does not have the power to grant life to the neshama in the World-to-come. Thus he added the next verse: "She will give to your head a graceful wreath, a crown of glory will she bestow on you" (Mishlei 4:9).

This latter verse does not say "and necklaces about your throat" but rather only: "She will give to your head a graceful wreath". Due to this, one needs to understand without a doubt that it is coming to teach that the torah grants the divine neshama which is in the head, "a wreath of grace". Namely an ornament and honor divested [of the physical]. Through this he merits the Olam Haba (World-to-come) mamash (and not just a taste in this world).

This verse continues: "a crown of glory will she bestow on you". This teaches on the level of Olam Haba as our sages said: "in Olam Haba, there is no eating and drinking... rather the righteous sit with their crowns on their head.." (Berachot 17a). This itself is what is said here: "a crown of glory will she bestow on you".

He still did not bring a proof that the torah will grant him long life in Olam Haba... And even though the Olam Haba is certainly long (eternal), nevertheless [one could say] the torah does not have the power. Rather, through the torah, a man merits Olam Haba but one needs mitzvot and good deeds to merit long days.

Thus he brought the next verse: "in her right hand is length of days, in her left riches and honor" (Mishlei 3:16). That which he said: "length of days", it is impossible to explain this except on Olam Haba, as the talmud brings (Chulin 142a) that if it were referring to this world, this cannot be so since here in this world, a person dies and this is not considered long days. And even if one lives to 100 years old, it is nevertheless called: "man born of woman is of few days [and full of trouble]" (Iyov 14:1) and David said: "our days on the earth are like a [passing] shadow" (Divrei 1 29:15) and this is not called "long days". Rather the verse is speaking on Olam Haba which is "long".

Furthermore, the explanation of the verse: "in her right hand is length of days, in her left riches and

honor" is in the way of what our sages said: "to those who veer right, will have length of days and life and needless to say also wealth and honor" (Shabbat 63a).

The reason for the matter is that one who toils in torah lishma (for G-d), it is proper for him to have long days in Olam Haba.

(R. Hartman: when he does lishma of the torah, then the qualities of the torah activate (chal) on him as he explained earlier in Beraitha 2: "when one learns torah lishma, he has the level/quality of torah. For he learns lishma. But if he studies not lishma he does not at all have the level/qualities of the torah..")

For he does lishma of the torah and the torah is above this physical world. It is sichlit (transcendent intellect).

Therefore it is proper for him to have the level of Olam Haba which is long days. And all the more so it is proper for him to have the level lower than this, namely, good of this world. For this world is below the level of Olam Haba.

But for those "who veer to the left", i.e. if he toils in torah to receive honor from the torah or to obtain a livelihood to eat, which are pleasures of this world. Then it is fit for him to have this world according to his toiling in torah for pleasures of this world. But that he should acquire a level of Olam Haba through this? - he will not acquire.

Therefore long days there are not (to those who veer to the left). Hence, perforce the verse is referring to long days in Olam Haba.

We have still not learned from the verses that he will merit eternal life through the torah. For it only said: "long days" (Orech Yamim). This does not imply eternity. And likewise if he merits eternity, this is not through torah only. Rather one needs to join this with mitzvot and other good deeds. For the word "days" does not imply so much..

Rather only a lengthening of days somewhat. Therefore, he brought the final verse: "with me your days shall be increased and years of life shall be added to you" (Mishlei 9:11). And since it says "years of life", it refers to eternal life.

(R.Hartman: since it said: "years of life" and not "days of life", perforce it is referring to eternal life. This corresponds to the sefira of chesed which is endless shefa).

Thus he started from the lowest level (1st verse) and finished with the highest level (7th verse), namely, eternal life of Olam Haba. This is clear.

Chapter 6 Beraitha 9 - Beauty, Strength..

Rabbi Shimon ben Yehuda would say in the name of Rabbi שמעון בן יהודה משום רבי שמעון Shimon ben Yochai: beauty, strength, wealth, honor, wisdom, והעשיר והנח והנוי והעשיר והנכבד והחכמה והזקנה והשיבה והעולם, and sons are becoming to the tzadikim (the righteous) and becoming to the world, as written: *"old age is a crown of glory, [if] it is found in the way of righteousness"* (Mishlei 16:31). And *"the glory of youths is their strength, and the glory of elders is their age"* (Mishlei 20:29). And *"the crown of the wise is their riches"* (Mishlei 14:24). And *"children's children are the crown of old men, and the glory of children are their fathers"* (Mishlei 17:6). And *"the moon shall blush and the sun shall be abashed, when the L-ord of hosts shall reign on mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His elders shall be honored"* (Isaiah 24:23). Rabbi Shimon ben Menasya would say: *"these seven qualities which the sages have enumerated [as becoming] for the tzadikim, were all of them realized in Rabbi ברבי and his sons"*.

ורבניו

Q Level 1

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "beauty.." - for when these things are found in the tzadikim, not only will they gain through this but also the people of the world will gain through this.

Beauty will help grant the tzadikim favor before ministers and kings allowing them to work for the good of their people.

Through strength they will save the oppressed from their oppressors. Through wealth they will support the poor and destitute. Through honor, their counsel to heed the word of G-d will be listened to. Through wisdom they will teach the people to know G-d. Through older age, their teachings will be sound, concise and well thought out.

Through elderliness (very old age), they can tell over stories of past events that occurred on the G-d fearing and how G-d saved them. Likewise they can report on the wicked who were tranquil in the beginning but their end was sufferings.

With many children and grandchildren they will plant many fine trees (ie good people) in Yisrael who will bear fruit to spread knowledge of G-d throughout the land.

But the wicked use all these powers, everything for the opposite. Beauty for illicit relations, power for corruption, etc.

Q Level 2

Binah Le'Itim 2:40 - "are becoming to the righteous and becoming to the world" - for when these qualities are found among lowly people, it is not fitting for them. For they damage themselves. It causes them to become arrogant and of inflated spirit on account of them. This then leads to harm to the world. For they will strive to rule and impose dominion over everyone.

But for the tzadikim it is good for them and good for the world. For they will conduct themselves according to reason and torah and will not become proud nor harm others..

Q Level 2

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - the intent here is to warn a man that these seven things are powerful and one

needs to carefully weigh them on scales. For one can incline himself to go in the just ways or to corrupt himself and become wicked. Fortunate is he who chooses to be righteous and woe to he who inclines himself to the other side...

For example, beauty is something which can raise a man to the level of tzadik as we find by Yosef Hatzadik. Due to his being of beautiful form and appearance, his master's wife set her eyes on him. But he overcame his evil inclination and conquered it.

But for an ugly person, it will not be considered such a righteousness when he distances from promiscuity. Thus in this sense beauty is becoming to the tzadikim...

Q Level 2

Sforno

Sforno - "beauty, strength, wealth, honor, wisdom.." - it is proper to pray on the tzadikim of the generation that they will attain these successes for their own good and for the good of the generation. He brought proofs of some of them from scripture and testified that even though it is not common to find all these qualities together in one tzadik but nevertheless they were all found in his generation - in Rebbi and his sons.

Q Level 2

☆ Ben Ish Chai

Ben Ish Chai - *Birkat Avot* - "beauty, strength, wealth, honor, wisdom.." - a talmid chacham who learns torah lishma, truly and wholly (b'emet ub'tamim) - he will merit these seven things just like they were fulfilled by Rebbi and his sons.

Q Level 4

Chida

Chida, roshei avot - "strength" - certainly strength is good for the righteous to serve G-d and toil in torah, as written in the talmud: "your strength to torah" (cheylech l'oreita) (Bava Metzia 84a). For it is necessary to minimize eating and sleeping and to toil in torah and the like. This is the meaning of "your strength to Torah" (cheylech l'oreita)..

Q Level 3

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "beauty, strength, wealth, honor, wisdom, , old age.. and sons.." - the intent is that all qualities (maalot) are fitting to the righteous. We already explained that the number 7 always teaches on all the levels of something. Seven always teaches on this. Scripture demonstrates in saying: "they shall come out against you one way, and flee before you seven ways" (Devarim/Deut. 28:7)...

These seven qualities include all qualities... and one who merits to torah merits all these seven qualities. For wisdom is fitting specifically (davka) to a tzadik. And when there is wisdom, if so, certainly he is a tzadik. For "if there is no fear [of G-d], there is no wisdom" (Avot 3:17). And when he is a tzadik, this leads to all the seven qualities.

In the previous beraitha he taught that one who toils in torah merits life in this world and in the World-to-come.. Now he comes to teach that just like through torah one merits the highest level, namely, the seventh level which is life in the World-to-come, so too through torah one merits all the qualities. They are likewise seven. He brought a proof from Rebbi and his sons in whom all the seven qualities were fulfilled. For they were chachamim (scholars) in torah and merited these 7 qualities..

Q Level 3

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "the moon shall blush and the sun shall be abashed, when the L-ord of hosts shall reign on mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His elders shall be honor" - for when Moshiach comes, the glory of G-d will shine on us and then "the moon shall blush and the sun shall be abashed". For their light will be as darkness as scripture states: "the sun will no more be

your light by day; nor the brightness of the moon give light to you; but the L-ord will be to you an everlasting light, and your G-d your glory" (Isaiah 60:19).

"and before His elders shall be honor" - he said earlier that honor is becoming for the tzadikim, ie it is proper to honor them. Thus he brought a proof to his words from the verse *"and before His elders shall be honor"*. For then at that time, those deserving of honor will be honored, namely, the sages and pious who are called *"His elders"*. They will be granted honor as is fitting.

 **Level 3**

Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer, drashot chelek 1:72a - *"the moon shall blush and the sun shall be abashed, when the L-ord of hosts shall reign on mount Zion and in Jerusalem* - the Rabbi of the generation is called *"the sun"*.. while his chief disciple is called *"the moon"*. For he receives from him like the moon receives from the sun.

He teaches that in the future *"the sun shall be abashed"* for they will have no preeminence as the people will hear from G-d, blessed be He. *"and before His elders shall be honor"* - G-d will dwell opposite them, so to speak, face to face. And even for the Messiah king, Israel will have no need for him.

 **Level 3**

Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - *"the moon shall blush and the sun shall be abashed"* - this refers to the rich people, television stars, politicians etc. that the world honors greatly. When G-d becomes king over all the land and honor is granted to the servants of G-d, all of their imaginary honor will turn to one big embarrassment..

 **Level 3**

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - *"beauty, strength., wealth, honor, wisdom, older age, elderliness, and sons are becoming to the tzadikim (the righteous) and becoming to the world"* - for these things are like the number *"0"*. On its own it is nothing and even a thousand of them does not add up to *"1"*. Only that through it, the number *"1"* can become 1 million.

Chapter 6 Beraitha 10 - Place Of Torah

Rabbi Yossi ben Kisma said: one time I was walking on the way when a man met me. He greeted me and I greeted him. He said to me: "Rebbi, from what place are you?" I said to him: "from a great city of sages and scribes am I". He said to me: "Rebbi, would you like to dwell with us in our place and I will give you a thousand thousand dinars of gold, and precious stones and pearls?"

I replied to him: "even if you were to give me all the silver, gold, precious stones and pearls in the world, I would not dwell anywhere except in a place of torah."

And so it is written in the book of Tehilim (Psalms) by David, king of Israel: *"the Torah of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver"* (Tehilim 119:72).

Furthermore, at the time a person passes from this world, neither silver nor gold nor precious stones and pearls accompany him, but rather only torah and good deeds alone, as written (Mishlei 6:22): *"when you go it shall lead you; and when you lie down, it shall watch over you; and when you rise up, it shall be your speech"* - "when you go it shall lead you" - in this world. "when you lie down, it shall watch over you" - in the grave. "when you rise up it shall be your speech" - in the World-to-come.

And it is written: "Mine is the silver, and mine is the gold, says the L-ord of Hosts" (Chagai 2:8).

אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹסִי בֶן קִיסְמָא, פְּעַם אַחַת הָיִיתִי מְהַלֵּךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ וּפְגַע בִּי אָדָם אֶחָד, וְנָתַן לִי שְׁלוֹם, וְהַחֲזִרְתִּי לוֹ שְׁלוֹם. אָמַר לִי, רַבִּי, מֵאִיזָה מְקוֹם אַתָּה. אָמַרְתִּי לוֹ, מֵעִיר גְּדוֹלָה שֶׁל חֲכָמִים וְשֶׁל סוֹפְרִים אֲנִי. אָמַר לִי, רַבִּי, רְצוֹנָךְ שֶׁתְּדוּר עִמָּנוּ בְּמִקְוָמֵנוּ, וְאֲנִי אֶתֵּן לְךָ אֶלֶף אֶלְפִים דִּינָרֵי זָהָב וְאַבְנִים טוֹבוֹת וּמְרַגְלִיּוֹת

אָמַרְתִּי לוֹ, בְּנִי, אִם אַתָּה נוֹתֵן לִי כָל כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב וְאַבְנִים טוֹבוֹת וּמְרַגְלִיּוֹת שֶׁבְּעוֹלָם, אֵינִי דֹר אֶלָּא בְּמִקְוָם תּוֹרָה

וְכֵן כָּתוּב בְּסֵפֶר תְּהִלִּים עַל יְדֵי דָוִד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל (תְּהִלִּים קִיט), טוֹב לִי תוֹרַת פִּיךָ מֵאֶלְפֵי זָהָב וְכֶסֶף. וְאוֹמֵר (חֲגִי ב) לִי הַכֶּסֶף וְלִי הַזָּהָב אָמַר ה' צְבָאוֹת

וְלֹא עוֹד, אֶלָּא שֶׁבִשְׁשַׁעַת פְּטִירְתּוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם אֵין מְלִיץ לוֹ לְאָדָם לֹא כֶסֶף וְלֹא זָהָב וְלֹא אַבְנִים טוֹבוֹת וּמְרַגְלִיּוֹת, אֶלָּא תּוֹרָה וּמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים בְּלִבָּד, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (מִשְׁלֵי ו) בְּהִתְהַלֵּךְ תִּנְחָה אֶתָּה, בְּשִׁכְבְּךָ תִּשְׁמַר עֲלֶיךָ, וְהַקִּיצוֹת הִיא תְּשִׁיחָךְ. בְּהִתְהַלֵּךְ תִּנְחָה אֶתָּה, בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, בְּשִׁכְבְּךָ תִּשְׁמַר עֲלֶיךָ, בְּקֶבֶר, וְהַקִּיצוֹת הִיא תְּשִׁיחָךְ, לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא.

Q Level 1

Sforno

Sforno - "neither silver nor gold nor precious stones and pearls accompany him, but rather only torah and good deeds alone" - and these two are not attained wholly without the company of those who hold on to the torah, toiling in torah and good deeds. For in their company he will increase knowledge in torah and habituate himself in good deeds like them. And when one does kindness there, it will be to proper people..

Q Level 2



Maharam Shik, avot - "I would not dwell anywhere except in a place of torah.." - this mishna teaches on the virtue of studying torah with others (talmud torah b'rabim). As the Talmud brings (Taanit 7a): "the torah is compared to fire, as written: 'is not My word like fire [says the L-ord...]' (Yirmiyahu 23:29). For just like by fire, a single piece of wood does not catch fire, so too the torah does not endure by solitary [study]".

Furthermore, just like one piece of metal sharpens another, so too, two torah scholars sharpen each other. And in Berachot (63b): "one who toils in torah alone becomes foolish".

Due to this, R.Yossi ben Kisma did not want to live in a place where there are no torah scholars. Rather, he dwells only in a place of torah whereby there are many torah scholars. For through this

he reaches the truth...

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "one time I was walking.." - he brought this story to teach us that even though the qualities mentioned last mishna (ex. wealth) are "becoming for the righteous", but nevertheless one must not abandon the torah for them.

"*Rebbi, from what place are you?*" - perhaps the man saw R.Yossi learning torah and thus he called him "Rebbi". Or perhaps his clothing was like those of torah sages.

"*he greeted me 'Shalom'*" - so that one does not think that the reason R.Yossi did not go with him is because he showed an angry face and he was concerned that he will be shamed by him in the end. Thus he wrote that on the contrary, the man was very pleasant in his words. He appeared to love torah scholars and seek their good.

"*from what place are you?*" - he wondered why the people of his city did not support him and he needs to travel on the road to toil for his livelihood.

"*I am from a great city of sages and scribes*" - but there isn't enough wealth to support me.

"*Furthermore, at the time a person passes from this world..*" - he added an additional argument. ie from your questions it appears you do not recognize the pleasure in this world experienced by those who study torah... But nevertheless admit to me that "at the time a person passes from this world..."

"*and when you lie down, it shall watch over you*" - ie when the soul leaves the body (at death). By nature, great fear and darkness befalls a man at this time. All his thoughts race through his mind and he feels completely lost. But then too the torah guards on its learners and saves his soul from drowning in that great abyss of shock and bewilderment. This is the "valley of death" in Tehilim "even when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil; for You are with me" (Tehilim 23:4).

"*Mine is the silver, and Mine is the gold..*" - he brought another proof to that man who tried to entice him to leave a place of torah. Namely, that all gold and silver belongs to G-d. And since his desire to live in a place of torah is in order to do G-d's will, then if wealth is good for me, certainly G-d will grant me wealth also in my city. So why should I leave there for nothing?

Q Level 3

Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "one time I was walking on the way.." - ie all his days he would sit in the tents of torah and never left except for one time only. Perhaps this one time was even for a mitzvah. And even if it was for some business dealings, it only happened one time.

"*a man encountered (pagah) me*" - he informs us that if a person strives to sanctify (lekadesh) himself below, he is helped from above. But if he comes to defile (letamei) himself, immediately S-amael (the Satan) encounters him to entice him.

Likewise, even R.Yossi ben Kasma when he was roused to leave one time and set out on foot to the road, immediately S-amael prepared a man to entice him with great money in order to drive him out of his great city of torah scholars etc. and bring him to a dry city of darkness.

This is the meaning of "a man encountered (pagah) me", ie as if he was seeking me and encountered me and found me. Thus he did not write "I encountered a man"..

 **Level 3**

Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "one time I was walking on the way.." - in the way of allegory (hamlatza), he comes to teach that one should not go out of the entrance of the Beit Midrash (place of torah study). For he merely went out one time and the enticer encountered him to lure him away from toil in torah.

 **Level 3**

Merkavat Hamishna - R.Yossi went on the road by himself so that his heart would be free to contemplate in torah.. Since he was absorbed in his thoughts he did not notice the person coming towards him. Thus he said: "a man encountered me". Perhaps this man was Eliyahu such that he did not see him until the man came to him.

Thus the man greeted him first. For it is proper for the torah scholar to greet him first as the wise man said: "no man ever greeted me first, not even a gentile in the marketplace" (Berachot 17a).

Thus he asked: "from which city are you from?" ie that they did not pay attention to you and did not give you even a donkey to ride on. Certainly it must be a lowly city of lowly and bad hearted people.

R.Yossi answered him accordingly: G-d forbid. The city is not lowly and its inhabitants are not bad hearted. Rather it is a large city and its people are great wise scholars but they are busy in their studies. Due to this, they did not notice that I left the city.

He replied, if so that due to its great size and due to most people being wise scholars, they did not notice you, would you like to live with us? We are not wise scholars and our city is not large.

Thus he said "our place (mekomenu)" and not "our city".

We will watch over you all the time. Besides the benefits you will get from our inhabitants, I will personally give you much gold and silver.

R.Yossi replied: I toil in torah only lishma and even if you give me etc. I will dwell only in a place of torah. And even if I receive no honor there, I am not concerned about imaginary honor and I will not exchange temporary life for eternal life.

This is what he continues: "at the time a person passes from this world, etc.", i.e. furthermore, I will be harmed by this.

 **Level 3**



Minchat Yehudah Veyerushalayim, tzantz - I always wondered on this. The man wanted to give him millions to live in his place. Why did R.Yosi ben Kisma want to live only in a place of torah? For with all that money he can transform the place into a place of torah, to build there a yeshiva and transform the whole city back to the good.

It seems R.Yossi did not want to go to this place, even in order to bring them to the good. For he told himself: while I try to draw them to the good, perhaps the opposite will occur -they will draw me and trap me in their corrupt ways.

Thus he decided to live only in a place of torah and rise up early and leave late from the beit midrash (synagogue). Through this he will bring back also the people there to the good.

 **Level 3**

Ohr Yechezkel, chelek 5 makom torah - certainly the man's intent was not that R.Yossi would leave

the torah for a large amount of money. Rather his intent was that the Tanna come to teach torah in his place which has no torah scholars and make it into a new "place of torah" and bring bnei torah to learn there peacefully without worry on livelihood.

Nevertheless, R. Yossi's answer was that he would not leave his city under any circumstances. Even if he gave him all the money in the world, he will not leave his city. For it is full of scholars and scribes.

For the true fearful person does not trust himself and does not believe in himself. Due to this, he was concerned that in leaving a place of torah, it is possible that he will go down from his level. And even though it is possible that he will be able to spread torah in the other place, but nevertheless, he does not want to depart from the yeshiva and places of torah. For the danger in leaving a place of torah is great.

🔍 Level 3

☆ Matanat Avot

Matanat Avot - this mishna is the only one in tractate Avot where it is possible to say on it: "even the mundane speech of torah scholars needs study" (Sukkah 21b). For R.Yossi ben Kisma first tells over a simple story that occurred to him and only afterwards he turns to words of mussar and chizuk (strengthening) in spiritual matters, as he continues: "and likewise it is written in Tehilim by David, king of Israel, etc..."

But why did the mishna bring this whole story before?

This was in order to teach us piles of lessons from every word of the story of R.Yossi ben Kisma.

I will not delve into all the details one can learn from this story but I will present two points that I heard once which one can learn from this story.

"Rebbi, would you like to dwell with us in our place and I will give you a thousand thousand dinars of gold... I would not dwell anywhere except in a place of torah" - the commentators ask: how did Rabbi Yossi ben Kisma know that his place is not a place of Torah such that he refused to dwell there?

Two answers are given: One, the man immediately addressed Rabbi Yossi ben Kisma as "Rebbi". In those days "Rebbi" was a title given only to those who received "smichah" (special Rabbinic ordination) to rule halachic decisions.

Rabbi Yossi ben Kisma wondered to himself: how does he know that I am a Rebbi? He never met me before nor did he speak to me even one word in torah. So who told him that I am a talmid chacham (torah sage)? It seems the answer is that he is looking at my long beard and frock. Only because of this he thinks I am a big torah sage. A person who is convinced merely by a frock and beard standing before him, this is a sign that he is far from being a ben Torah (torah person)! For the torah teaches its learners to look only at the inner side, not to believe any sort of nice and honorable superficial appearance. For every empty person can easily hide himself behind the appearance of a great torah sage.

Only those who are far from the torah outlook can err in this. Thus, this is a sign that this person is far from becoming a true ben torah and likewise certainly his city is not a place of torah. For otherwise, the people there would have influenced him to not judge based only on the external superficial appearance.

Two, the man offered R.Yossi ben Kisma: "Rebbi, would you like to dwell with us in our place and I

will give you a thousand thousand dinars of gold?"

When R.Yossi heard this, most likely many red lights lit up in his mind: this man did not try to convince me to come there in order to strengthen torah or to open a yeshiva or to strengthen the people there to repent.

Rather, he immediately spoke on money, a lot of money. One who speaks thus on money, it is a sign that he is very far from being a ben torah. For a ben torah does not think only on money.

A true ben torah who tries to convince someone to do something comes with spiritual arguments: "it is worthwhile for you to do this as you will do a big mitzvah and G-d will love you and your prayers will be better received and you will merit all salvations, etc. etc."

But one who tries to convince someone to listen to him saying: "I will give you a lot of money", certainly he has no connection to torah and the spiritual and most likely the people there are like him otherwise they would have rebuked him and shown him the truth.

Thus, R.Yossi ben Kisma answered him: "even if you were to give me all the silver, gold... I would not dwell anywhere except in a place of torah".

This is a wonder. For why did he not want to move there? He could have taken all those millions and opened a yeshiva and kollel and established a new congregation of bnei torah and servants of G-d?

I once heard an answer from R.Yaakov Galinsky zt'l that R.Yossi ben Kisma knew that it is not at all recommended to bring young men and avreichim to study in a place which is not a place of torah out of concern that they would be negatively influenced by the environment of the place.

When I read this in his name, I wondered greatly. For it seems he is contradicting himself, since R.Yaakov Galinsky himself opened a yeshiva in the city of Hadera (in Israel) when it was a completely secular city.

It seems the answer is that Rabbi Yossi ben Kisma understood that this was not just a place without torah. Rather, this is a place where people are chasing and lusting after money. Thus, they speak all the time only on money. The financial situation in their bank account is their only measure of whether they are "worth something".

Rabbi Yossi ben Kisma told himself: if this was a place of torah ignorant (am haaretzim) who have nothing to "sell" and do not think that due to that they are "worth something", then he would have come there and opened a congregation of bnei torah and begin to elevate Judaism there higher and higher.

But when we are speaking of a place which already has a different ideology called "money", I am afraid to bring there bnei torah perhaps they will get confounded and drawn after the lust for money and lose all the important values they were raised with that "torah is the best merchandise".

As known, when R. Yechezkel Levenstein came to America after the Holocaust, it greatly pained him to see the unbridled chasing after materialism there.

When he left there, he took nothing besides his clothing, hat and umbrella. For he did not want to take anything that reminded him of the chasing after materialism there. And when he was there, he

implored the students who listened to him to not look at the shops on every street which are full of luxuries and superfluous things in order that they not also become immersed in the pursuit of material pleasures of this world.

After we have explained some of what can be learned from the "mundane speech" of R.Yossi ben Kisma, let us move on to his words of mussar.

It seems that after he saw on this man that the only thing that interests him is money, he decided to strengthen him a bit to open his eyes and see that there are other things more important than money.

Therefore, he told him: "And so it is written in the book of Tehilim (Psalms) by David, king of Israel: 'the Torah of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver'" (Tehilim 119:72).

Why was it important to emphasize that this is written in Tehilim (psalms) and that it was said by David, king of Israel. Does not every small child not know where this verse is from?

It seems R. Yossi ben Kisma wanted to tell him: "sir, you think that because I look like an avreich (torah scholar) and that I don't have money that you will succeed to convince me to sell my torah for your millions? Know that even David who was king of Israel and was much wealthier than you, told us that the torah is better than thousands of gold and silver. I rely on him that he is telling the truth. Therefore, even though I never tasted what it feels like to have millions in my bank account, nevertheless, I can tell you ahead of time that my torah gives me a much greater feeling than this. For I rely on the testimony of king David."

"Furthermore, at the time a person passes from this world, neither silver nor gold nor precious stones and pearls accompany him.." - here R.Yossi ben Kisma continues to hammer on the nail while it is warm and to add to the person before him a little more chizuk (strengthening) in love of Torah.

He told him: know my dear friend, that besides the good feeling for having a lot of torah which is a greater feeling than having a lot of money, furthermore, at the time a person passes from this world, there is a huge difference between the two.

For during your lifetime, you can claim that one who learns torah has a good feeling, satisfaction and joy in life, but so too for one who has a lot of money. The rich man also has satisfaction, joy in life, and pleasures here and there.

Perhaps, but at the time when a person leaves this world, then he does not have a crumb of pleasure from all his gold and silver. Then one truly sees the enormous difference between one who amassed torah and good deeds all his days versus one who amassed money all his life. For one who amassed money all his life, then at the time of his death, nothing is left of all this. He will not even take a small coin with him to the grave.

But one who amassed torah and good deeds all his days, begins to enjoy from this intense joy forever. Thus, while the rich man ceases to enjoy his money, the torah person now just begins to enjoy the main pleasure which is intense beyond imagination.

I will mention here a nice analogy I observed a few years ago when the government in Israel decided to change the 200 shekel bills from red color to blue color. They declared that the red bills will be valid for only another 5 years from the date the blue bills begin to be circulated.

I thought that just like with the red bills, it is possible to buy things worth 200 shekels which is not a small amount, but one day the bill will expire and become completely worthless. One will not be able to buy even a small piece of candy with it.

So too for pleasures of this world. Many people think the pleasures of this world are something good and pleasurable and it is worthwhile to invest in this all of one's life. All their days, they live with an outlook that the pleasures of this world is a good purchase and it is worthwhile to chase after. But when they leave this world suddenly, the expiration date of all the pleasures will arrive. Then, they will see that it was all vanity of vanities and was completely worthless like the red bill that was worth 200 shekels and today is worth nothing.

But there is another difference between the analogy and the reality. For in the analogy of the red bills, the red bill was truly worth 200 shekels until the last day and it was possible to fulfill mitzvot that depend on money such as tzedaka (giving charity). But in reality, the pursuit of pleasures of this world, at the time a person passes away from this world, it will be revealed to him that even retroactively all the pleasures of this world were completely worthless!

Then he will be filled with enormous and boundless pain and regret for having wasted his days chasing after physical pleasures and luxuries that he thought were worth a lot but in the end he realized that "they scammed me" and that it was completely worthless. Thus he lost here and there.

"as written: 'when you go it shall lead you' - in this world. 'when you lie down, it shall watch over you' - in the grave. 'when you rise up it shall be your speech' - in the World-to-come." - i.e. in the merit of the torah you learned here, you will understand the things spoken in the World-to-come and you will be able to speak there in learning and hear the deep secrets hidden in every word of torah.

But one who did not learn here will not be able to understand anything there. What will he do there in the World-to-come?!

This is as written in the talmud (Bava Kama 91a) on Yehuda whose bones were rolling in his coffin because he excommunicated himself on returning Binyamin. Moshe Rabeinu prayed on him several prayers until he brought him to there. Then it is written: "he did not understand what the Rabbis were saying and could not participate.." i.e. he entered there but he was still poor. For he did not understand what they were learning there until Moshe prayed on him.

Thus, everyone who does not want to wind up in this situation must strengthen himself to learn at least once in his life all of the talmud bavli, yerushalmi, tosefta, sifra, sifri, mechilta and the rest of the torah works until the end of the era of the Amoraim (talmudic sages) in order that it will be interesting for him there in the World-to-come and he will be able to understand what they are saying, as Rabeinu the Chafetz Chaim spoke of many times in his books.

"And it is written: 'Mine is the silver, and mine is the gold, says the L-ord of Hosts' (Chagai 2:8)" - to conclude his words, Rabbi Yossi ben Kisma turns to the man and tells him: "listen dear sir, now you certainly feel pity on me and think I am a pitiful person for having forgone on your generous offer to come dwell in your city for millions. But know that in truth, I did not lose anything. For you are under the assumption that all those millions are yours and under your decision only. And if I do not take this from you, then I will not get this from anywhere else.

But you are making a big mistake. For all the silver and gold in the world belong only to G-d. He alone decides where to distribute it. Thus, I did not lose anything by refusing your generous offer. For if you do not want to give me the money, G-d can send it to me in other ways. Thus, there is no reason for me to feel I lost money for refusing your offer."

From here is sharp mussar to all those who receive all sorts of job offers with good conditions but in bad places. They should know that if they forgo this, they will not be losing anything. For G-d can provide a livelihood in a permitted manner to all His creatures.

All this matter is in the category of: "for the L-ord your G-d is testing you to know whether you really love Him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Devarim 13:4). And when one refuses such an offer, he will profit just as much as if he accepted it. For only G-d has the final word how much money He will grant to each person and no person can change this decision even if he expends the greatest efforts and strategies in the world.

🔍 Level 3

☆ Chatam Sofer

Chatam Sofer, Avot Hasoferim pg.247 - "Mine is the silver, and mine is the gold, says the L-ord of Hosts" - our teacher, the Chatam Sofer explained that he is coming to explain why in truth torah is better than thousands of gold. For with thousands in gold, a person can support many torah scholars. But the verse says: "Mine is the silver, Mine is the gold". One who supports torah scholars is merely a shliach (agent) unlike by the torah where it is written "and in his torah he contemplates" (Tehilim 1:2) which our sages explained: "in the end, the torah becomes his own" (Avodah Zara 19a).

🔍 Level 3

☆ Chachma u'Mussar

Chochma u'Mussar, chelek beit, 357 - "I would not dwell anywhere except in a place of torah" - we learned: "'the jealousy of scholars increases wisdom' - this is good jealousy" (Bava Batra 21a). Therefore, fortunate is he who dwells among wise scholars. For they are not satiated with wisdom (ie they thirst for more). This is unlike the amei haaretz (ignorant), of lowly soul (pechutei hanefesh) who are satiated. The opposite of "the nefesh (soul) is not filled (hanefesh lo timale)" (Kohelet 6:7). And when they see a person toiling a tiny bit in torah and mitzvot, they regard this as a great righteousness and extra piety. It is easy to be drawn slowly slowly after them and thus it is not for nothing that R.Yossi replied "I would not dwell anywhere except in a place of torah" - and to distance from Amei haaretz (ignorant).

The Vilna Gaon has already explained that the tzadik is like a full barrel. When water is poured into it, it spills out all around. For the tzadik is full of "fear of G-d" and the "fear of G-d" spills out all around and the light of his fear shines on other people and the whole world benefits from him. This is why "I would not dwell anywhere except in a place of torah". For in a place of torah, one is close to receive the light of torah which shines from its scholars.

🔍 Level 3

☆ Chachma u'Mussar

Chochma u'Mussar, chelek beit 186 - "when you go it shall lead you.." - for by nature, a man is very fragile and prone to harm. This is because he is formed from two opposing natures which are against each other and there is no greater and more intense war than two opposing natures. Likewise the world is full of things harmful to man. For man is extremely weak against the many creatures above and below ground. Even for flying insects and mosquitoes - man does not have the ability to wage war against them and defeat them. So too for the creepy crawlies on the ground. Only the blessing of G-d guards him as written: " and rule over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the sky and over all the beasts that tread upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28). This blessing of the torah places fear on all creatures to guard man. This is what we learned: "when you go it shall lead you.." - in this world.. For the torah will guard him against all harmful agents in nature and above nature..

(Siftei Daat) - But this verse is speaking only when one cleaves to the torah through toiling in torah and the ways it is acquired through which the torah will desire to join with him and become part of him.. This is like the story brought in the Yavetz (5:19) regarding a man who lived alone and then died. G-d sent an angel in the form of a woman which cried and wept loudly: "my husband, my husband" until all the people of the village came due to her bitter cries.

Afterwards, it became known that this woman was tractate Chagigah which this man studied all his days and became bound to him.

We find such things by later sages who learned one particular tractate all their life in order to cling with it always..

🔍 Level 3

☆ Ruach Chaim

Ruach Chaim - "when you go it shall lead you.." - for David said: "Your word is a candle to my foot [and light for my path]" (Tehilim 119:105). For every doubt which arises on a person on how to act, he will find everything in the torah. And if he acts according to her instructions, he will not stumble. This is the meaning of: "Your word is a candle to my foot". For each and every step, I would hold on to the torah like a candle, to see which way to go.

This is what is written: "when you go it shall lead you.." - if you take upon yourself to act according to the torah, and the torah guides you and you walk according to her, then it will truly lead you.. and you will be helped by G-d.

In the Ktav Yad: for a man needs to keep in mind that without the torah, he has absolutely no idea how to conduct himself in every act. Only he must pray to the Holy One, blessed be He, that G-d will open his eyes to understand his path from the holy torah. Therefore, he did not write "belechtech" (when you go) which would imply he goes by himself. But rather, "behithalechecha" (passive tense) which means being moved by another, as written: "vayithalech Chanoch et HaElokim" (Chanoch walked with G-d). And likewise: "Noach walked with G-d" (Beresheit 6:9).

Chapter 6 Beraitha 11 - Five Acquisitions

Five possessions has the Holy One, blessed be He, [specifically] acquired in His world, and these are:

Torah, one acquisition. Heaven and Earth, one acquisition. Avraham, one acquisition. Israel, one acquisition. The Temple, one acquisition.

The Torah, from where do we know this? Since it is written: "G-d acquired me as the beginning of His way, as the first of His works of old" (Mishlei 8:22). Heaven and earth, from where do we know this? Since it is written: *"Thus says the L-ord, the heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool; what house can you [possibly] build for Me, and what place for Me to rest?"* (Isaiah 66:1). And it is written: *"How many are your works, O G-d, You have made them all with wisdom; the earth is filled with Your acquisitions"* (Tehilim 104:25). Avraham, from where do we know this? Since it is written: *"And he blessed him, and said: Blessed be Avraham of the Most High G-d, possessor of heaven and earth"* (Bereisheit 14:19). Israel, from where do we know this? Since it is written: *"until Your people pass over, O G-d, until these people whom You have acquired pass over"* (Shemot 15:16). And it is written: *"To the holy who are upon earth, the noble ones, in whom is all My desire"* (Tehilim 16:3). The holy temple, from where do we know this? As written: *"the Sanctuary, O L-rd, which Your hands have established"* (Shemot 15:17). And it is written: *"And He brought them to His holy domain, to the mountain which His right hand has acquired"* (Tehilim 78:54).

חַמְשָׁה קַנְיָנִים קָנָה לוֹ הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּעוֹלָמוֹ, וְאֵלֵיוֹ הֵן

תּוֹרָה קָנִין אֶחָד, שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ קָנִין אֶחָד, אַבְרָהָם קָנִין אֶחָד, יִשְׂרָאֵל קָנִין אֶחָד, בַּיִת הַמִּקְדָּשׁ קָנִין אֶחָד

תּוֹרָה מִיָּנִין, דְּכַתִּיב (משלי ח), ה' קָנִין רִאשִׁית דְּרָכּוֹ קָדָם מִפְּעֻלּוֹ מֵאֲז. שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ קָנִין אֶחָד מִיָּנִין, דְּכַתִּיב (ישעיהו 66), כִּי אָמַר ה' הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּסְאִי וְהָאָרֶץ הַדָּם רַגְלִי אִי זֶה בַּיִת אֲשֶׁר תִּבְנֶנּוּ לִי וְאִי זֶה מְקוֹם מְנוּחָתִי, וְאוֹמֵר (תהלים קד) מִה רַבּוּ מַעֲשָׂיךָ ה' כָּל־ם בְּחִכְמָה עָשִׂיתָ מְלָאָה הָאָרֶץ קַנְיָנֶיךָ. אַבְרָהָם קָנִין אֶחָד מִיָּנִין, דְּכַתִּיב (בראשית יד), וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר בְּרוּךְ אַבְרָם לְאֵל עֲלִיוֹן קָנָה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ. יִשְׂרָאֵל קָנִין אֶחָד מִיָּנִין, דְּכַתִּיב (שמות טו), עַד יַעֲבֹר עִמָּךְ ה' עַד יַעֲבֹר עִמָּךְ זֶה קְנִינִי, וְאוֹמֵר (תהלים טז) לְקַדוֹשִׁים אֲשֶׁר בְּאָרֶץ הַמָּה וְאֲדִירִי כָּל חִפְצֵי בָם. בַּיִת הַמִּקְדָּשׁ קָנִין אֶחָד מִיָּנִין, דְּכַתִּיב (שמות טו), מִכּוֹן לְשַׁבְּתָךְ פְּעֻלַּת ה' מִקְדָּשׁ ה' כּוֹנֵנּוּ יְדִיךָ. וְאוֹמֵר (תהלים עח) וַיְבִיאֵם אֶל גְּבוּל קְדֻשׁוֹ הַר זֶה קְנִינִי וְיָמִינוּ:

Q Level 1

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "Five possessions has the Holy One, blessed be He, [specifically] acquired in His world" - the intent is to highlight their great importance and preciousness in the eyes of G-d. Thus he called them kinyanim (acquisitions). For whatever a man acquires and pays money to acquire it, if it were not important to him, he would not have paid money for it. Thus he used the analogy of (acquisitions) kinyanim, as if G-d purchased them with money to show their preciousness before Him.

Q Level 2

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "Five possessions has the Holy One, blessed be He, acquired in His world" - the special importance of these five things stems from their being the foundation stones for the fulfillment of the main purpose of creation. By examining what are these five things, we can determine what is the goal of the entire creation, as brought next beraitha - the revealing of G-d's kingdom in the world and doing His will.

The five are listed in chronological order. First is Torah which preceded the creation of the world (Midrash Genesis Rabba 1:1). Afterwards, heaven and earth were created. Then Avraham, father of the Jewish people. Afterwards, the people of Israel and in the end the Temple built by them when they settled in the land of Israel..

According to the pious Yaavetz, specifically Israel is the primary acquisition. For the purpose of creation is the indwelling of the Shechina (divine presence) in the world which is the revealing of the glory of G-d's kingdom in the world as stated next Beraitha. This purpose is attained through the people of Israel. All the other acquisitions were created in order to help the people of Israel to reach this purpose.

Thus the purpose of the torah is in order that the people of Israel will come and fulfill it and the Shechina will dwell in the land. Heaven and earth were created to serve as a place and vessel for those who would fulfill the torah. Avraham began the revelation of G-d in the world.. Even the Temple is a vessel for revealing G-d's glory through the Temple service of the people of Israel, as the Yaavetz emphasizes: "Israel is primary and the Temple is secondary."..

Q Level 2

☆ Sfas Emes

Sfat Emet, lech lecha 5657 - "Five possessions has the Holy One, blessed be He, [specifically] acquired in His world" - for it is impossible to grasp or cleave to the Holy One, blessed be He, due to His exalted holiness and divestment [of the physical]. Therefore, G-d prepared five "acquisitions" (kinyanim) through which one can cleave to Him, blessed be He. Namely, through the torah, the holy temple, etc. and also through the creations of heaven and earth. This is also a path. Through contemplating the creation as written: "G-d established the earth with wisdom" (Mishlei 3:19). Also through Avraham who prepared a path. Namely, the covenant of Avraham our forefather. Thus it is called an acquisition (kinyan), as our sages said: "Avraham acquired (hikne) to the Holy One, blessed be He, heaven and earth". This is what the Midrash expounds (Bereisheit Rabba 39:3) "'achot lanu' - she'icha all humanity, for he prepared a path to cleave to G-d, blessed be He.

Q Level 2

Einei Kol Chai - "Israel, one acquisition" - for if there were not Israel, there would be no torah as the Yalkut Shimoni says on the torah (siman 872): "the torah was created only for the honor of Israel". see there.

Q Level 2

Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "Five possessions has the Holy One, blessed be He, [specifically] acquired in His world" - i.e. all the five things are especially precious to the Holy One, blessed be He, as if He acquired them for Himself. And all of these things depend on each other.

"Torah" - it is most precious before G-d.

"Heaven and earth" - G-d made the world in the best way for torah. Namely, that the world endures only through guarding the commandments of the torah. Also that nature does not impede in fulfilling the torah and that on the contrary it becomes a cause to fulfill it. The world was also created in such a way as to support the righteous and punish the wicked who do not fulfill the commandments of the Torah.

"Avraham" - he was the first to light the holy candle of recognizing G-d and he walked in G-d's ways. This giant went and shone the light in the dark and obscure world and illuminated the earth.

"Israel" - after the sunset of Avraham and the subsequent nightfall, his descendants shone light in the world like the stars - to illuminate the world to recognizing G-d and His ways.

This occurred whether during their success such as when G-d performed miracles for them or whether during their troubles when they were exiled in the world. Everywhere they are as priests and teachers. For they bring the torah with them. This is as written: "you shall be unto Me as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Shemot 19:6). All the fundamental principles that the nations learned was from the torah the Jews brought with them in their exile.

 **Level 3**

☆ **Sforno**

Sforno - "Five possessions has the Holy One, blessed be He, [specifically] acquired in His world" - the purpose which G-d intended to acquire and attain for creating the world is fulfilled through five things.

The first is the torah. Through it, the man of free will can attain wholeness (Shleimut), to become in G-d's image and form (btzalmu ubidemuto). He brought a proof from the verses which begin: "I (the torah) am wisdom.." (Mishlei 8:12-22).

The second is heaven and earth. Through them, the human race is ready to become that "whole man" G-d intended when creating the world. He brought a proof from the verse: "*the heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool... [but to this man only will I gaze, to him who is poor and broken in spirit and trembles (Chared) at My word]*" (Isaiah 66:2).

Thus, the Chared (G-d fearing) who strives in the word of G-d which is the torah - he fulfills the intent of heaven and earth..

The third kinyan (acquisition) is Avraham who was the only person in his generation who became that intended [whole] person. He brought a proof from: "Blessed be Avraham of the most high G-d, possessor of heaven and earth" (Bereisheit 14:19), i.e. through Avraham, G-d became exalted (elyon), possessor of heaven and earth. For G-d attained their intended purpose.

"*Israel*" - of all the nations, G-d's intent was not fulfilled. But it was fulfilled through Israel..

"*Temple*" - of all places in the world, there alone G-d acquired and attained His divine desire and acquisition...

"*G-d will reign forever..*" (Shemot 15:17-18). For the intent of all that He made was to reign forever and ever and that His glory will fill the whole earth, amen ve'amen.

 **Level 4**

☆ **Maharal**

Maharal - "Five acquisitions (kinyan)..." - the word "kinyan" applies to many things. But that which is called a "kinyan gamur" (complete kinyan), this is when the thing is completely acquired from all sides and does not go out at all from the domain of the one acquiring.

Even though everything belongs to G-d, but nevertheless you will find only five things which are complete acquisitions on their own intrinsic aspect and which are indispensable..

These five things serve G-d's divinity.. The Torah is G-d's divine decree on the creation as the torah opens (at Sinai): "I am the L-ord your G-d who took you out of Egypt" (Shemot 20:2). Heaven and Earth are the world and G-d's Name is called upon them as written: "the G-d of Heaven and Earth" (Bereisheit 24:3). G-d's Name was called on Avraham.. Even though G-d's Name was called also on Yitzchak and Yaakov, but it opens and seals only on Avraham (Pesachim 117b). Likewise G-d's Name is called on Israel (Shemot 5:1) and the Temple (Kings I 8:43)..

Thus, these things are called "kinyan" (acquisition) to G-d like one who acquires something he needs completely..

The Torah is sichlit (transcendent intellect) and singular in this level. Afterwards heaven and earth which are the physical world..

Avraham is the beginning of the human race. Thus, he was called "Avraham, av hamon goyim (father of multitude nations)" (Bereisheit 17:5), i.e. the beginning of the klal haumot (congregation of the nations).

R.Hartman commentary - in Gur Aryeh (Shemot 4 ot 14) the Maharal writes: Avraham was the father of the whole world, not like Yitzchak and Yaakov who were fathers only to Israel..

And in Siman 1864 R. Hartman writes: it is an important foundation in the Maharal's books that the primary creation was Avraham. For him the world was created as the Midrash expounds: "these are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created (behibaram)" (Bereisheit 2:4) - behibaram (spells Avraham) - the world was created in the merit of Avraham" (Bereisheit Rabba 12:9).

And in the Talmud: "the world will exist 6000 years. Two thousand years of Tohu (void)..", i.e. from creation until Avraham was 52 years old everything was "void", there was no torah. And when he was 52, he toiled in torah.. thus all the previous generations were void and did not have creation.. for Avraham was the primary existence of the world (ikar metziut haolam).. For Avraham was the foundation of the world.. he had the trait of Chesed (kindness) and this is first and closer to G-d than anything. For G-d is the good itself and thus the trait of Chesed which is the good is closer to G-d than everything. And when the world was created, it was created for something which is first and close to G-d while other things were created for this. Thus everything was created for Avraham whose trait was kindness.. without Avraham, the world would not have been created..

Afterwards Israel is a separate level. the Jews were chosen among all nations to be for G-d and are singular in this.

The fifth level is the temple which was chosen from all places on earth..

And in the talmud (Pesachim 87b) only four acquisitions of G-d are brought: torah, heaven and earth, Israel and the Temple. Avraham is not mentioned for the talmud holds that it is only proper to count Israel as an acquisition since Avraham was the beginning of Israel and its head and is included in them.

These four things, when you understand wisdom, begin with torah as the highest level. Afterwards, heaven and earth, then Israel and the temple.

All these things are very much in order. Thus it is proper for them to be acquisitions of the Holy One blessed be He. It is proper for you to understand the things we hinted to her...

R.Hartman: the four correspond to the four letters of the Tetragramaton while Avraham is the crown of the Yud. They hint to the 10 sefirot: Avraham keter-crown, torah chochma-wisdom, etc.)

Chapter 6 Beraitha 12 - For His Glory

All that G-d created in His world, He created not but for His glory, as written: "All that is called by My Name it is for My glory, that I have created it, formed it, also I made it" (Isaiah 43:7) and it is written: "the L-ord shall reign forever and ever" (Shemot 15:18).

כָּל מֵה שֶׁבְּרָא הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּעוֹלָמוֹ, לֹא בְּרָאוּ אֶלָּא לְכַבוֹדוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (ישעיה מג), כֹּל הַנִּקְרָא בְּשִׁמִּי וְלְכַבוֹדִי בְּרָאֲתִיו וְצִרְתִּיו אִף הִנֵּה עֲשִׂיתִיו, וְאוֹמֵר (שמות טו), יְ-הוָה יִמְלֶךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד.

Q Level 2

☆ Tiferet Yisrael

Tiferet Yisrael - "all that G-d created in His world, He created only for His glory" - do not think that the other creations which are not of the five kinyanim (acquisitions mentioned last mishna) were created incidentally and without purpose. Thus he added: "all that G-d created in His world, He created only for His glory..."

"for His glory" - for through each one of them, a person can peer at the light of His glory and they are means to this. Due to this, they are cherished before G-d. Just that the five kinyanim are most cherished.

"I have formed it" - I have formed each one with a wondrous form. For even the tiny creatures which can only be seen by microscope (such as the "milba" with 24 tiny legs) have wonders no less and even more than a giant elephant.. And since each creature was made with great precision and exactness from this you can deduce that they were all created for a great purpose.

Q Level 3

Maharam Shik, avot - this mishna is very difficult. For it implies that the creation of the world was for the honor of G-d, blessed be He. This is a very difficult thing to hear. G-d forbid that He needs the honor of flesh and blood.

And in the Midrash: "a flesh and blood craftsman mentions his name and then his handiwork. But the Holy One, blessed be He, is not like this. For the Torah writes first: 'Bereisheit' (in the beginning) and afterwards 'Elokim (G-d)'" (Bereisheit Rabba 1:12).

We explained there that when a human being does an act, his intent is only for his own benefit. Therefore, he mentions his name first. But for G-d, His entire purpose for the creation is Israel and not Himself (as mentioned there "Bereisheit - for Reishit, for Israel.. G-d created the Heavens and the Earth.. and the thought of Israel preceded everything), therefore G-d mentions His Name in the end.

Thus, this mishna is difficult. It seems to me to answer in my humble view, the intent is like the Midrash in Parsha Bo: that for this G-d is called "the King of Honor" (Melech Hakavod) as written: "who is the King of honor" (Tehilim 24:8). Namely, does G-d need our honor? Is He not almighty in strength? Rather, it means He is the King who *gives* of His honor to flesh and blood. The intent is that G-d's desire is to impart of His honor and bestow of His spirit and perfection on human beings. For this is the way of the good and His aspiration is to bestow and benefit another.. This is the meaning of: "He created not but for His glory", namely, to bestow of His honor and benefit and perfect human beings through this; if they delve deeply and reach the level of knowing secrets of Torah...

Q Level 3



Yitav Lev, vayigash - a man must know that all what the Holy One, blessed be He, created, He

created only for His glory. This is the "foundation of all and root of religious service" (yesod hakol veshoresh haavodah). Namely, that a man does not seek anything for his own honor and not want any thing here or there for himself. But rather that through this deed, the honor of G-d will increase forever and ever. This is the meaning of: "Avraham was one" (Yechezkel 33:24)... For if he wants for himself then man has many desires such as honor, children, tranquility, nice clothing, etc etc. But in all these things, he should have only one desire - to serve G-d through this and increase G-d's honor in the world.

If he does thus, all his desires become one single desire as king David said: "one thing I ask of G-d, this I seek, to sit in the house of G-d all the days of my life..." (Tehilim 27:4).

This is along what the Rambam wrote in Moreh Nevuchim (3:51) "these forefathers and Moshe rabeinu were one with G-d. Though they were engaged in the toil of human beings, namely, increasing wealth, cattle and status, but when doing these things, they did them with their limbs only. For their minds and hearts did not part from being before G-d. Due to this, G-d's providence was continuously with them even while they were toiling with mundane activities - sheep herding, work of the field, and the home. For their intent in all their deeds was to come closer to G-d very much and to raise a nation who will know G-d and serve Him.."

If a man reaches this level, then all complaints and jealousy depart from him. For if a man wants honor for his own self, and his fellow likewise wants honor for his own self, then the two become jealous of each other and there is friction between them. Each one tells himself: "I deserve to rule".

But if each one does not want honor for himself, but rather seeks to fulfill the will of G-d, that through this the honor of heaven will increase in the world. Then, since the underlying intent of each person is to fulfill the will of G-d and honor Him, if so, when he sees G-d has granted honor to his fellow so that through the fellow, G-d's honor will increase, it will not bother him at all. For all his desires are annulled and he has only one single desire to fulfill the will of G-d. Thus, what does it matter to him whether G-d's honor is increased through his fellow or through himself.

Level 3

☆ Daat Zekenim

Daat Zekenim on Pirkei Avot, writings of Rabeinu Yerucham haLevi of Mir - the foundation (yesod) of the matter is that in the entire creation, there is not even a hair's breadth which is for itself. Rather, the existence and essence (metziuta umahuta) of everything is to serve and show the glory and splendor of G-d's kingdom (lesharet uleharot kevod hadar malchuto vetifarto).

This is the foundation and purpose of the entire creation and its creatures. There is nothing else besides this at all. Rather, "All that G-d created in His world, He created not but for His glory...", serving the glory of His kingdom, blessed be He..

The traits of G-d are not like the traits of flesh and blood. For by human beings, the greater the minister, the more he has for himself and the more his life is tranquil.

But by the traits of G-d, the greater a person is, his service changes accordingly.. For example, by Moshe rabeinu it is written: "*And Moses said to G-d, why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, so that You lay the burden of all this people upon me?. Have I conceived all this people? Did I bring them forth, that You should say to me, Bear them in your bosom like a nurse carries the suckling baby, to the land which You swore to their fathers?*" (Bamidbar 11:11-12).

Can we imagine the enormity of this burden to carry. We can see the burden to carry even one baby. And what of this that the burden of the entire nation was placed on him like "a nurse carries

the suckling baby". And in truth, he led them in this way as written: "I beg You to kill me at once.. and let me not see my misfortune" (Bamidbar 11:25). Thus he would rather die than see their misfortune.

This stemmed from that which he bore them "like a nurse carries the suckling baby", and in the end he saw their misfortune.

Thus all his life, he was in a situation of "I beg You to kill me at once" and when he said: "why have You afflicted Your servant...", he was punished for this despite that he was bearing this enormously heavy burden as the Midrash Rabba (Shemot 15:25) brings.

It is clear from this how true is the principle we brought. Namely, in the entire creation there is not even a hair's breadth which is for itself. Rather: "All that G-d created in His world, He created not but for His glory..", serving G-d's kingdom.. and "according to the camel is the burden" (Ketuvot 67a). If a person has broader shoulders, a greater burden is correspondingly placed on him until for Moshe rabeinu the entire nation was placed on his shoulders according to the vast capabilities he was graced with.

Not even a hair's breadth of his capabilities was left for himself since "for myself" does not exist at all in the creation. Rather "All that G-d created in His world, He created not but for His glory".

This is what our sages said: "the greater a person is than his fellow, the greater is his evil inclination" (Sukkah 52a). This is perforce and it cannot be otherwise. Shall we leave him for himself to rest? This is what Rabbi Yisrael Salanter said: "I know that I have a head corresponding to that of a thousand men, but due to this my obligation of service is a thousand times [greater]".

Level 4

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "All that is called by My Name it is for My glory (1), that I have created it (2), formed it (3), I even made it (4)" - he wanted to include all the four worlds: Atzilut, Beriah, Yetzira, Asiyah.

Corresponding to the world of Atzilut which is all divine Names of G-d, and no angel can grasp anything there it is written: "All that is called by My Name it is for My glory". For it is all a place of His glory whereby the ministering angels in Beriah and Yetzira ask on the world of Atzilut: "where is the place of His glory (ayeh mekom kevodo lehaaritzo)".

Afterwards, "barati" (I created) the world of Beriah like the world of Atzilut. Afterwards, "yetzarti" (I formed) the world of Yetzira and "af asitiv" (I even made it) the world of Asiyah.

And on the world of Asiya he said "even" while on the world of Yetzira he did not say "I even formed". This is because the chidush (novelty) is His making the world of Asiyah. For it would appear that it is better to not make it (noach lo shelo naase). Therefore, he said "I even made".

"the L-ord shall reign forever and ever" - it appears at first that this verse has no connection whatsoever with the previous. But we may answer that the intent is that he sensed in his words that one could ask: "granted we could say G-d created the other worlds for His glory since all of them praise and exalt (maaritzim umakdishim) the Name of the great, awesome almighty G-d (shem haE-I, hamelech, hagado, hagibor, vehanorah) but for the world of Asiyah, we can see with our own eyes that evil has overpowered (gavrah hasitra achra) and "the heart of man is evil from his youth" (Gen.6:5), to anger his Creator and "it is better for man to not have been created" (Eruvin 13b).

On this he answered, even if now many multitudes rebel against G-d, but in the future "G-d will be One and His Name One". On this he wrote: "the L-ord shall reign forever and ever".

Then the whole world will be as one, "For then will I turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the Name of the L-ord, to serve Him with one consent" (Tzefaniah 3:9). For this G-d created it. Then His glory will be visible to all. Thus, even the world of Asiyah was created only for His glory.

Q Level 4

☆ Maharal

Maharal - "All that G-d created in His world, He created not but for His glory.." - this entire chapter speaks on torah. Thus it seems not proper to bring this teaching here.

We may answer that since the entire chapter speaks on torah study and one who studies torah needs to guard and fulfill the commandments of his Creator - this is honor of Heaven, as opposed to one who studies torah with intent for his own honor. For "All that G-d created in His world, He created only for His glory".

And even though in the beginning of the chapter he already wrote: "whoever learns torah lishma merits many things..." Nevertheless, this taught us only that he merits many things implying that otherwise he does not merit many things. But this was not to teach us that this is the primary will of G-d that he learns lishma. On this he wrote "all that G-d created..." If so, one who does not learn torah lishma, better had he not been born. For "G-d created only for His glory". Thus one who toils in torah for his own glory better had he not been created at all.

Thus our sages said: "one who toils in torah shelo lishma, better for him had he not been born" (Berachot 17a)..

He is also teaching that even for one who studies torah lishma, he needs to combine this with proper conduct so that G-d will be honored through his torah. And in the talmud:

"And you shall love the L-ord your G-d.." (Devarim 6:5) i.e., that the Name of Heaven be beloved because of you. if someone studies Scripture and Mishnah, and attends on the disciples of the wise, is honest in business, speaks pleasantly to people, what do people then say concerning him? "fortunate is the father who taught him Torah, fortunate is the teacher who taught him Torah; woe unto people who have not studied the Torah; for this man has studied the Torah look how fine his ways are, how righteous are his deeds!". Of him does Scripture say (Isaiah 49:3): "And He said unto me: you are My servant, Israel, in, whom I will be glorified" (Yomah 86a).

It seems though that the reason he ended with this teaching is because he wanted to end with something which is the purpose of man. Namely, the Holy One, blessed be He, is the purpose of everything since "all that G-d created was only for His glory.."

It is as if he said: "the sole purpose of everything is G-d and there is nothing else". And since this is the purpose of all created beings, he set it as the final words of this chapter and the end of everything.

This is like king Shlomo ended Kohelet/Ecclesiastes which is all words of mussar (ethics): "the end of the matter, all having been heard - fear G-d, and keep His commandments, for this is all of man" (Kohelet 12:13). That is to say, the whole world was created only for this, since everything was created for man and man was created to fear G-d and guard His commandments..

This is as one who instructs his son and gives him mussar to benefit him and in the end concludes his words summarizing the purpose of everything...

Our sages said explicitly that man was created to serve his Creator. Even though it is true that G-d does not receive honor from anyone and certainly: *"If you sin, what do you do against Him?..And if you are righteous, what do you give Him? Or what does He receive from your hand?"* (Iyov 35:6-7).

Only that man was created such that G-d is king over him and a king does not receive honor from what the people give to him. For a king's honor is from the aspect of his rulership (memshala), that he rules over the people. And if a man is righteous, his king gives him reward and if he is not righteous, the king is still his king when punishing him.

For when G-d pays retribution to those who transgress His will, then too His Name is aggrandized and sanctified (mitgadel and mitkadesh). Just that G-d, blessed be He, is the good, and He wants that man do good. But nevertheless, the honor He receives from the creations does not at all depend on man. Only that He created them and is King over them. This is the honor of His kingdom and as he brought the verse: "G-d shall reign forever and ever"...

One should not ask: "why did G-d create the world? His honor is [intrinsic] in Him and thus He does not need this honor of that which He is King of the universe. If so, why did He create the world?"

This question has no substance at all. For G-d is completely Shalem (whole/perfect) such that it is impossible for His Shelemut (wholeness/perfection) to be lacking. But without a doubt something which is in actuality is more Shalem (whole/perfect) than something which exists only in potential. Therefore, even though G-d has the power to do as He wishes but this is only in potential. But when it goes out to actual existence, then it is complete Shelemut (perfection) in actuality. Therefore G-d called the world into existence in actuality until His kingdom is in actuality and not just in potential...

Level 3

☆ Yachel Yisrael

Yachel Yisrael - "All that G-d created in His world, He created not but for His glory.." - as in Kohelet (Ecclesiastes), this Beraitha comes to summarize all of tractate Avot. It highlights what is the purpose of fulfilling all the words of mussar mentioned in this tractate: "All that G-d created in His world, He created not but for His glory". All fulfilling of torah and the commandments is for one purpose only - to reveal the honor of G-d in the world.

This goal needs to be opposite a person's eyes at all times. Then he will fulfill all that is written in this tractate. Not for personal gain in this world and not even to receive reward in the world to come. Rather in order to sanctify the Name of Heaven.

If a person does not put heart to this and he fulfills the torah and commandments "shelo lishma" then "better for him had he not been created" (Berachot 17a). For he missed the primary purpose in the world.

Thus the Tanna (sage) connects the end of the chapter with its beginning. For in the beginning Rabbi Meir spoke of the qualities of "one who learns torah lishma" (for G-d).

Chapter 6 Beraitha 13 - Rebbi Hanania

Rabbi Hananiah ben Akashya said: the Holy One, blessed be He, wished to grant merit to Israel, therefore He gave them Torah and commandments in abundance, as it is written: "The L-rd desires in order to make righteous; to make the Torah great and glorious" (Isaiah 42:21)

רַבִּי חַנְנִיָּא בֶן אַקָּשְׂיָא אָמַר, רָצָה הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְזַכּוֹת אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, לְפִיכָךְ הִרְבֵּה לָהֶם תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (ישעיה מב) ה' חָפֵץ לַמַּעַן צְדָקוֹ יַגְדִּיל תּוֹרָה וְיֵאֱדִיר

Q Level 1

☆ Sforno

Sforno - in order to make Israel righteous He wished to increase for them Torah and commandments in order that each one will be found righteous with some portion in the torah and the commandments so that all of them will merit life in the world to come.

Q Level 2

☆ Midrash Shmuel

Midrash Shmuel - "therefore He gave them Torah and commandments in abundance" - so that one will not say: "(the torah's) measure is longer than the Earth and wider than the sea" (Iyov 11:9) and likewise the details and fine points of the commandments (mitzvot) are enormously vast. Who can ever fulfill all of them?"

Therefore the Tanna teaches us that Gd, "who sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us" (asher kidshanu bmitzvotav vetzivanu) - His commandments are not like those of a flesh and blood king. For the latter commands and fixes an amount of work to his servant such and such. And if the servant does not complete the entire amount, he will be punished for not fulfilling all the king's command.

But the Holy One, blessed be He, is not like this. For that which He increased torah and mitzvot on Israel, the intent is not to say that they must finish and learn the entire torah and fulfill all the commandments. And if not, they will be punished even though they fulfilled some of them or most of them. Thereby the increase of torah and mitzvot is mainly a cause to be punished through them.

It is not so. For "it is not incumbent on you to finish" (Avot 2:19) and "whether one does much or little as long as his heart is to Heaven". This is like the story of the man who learned all his days only tractate Chagigah. Thus the increase in mitzvot is not a cause to punish but rather just the opposite.. For "He wished to grant merit to Israel" to he who is unable to fulfill all of them For according to how much he attains in torah learning and fulfilling mitzvot, so too his reward will increase without limit. Therefore "He gave them Torah and commandments in abundance".

Q Level 2

☆ Maharal

Maharal - even though now that there are many mitzvot, it is possible to result in many sins, but it does not matter. For G-d wants to bestow good to the good. And since with many mitzvot it is more merit for the good people, for then they will be whole in the 613 mitzvot, therefore G-d wanted to grant merit to the good (lezakot hatovim)... For Gd is righteous and loves righteousness...

That which the Rambam explains: "by many mitzvot it is impossible for a person to not do at least one wholly. Through that he will merit life in the world to come.." It seems the Rambam wrote these things to draw the hearts of the people.. But these words have no basis at all.. (see there for a long discussion with many arguments).

Q Level 2

☆ Rashi

Rashi - this mishna was not said in Pirkei Avot but rather in the end of tractate Makot. But since it

has a nice ending, it became a custom by all the people to read it at the end of every chapter.

And since one does not recite the Kaddish on mishna but rather on Agadah as the talmud says: "Mar said: on what does the world endure? On kedusha of Sidra and kaddish of Agadah" (Sotah 49a).

These chapters are called Pirkei Avot because in them are arranged the words of the early fathers who received the torah one from the other. For example, Moshe and Yehoshua and the Elders until the men of the great assembly, and Hillel and Shamai and Rabban Yochaban ben Zakai and his disciples.

Rebbi told us how their deeds were noble and that they would exhort the people of their generation and guide them in the just path. So too it is proper for every Chacham (torah scholar) to exhort the people of his generation and teach them the just path.

