

In the Ways of Ascent

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Preface

Part A: General Content and Methods of Attaining Supernatural Powers

- I. This book, *In the Ways of Ascent*, presents tried-and-true methods of ascending the spiritual ladder which leads a Jew to appreciate his spiritual connection to Hashem (G-D) and inspires him to cleave to the Creator with his heart and soul. This book highlights the most essential aspects of spiritual growth, impelling man to take steps to further enhance his service of Hashem.
- II. Many were the *tzaddikim* (righteous sages) who possessed supernatural powers due to their virtues; and this book presents the keys to acquiring these powers. (The definition of supernatural powers and the benefits of possessing them are explained below in Ch. 12.)
- III. There are numerous means that can be exploited to achieve these powers; this book will present the foundational pillars of these methods, as transmitted from teacher to student throughout the generations. It is known that many of the righteous individuals who acquired supernatural powers employed the methods described in this book.
- IV. Some of the methods to acquiring supernatural powers that are presented in this book were transmitted secretly from generation to generation in order to prevent them from being exposed to the masses, not all of whom are worthy of exploiting them.
- V. In our day and age, many are those who seek to acquire supernatural powers. There are several reasons for this passionate search, one of the primary ones being the force of *kedusha* (holiness) in the world, as written, "Behold days are coming, said Hashem, and I will send a hunger in the land; not a hunger for bread nor a thirst for water, but to hear the words of Hashem, And the waters will move until the sea, and from the north until the east, they will wander to seek the word of Hashem; and they will not find it" (*Amos* 8:11-12).

The *Gemara* (Talmud) expounds upon the verse, "The word of Hashem is *Halacha* (Jewish law); the word of Hashem is Prophecy; the word of Hashem is the end of days." Although the verse states that they will not find; it says the same of the *Halacha*" (*Shabbos* 138b). The *Gemara* concludes in the name of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai that this does not mean that there will come a time when *Halacha* will be forgotten totally, but that the nation will not find a conclusive explanation and clear-cut *Halacha* in one place.

Prophecy no longer exists in this day and age (see the *Smag's* explanation regarding the Prophets and Scriptures at the end of *Sefer Malachi*). Yet, with tremendous Divine assistance, it is still possible for a Jew to attain a magnificent spiritual light that endows him with supreme spiritual capacities.

- VI. There were many motives in the publication of this book, the foremost being the depressed spiritual level of our generation. Unfortunately, on many occasions, man's determination to achieve supernatural abilities that are beyond him lead him to err and traverse false paths,

which cause him terrible hardship throughout his spiritual journey and impairs his service of Hashem.

- VII.** A second motive is the vast spiritual challenges faced by the members of our generation. For some, the only method of avoiding total spiritual degeneration is the discovery of the lofty spiritual levels that allow a Jew to cleave to Hashem and His Torah absolutely. This is especially true for those who possess extremely lofty *neshamos* (souls), but who are unaware of it, and thus confront enormous spiritual challenges in their lives, as written “One who is greater than his friend, his evil inclination is greater than his” (*Sukkah* 52b).

Thus, following a period of extensive debate, it was determined to publish the contents of this work, *In the Ways of Ascent*, for the benefit of Jews worldwide.

Part B: Studying This Book with the Goal of Achieving Spiritual Strength

- I. This book was written in the clearest form possible in order to allow every Jew, including those who are remote from spirituality, who have never learned Torah or observed the *mitzvos* (commandments), to understand the maximal content and utilize the inherent messages in order to draw nearer to truth, spiritual strength and lofty spiritual levels.
- II. However, due to concerns in publicizing the sensitive contents of this book, there are several sections that were recorded cryptically, compelling the reader to study the text in depth in order to gain maximal clarity and lead the *neshama* to discover and connect to the sacred concepts embedded in the text.
- III. Even one who is *mitzvah*-observant, who has studied Torah for years and who has already attained lofty spiritual levels is likely to encounter new information and important lessons in this book. He may, likewise, be compelled to read the text several times before he is familiar enough with the concepts to merit the vast powers described. It is insufficient to identify with the concepts on an intellectual level, as one must merit a soul connection to these lofty ideals. Ironically, one who is already familiar with the concepts may actually be forced to invest extra thought and effort into appreciating them before attaining the desired spiritual heights.
- IV. It is advisable to occasionally reread this book, or at least the sections of it that most inspire a soul-connection with Hashem. This will maximize the benefits that can be gained from this work and help the reader acquire the desired spiritual levels.
- V. This book contains sixteen chapters that highlight various means toward achieving spiritual greatness. Ideally, one should endeavor to implement all these methods simultaneously. However, if this is unfeasible, one should focus intensely on a single path; and one will still attain vast spiritual accomplishments.

For example, one who meticulously studies, reviews and strives to follow even the instructions listed in the very first chapter in the book can already achieve astonishing spiritual results. Still, it is recommended that the reader at least read and familiarize himself with the other paths to spiritual greatness, as knowledge itself reinforces his strength and endeavors. Moreover, if there is one part in the path that he selects that he is unable to understand or follow, he may be capable of achieving the same results via another path. Then, once he has achieved his goal via a different course, it is possible that when he returns to read the first ambiguous section, he will be able to grasp and implement the part that he was previously unable to comprehend.

- VI. Chapters 13 and 14 primarily discuss the famous *Gemara Ksubos* 111b and the commentaries of the *Rishonim* (Early Sages), as opposed to methods of achieving *dveikus* (cleaving to Hashem). Notwithstanding, these chapters both contain vital elements toward achieving supernatural strengths, as clarified by Rabbeinu Chaim Vital in *Sefer Eitz Chaim* regarding the importance of *pilpul* (sophisticated Torah-based debates) as a powerful weapon against negative forces that block spiritual light. While his statement actually

pertains to all aspects of Torah study, it is especially significant when applied to this subject of acquiring supernatural strengths. As stated above, even if there are sections in this book that seem ambiguous or confusing to the reader, one can still attain extraordinary spiritual heights through learning and absorbing other sections of the book.

- VII.** Chapter 7 and 8 are fundamental to this work, as they emphasize that mocking or scorning its sacred content may cause one to lose all that he stands to attain or has already attained through other sections of the book.
- VIII.** A glossary at the end of the book translates and defines Hebrew words and terms.

Chapter One: The essence of the Jewish *neshama* ; that which is activated in the *neshama* via Torah and *mitzvos*; and how this translates into a Jew’s practical service of Hashem.

Part I

A. The *Ramchal*, *Nefesh HaChaim* and many other *sefarim* (holy books) quote the *Zohar Hakaddosh’s* famed statement: “Hakaddosh Baruch Hu (The Holy One Blessed Is He), Torah and Yisrael (Nation of Israel) are One” (*Adir Ba’Marom; Nefesh HaChaim Shaar 4 Ch. 11*). [This exact text is not found anywhere in the *Zohar*, yet it paraphrases the words of the *Zohar* on *Parshas Acharei Mos 73*).

B. The above statement is perplexing and requires due explanation. How can it be said that Hashem is One with the Torah and Yisrael? It is known that Hashem possesses neither physical body nor corporeal form, that His Presence fills the entire universe and that He created both the universe and Torah. The Torah is a holy book from which the world was fashioned; and Yisrael are mere flesh and blood! How can they merge into One?

C. The explanation must be prefaced with the following statement:

Man is composed of a physical body and spiritual soul. The body is corporeal, manifest to all. The soul, albeit obvious as it distinguishes between a live and dead person, is invisible; and it is exceedingly difficult to aptly define its essence.

The Jewish *neshama* can be compared to rays drawn from the sun. The existence of sunrays and their very essence are conditional to their drawing light from the sun. If one were to place a barrier between the sunrays and the sun, those rays of light would cease to exist. The Jewish soul, drawn from its Sun—Hashem—are as sunrays. The essence and definition of the Jewish soul is that it is drawn from Hashem Yisborach.

(Obviously, the model of the sun is but a parable, as the gap between Hashem and a human being is inconceivable, whereas there is a measurable gap between the sun and the distance that rays of light travel. The purpose of this parable is to underscore that the Jewish soul is merely an extension of Hashem, drawn totally from Him.)

D. The above explicates the statement, “Hashem, the Torah and Yisrael are One.” The souls of *Bnei Yisrael* (People of Israel) are as a bounty of spiritual light. (Kabbalistic works regularly refer to a positive spiritual bounty as ‘light’ or ‘radiance,’ since the most spiritual substance that can be found within the physical world is light, and because it is extremely beneficial to the world.) *Bnei Yisrael’s* soul—a bounty of spiritual radiance—is drawn from Hashem, the Source of all light. This is why the Sages state that Hashem Yisborach and Yisrael are One—as Hashem is the Source, and *Bnei Yisrael* are the bounty emanating from that Source.

E. The connection between the Torah and Hashem-Yisrael is explained as follows:

Gemara Sanhedrin 89 quotes the verse, “A soul that toils, toils for itself.” *Chazal* (Sages) explicate the redundancy as, ‘A person toils in one place, and the Torah toils for him in another

place.' *Rashi* elucidates that when man toils in the study of Torah, the Torah turns to Hashem and entreats that man should be blessed with understanding of Torah.

The Torah is not simply a code of laws to which we must adhere; rather, it is an actual spiritual creation called Torah. The Torah exists in the heavens and harbors the force to beseech for mercy from Hashem, similar to the heavenly Angels.

- F. This explains how the Torah is One with Hashem and Yisrael. Hashem molded Creation in a way that the bounty that He emits toward Yisrael is directed via the spiritual entity called Torah. The bounty comprising the Jewish soul is created by and passes through the holy Torah, which is also a type of bounty that emanates from Hashem. (*Ramchal, Adir Ba'Marom*)
- G. The most compelling, potent soul-desire of a Jew is to connect to his Source and benefit from greater bounty and vigor that fortifies his soul. The means of acquiring this powerful force is Torah—by increasing hours of learning and *mitzvah* observance. Enhancing one's fulfillment of the Torah includes all aspects of *avodas Hashem* (service of Hashem), including observing *mitzvos*; refraining from *aveiros* (transgressions) both in regard to man's relationship with Hashem and man's relationships with his fellow men; and prayer. These three simultaneously awaken the spiritual bounty in the heavens and draw it toward man via the radiance of Torah.
- H. As a Jew endeavors to connect to Hashem, his heart must blaze with fierce aspiration to learn Torah, spill his soul in prayer, observe the *mitzvos*, avoid *aveiros*, and strive to fulfill the Will of Hashem. These should be accomplished with the clairvoyance that his endeavors will lead his soul to connect to its Source and enjoy enormous spiritual radiance.

This is truly the ultimate desire of the Jewish soul, a yearning that surpasses any longing or aspiration that can exist in this physical world. Indeed, the *Ramchal* writes, "As the soul derives from Above, its truest pleasure can only be the light emanating from the Face of Hashem Yisborach" (*Mesilas Yeshtarim* Ch. 1).

- I. A Jew who grasps this foundational pillar of Judaism is automatically aroused to achieve lofty levels of spiritual growth. As he prays, learns Torah, fulfills the *mitzvos* or refrains from *aveiros*, he should focus on the concept that his actions fortify his soul connection with Hashem and convey a heavenly radiance from Hashem that illuminates his own *neschama*.
- J. When a Jew focuses single-mindedly on this concept, he generates a profound effect on his soul and also fortifies his *neschama* with tremendous power and strength. The more he concentrates on his prayer and Torah study, the greater power he infuses into his soul.

Part II

- A. As explained in Kabbalah, a Jew's constant focus must be to reinforce his soul connection to Hashem Yisborach through his performance of the *mitzvos*, albeit he may reflect upon this in a very general sense.
- B. However, ideally, one should focus on the following two intentions:
 - 1. *Down-Up*: To intensify his soul connection to Hashem. (Although man's soul is always connected, his focus should be to strengthen that connection.)
 - 2. *Up-Down*: To draw spiritual radiance from Hashem and implant it in his soul.

- C. A Jew's intellect and thoughts are eminently powerful. Every Jew owns the capacity to reflect upon these intentions; and his thoughts harbor the power to transform these into reality.

It is essential that one focus on these two intentions while engaged in fulfilling the will of Hashem. For example, as one commences his daily prayers or begins learning Torah, he should contemplate that his utmost desire is for the words of prayer/Torah that he utters to reinforce his soul-connection to Hashem.

One who is able should likewise reflect upon this repeatedly in the midst of his prayers/learning, as well. The same applies while performing a *mitzvah* or refraining from *aveirah*. (Obviously, one who forgot to reflect upon this desire before he began praying/learning should do so whenever he remembers.)

- D. One who does not focus on these intentions or who is unaware of these fundamental concepts will still benefit from the results of his *mitzvos*/learning/prayer, since the connection between Hashem and the Jewish *neshama* is inevitably strengthened when a Jew fulfills the will of Hashem. However, being cognizant of and striving to focus on these two intentions while fulfilling the will of Hashem is more effective in terms of absorbing spiritual radiance. Moreover, it allows one to sense that spiritual radiance as it penetrates one's *neshama*, endowing one with profound strength that impels him to ascend higher and higher upon the ladder to spiritual attainment.
- E. The subjects discussed in this chapter are essential to the concept of the *neshama* acquiring its spiritual power and force. The Vilna Gaon explains that not only does a Jew benefit from an additional radiance to his *neshama*, but he also receives added parts to his *neshama* that he previously lacked. It is via these newfound aspects of his soul that he acquires greater spiritual powers. (Vilna Gaon on *Zohar*, *Parshas Pekudei* 16)
- F. The more effort a Jew invests into Torah, prayer, *mitzvah* observance and refraining from *aveiros*, the more he will enjoy the spiritual radiance that penetrates his soul. Likewise, the more he affixes his holy thoughts to his endeavors, the greater bounty and spiritual powers he will merit. (See *Kisvei Ha'Ari*, *Mevo She'arim*, *Sha'ar* B Vol. B Ch. 6 p.9 regarding the two concepts that embody Kabbalah which are related to the above two intentions.)

Part III

- A. A Jew who yearns to acquire those added portions of his *neshama* that will lead him to acquire vast spiritual strengths is obligated to avoid the quality of anger at all times. The *Zohar* writes that anger is such a terrible trait that it can cause man to lose the parts of his *neshama* that he gained through his positive endeavors and aspirations. The *Zohar* likewise presages that anger can cause a Jew to lose even the most basic elements intrinsic to his soul.
- B. Thus, a Jew must beware of anger at all times, especially while ascending the ladder of spiritual growth. The evil inclination is constantly at war with the Jew, seeking to impede his spiritual ascent and causing him to stumble and fall. Thus, specifically when a person feels that he has received new parts to his *neshama*, he should exercise extreme caution to avoid anger, as the evil inclination will choose that moment to present him with numerous challenges in order to cause him to stumble and fail.

Part IV

- A. A basic foundation of Judaism is that thoughts harbor a powerful existential force in the spiritual world. (Rabbeinu Chaim Vital, *Sha'arei Kedusha*)
- B. Just as it is possible to join two objects in the physical world with a hammer and nails and fuse them into a single unit that allows a person to lift only one object, but actually lift both; so too, man's thoughts harbor the spiritual power to fuse two spiritual aspects.

When a person focuses on binding his soul to Hashem, a spiritual connection is automatically forged. Then, as he reflects that this connection draws spiritual light into his soul, his thoughts actually effect a real change in the spiritual world, infusing his soul with a greater spiritual glow.

Part V

- A. *Tehillim* 42 states: "As a deer desires for the water brook, so my soul will desire for You, Hashem. My soul thirsts for G-D, for the Living G-D; when will I come and see the Face of G-D?"
- B. This verse is elucidated as follows:

Hashem created the world in two categories: Animate and inanimate. Inanimate objects, as metals and stone, are inert; they do not require food or water. Animate objects, as plants and wildlife, require sustenance in order to survive. Plants wilt and eventually die without water; animals perish from lack of food and water.
- C. Like all animate objects, man also requires sustenance; but as he is composed of both a body and a soul, he requires both physical and spiritual nourishment.
- D. As the soul is an entirely spiritual creation, its sustenance is spiritual as well. It is not satiated with mere food and water like plants, wildlife and the corporeal body. The *Ramchal* explains that the essence of the soul is a sacred spiritual light that emanates from Hashem; thus the sustenance of the soul is additional spiritual light from Hashem. When the soul receives this vital

nourishment, it enjoys feelings of vigor and power; and when it is deprived of its sustenance, the soul feels empty, pained and anguished. (*Adir Ba'Marom*)

- E. This is the explanation of King David's poignant words, "As a deer desires after the water brook, so my soul desires for you Hashem." A deer instinctively gallops across the sandy desert in the heat of the day toward a refreshing spring of water, although there was no one who taught him to do so. Even if one were to offer it all the gold and silver in the world, it would still head toward the water. So too, the Jewish soul thirsts endlessly to connect to Hashem and for the added spiritual light that is so vital to its continuity.
- F. The Jewish soul acquires added spiritual light through Torah, prayer, fulfilling *mitzvos*, refraining from *aveiros* and assisting one's fellow man. It is these positive actions that endow the soul with life and spiritual power. However, when one affixes one's thoughts of spiritual connection to one's actions, the resulting spiritual light and added strength to one's soul are far greater, harboring the power to elevate one's very essence and way of life.

Chapter 2: The *Ohr HaChaim's* commentary on the beginning of *Parshas Acharei Mos* regarding the methods and significance of cleaving to Hashem Yisborach, and the supernatural powers that arise from this.

- A. The *Ohr HaChaim* presents a beautiful elucidation of the first verse in *Parshas Acharei Mos*, regarding the tragic demise of Aharon *HaKohein's* elder sons, Nadav and Avihu. (The actual death is described in *Vayikra* 10:1-2 and mentioned again in the first verse of *Acharei Mos*.)
- B. The *Ohr HaChaim's* commentary, which delineates clear steps to attaining spiritual growth in the service of Hashem, has the potential to arouse man to achieve *dveikus*. His words also encompass vital elements toward acquiring the special spiritual strengths and supernatural forces desired. Many of our righteous sages engaged in the daily study of this *Ohr HaChaim* in order to ensure that his message remained constantly in their minds; and there are many who attribute the lofty spiritual levels that they attained to the hours and effort that they expended immersed in this sacred teachings.
- C. The *Ohr HaChaim's* message in this section is deeply mystical and requires due explanation. Part I of this chapter will quote the sacred words of the *Ohr HaChaim* and Part II will illuminate their meaning.
- D. There are several existing versions of the exact text of this *Ohr HaChaim* with negligible variations in the wording; the author's choice of text is the most commonly accepted version.

Part I

Quote from the *Ohr HaChaim*

(This section is divided into paragraphs for the benefit and clarity of the reader.)

- A. The *Ohr HaChaim* writes: "And Hashem spoke to Moshe following the death of the two sons of Aharon, when they approached before Hashem; and they perished" (*Vayikra, Parshas Acharei Mos* 16:1).

The *Ohr HaChaim* elucidates: "Another way to explain this is that Hashem told Moshe the way of their deaths, which occurred because they 'approached before Hashem.' The meaning of this is that they approached the Upper Light with a love of all that is holy; and with this, they perished.

- B. "And this is the secret of the 'Death by Kiss' through which *tzaddikim* perish.
- C. "And their [deaths] is similar to the deaths of all the righteous; yet the difference is that [in the case of] the righteous, the Kiss approaches them; and they [Nadav and Avihu] approached the Kiss.
- D. "And this is why it says, 'As they approached before Hashem.'
- E. "And when [the verse] says, 'And they perished' with an extra letter *vav*; the Torah alludes to the magnificence of the love of the *tzaddikim*. Even as they felt that death was imminent, they could

not repress their urge for greater *dveikus*, pleasure, sweetness, closeness, love, longing, bliss until their souls departed. And one must delve into this in order to comprehend this.

- F. “It is impossible to fathom the value of this quality, nor can it be explained or encapsulated in words nor is it able to be grasped; and the mind is limited in its ability to realize this fully.
- G. “But one who attains partial understanding; the barriers that block his perception will be removed; and he will recognize it through its symptoms. For his enemy will turn from before him, and there will be a manifest result upon him to negate the force of that which opposes it and sustains it. And occasionally, [this force] will despise and will engage it in fierce battle; and this is the secret to the ecstasy of the prophets [*Shmuel* A 19:24]. And when this quality increases within him, his soul will despise the body; and it will depart it and return to the House of its Father.”
- H. In the next segment of his commentary on *Parshas Acharei Mos*, the *Ohr HaChaim* poetically prescribes how one may achieve these lofty spiritual levels, the feelings that accompany this dramatic achievement, and the steps one must take in order to attain this lofty goal. However, the *Ohr HaChaim* conceals these profound and insightful secrets of the Torah in an elaborate, eloquent and brilliant poetic description that has been fathomed only by the greatest of our sages after concerted effort and intense reflection. This outstanding section of the great and holy *Ohr HaChaim’s* commentary is beyond the scope of translation and must be meticulously read and analyzed numerous times in the original Hebrew in order to merit grasping the dazzling secrets contained within it.
- I. The *Ohr HaChaim* then continues, “And then the surplus will be crowns of kings and their thrones.
- J. “For there is life to life, of which Moshe said, ‘And you shall choose life’ (*Parshas Nitzavim* 30:19). [The Hebrew verse uses the word, ‘*Ba’chaim—Life.*’] The letter *beis* is a ‘referring *beis*,’ and precludes the regular life experienced by the masses. And the Living G-D shall be blessed, as He endowed this capacity to His Chosen Nation.’

Part II

The *Ohr HaChaim*, Expanded

(The paragraphs in this section correspond to the above section)

- A. *The Ohr HaChaim* describes the sequence of events leading to the death of Aharon’s two sons and how their deaths occurred. He writes that Nadav and Avihu approached Hashem with supreme *dveikus*; they bound their souls to the Upper Light with a spiritual connection that was so extreme that their corporeal bodies could no longer withstand the force of the radiance spurred by their drawing near to Hashem. The intensity of this *dveikus* compelled their bodies and souls to separate, which inevitably resulted in their physical deaths.
- B. The *Ohr HaChaim* also expands upon the concept of *Misas Neshika*, the ‘death by kiss’ merited by the righteous (see *Bava Basra* 17a). This unique form of death intensifies the soul’s

connection to Hashem until it reaches the point that the body can no longer bear it; and the body and soul are forced to separate.

- C. Notwithstanding, there is a difference between the *Misas Neshika* experienced by the *tzaddikim*, as mentioned in *Gemara Bava Basra 17a*, and the one that preempted the deaths of Nadav and Avihu. The former occurs when Hashem approaching the *tzaddik* with ultimate *dveikus* and an Upper Light that forces their deaths, whereas Nadav and Avihu, in contrast, endeavored to approach this Light on their own accord.
- D. The *Ohr HaChaim* notes that the first verse in *Parshas Acharei Mos* alludes to the above in the words, 'Following the death of the two sons of Aharon, *when they approached before Hashem.*' Indeed, they instigated their own demise by choosing to draw close to Hashem.
- E. The *Ohr HaChaim* expounds upon the letter *vav* in the word "*va'yamusu—and they perished.*"

The Torah could have employed the shorter word '*meisu—and they died*', which is in the past tense. Grammatically, the word '*va'yamusu*' is written in the future tense, with the prefix letter *vav* added to change the inflection to the past tense. The *Ohr HaChaim* focuses on the Torah's usage of the more complicated past tense (with the correcting *vav*) as opposed to the simpler past tense.

The *Ohr HaChaim* explains that the complex form of the word alludes to the fact that when Aharon's two sons achieved the desired level of *dveikus*, they understood that if they were to continue experiencing the *dveikus* for any longer, they would surely perish. Still, despite their clear knowledge of impending death, they chose to sacrifice their lives in order to prolong the supreme experience of *dveikus*. The added letter *vav*, which converts the future tense to the past tense, hints to the future, as Nadav and Avihu were cognizant of their imminent deaths.

- F. It is impossible to encapsulate this lofty level of *dveikus* in words, as it is a feeling, an experience of thought and emotion that cannot be described. Yet, such *dveikus* fosters an existential spiritual reality of connecting the soul to the Upper Light; and this connection has profound effects on a person's soul that are beyond human comprehension. Thus, there are no words or natural ways to explain the essence of *dveikus*; and we have no choice but to simply discuss the parts that surround it as best as we can. *Dveikus* is an unparalleled, unfathomable experience for most people; one who merited attaining it can understand it, but is unable to describe it to others.
- G. *Dveikus*, the soul's intense spiritual connection to the Upper Light, conflicts with the body which is a physical creation. The corporeal nature of the body interferes with the soul's ability to absorb the vast Upper Light.

The *Ohr HaChaim* divides this into two categories:

1. The ultimate soul connection to the Upper Light conflicts with the body and eventually instigates physical death. This connection is an absolute spiritual binding to the Light which cannot be tolerated by the body and forces the soul to flee from it, as demonstrated by *Misas Neshika* and the death of Aharon's two sons.

2. A slightly-lower level of connection that does not cause total conflict between the body and soul and permits the soul to remain within the confines of the body. However, the intense connection still causes friction between the body and soul, which is expressed as the ecstasy of the prophets (see *Shmuel A* 19:24).

The writings of the *Ohr HaChaim* seem to indicate that there is yet a tertiary level of soul affiliation with the Upper Light, which is an even lower level than the one described above. This third level also instigates a mild friction between the body and soul, but not to the extent of the ecstasy experienced by the prophets.

- H. Throughout the generations, our sages have been challenged by the enigmatic and mystical insights recorded in this magnificent segment of the *Ohr HaChaim*. Some who indeed merited fathoming his teachings have endeavored to reveal this great light of understanding to the nation in their own elucidations of the *Ohr HaChaim's* inspiring words. A partial listing of these inspiring works include the *Ohr HaGanuz*, *Segulas Moshe*, *Arvei Nachal*, *Ma'amar Mordechai*, *Ner La'Maor*, *Otzar HaChaim Mitzvah 125*, *Ohr HaBahir*, *Marganisa Tava*, *Eidus B'Yaakov*, and *Bikurei Aviv*.

[The *Arvei Nachal* asserts that the *Ohr HaChaim's* message refers to Rav Chaim Vital's writings in *Sefer Sha'ar HaKedusha* Vol. 3 regarding the connection between the soul and the Upper Worlds.]

- I. "And then the surplus will be crowns of kings and their thrones."

Previously, the *Ohr HaChaim* describes meriting a vastly spiritual Upper Light, an indescribable radiance. Yet, here, he also writes that one who merits this light likewise merits many other conceivable supernatural gifts. These endowments are likened to the crowns and thrones of kings, as they are merely the ornaments of the light, but not the core desire.

These conceivable gifts are not the lofty levels discussed by the *Ohr HaChaim*, but rather special qualities that accompany them. On the contrary, the ideal soul-connection to Hashem is greater than any accompanying gift. This soul-connection is one that is known only to Hashem; only He can express or describe it. (See *Sefer Leshem Shvo V'Achlama* Vol. 2 page 38, which discusses the levels of *dveikus* that may be achieved at the time of learning Torah and fulfilling the *mitzvos*. This *dveikus* stimulates a lofty spiritual rectification that is even greater than the rectification acquired through the actual learning and fulfilling of *mitzvos*.)

- J. "For there is life to life, of which Moshe said, 'And you shall choose life' (*Parshas Nitzavim* 30:19). [The Hebrew verse uses the word, '*Ba'chaim*—Life.'] The letter *beis* is a 'referring *beis*,' precluding the regular life experienced by the masses. And the Living G-D shall be blessed, as He endowed his Chosen Nation with this capacity.'

It would seem that the *Ohr HaChaim's* message is that just as natural life requires both physical body and spiritual soul, the spiritual soul being that which endows life to the physical body; the same applies to the Spiritual Light that enters man when he attains *dveikus*, relative to the soul. The Upper Light is as a soul to man's soul, which takes the form of the body during periods of *dveikus*. This is why he writes, 'For there is life to life, and it says regarding this life, 'And you shall choose life.' The word *ba'chaim*—the life' is punctuated with a *pasach* beneath the *beis*.

This *pasach* is similar to a *hey ha'yedia*—the referring *hey*. Indeed, the absolute fulfillment of the *mitzvah* to ‘choose life within life’ is the greatest spiritual level attainable.

The *Ohr HaChaim* then concludes, ‘And the Living G-D shall be blessed, as He endowed this capacity to His Chosen Nation.’

Part III

Two Important Points Gleaned from the *Ohr HaChaim*

- A. The *Ohr HaChaim’s* commentary on *Parshas Acharei Mos* contains two fundamental lessons:
1. *Dveikus hamachshava* (cleaving to Hashem in thought) is not an abstract concept. Indeed, the period of *dveikus* creates an awesome reality of the Jewish soul actually connecting to Hashem Yisborach.
 2. When a Jew merits a period of soul-connection and *dveikus*, a new soul penetrates his regular soul. This loftier soul-time, which encompasses an intrinsic connection to Hashem, surpasses the connection that can be attained by the regular soul.

The above two points contain profound messages that allow each and every Jew to ascend the ladder of spiritual growth and serving Hashem.

- B. As prophecy was appropriated from the world centuries ago, many of the spiritual stages described by the *Ohr HaChaim* are unattainable in this day and age. However, his main points regarding the acquisition of lofty spiritual levels certainly remain applicable.

Part IV

The *Ohr HaChaim’s* Commentary on *Parshas Bereishis* Regarding *Ruach HaKodesh*

- A. *Parshas Bereishis* 6:3 states: “And Hashem said, ‘My spirit will not judge man forever, as they are only flesh; and their days will be one-hundred and twenty years.’”

The *Ohr HaChaim* writes: “This verse requires clarification; and our Sages elucidated it in many forms. Although the simple meaning of the verse remains ambiguous, it would seem that, previously, Hashem interacted with His creations and judged them overtly. [As written,] ‘And Hashem said to the Snake... and to the Woman... And to the Man He said... And Hashem said to Kayin, ‘Why?’... And Hashem said, ‘Where is Hevel?’... But when mankind increased their sins, Hashem said, ‘I will not judge man face to face, to judge him directly.’ The deeper meaning of the word *Ruchi*—My Spirit—is *Shchinaso*—His Presence. Indeed, man will no longer be able to achieve this spiritual level (*Bereishis Rabba* Ch. 26:7).

- B. “We find that in accordance to man’s actions, his spiritual level descends lower and lower. Indeed, initially, Hashem would rebuke man to his face; and all creations merited the spiritual level of prophets. However, as the verse states, ‘And it was when *hechel ha’odom*—man began.’ The word

hechel derives from the same root as *chillul*—defilement. As man repeatedly defiled his soul, he plummeted from the status of a prophet. Yet, eventually, righteous people sprouted in the land and restored the crown of holiness to its Master.

“Yet, when the Temple was destroyed, all visions of prophecy were eliminated, albeit we still remained with *ruach hakodesh* (a sacred spirit). But then *Bnei Yisrael’s* eyes were concealed, and there was no one to even merit the *ruach hakodesh*. This is a terrible tragedy for *Bnei Yisrael* that there is nothing greater for those who thirst to revel in the spirit of our Father in heaven and revive our spirits. This curse first began in the times of the Flood.”

The Ohr HaChaim then explains the continuation of the verse, ‘As they are flesh’ (see there.)

C. “When the Temple was destroyed, visions of prophecy were eliminated.”

Bava Basra 12 states: “Rabbi Yochanan said, ‘From the day that the Temple was destroyed, prophecy was appropriated from the prophets and given to fools and children.’

Yuma 9b; *Sotah* 48b; and *Sanhedrin* 11a shed light on this concept: “From the time that the last prophets, Chaggai, Zecharya and Malachi, passed away, *ruach hakodesh* abandoned Yisrael, but they continued to use *Bas Kol*.”

The *ruach hakodesh* mentioned in these *Gemara* apparently refers to prophecy, as Chaggai, Zecharya and Malachi were legitimate prophets who lived in the initial era of the second Temple and whose books are included in *Trei Asar*. If so, the *Gemara* in *Bava Basra* cannot be elucidated as pertaining to the First Temple era since there were clearly several prophets who lived during the era of the Second Temple as well. (Moreover, Yirmiyahu and Yechezkel also relayed prophecies after the destruction of the Temple.)

However, it is known that prophecy was appropriated from the nation long before the destruction of the Second Temple. Thus, how can one clarify the *Gemara* in *Bava Basra*? (See *ibid Bava Basra, Bi’urei Aggados*).

D. In the quote described in Paragraph 2, the *Ohr HaChaim* laments that *ruach hakodesh* has vastly diminished in recent generations. In fact, he writes that the greatest tragedy of our modern era is that we are thirsting for the scent of our Father in heaven to revive our spirits.

Rav Chaim Vital writes that the punishment to Odom for eating from the Tree of Knowledge was the removal of the *nefesh-ruach-neshama* aspects of *atzilus*, which is also referred to as the radiance of Odom HaRishon. This was the fulfillment of Hashem’s decree, ‘For on the day that you eat from it, you will die.’ Indeed, there is no worse death than the removal of the three levels of *atzilus*. (*Shaar HaGilgulim*, Preface 31)

The connection between *ruach hakodesh* and the removal of *atzilus* is that both represent a deficiency in the lofty spiritual powers of the soul that connect man to Hashem in the closest possible way. (See Rav Chaim Vital, *Sefer HaChezyonos* regarding his dream about the Arizal and Mahari di Kuriel.)

Part V
The Ohr HaChaim's Commentary on *Parshas Bechukosai*

- A. The *Ohr HaChaim's* commentary on *Parshas Acharei Mos* compliments his commentary on the verse in *Parshas Bechukosai*, "And I will place my dwelling place amongst them, and my soul will not detest you."
- B. In *Parshas Bechukosai*, he shares the astounding revelation that "The whole fact that it is possible to draw a Jewish soul to the abyss of this lowly world; the root of everything is with the removal of an aspect of the G-Dly light intrinsic in his soul. Through this, it is possible for materialism to penetrate" (see there). This fundamental knowledge allows a Jew to remove material distractions by augmenting the G-Dly light within his soul.
- C. A second monumental lesson gleaned from the words of the *Ohr HaChaim* is that the magnitude of a prophecy is not necessarily contained in the message that the prophet is bound to relay to the nation, but rather in the achievement of intense *dveikus* to Hashem. *Dveikus* to Hashem is the greatest imaginable experience, so intense and lofty that it cannot be encapsulated in words; and the message of the prophecy is a mere by-product of the experience of *dveikus* as opposed to the core of it.
- D. The Ramchal concurs with the *Ohr HaChaim* in *Sefer Derech Hashem*, Vol. 3 Ch. 3:3 in his section regarding prophecy. (Several *Rishonim* assert similarly as well.)
- E. The understanding that prophecy is secondary to achieving *dveikus* has practical implications on life. The *Tur* in *Ohr HaChaim*, Ch. 98 (Laws of Prayer) wrote that the early pious ones would wait one hour before commencing prayers, thereby meriting to ascend to a spiritual level similar to that of prophecy.

If the goal of these pious Jews was to achieve prophecy, then they were clearly unsuccessful, as it is known that prophecy was appropriated from the world immediately following the period of Prophets. It is impossible that these righteous Jews could have merited hearing the word of Hashem.
- F. However, if one appreciates that the loftier aspect of prophecy is the achievement of *dveikus* and solidifying the soul's relationship with Hashem through shackles of love and commitment, then one can understand that these pious Jews did, in fact, ascend to the spiritual level called 'prophecy,' albeit there was no message to deliver to the nation.
- G. This vital concept underscores the prime significance of an infinitely close-connection to Hashem Yisborach and of spilling one's soul in heartfelt prayers before him.
- H. *Sefer Leshem Shvo Achlama* Vol. 2 p. 38 describes that the experience of *dveikus* serves as ultimate spiritual rectification, and one who does not merit *dveikus* cannot atone for all his sins, even if he fulfills all the *mitzvos* in the Torah with absolute purity. Indeed, absolute spiritual rectification for the soul can only result from *dveikus* (see *Leshem Shvo Achlama; Divrei Yaakov Kabbalas HaGr"a* Vol. 2 in his explanation of the *Leshem Shvo Achlama*.)

- I. The *Ohr HaChaim* also indicates that the many miracles and wonders enacted by the righteous *tzaddikim* of all generations was also a consequence of their lofty experience of *dveikus*, as written, “And its surplus will be the crowns of kings and their thrones.”

Megilla 27a cites the verse in *Melachim B Ch. 25* regarding the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem: “‘And he burned the House of Hashem and the palace of the king and all the homes of Jerusalem; and the Great House he burned in a fire.’ ‘And the great house.’ Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Yehoshua *ben* Levi taught. One said, ‘A place where they make Torah great’; one said, ‘A place where they make prayers great.’ Torah, as written, “Hashem desires for his righteousness, to make the Torah great and glorify it. Prayers, as written, ‘Relate of the great things that Elisha did, and Elisha served in prayer.’” [*Melachim B Ch.8:4*]

The *Gemara* is ambiguous, as the second verse seems to discuss the miracles that Elisha performed. Indeed, Elisha *HaNavi* only merited performing miracles because of his earnest prayer, which explains why the *Gemara* relates the miracles and wonders to a house of prayer.

It emerges that miracles are mere byproducts of *dveikus* to Hashem. Elisha, who immersed himself in prayer and attained absolute *dveikus* through his prayers, was capable of performing some of the greatest miracle sin history. (See Ch. 17 below for an expanded explanation of this concept.)

Addendum

- A. The *Me’or Va’Shemesh* comments on the *Ohr HaChaim’s* description of Nadav and Avihu’s deaths in his explanation of the concept of *mesirus nefesh* (sacrificing oneself for the sake of Hashem). He expounds that there are times when man desires such an intense experience of *dveikus* and connection to his Creator that his soul separates completely from the body. (See *Me’or Va’Shemesh*.)
- B. See the *Baal HaTanya’s Sefer Likutei Torah, Parshas Re’eh* and *Ha’azinu* for more regarding the above. In contrast to the *Me’or Va’Shemesh*, this work does not discuss the concept of perishing for the sake of *dveikus*, and his writings are reminiscent of the *Ohr HaChaim*.
- C. Although in this day and age, it is nearly impossible to arrive at this ultimately lofty spiritual level of *dveikus*; the teachings of the *Me’or Va’Shemesh* underscore that it is still commendable to strive toward this goal.
- D. The above follows the *Kisvei Ha’Ar”i, Sha’ar HaKavanos* in his elucidation of *Kri’as Shema*, explanation 6, p.24 column 2 regarding a Jew’s obligation to reflect upon sacrificing one’s life in order to sanctify the Name of Hashem while reciting *Kri’as Shema*. (See also *Sha’ar HaKavanos*, elucidation of *Kri’as Shema She’al HaMitta*, explanation 5, p. 95 column 1 regarding focusing on sacrificing one’s life in order to submit to the four capital punishments delivered by *Beis Din* (Halachic Court) in order to atone for one’s sins. This subject is also discussed at length in the *Zohar, Bereishis 124*; *ibid Bamidbar 195*; *Sha’alos U’Teshuvos HaRashba Vol. 5 Ch.55*; *Sefer HaKavanos Vol. 1* regarding thoughts during *Kri’as Shema*, etc.

Chapter 3: The *Mesilas Yesharim* regarding the steps that convey a Jew to the praiseworthy spiritual level of fearing sin.

Part I

Excerpt from *Mesilas Yesharim* Chapter 25

- A. The *Ramchal* in *Mesilas Yesharim* describes the path toward acquiring *yiras Hashem* (fear of Hashem) at its loftiest level, which is called *yiras cheit* (fear of sin). The means to acquire this level of fear is reflecting upon two major concepts:
1. “Hashem’s Presence is everywhere in the world.
 2. “Hashem observes and knows everything. There is nothing hidden from His eyes, whether big or infinitesimal; and He sees both the negligible and small and the giant and great; and He understands everything.
- B. “The Prophets state: ‘The whole world is filled with His Honor’ (*Yeshaya* 6:3) and ‘Behold, I fill the heavens and the earth’ (*Yirmiyahu* 23:24). The Scriptures state: ‘Who is as Hashem Who dwells on high, Who looks down to see the heavens and the earth?’ (*Tehillim* 113:6-7) and ‘For Hashem is Great, yet has respect for the lowly; but He is remote from the proud’ (*Tehillim* 138:6).”

The former two verses cited by the *Mesilas Yesharim* attest to his first foundation that Hashem’s Presence fills the world constantly; and the latter two prove the second foundation that Hashem watches and directs every situation and occurrence in the world.

- C. “And when it becomes clear to him that Hashem’s Presence exists wherever he may be; fear and awe of Hashem will automatically follow, as he will fear of stumbling in his actions or that his actions will not be proper in the Eyes of Hashem. This is as *Chazal* taught ‘Know what is above you: An Eye that sees; an Ear that hears; and all your actions are inscribed in the Book’ (*Avos* 2:1). As Hashem observes everything, sees all, and hears all; it is obvious that each and every action—both positive and negative—makes a lasting impression and is inscribed in His Book.
- D. “Man has difficulty fathoming this vast concept, yet he can absorb it properly through constant reflection and contemplation. As this concept is remote from man’s mindset, the intellect cannot easily depict it without concerted thought and rumination. And even once it is depicted in the mind, the vision will swiftly disappear if man does not persist and contemplate it frequently. Hence, just as constant reflection allows one to acquire constant fear of Hashem; so too, diverting attention and ceasing to contemplate this causes man to lose the fear that he has acquired.
- E. “This is as Hashem commanded the kings: ‘And [the Torah] will be with him; and he will read from it all the days of his life, so he will learn to fear Hashem’ (*Devarim* 17:19). From here, we learn that one can acquire fear only through constantly reading and learning the Torah. The verse states, ‘So he will *learn* to fear,’ instead of ‘So he will fear.’ Indeed, fear of Hashem is not ingrained in man’s nature, but remote from him due to the physicality of the senses. It can only be acquired through perpetual, continuous study of the Torah and its sacred ways.

- F. “Thus, man should reflect and contemplate these things at all times—when he sits and when he walks; when he lays down to sleep and when he arises, until he embeds the truth of it firmly in his mind: The truth that Hashem’s Presence is everywhere at all times, and that we literally stand before Him at every hour. Then, he will fear Him sincerely; and this is what Dovid HaMelech beseeched when he said, ‘Teach me, Hashem, Your ways; I will along Your truth. Unify my heart to fear Your Name.’”

Part II

***Mesilas Yesharim* Chapter 25—Elucidated**

- A. The above excerpt from the *Mesilas Yesharim* contains vital foundations of our nation’s beliefs that harbor the potential to lead man to attain the loftiest spiritual levels imaginable. It is recommended that one study these words of the *Mesilas Yesharim* repeatedly, as they will surely instigate a positive change in one’s soul and spiritual path, especially if one merits attaining a deep understanding of their inherent meaning.
- B. The following is a brief summary of the *Mesilas Yesharim* above:
1. There are two primary foundations toward achieving fear of Hashem. The first is that Hashem’s Presence is everywhere, and the recognition that man stands constantly before Him. The second foundation is that every individual action—both positive and negative—is closely monitored by Hashem, and that man is accountable for every detail of his every action, which is meticulously inscribed in the heavenly Books.
 2. Reflecting upon these two fundamentals of our beliefs safeguards man from sin. As such, man should reflect upon these beliefs constantly.
- C. The advantage to perpetually contemplating these two fundamentals of our belief is that the mere notion that Hashem is observing us at every moment and marking our positive and negative deeds causes fear of Hashem to penetrate our hearts and motivates us to carefully guard our actions from sin.

The *Rama* wrote in *Orach Chaim* Ch.1:1: “I place Hashem before me always. This is a vital rule in the service of the righteous,” as one cannot compare the behavior of a person when he is alone to his behavior when in the presence of a king.

The Vilna Gaon connects another Kabbalistic concept to this topic. He writes that for every moment that man reflects upon Hashem, he merits additional parts to his soul that he did not previously possess; and this is what sanctifies a Jew with lofty purity. (See *Zohar, Parshas Pekudei* 16)

Chapter 4: Hashem's omnipotent Presence in this world.

Part I

A. One of the qualities that lead man to attain the greatest spiritual level is the recognition that Hashem is Present everywhere in the world. (See *Iggeres HaRamban, Kisvei HaRamban* beginning with '*Terem e'e'ne ani shogeg.*') The *Nefesh HaChaim* discusses this concept at great length and emphasizes that this recognition leads man to attain supernatural strengths and achievements in Torah.

B. *Nefesh HaChaim Shaar A* and C discuss two fundamental points:

The first point regards Hashem's actions in this world: Hashem activates everything in this world, and there is no force in the world other than Him.

The second point is that Hashem created the world in a way that He perpetually causes it to exist at each and every moment of time. If Hashem wished to destroy the world, He could do so by pausing for an infinitesimal moment from His constant desire to create and sustain it. Hashem stimulates every action and experience in the world and in man's life; and the very fact that man and the universe continue to exist is only a result of Hashem constantly willing them to be.

The recognition of the above two concepts inspires a Jew to attain greater *dveikus* to Hashem Yisborach. (See *Gilyonei Leshem Shvo V'Achlama* p. 307 regarding the Splitting of the Sea.)

C. There are also two essential principles regarding Hashem's existence:

1. Hashem's Presence is everywhere, always.
2. There is none other than Hashem.

There is a famous question regarding the second principle: If there is none other than Hashem, how, then, is there a concept of a choice between *mitzvah* and *aveirah* in the world?

It is possible that the *Nefesh HaChaim's* intent is that although Hashem did endow man with the ability to choose, He did not bequeath the force of existence to any creation; and He recreates them at each and every moment through His desire for their existence. As such, nothing in this world is independent of Hashem as its very existence is contingent upon Hashem's desire for it to exist.

D. The *Nefesh HaChaim* thus teaches that in order to attain absolute *dveikus*, one must depict in one's mind that there is absolutely nothing in the world—even negligible —except Hashem.

E. The question may also be resolved with the understanding that absolute *dveikus* is the binding of man's thoughts to the concept that Hashem encompasses all. Although there is a very negligible concept of things created, the ideal level of *dveikus* is when man chooses not to focus on this at all but rather on the omnipotence of Hashem alone. Such a level of *dveikus* can only be achieved by focusing solely on Hashem and regarding those things created as nothing at all.

Another way to explain this is that, unfortunately, man does not perceive Hashem's Presence in the world, whereas he does constantly perceive the minor forces of the things created—which is

why he is barred from attaining that lofty level of thought. Vision often overcomes knowledge, and the sights and scenes to which man is constantly exposed prevent him from perceiving the truth. Hence, in order to overcome this barrier, man must view things created as if they do not exist at all.

- F. In summary, there are five aspects regarding Hashem's omnipotence in the world: The first two regard Hashem's actions, as mentioned in Paragraph B; the next two regard Hashem's Presence, as mentioned in Paragraph C; and the last regards man's perception of it all as mentioned in the above two paragraphs.

According to the *Nefesh HaChaim*, it is these five aspects that lead man to acquire spiritual greatness—whether via his ability to instigate a miracle or salvation or via the removal of spiritual barriers which is also a supernatural event. (See *Gilyonei Leshem Shvo V'Achlama* p. 307)

- G. The explanation of *Nefesh HaChaim Shaar A* and *C* seems clear; however, the author himself inscribes that it is impossible to fully grasp these concepts. (Thus, we must conclude that we are either mistaken in our explanation or that the *Nefesh HaChaim* wrote this in regard to a different question that is not addressed by this book.)

Notwithstanding, it is obvious that achieving *dveikus* is hugely beneficial. (*Sefarim* state that many people are challenged by the task of focusing on the above concepts and achieving *dveikus* due to myriad distractions. However the task becomes easier when one is engaged in serving Hashem.)

Part II

- A. *Nefesh HaChaim Shaar C* Ch. 12 describes the significance of *dveikus* and enhancing it in order to merit supernatural powers.

“Indeed, this is a great thing and propitious *segula* (auspicious tool) that allows one to remove and annul all decrees and negative wishes, so they will not control him and will make no impression at all. When man commits in his heart to say, ‘Hashem is the true G-D and there is none other than He, nor any force in this world or the universe at all, and everything is filled only with his Unity;’ eliminates any other thoughts from his heart; does not account for any other force and power in the world; subjugates himself and connects his thought in purity only to the One and Only Master, blessed is He; then Hashem will decree that any negative forces and aspirations that do exist in this world will have no effect on him at all.”

- B. The *Nefesh HaChaim* explains the meaning of the *Zohar* 12a: “The fourth *mitzvah* is to know that Hashem, may He be blessed, is G-D and to include all the spiritual lights that are hinted in the Name *Elokim* in the upper light that is alluded to in the name *Havaya*, and to know that there is only One force in the world that is Hashem Yisborach. Then, even the lofty negative spiritual forces will be removed from this world and will be unable to render damage or diminish the positive bounty to the world.”

- C. The *Nefesh HaChaim* continues: “And he will also decree something, and it will be fulfilled; and he will initiate wonders and miracles that transcend the laws of nature, as he subjugates and connects the pure, enduring faith of his heart in truth only to Hashem, to Whom all is equal—whether it adheres to or counteracts the laws of nature. This is as we find with Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa who spoke and caused nature to accede to his will at all times, as described in *Taanis* 25a: ‘The One Who said that oil should burn shall command the vinegar to burn.’ This *Gemara* underscores that, to Hashem, all is equal; the laws of nature do not possess any power in of themselves. Thus, Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, who recognized this, was capable of performing many miracles, as described by the *Gemara*.”
- D. The *Nefesh HaChaim* likewise describes that Moshe Rabbeinu merited attaining his exalted spiritual stature as he directed his thoughts constantly to this very belief. Chapter 14 states that this lofty thought elevates man’s prayers, affords his prayers extraordinary powers, and vastly augments man’s power for learning and absorbing Torah. Obviously, the extent to which a Jew embraces this concept in depth and time is the extent to which his own powers increase in this world. The Brisker Rav mentioned this point repeatedly in his teachings.
- E. This section has revealed the awesome strength and force that arise from man’s reflection on the singular greatness and omnipotence of Hashem in the world. In order to fully grasp and absorb this truth, one should intently study Ch. 4 Part A above. Moreover, after one has studied and grasped this section in depth, one should continue reviewing the section time and again, each time with greater depth and intensity, to order to truly attain the lofty level of spirituality that one desires.

Addendum

- A. *Sefer Me’Ein HaChochmah*, an ancient work printed inside *Yalkut HaRo’im*, is cited by the *Pardes* in *Shaar Mahus V’Hanhaga*; *Emek HaMelech*, *Shaar K’Dor Hit’hiru*, Ch. 3; and *Sha’arei Gan Eden*, *Sha’ar Derech Ha’Emes*, Ch. 1, *Derech* 50. (More recently, it has been reprinted in *Yalkut HaRo’im HaGadol*).

This *sefer* lists various means of achieving the loftiest spiritual levels, to the extent that man can even understand the conversation of the heavenly angels. (The capacity to even overhear the talk of the angels requires an exalted spiritual level; understanding their conversation is even greater. The latter spiritual level is mentioned in both *Sukkah* 28a and *Bava Basra* 134a regarding the lofty spiritual level of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai.) This *sefer* also lists the step-by-step order of spiritual ascension through which man can attain this goal (see source).

- B. He concludes with the sage counsel: “...Until you stand in total clarity, and your mind will settle with lofty thoughts, as there is no greater level than this.” These words emphasize that fathoming the speech of angels is the loftiest spiritual level attainable and that all other spiritual levels are merely the preparatory stages toward achieving this divine goal. This concurs with the *Nefesh HaChaim* which also states that this is the greatest spiritual level of all.

Chapter 5: The *Bach's* commentary on *Orach Chaim* Ch. 47 regarding the *mitzvah* of Torah study; an explanation of the thoughts that should accompany Torah study; and *Sefer Sha'ar Ruach HaKodesh* regarding this topic.

Part I

- A. Diligence in Torah study is the prime factor leading a Jew to attain the loftiest levels of spirituality. The Maggid (angel) who appeared to the Beis Yosef (Rav Yosef Karo) frequently reiterated that if he wished to merit miracles and wonders that transcend the laws of nature, he must increase his diligence in learning. The Beis Yosef, one of the greatest of our *Rishonim*, was a revered Torah scholar who undoubtedly invested endless hours in diligent study; yet the Maggid still emphasized this point to him, underscoring the significance of Torah study. (Chapter 12 below cites several of the points relayed by the Maggid Meisharim to the Beis Yosef.) See also *Pirkei Avos* Ch. 6, which lists the lofty spiritual levels that man achieves through learning Torah *lishmah* (for the sake of learning), and *Nefesh HaChaim Shaar D* Ch. 11 and onward which expounds upon this.
- B. *Maseches Nedarim* adds an interesting point regarding diligent Torah study that leads man to attain lofty spiritual levels: "Rav Yehuda said, Rav said: 'What is the meaning of the verse, "Who is the wise man who will understand this and to whom the Mouth of Hashem spoke to him and will tell why the land was destroyed?' This question was posed to the sages, prophets, even to the heavenly angels, but it was unanswered until Hashem Himself replied, as written, 'And Hashem, "For they forsook My Torah that I gave before them, and they did not hearken to My Voice; and did not follow in its ways.' What is the meaning of the phrase, 'And they did not hearken to My Voice and did not follow in its ways?' Rav Yehuda says, Rav says: 'That they did not bless the Torah first.'"
- C. The *Bach* elucidates the *Tur* in *Orach Chaim* Ch. 47: "It is difficult to understand why Hashem chose to punish them so severely for not reciting the blessings of the Torah, a seemingly minor transgression."
- D. He explains that Hashem's purpose in creating the world was so mankind would engage constantly in Torah study in order to fortify our souls in the spirituality and holiness that derives from Torah. "Hence, Hashem presented the Torah to Yisrael as a gift, so it would never be forgotten, and so our souls and the 248 bones and 365 tendons of our bodies, which correspond respectively to the 248 imperative commandments and 365 transgressions, would cling in totality to Him. If *Bnei Yisrael* would indeed engage in Torah to this extent, then they would serve as a vehicle and sanctuary for Hashem's Presence in the world, and the Divine Presence would rest constantly within us. Then, the entire land would radiate in purity from His Honor and there would be an unbreakable connection between the congregations above in the heaven and congregation below in this world, and it would all be one large resting place for Hashem.
- E. "Yet tragically, it is now prevalent that man only studies Torah in order to attain material wealth and physical pleasure, to grasp business laws, to gloat arrogantly and display his knowledge. This is instead of learning in order to fortify the soul and induce it to cleave in purity and spirituality to Hashem and draw the Divine Presence into the world with the goal of exalting one's soul after

death. This trend has rent a terrible breach between man and Hashem and caused the Divine Presence to abandon this world. Thus, the Divine Presence has fled, and the land remains only physical, lacking holiness and sanctity; and this is what actually caused the destruction and loss of our holy Temple.”

- F. “Hashem describes the reason for the destruction in the above *Gemara*: ‘...My Torah is a Torah of Truth, which I bestowed upon them as a gift not so they should learn and forget. I also gave them a reason and explanation for all that is written there, as written, “As I gave you as a set table, etc.”’

“*Chazal* elucidate the verse, ‘And these are the statutes that you shall place before you,’ as Hashem’s intent was that *Bnei Yisrael* should bind themselves to the essence of Hashem’s Torah—a Torah of sanctity—which would then cause the Divine Presence to dwell in their midst. Yet, *Bnei Yisrael* abandoned the Torah and did not follow in its ways; they did not progress along the rungs of the Torah’s spiritual ladder with the goal of binding their souls to the essence of the Torah’s sanctity.”

The meaning of the phrase, ‘They did not walk in its ways,’ is that when they recited the blessing of ‘Giving the Torah,’ they did not focus on Hashem’s intention in giving the Torah. Indeed, they did not even begin to go in its ways by commencing with the proper focus in the blessing. Thus, they also failed to express gratitude to Hashem Yisborach for granting us the Torah which allows us cleave to its sanctity and Hashem’s Divine Presence.

The *Bach* continues: “The meaning of the next blessing, ‘Who chose us,’ is to express gratitude to Hashem for drawing us to Mount Sinai and granting us the Torah—His most prized creation with which He delights Himself always—so our souls can cling to the essence of the Torah’s sanctity and spirituality and draw the Divine Presence into our midst. Yet, we did not heed the words of this blessing and failed to engage in the study of Torah *lishmah*. Thus, we were punished as the Divine Presence abandoned us and our land was subsequently destroyed, ravaged as a desert and forsaken, with no passersby. With the Divine Presence departed, the land became barren, absolutely physical with no vestige of spirituality. There was no one to pass through; the Divine Presence’s holiness had absconded and returned to the heavens.”

Part II

- A. In order to better understand the message of the *Bach*, it is recommended to review Chapter 1 above which discusses the concept of Hakaddosh Baruch Hu, the Torah and Yisrael being One. An in-depth review of this fundamental concept sheds light on the *Bach*’s statement in reference to the *mitzvah* of Torah study. He explains that the learning itself causes the radiance intrinsic in man’s soul and the radiance of the Torah to merge into one, which causes a vast bounty of spiritual radiance to spill forth from Hashem Yisborach directly onto the soul.
- B. On a practical level, this becomes easier when one focuses on two general points while learning Torah:

1. The act of learning Torah should bind one's soul to Hashem Yisborach. (In actuality, this means that the learning should augment the soul's connection to Hashem, as there is a perpetual connection between man's soul and Hashem.)
 2. The learning should cause an upper spiritual radiance to shine down from Hashem onto the soul.
- C. Rabbeinu Chaim Vital's *Sefer Sha'ar Ruach HaKodesh* 11a quotes the teachings of the Arizal: "Regarding Torah study, my master, z"l (may his memory be blessed), taught that the essence of man's thoughts and intentions while learning Torah is that it should lead him to spiritual attainments and sanctity. This concept embraces the fact that man's entire focus should be to connect his soul and bind it to its exalted Source via the Torah. Man is obligated to bear this thought in mind constantly, so it will allow him to attain complete spiritual rectification which is the ultimate realization of Hashem's purpose in creating mankind and commanding them to engage in the study of Torah."
- D. Understanding the Arizal's statement in the paragraph above requires familiarity with fundamental points in introductory Kabbalah. However, Paragraph 2 above already includes a large portion of the points listed in *Shaar Ruach HaKodesh*, which will be beneficial in the quest to acquiring the spiritual levels mentioned in *Shaar Ruach HaKodesh* that are attained through these intentions.
- E. The *Bach's* intent is not to add a new perspective in regard to learning Torah, but rather to highlight that the foremost purpose of learning Torah is to bind man to Hashem and allow him to merit the wondrous spiritual light that emanates from Him. As the *Bach* explicitly wrote, "For this is the prime intention in giving the Torah to Yisrael; and when this was lacking, the land was inevitably destroyed and they were exiled from it."

The message in *Shaar Ruach Hakodesh* can be explained according to this point. Rav Chaim Vital writes, "Through this, he enhances the fulfillment of the purpose for which man was created and the purpose for which Hashem commanded him to engage in Torah study." Hence, man must accustom himself to reflect upon this concept at all times and embed it in his soul so that whenever he begins studying Torah, he will automatically focus on these two points—augmenting his soul connection to Hashem and drawing Hashem's bounty upon his soul.

- F. The study of Torah and reflection upon these lofty concepts not only grant man spiritual sanctity, but they also imbue him with a greater desire to invest in diligent, devoted Torah study. This improved commitment to Torah inevitably causes one to overcome many of the barriers and distractions that prevent him from learning.

The above affords a deeper understanding of *Gemara Yuma* 35b: "They said of Hillel HaZakein that every day he would labor and earn his wages of a *tarpiq* (small coin). Half he would give to the guard of the *Beis Midrash* (House of Study), and half he would keep to support his family. One time, he did not find work; and the *Beis Midrash* guard refused to allow him to enter. He climbed onto the roof and sat on the skylight so he would hear the words of the Living G-D from

the mouths of Shmaya and Avtalyon. It was *Erev Shabbos* in the month of *Teves*; and snow fell upon him from the heavens. The next morning, at sunrise, Shmaya told Avtalyon, 'Avtalyon, my brother, every day, the *Beis Midrash* is illuminated, but today, it is dark; perhaps, it is a cloudy day.' They peered outside and saw the figure of a man against the skylight. They climbed onto the roof and found a pile of snow that was three handbreadths high. They removed him, washed him and revived him, etc..."

This story illustrates the supreme greatness of Torah study. Hillel so desperately craved to hear the words of Shmaya and Avtalyon—the words of a Living G-D—that he was willing to climb atop the roof to learn Torah.

Chazal included this inspiring story in the *Gemara* in order to demonstrate from where Hillel drew his exceptional spiritual strength to the extent that he was willing to sacrifice his life for the sake of learning Torah. Hillel refused to miss even a single lecture, a single moment of pure Torah learning. Thus, when the guard forbade his entrance, he climbed to the rooftop on a freezing, snowy day and placed his ear against the skylight, almost freezing to death, in order to hear the sacred words of Torah.

The paramount lesson to be learned from this *Gemara* is that Hillel developed his inner spiritual drive as he perceived the Torah taught by Shmaya and Avtalyon as the words of a Living G-D. The very act of hearing their words was akin to hearing the Voice of Hashem! The Torah that Hillel acquired by listening and learning drew an upper spiritual light from Hashem onto his soul, which both revived and enlivened his soul. Indeed, one who accords the study of Torah the same reverence will enjoy the benefits of a boundless strength coursing through his body, allowing him to continue learning diligently with desire and commitment always.

- G.** This next concept must be unequivocally clear to the reader: Even if one does not focus on both intentions simultaneously—at every time and in every place; the above benefits are still achieved through learning Torah. Every moment of Torah study automatically augments the connection between Hashem and the soul, regardless of man's thoughts. Similarly, a spiritual light shines from Hashem onto man, whether or not man reflects upon this point. These two gifts—the enhanced spiritual connection and the bounty of spiritual light—sanctify the Jewish soul, even a soul that is remote from Torah and Hashem Yisborach. Indeed, this is the meaning of *Chazal's* description of Torah, 'For the light in it returns them to good.'

Of course, one who does focus on these points merits the gifts of connection to Hashem and spiritual light on a higher and more potent level, which sanctifies the soul to a much greater extent than would have been had he not focused upon these intentions. Then, the very act of learning inspires the soul to invest increased energies and abilities into learning the holy Torah, which allows for the continuation of this blessed cycle.

Chapter 6: Sources from the Vilna Gaon regarding the extraordinary power of *dveikus hamachshava*.

Part I

**Cited from the Vilna Gaon's elucidation of *Zohar Parshas Pekudei*
Regarding the Positive Outcome of Proper Thoughts
& Negative Outcome of Improper Thoughts**

- A. *Bi'ur HaGra* in *Zohar Parshas Pekudei* 226a p.16 column 3 extol the fantastic spiritual level that man attains through *dveikus hamachshava* (cleaving to Hashem in thought). He describes that *dveikus hamachshava* is the primary means of attaining all lofty spiritual levels and adds that for every moment that man binds his thoughts to Hashem Yisborach, the heavens bestow upon him new elements of a pure soul that he did not previously possess.
- B. Conversely, column 4 describes the appalling results of blemished thoughts. The Vilna Gaon explains that the root of Odom and Chava's sin in eating from the Tree of Knowledge was that it caused a terrible decline of thought and intellect.
- C. In his elucidation of *Safra D'Tzniusa* Ch. 5 p.34 column 1, the Vilna Gaon states that every man harbors qualities of both Odom HaRishon and Moshe Rabbeinu.
- D. As the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge was the root of Odom's initial spiritual decline; the basis for every spiritual challenge presented to man in this world is rooted in the concept of preserving pure thoughts and maintaining *dveikus* to Hashem Yisborach while severing oneself entirely from evil.

Part II

**Cited from the Vilna Gaon's Elucidation of *Zohar Parshas Bereishis* and *Parshas Pekudei*:
Spiritual Ascent Is Rooted in Elevated Thought**

- A. The Vilna Gaon inscribes in his elucidation of *Zohar Parshas Bereishis, Heichal A* 12 column 3: "The spirits are encompassed one within the other; and they rise higher and higher and become one. This is not the case with angels, which are absolutely pure spiritual entities that do not have any potential for spiritual elevation, but only for clarity... The spiritual ascent of man's soul occurs on *Shabbos* (Sabbath) and holidays, during times of prayer. Man's spirit, alone, ascends; but the corporeal body does not have potential for spiritual ascent." (See Addendum below for his explanation regarding Moshe Rabbeinu who physically ascended upon Mount Sinai.)
- B. In his elucidation of *Zohar Parshas Pekudei* 266a (prior to *Heichalos Pekudei*), the Vilna Gaon asserts: "And this is the key to all spiritual ascension: It is the soul's ascent in thought that is the secret of all spiritual ascension."

He continues later: "And you should know that all spiritual ascents are rooted in the mind of all the worlds, just as the thoughts of man."

Part III
**The Rama and Vilna Gaon Emphasize the Importance of Attaining
the Spiritual Level of ‘Shivisi Hashem L’Negdi Samid’**

- A. The *Shulchan Aruch* commences with the famous quote, “*Shivisi Hashem l’negi samid*—I place Hashem before me, always. This is a paramount rule in the spiritual attributes of the righteous.” (*Orach Chaim* Ch.1:1)
- B. The *Biur HaGra* comments that the spiritual level of ‘*Shivisi Hashem*’ encompasses all spiritual attributes of the righteous. This indicates that the recognition that Hashem is present everywhere, always, is not only a paramount foundation of the Jewish faith, but the very essence of a *tzaddik’s* service of Hashem.
- C. One could argue with the above, as the *mitzvah* of devoted Torah study surpasses all spiritual level, as documented even by the Vilna Gaon himself.
- D. However, there is really no contradiction at all, as gleaned from Ch. 5 above which cites the teachings of the *Bach* and *Sha’ar Ruach Hakodesh*. Indeed, both affirm that for every moment that man engages in the study of Torah, his soul-connection to Hashem is augmented, and Hashem rains a spiritual bounty down upon his soul, albeit man should ideally focus upon this goal during his learning. (See the Vilna Gaon’s writings on *Sefer Yetzira* in the section below.)

Part IV
**Cited from the Vilna Gaon’s Explanation to *Sefer Yetzira*
Torah is a Covenant between Hashem and Yisrael**

- A. See *Biur HaGra* on *Sefer Yetzira* Ch. 1:8 p. 10 columns 3-4 regarding the Torah and covenants in the Torah.
- B. In this section, The Vilna Gaon describes that the sole purpose of the world’s creation and of giving the Torah was so *Bnei Yisrael* would be perpetually connected to Hashem without interruption.
- C. However, due to the corporeal nature of man and the world, this is an extremely difficult goal.
- D. Hence, Hashem created extremely powerful upper forces that are connected to Him. As *Bnei Yisrael* connect to these powers, they automatically attach themselves to Hashem *Yisborach*. These forces are described as, “A covenant between Hashem and the Nation of Israel.”
- E. The Torah itself is one of the covenants between Hashem and Yisrael, as the essence of Torah is the intense spiritual connection between Hashem and Yisrael.
- F. Anytime that man learns or fulfills the Torah, he adds to this connection and strengthens the bond between his soul and Hashem. (All the above is discussed by the Vilna Gaon *ibid*.)

Part V
Cited from the Vilna Gaon Explanation to *Sefer HaYetzira*
Regarding the Divine Presence Clinging to Yisrael
& the Outcome of This Force Which Binds Yisrael to Hashem

- A. *Biur HaGra* on *Sefer Yetzira* Ch. 1:6 o, 9 column 4 discusses *Bnei Yisrael's* connection to Hashem Yisborach.
- B. The Vilna Gaon explains that there is a concept called the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) which is described as *malchus d'atzilus*. It is an extremely lofty element deriving from the Upper Worlds, which is why it harbors a power and force stronger and more compelling than any force in this world.
- C. The essence of this lofty element is an intense connection to Hashem Yisborach and an unbridled pull to Him.
- D. This element enters and unites with the soul of *Bnei Yisrael*, which is why every Jew harbors a trace of *Shechina* within his soul. However, the powers of this element are largely dependent on man choosing to unite his soul and entire being to this element within him. Heaven forbid, he may ignore this lofty element and allow it to become dormant within him. However, if he chooses to join forces with it to activate his soul, then he arouses this element and connects to it, thus drawing his soul to Hashem Yisborach with the most compelling force that exists.
- E. There are two practical lessons to be gained in terms of serving Hashem with this element:
 - 1. Each and every Jew can attain the exalted spiritual level of connection with Hashem Yisborach, even if it seems too lofty to be attained by his soul. Indeed even if man is correct in his assumption based on the source of his own *neshama*; this is never the case in terms of the *Shechina*. The connection between his soul and the *Shechina* and the fierce pull that the *Shechina* has to Hashem is unfathomable and certainly indescribable. Thus, man's soul can certainly attain these indescribably-lofty spiritual levels, as his soul unites totally with the *Shechina* inside his soul—which then draws him nearer to Hashem.
 - 2. One who has stumbled spiritually and fears that he can no longer reconnect to Hashem fears for naught. Every Jew is capable of connecting and reconnecting to Hashem. Even if one's soul has plummeted spiritually and been totally disgraced, one can never eradicate or even diminish the sanctity of the *Shechina* that rests within him. Inevitably, the pure *Shechina* retains its holiness and uninhibited connection to Hashem. Hence, as the *Shechina* can always be found united with man's soul, man is likewise always able to connect closely and intensely to Hashem Yisborach.

Part VI
Summary

- A. One who studies the above sources in-depth and relates to all that has been learned will discover the extraordinary nature of the powers of the mind, the thought and of *dveikus* and fathom the spiritual heights that these can lead a Jew to attain.
- B. It is difficult to describe all this at length as many of these topics require lengthy introductions and background in Kabbalistic topics. However, even one who is not versed in Kabbalah can arrive at lofty spiritual levels if he reviews these teachings repeatedly and strives to act accordingly.

Part VII

The Vilna Gaon Regarding Moshe Ascending Upon Mount Sinai As Explained in Ch.2:1 Above

- A. The Vilna Gaon in Ch.2:1 above discusses Moshe Rabbeinu's ascent upon Mount Sinai. It is clear that the Vilna Gaon did not allude that Moshe did not physically ascend upon Mount Sinai, as the verse clearly states that "Moshe ascended to Hashem," and the deeper meaning of a verse can not contradict it. It thus emerges that Moshe ascended with his corporeal body to the heavens.
- B. The Vilna Gaon cites *Sukkah* 5a: "Rabbi Yosi taught, 'The Divine Presence never descended, and Moshe and Eliyahu never ascended to the heavens, as written, "The heavens are for Hashem, and the land, He gave to man." [The *Gemara* asks:] Did the Divine Presence not descend? Indeed, it is written, "And Hashem descended on Mount Sinai." [The answer is] Above ten handbreadths. And it is written, "And his feet stood on that day on the Mount of Olives." [This also means] Above ten handbreadths. [A second question is] And did Moshe and Eliyahu not ascend to the heavens? Indeed, it is written, "And Moshe ascended to Hashem." [The answer is] below ten. And it is also written, "And Eliyahu rose in a tempest to the heavens." [This also means] below ten. And it is written "[Hashem] makes it possible for His Holy Throne to be grasped" [Yov 26:9]. Rabbi Tanchum teaches, 'He separates a portion of His *Shechina* and fashioned it as a cloud above man.' This is still above ten handbreadths. [The next question is] how can it be above handbreadths if people can still grasp the Throne? [The *Gemara* answers], Hashem brings the Throne exactly above ten handbreadths so it can still be grasped."
- C. See the *Ein Yaakov* which elucidates this point regarding Moshe Rabbeinu and Eliyahu who ascended, 'less than ten handbreadths.' Obviously, the number does not refer to a physical height, as this would mean that they hardly ascended at all and remained very close to the earth. Rather, they ascended to a height that was a mere ten handbreadths beneath the heavens. Similarly, when the *Shechina* descended upon Mount Sinai and upon the Mount of Olives, it descended almost to the earth but remained ten handbreadths above the earth.
- D. The Vilna Gaon adds that when Moshe ascended to the heavens, his body remained beneath the heavens and certainly did not rise above the heavens. However, his soul ascended to a far greater height and actually attained the heavens and perhaps even a higher level than that.

Moshe merited this enormously lofty level due to his sincerity in serving Hashem and cleaving to Him constantly with his thoughts. (See *Nefesh HaChaim* regarding Moshe Rabbeinu's spiritual powers.)

Addendum

- A. *Sefer Leshem Shvo V'Achlama* sheds light upon this concept of connection to Hashem Yisborach. In Vol. 2 p.38 column 4, he poignantly elaborates on the magnitude of man yearning for Hashem. "All our actions in rectifying the *Atzilus* are not accomplished through any physical or corporeal action, but through our desire and yearning. Any desire and yearning that we have toward the Holy One Blessed Be He is expressed within each and every *mitzvah* and through our service of prayer and learning Torah when fulfilled with heart, soul, aspiration and yearning to Him. Then, that very same desire and yearning ascends with *Atzilus* itself, and this is pure desire without any thought at all; it is pure repentance.

- B. "Yet the actions of all the *mitzvos* with their intentions only affect the worlds of *Bri'ah*, *Yetzira* and *Asiya*. The only part that does rise is the pure desire from each and every *mitzvah* as we have mentioned. This is what ascends level upon level to *Atzilus*." (See *ibid* for elaborated explanation.)

- C. *Sefer Kabbalas HaGr"a* Vol. 2 cites the above at the end of the *Bi'urim* to *Leshem Shvo V'Achlama* and quotes various statements pertaining to this subject.

- D. See *ibid* for the Vilna Gaon's explanation citing the *Sha'ar HaKavanos* and *Nahar Shalom* regarding the differences between *Atzilus* and *Bri'ah*, *Yetzira* and *Asiya*. His words emphasize the vast importance that he ascribes to man's inner yearning for Hashem Yisborach, which is why man must strive intensely in this realm so he merits experiencing this while learning and serving Hashem.

Chapter 7: Thirty-six individuals greet the face of the *Shechina* every day (*Sukkah* 45b); one who wishes to attain supernatural powers must be extremely cautious regarding *Halachos* that are punishable by *kareis*.

Part I

- A. *Gemara Maseches Sukkah* 45b states: “*Chazal* taught that in every generation there are at least thirty-six men who greet the face of the *Shechina* every day” on a lofty level. [See the Steipler’s *Sefer Chayei Olam* regarding this subject.]

The above *Gemara* is the primary source regarding the existence of thirty-six hidden *tzaddikim* who sustain the world with their Torah. One who merits achieving this spiritual level attains phenomenal spiritual strengths and surpasses the natural spiritual levels of this world. Notwithstanding, one who does not achieve this, but who strove to the maximal extent of his abilities and exerted effort within the realm of that which allows one to achieve the level of the thirty-six individuals who greet the *Shechina* every day will automatically attain a great level of spirituality. Hence, man should endeavor to learn about the means of arriving at lofty spiritual heights. Obviously attaining the spiritual level of greeting the *Shechina* is contingent on many aspects of spiritual growth, and it certainly cannot be attained by endeavoring in only one realm or one form of *avodas Hashem*. Thus, man must strive constantly in all realms of serving Hashem—both between man and Hashem and man and his fellow man.

- B. It is worthwhile to mention one specific aspect in *avodas Hashem* that can lead man to achieve this exalted spiritual level, as alluded to by the number thirty-six. *Krisus* 2a states that the number of transgressions punishable by *kareis* (death of the soul) is also thirty-six. [See *Divrei Yaakov* on *Maseches Krisus* 2a regarding the number thirty-six.]
- C. Commentaries write that the two numbers ‘thirty-six’ are not coincidental. Indeed, *kareis* occurs when a division occurs between the sinner’s soul and Hashem Yisborach; and the punishment is merely a result of this separation as described in *Parshas Vayelech* 31:17. This verse discusses that the source of all evil in this world is when Hashem hides His Face, and that evil is disconnection from Him. (See *Rambam, Moreh Nevuchim* Vol. 3 Ch. 51-2.)
- D. The concept underlying the thirty-six individuals who greet the Face of the *Shechina* every day is that there are people in the world who can elevate their souls to such a lofty height that they reach Hashem Yisborach. The concept underlying *kareis* is the diametric opposite. The reason that both numbers are equal is because the world harbors thirty-six channels of connection to Hashem Yisborach which means that there can be no less than thirty-six individuals meriting acceptance of the *Shechina*. To maintain these pure spiritual channels, the Torah delivered thirty-six prohibitions that have potential to injure these spiritual channels and man’s connection to Hashem.
- E. The source of all supernatural powers is working on an ultimately close connection to Hashem Yisborach, and this can be achieved through myriad means of serving Him. Still, one of the most

effective means of increasing one's connection to Hashem is exerting extreme caution to avoid prohibitions that are punished by *kareis*. Of course, one must avoid all form of sin, yet one must work even harder to shun any action that harbors even a slight trace of connection or an element of one of the prohibitions that Hashem punishes with *kareis*. Endeavoring to do this will greatly assist a Jew in his spiritual quest toward achieving supernatural strengths.

- F. Rabbeinu Chaim Vital alludes to the above in the end of *Sha'ar HaGilgulim* in the list of directives that the Arizal issued to him: "And the things that he told him regarding the purpose of his soul...The aspects in which he most encouraged him is to strive and excel regarding anything that bears the slightest hint to the prohibitions punishable by *kareis*." (See *Sha'ar HaGilgulim*).
- G. Avoiding sins punishable by *kareis* allows man to grasp onto the lights emanating from the *sefirah 'Kesser,'* which is the root of the miracles and wonders that transcend the laws of nature. The *Eitz HaChaim* reveals that *Kesser* is not included per se within the ten *sefiros*, as it harbors an element that is greater and more wondrous than the other ten *sefiros*.

Tikkun 70 in *Tikkunei HaZohar* explains that exceptionally long life is achieved by those who grasp onto the *sefirah Kesser*. This is why those who lived in the earliest generations—who grasped the *sefirah Kesser*—merited extremely long lives, as detailed in *Sefer Bereishis*. *Sefer Matzas Shimurim* also states that grasping onto *Kesser* is the opposing force to the transgressions punishable by *kareis*. The Hebrew words for *kareis* and *Kesser* both include the letters *kuf*, *reish*, and *taf*, but in a different order, alluding to their ability to counteract one another. Indeed, the concept of *kareis* is vanquished by the radiance of *Kesser*.

Part II

- A. The number of sins punishable by *kareis* is longer than the list in *Mishnah Krisus 2a*. The *Mishnah* states that there are thirty-six prohibitions, but there are actually more, since the *Mishnah* includes several forms of prohibitions in one.

The following is a list of the most common categories of sins punishable by *kareis* which every Jew must endeavor to avoid:

1. Laws pertaining to *Shabbos*
 2. Laws pertaining to family purity
 3. Laws pertaining to *Pesach*
 4. Laws pertaining to *Yom Kippur*
 5. Laws pertaining to the prohibition of eating *cheilev* (suet) and blood that causes death, (as opposed to blood from the limbs which is also prohibited by the Torah, but not punishable by *kareis*.) Moreover, if one cooked the blood, Rabbinical authorities maintain that this is only a transgression of a law instituted by the sages. Although all are certainly terrible sins, this section only deals with sins of the greatest severity.)
- B. The above categories each encompass laws that were forbidden by the Torah and those that were instituted by the Sages. The concept discussed in Part I above primarily refers to laws that

were forbidden by the Torah, although it is obvious that exerting caution in regard to laws instituted by the Sages is also beneficial to a Jew's quest to attaining spiritual growth.

- C. The sections below list more specific aspects of the five categories mentioned above.
- D. Much of the content in the sections below regards basic information, yet it was included in this booklet in order to provide the reader with a complete understanding of this topic.

Part III ***Shabbos***

- A. Observing the sanctity of *Shabbos* allows man to achieve lofty spiritual heights, both because he is refraining from the transgressions listed in the Torah and because guarding the *Shabbos* itself endows man with the ability to grasp onto the *sefirah Kesser* which is the ultimately close connection to Hashem and diametric opposite of *kareis*.
- B. *Parshas Ki Sisa* states: "For Hashem created the heavens and the earth in six days, and on the seventh, it was *Shabbos*, and He rested."

The word 'rested' in Hebrew is '*vayinafash*,' which contains the root word *nefesh*—soul. This alludes that Hashem imbued the aspect *nefesh* into the *Shabbos*, endowing it with a highly spiritual quality, just as the soul's entrance into the body endows it with its spirituality.

- C. As a Jew guards the *Shabbos* with all its laws and statutes, his spiritual level is enhanced, as is his connection to the spiritual holiness of the world—which are the two paramount factors in the quest to achieve supernatural powers.
- D. *Siddur HaRashash* describes the progression of the entrance of lights into the world throughout the week: On Sunday, *Chessed* enters; on Monday, *Gevura* enters; on Tuesday, *Tiferes* enters; on Wednesday, *Netzach* enters; on Thursday, *Hod* enters; on Friday, *Yesod* enters; and on *Shabbos*, *Malchus* enters. Although on the pyramid of *sefiros*, *Malchus* is depicted on the bottom, it harbors a force that encompasses all the six other *sefiros*; and this force is especially potent on *Shabbos*.
- E. There is also another type of lights that enter the Upper Worlds on *Shabbos*. Indeed, throughout the six days of the week, all the lights that enter harbor elements of *Netzach*, *Hod* and *Yesod*; yet on *Shabbos*, the spiritual rectification that arrives is with *Chessed*, *Gevura* and *Tiferes* and with *Chochmah*, *Binah*, and *Da'as*, which are much loftier levels. [A clearer portrayal of these can be found in *Divrei Yaakov*, *Sefer HaKavanos* Vol. 2 in the essay entitled, '*Seder HaTikkun L'Chol V'Shabbos V'Rosh Chodesh*.]

Man's ability to acquire supernatural powers is largely dependent on these elements, as the greater the element that he harbors, the more he can rise above the forces of nature. By avoiding sin on *Shabbos* and observing the ultimate sanctity of *Shabbos*, he connects to these lofty levels and powers. Even though these lofty levels can only be acquired on *Shabbos*, they

still have a potent effect on man's spiritual level throughout the week. [See Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Sha'ar HaKavanos* p. 70 column 3: "And this is why man must focus that he should remain with that added sanctity of *Shabbos*, and that it should accompany him throughout the coming weekdays. And through this, they will direct his path, if he perpetually focuses on this; and he is guaranteed that the Evil Inclination will not accuse him or cause him to sin throughout that entire week. All is conditional to the intensity of his desire to achieve sanctity and purity."]

- F. In summary, a Jew must be extremely vigilant and refrain from all the prohibitions both listed in the Torah and instituted by the Sages, even those which Rabbinical authorities dispute whether or not they are actually forbidden. At times when it is generally accepted to rely upon a leniency, it is still preferable to be stringent in order to observe the sanctity of *Shabbos* to the maximal extent. [Obviously, the above should be done in accordance to accepted Halachic practices, as dictated by Rabbinical authorities; and there are Halachic guidelines pertaining to the extent that one should abide by a minority ruling.]
- G. Furthermore, it is also important to sanctify the holy day of *Shabbos* with positive activity including increasing hours of learning Torah and praying from the bottom of the heart with utmost devotion. *Bi'ur HaGra* on *Tikkunei HaZohar* describes that the eminent powers and holiness contained within the *Shabbos* cause man's prayers on *Shabbos* to be more readily accepted than his prayers during the week; and the *Ben Ish Chai*, *Shana Shniya*, *Parshas Shmos* inscribes that the force of Torah study on *Shabbos* likewise exceeds that of Torah study during the week.

Part IV Family Purity

- A. In addition to all that is stated in Parts I and II above, the *Zohar* in *Parshas Shmos* warns that one must be extremely vigilant in the observance of the laws of family purity, as there is no worse impurity than that which arises from stumbling in the essential *mitzvah* of *niddah*.
- B. The *Zohar* presages that the *Shechina* flees from any place that one who transgresses the laws of *niddah* walks; and that the place itself plummets to a lower spiritual level.
- C. Aside from the terrible outcome of the sin itself, sinning in this area also causes intense spiritual damage to all aspects of supernatural powers, as these depend upon the presence of *Shechina* in the world.
- D. One who yearns to acquire supernatural powers should not only avoid transgressing the actual prohibitions, but should also endeavor to be stringent regarding the *mitzvos* in which there are Rabbinical authorities who endorse acting stringently.

Part V Stringency in Laws of Family Purity

- A. One who wishes to act stringently in order to enhance his observance of the laws of family purity must own a clear knowledge and understanding of these laws. Indeed, there are certain instances when it is actually forbidden to be stringent since it may cause one to lapse in the fulfillment of the imperative *mitzvah* of bearing children, which is also a paramount *mitzvah* and the basis of the entire world. [See *Bi'ur HaGra* on *Tikkunei HaZohar*, *Tikkun* 43 which extols the greatness of this *mitzvah*.] Aside from the merits in fulfilling the *mitzvah* of bearing children, the *mitzvah* of family purity also endows man with a special spiritual strength. Rabbi Sulman Eliyahu in *Sefer Kerem Shlomo* on *Eitz HaChaim Sha'ar HaShvira* Ch. 1 p. 107 describes that a couple merits a unique additional spiritual bounty with the birth of each child.
- B. Even in cases that do not constitute abstention from the *mitzvah* of bearing children, acting overly stringent in the laws of family purity could constitute an abstention from the *mitzvah* of *onah* if one's partner does not acquiesce with a full heart.
- C. Of course, the above certainly depends on the extent of the partner's feelings, as there is definite reason to be stringent in certain cases even when an action may be permissible according to the letter of the law. In this case, it may be permissible to be stringent, even if it counters the *mitzvah* of *onah*.
- D. The above is clearly discussed in *Shei'los U'Teshuvos Chasam Sofer*, *Yoreh De'ah* Ch. 149 in *Pischei Teshuva*, *Yoreh De'ah* Ch. 158:2 and *Ohr L'Zion*, *Maseches Ksubos* 22b quoting the *Mahari"l Diskin*. It is likewise mentioned in *Chazon Ish*, *Yoreh De'ah* Ch. 125:3 p. 148 column 3 and *Chazon Ish*, *Taharos* in the *Likutim* following *Maseches Mikva'os* Ch. 5 p. 204 column 2 quoting the *Mahari"l*.

The *Chazon Ish* writes regarding the *mitzvah* of family purity that the concept of stringency applies only to aspects of the *mitzvah* that were instituted by the Sages which occasionally permit leniency. He also asserts that there are situations when one may be stringent even when it counters both the *mitzvos* of bearing children and *onah*. He concludes that one who is regularly stringent may also be stringent in his observance of this *mitzvah*.

- E. *Gemara Ksubos* 22a states, "Even though she is believed with a valid excuse to retract her previous claim, Shmuel was personally stringent and did not accept this."

The *Shulchan Aruch* rules as Rav, that the woman is believed with a valid reason; yet the *Rama* in *Yoreh De'ah* Ch. 185:3 concludes that one who wishes to be stringent and prefers not to believe her is acting on a level of piety. The *Bi'ur HaGra* states that the *Rama's* ruling is based upon the stringency upheld by Shmuel.

- F. However, there are still boundaries to the above recommendation of extra stringency in the fulfillment of *mitzvos*. Each situation must be analyzed and evaluated independently by one who possesses vast knowledge and experience in the ways of *Halacha* and Torah. Thus, one must always consult with a qualified Halachic authority, a Rabbi who is acquainted with the person posing the question, his ways of life and service of Hashem.

- G. As said, Part V of this chapter refers only to aspects of the *mitzvah* that are Halachically permissible and permit leniency. However, it must be clarified that anything that is Halachically forbidden—even if it is forbidden due to doubt—cannot be permitted or justified due to rationalizations of fulfilling *mitzvas onah*, etc.

Part VI

Pesach

- A. *Sefer Sha'ar HaKavanos* writes that the exalted spiritual lights that descended upon Bnei Yisrael at the time of the Exodus return to the world and are restored to the Jewish people each and every year anew during the holiday of *Pesach*.
- B. The endowment of these spiritual lights is conditional to man refraining from the sin of owning and consuming *chametz* on *Pesach*. The more man strives to be meticulous in the observance of this *mitzvah*, the more spiritual lights he will merit. [Increasing one's service of Hashem during the week of *Pesach* also enhances this *mitzvah*, yet the essence is refraining from consuming any *chametz*.]
- C. There are several food types that Rabbinical authorities dispute whether or not constitute as *chametz* and may or may not be eaten on *Pesach*. Moreover, there are foods that Halachically may be eaten on *Pesach*, despite a minority ruling which maintains that they are forbidden on *Pesach*.
- D. In order to attain the loftiest spiritual levels, it is crucial to be extremely cautious in observing the commandments and refraining from the prohibitions related to *Pesach*, even in situations that permit leniency.
- E. As *Pesach* amounts to only one week each year, one is certainly capable of adopting the maximal stringencies regarding *chametz* on *Pesach*. Moreover, in today's generation, when there is no limit to gluten-free food products, one should certainly endeavor to enhance one's fulfillment of the *mitzvah* and wait for the seven days of *Pesach* to elapse before eating a food that is questionably *chametz*.
- F. Above all, one should ensure that the *matzos* that he eats to fulfill the annual *mitzvah* are stamped with a superior *kashrus* certification and were subject to maximal *kashrus* supervision with all the desirable stringencies. One should not allow oneself to rely on any leniencies. Moreover, aside from the *matzah* itself, one should avoid purchasing any product that contains any grain; and if one requires a product containing grain for a specific purpose, it is recommended that one should prepare it oneself using the special *matzos* that he purchased. [Often, even if it is stamped with a superior *kashrus* certification, store-bought matzah-meal is of lesser *kashrus* quality than purchased *matzah*. Thus, if one requires matzah-meal, it is best to grind it oneself from one's own *matzos*.]
- G. Although the prohibition of '*Bal yeira'eh u'val yimatzei*—It should not be seen, and should not be found' (i.e. the prohibition of owning *chametz* on *Pesach*) is not punished by *kareis*, it is

commendable to be especially stringent in the fulfillment of this *mitzvah*, as it purifies the soul. Thus, one should endeavor to remove all traces of *chametz* from one's home and possession before *Pesach*, instead of relying on the sale of *chametz*. It is well-known that the Vilna Gaon did not rely on the custom of selling *chametz* at all. He ruled that the sale of *chametz* did not constitute an honest removal of *chametz* from one's possession since one's intention is to reacquire it immediately after *Pesach* instead of selling it permanently to the Gentile.

Hence, although many Rabbinical authorities do endorse the custom of selling *chametz*, it would seem preferable to avoid it if possible. Certainly when the *chametz* in question does not amount to a significant monetary loss and given that the prohibition of owning *chametz* is *d'oraysa* (commanded in the Torah), it is best to avoid leniencies even if one does proclaim '*Kol chamira*' (the invalidation of *chametz*). *Psachim* 4, 10 state: "According to the Torah, it is sufficient to annul it." However, several Rabbinical authorities assert that '*Kol chamira*' does not apply to sold *chametz*, as the items are of obvious value to the owner.

Part VII

Spiritual Ascension on *Yom Kippur*

- A. It is a *mitzvah d'oraysa* for every Jewish adult to fast on *Yom Kippur*, and there very few conditions which permit leniencies of eating and/or drinking. The only situation which calls for leniency is a serious health issue that could be life-threatening to the person fasting. Obviously, if the above is applicable, one should not attempt to be stringent and fast on *Yom Kippur*.
- B. Regardless of any leniency obtained, *Yom Kippur* must be a day absolutely devoted to spiritual growth and ascension. *Yom Kippur* is an auspicious, once-a-year opportunity to elevate one's spiritual state to great heights, as the final hour of *Yom Kippur* is the moment upon which a Jew's fate for the imminent year is stamped and sealed. The writings of the Arizal and Rashash attest to the vast spiritual leaps that can occur on the day of *Yom Kippur*. One who sincerely strives to enhance one's connection with Hashem can merit this, thus acquiring vast spiritual strengths.

Part VIII

The Prohibition of Eating *Cheilev*

- A. It is a grave prohibition to eat the *cheilev* (suet) of any kosher animal, including male and female cows, sheep and goats. Thus, part of the koshering process requires separating the *cheilev* from all the meat before eating it, as described in *Maseches Chulin* and *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah*. *Cheilev* closely resembles body fat, and it is complex to distinguish between the two. Thus, only one who has carefully studied the laws pertaining to *cheilev* and harbors expertise in the matter is qualified to remove *cheilev* from meat.
- B. The animal's rear contains the greatest percentage of *cheilev* in its body, and this *cheilev* is extremely difficult to remove. Therefore, it is customary to refrain from eating the rear of even a kosher animal and to eat only from the frontal part of the animal in order to avoid the grave transgression of eating *cheilev*.

- C. The frontal part of the animal also contains *cheilev* that must be removed during the koshering process; yet there is much less *cheilev* in the front than in the rear of an animal, and frontal *cheilev* is easier to remove. As such, those who aspire to avoid any possible transgression are stringent to eat only from the frontal part of the animal.
- D. Rabbi Chaim Vital describes in *Sha'ar HaGilgulim* describes that he was especially meticulous to avoid the prohibition of eating *cheilev*. In fact, he did not eat any meat unless he had personally removed the *cheilev* from the animal or observed the koshering process.
- E. *Halacha* mandates removing a part of the meat together with the *cheilev*, as a minute amount of *cheilev* inevitably penetrates into the permissible meat at the point of their connection, thus rendering that part forbidden as well. Rabbi Chaim Vital, however, acted stringently and removed double the amount of meat as he did *cheilev*, in order to avoid any possible transgression.
- F. Throughout history, there was many a righteous sage who never tasted meat and ate only poultry, as many more complex questions and doubts arise concerning meat, including *cheilev* and *treif* (non-kosher animals), that do not apply to poultry. Similarly, the *shechita* (kosher slaughtering) of an animal is more complex than the *shechita* of a chicken.

There are individuals who are obligated to eat animal meat for health purposes. The *Gemara* even relates of several *Amora'im* who were unable to learn properly if they did not eat meat. Notwithstanding, one who eats meat should exercise caution and purchase only products that are stamped with superior *kashrus* certification. Indeed, every food product that a Jew purchases and eats should boast superior *kashrus*, yet one should be extra stringent in regard to meat, as the prohibition of eating non-kosher meat is very serious.

- G. The concept underpinning the importance of eating only kosher meat and avoiding any trace of *cheilev* is that everything a person ingests enters one's body, fuses with it and becomes an indistinguishable part of him. As such, as the *Mesilas Yesharim* writes that it is vital to ensure that only strictly-kosher, permissible food products enter our bodies.

Addendum

- A. Just as it is crucial to exert maximal effort to avoid any possible transgression of an *issur kareis* (prohibition punishable by *kareis*) in order to achieve the desired spiritual heights, it is likewise essential to endeavor to fulfill all *mitzvos* to the greatest extent possible, with all stringencies. [See the *Chazon Ish*, *Sefer Emunah U'Bitachon* which describes the importance of absolute fulfillment of the *mitzvah* and *Halacha*, as opposed to a general or surface fulfillment of *mitzvos*. He also writes that man should not base his goals for *avodas Hashem* upon his previous efforts, but upon the absolute fulfillment of the *mitzvos*, as stipulated by the *Gemara* and Rabbinical authorities. One who does not do so, warns the Chazon Ish, is liable to stumble in actual Torah prohibitions.]

- B.** *Sheilos U'Teshuvos Rivash* quotes a response of the *Ran*, also cited in the *Beis Yosef* in *Orach Chaim* Ch. 690, regarding the *Rivash*, who ruled against a leniency pertaining to reading the *Megillah*. The *Ran* inscribes: "I see that your words are good and contemporary, as every wise individual can choose a secure path that protects him from all harm and stumbling blocks. And even if it is only in a case of doubt, this is how we must act in our progression along the path of Torah and *mitzvos*, which are the furnace of the world. Indeed, how can we abandon the path upon which our holy sages walked?"
- C.** *Rabbeinu Yonah* inscribes in *Brachos* 1b in the *Rif*: "And the essence of fear of Hashem is avoiding any doubt and not performing the *mitzvos* by habit."
- D.** *Rabbeinu Yonah* also cites *Parshas Vayikra* which states that a Jew who sinned inadvertently is obligated to offer a sheep or goat as a *Korban Chatas* (sin offering), and one who is uncertain whether or not he sinned offers a ram as a *Korban Asham Taluy* (offering of one who is unsure whether or not he sinned). The *Gemara* asks why these animals were chosen as atonement for these specific offerings, as the price of a ram for the *Korban Asham Taluy* exceeds that of the sheep or goat for the *Korban Chatas*. He explains, "The reason to demand more from the individual who is unsure whether or not he sinned than from the one who certainly sinned is because the one who certainly sinned feels guilty and repents for his sin wholeheartedly, whereas the one who is uncertain often justifies himself or convinces himself that he did not truly sin instead of restoring his heart to Hashem and repenting."

Chapter 8: Suppressing anger is a prerequisite to attaining supernatural powers.

Part I

- A. Rabbeinu Chaim Vital states that another primary condition toward attaining supernatural powers is controlling one's anger. *Chazal* strongly condemn the sin of anger. (See *Nedarim* 22; *Psachim* 66; Rabbeinu Chaim Vital, *Shaarei Kedusha* Vol. 2 *Sha'ar D* citing the *Zohar*.)
- B. Rabbeinu Chaim Vital cites the Arizal in *Sha'ar Ruach HaKodesh* 10b-11a:
- “The quality of anger inhibits one from total achievement, as we find in the verse that relates, ‘And Moshe grew angry at Elazar and Itamar.’ *Rashi* elucidates, ‘Any man who grows angry; if he is a prophet, the prophecy is removed from him; if he is a wise man, his wisdom is removed from him.’ (*Psachim* 66b).
- C. “However, the greater evil of [anger], is as we will explain. And my teacher [the Arizal] was scrupulous to avoid the quality of anger more than any other prohibition, even if the anger was on behalf of a *mitzvah*, as in the case of Moshe. He explained that all other sins injure one limb or another, yet the sin of anger injures the soul and changes it entirely. Indeed, when a Jew becomes angry, his holy soul departs from him and is replaced by the *klipah* (outer shell of the soul referring to negative forces). And this is what the Scriptures meant when they wrote, ‘He devours his soul with his anger,’ (*Iyov* 18), as he truly destroys his pure, holy soul and makes it as a corpse, killing it entirely at a time when he is angry. The *Zohar*, *Parshas Tetzave* 182b strongly condemns the quality of anger to the extent that it likens one who associates with an angry person to one who associates with idols.
- D. “And even if a person engages in spiritual rectification and devoted repentance for his sins and performs myriad *mitzvos*, all his lost from him entirely, as his beautiful, pure soul that had fulfilled all those good deeds has already departed and was exchanged for an impure one. Thus, he must repeat all the *mitzvos* and *tikkunim* that he has done previously. Indeed, this occurs each and every time that a person grows angry; and it thus emerges that one who is an angry person will find no spiritual rectification ever...
- E. “He also inflicts terrible damage upon himself. For, if he had once performed a tremendous *mitzvah* that afforded him the protection and assistance of the soul of a great *tzaddik*; his anger causes the soul of that *tzaddik* to depart, and this is another aspect of the verse, ‘He devours his soul with his anger.’
- F. “One who is an angry person can never attain any spiritual achievement while possessing this trait, even if he is a *tzaddik* in every other respect. Indeed, [an angry person] is constantly building and destroying all that he has built while he is angry. In contrast, other sins do not devour and uproot the soul as anger does; other sins cling to him, and his soul becomes imperfect in the realm of that specific sin. Anger, however, requires tremendous spiritual rectifications and preparations in order to repent from it and restore the soul that he devoured. The *Zohar* in *Parshas Tetzave* even states that it is possible that there is no *takana* at all. Indeed, when I [Rav Chaim Vital] was teaching my brother, and he did not know the material sufficiently, I grew angry with him; and my master warned and rebuked me harshly for this.”

Part II

- A. The concept that the sin of anger is worse than all other sins in the Torah, since it causes man's pure soul to depart, is relative to certain aspects.
- B. From a different perspective, it is obvious that other sins are worse than anger. Indeed, if a person has the choice of growing angry or desecrating *Shabbos*, he is obviously obliged to grow angry; and there is no doubt about this.
- C. The above regards not only desecrating *Shabbos*—which is a very important *mitzvah*—but all *mitzvos*, as well. Certainly, a person is forbidden to transgress any sin in the Torah in order to prevent himself from becoming angry. Although the quality of anger is truly terrible, it is encompassed in only one aspect of serving Hashem. And given that there are many other aspects of serving Hashem, it is obviously prohibited to transgress a *mitzvah* in order to avoid stumbling in the realm of anger.
- D. Notwithstanding, in order to acquire supernatural powers and the loftiest spiritual levels, it is important to understand that anger is a terrible trait that prevents one from arriving at these levels. As Rav Chaim Vital teaches, it is almost impossible for one who regularly grows angry to ever acquire supernatural abilities, as the acquisition of these strengths is dependent on intensive Torah study, prayer, repentance and the fulfillment of *mitzvos*. The *Zohar* teaches that anger, in contrast, causes man's soul to be switched for another, less pure one. As such, the moment a Jew becomes angry, he loses the hours of Torah, repentance and *mitzvos* that he amassed, as the same soul no longer exists within him after he stumbles in the sin of anger.
- E. Man should beware of pitfalls to anger, as these specifically arise at those times when the heavens wish to endow him with a vast spiritual bounty. In order to prevent him from receiving this, evil forces present him with a formidable challenge in order to lead him to grow angry and steal his pure soul from him. This is especially true regarding the portion of the soul that is added to him, which is easier to remove than the soul that is intrinsic to him.

Thus, any time a Jew is presented with a challenge that may arouse him to fury, he should focus on the thought that it is possible that directly behind this challenge is his potential for vast spiritual powers, and he should battle to overcome the anger at all costs.

- F. Another terrible aspect of anger is that aside from the severity of the sin itself, anger often leads to other sins as well. For example, one who is angry is liable to hurt another person verbally, which transgresses the Torah prohibition of *ona'as devarim* (harming a person verbally). (See *Pirkei Machshava, His'karvus La'Hashem* Ch. 11).

Moreover, there are times when anger leads a person to hurt not only the individual who angered him, but others as well. Thus, one who guards himself from anger not only saves himself from transgression but may also merit repaying the one who angered him with good instead of bad, which is a tremendously lofty level.

Part III

- A. *Sha'ar HaYichudim* p. 4 column 4 instructs one who strives for spiritual attainment to avoid anger and strict behavior against others.
- B. He adds that the extent to which a person avoids anger and strict behavior against others, he will merit spiritual attainment, as these are the two foundational pillars of all positive qualities.

Part IV

- A. Rav Chaim Vital writes as follows, as cited in Part I above: "Anger requires tremendous spiritual rectifications and preparations in order to repent from it and restore the soul that he devoured. The *Zohar* in *Parshas Tetzave* even states that it is possible that there is no *takana* at all."
- B. However, in *Sha'ar HaYichudim* p. 37 column 4, he alters the text slightly as follows: "Yet the angry person requires many rectifications and Kabbalistic thoughts in order to repent and regain [the soul] after it is was devoured; and *it is as if* there is no possible spiritual rectification in his present angry state."
- C. The primary difference between the two statements is that the former avers that there is no spiritual rectification for anger at all, whereas the latter states "it is as if" there is no *tikkun* from this, which is a softer, gentler statement.
- D. *Sefer Leshem Shvo V'Achalama* highlights this discrepancy in his comments on *Sha'ar Ruach HaKodesh*, p. 203. He explains that the meaning of the *Sha'ar Ruach HaKodesh* is the same as that in *Sha'ar HaYichudim*, and that it is possible, albeit challenging, to atone and achieve spiritual rectification for anger.
- E. The *Leshem Shvo V'Achlama* adds that the reason Rav Chaim Vital seemed to unequivocally state that there is no spiritual rectification for anger is because it is necessary to exert such an enormous amount of effort in order to acquire repentance and spiritual rectification from anger and regain his original, pure soul that it is almost impossible to attain spiritual rectification at all.

Part V

- A. Rav Chaim Vital inscribes in *Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, Introduction 5 p. 8: "Occasionally, it may happen that although a person owns a pure, lofty soul, he will fall once to anger; and then the soul will exit him and another, lower soul will enter in its place.
- B. "Or a person will fall ill with a terrible disease, and his soul will be switched for another one.
- C. "Or he will fall ill with epilepsy or similar diseases, and his soul will be switched and will enter another man; and a different soul will enter him.
- D. "And this is the reason why a person could be righteous throughout his life and fall to sin at the end of his days, or vice versa.

- E. “And because this is so, it is possible that other things will result from this. [One possible result is] that, until now, a specific woman had been destined for him; but now that his soul has been switched, the woman will be given to another man, and another man will take her.”
- F. Rav Chaim Vital’s statement in *Sha’ar Ruach HaKodesh* can be elucidated as follows: There are certain instances when it is impossible to reacquire one’s soul, especially if portions of it have already been bequeathed to another man.

However, according to the *Leshem Shvo V’Achlama*, which bases its statement on *Sha’ar HaYichudim*, it is always possible to achieve spiritual rectification. Indeed, even if one’s soul has already been transferred to another individual, one can still reclaim it from the other person if he engages in intense thoughts and efforts of repentance. [One way this could occur is if the person who acquired the first person’s soul also stumbles in the sin of anger and loses his soul as well. When this happens, the one who has repented could merit reacquiring it.]

Part VI

- A. *Kisvei Moreinu HaRav Chaim Vital* include a frightening tale related to anger in *Sefer Sha’ar HaGilgulim* Introduction 38. [It is important to note that although Introductions 38-39 were original manuscripts of Rav Chaim Vital that still exist today, they were not originally included in *Sha’ar HaGilgulim* or any of the eight Gates. Rather, the section was taken from *Sefer HaChezyonos*, written by Rav Chaim Vital, and later appended by his son to *Sefer Sha’ar HaGilgulim*. In the preface to Introduction 38 (p. 48b), Rav Chaim Vital’s son describes that his father had wished to conceal this information, yet he took it upon himself to publish it for the benefit of the public.
- B. He writes (p. 63b in old printing; p. 363-4 in new printing): “In the year of 5332, we walked to the field and passed the 1000-year-old ancient grave of a gentile. He saw my soul on his grave, and he desired to kill me and injure me; yet there were many angels and souls of *tzaddikim* on my right and left who refused to allow this; and he could not overcome me. And my master, z”l, instructed me that I should not walk along this route again.
- C. “And then the soul of that gentile walked together with me. There, in the field, I became angry with HaRav Yehuda Mish’an; and the soul of the gentile began to overcome me and cause me to sin further.
- D. “And I did not wish to heed the teachings of my master, z”l. [Rav Chaim Vital was known as one who sought to learn from his master at all opportunities, as described in many of his *sefarim* and especially *Sha’ar HaGilgulim* Introduction 38 p. 52b in the old printing, p.331 in new printing.]
- E. “And [the Arizal] began to weep, and he said, ‘Behold, all the souls of the *tzaddikim* and angels have absconded because of this anger, and this is why the base soul ruled over him. What should I do? If only they would harm him and leave him alive, for I can heal him; although I fear that they will kill him, and all that I believe that he can fulfill and rectify in this world will not be fulfilled, as I have been told. And I can not reveal what this is, for I do not have permission to

speak of it. Have I toiled for nothing so the world shall be destroyed?' And he did not eat that entire night due to his pain and anxiety.

- F. "And I went and returned along that path alone. When I arrived at his grave, a wind lifted me, and I perceived myself running in the air at a height of twenty floors above the earth, until I reached a distant land just as the stars were beginning to shine in the heavens. And they abandoned me there, and I went to sleep until the light of morning.
- G. "I wished to arise, but my limbs were weak and leaning on one another. And they aroused me and led me to the gate of my master, z"l. And when I finally reached there, there was no soul within me at all, as occurred with Yonah *HaNavi*.
- H. "And my teacher laid me to rest on his bed, and he closed the door and he prayed. Then, he entered the same house, and he was alone; and he walked through the house and returned to my bed and bent over me. He did this for a full half-day during which I was completely dead. Then, at noon, I saw myself that my soul had been restored to me slowly, slowly, until I opened my eyes, rose and recited the blessing, 'He Who revives the dead.' And this is all true and accurate, without any doubt."
- I. To understand Rav Chaim Vital's statement regarding the soul-connection that he shared with a gentile, see *Sha'ar Ruach HaKodesh* p. 12a regarding the transfer of an evil soul, and the *Divrei Yaakov* in *Kisvei Ari*, *Sha'ar Ruach HaKodesh* p. 34.
- J. This tale serves to underscore the terrible force of anger. Indeed, as long as he had never become angry, the angels and souls of the righteous protected him from all sides, and the soul of the gentile was unable to overcome Rav Chaim Vital, as. However, the moment he became angry, all those righteous souls and angels immediately absconded. This allowed the evil soul to overcome him and inflict severe spiritual damage upon him, to the extent that he no longer wished to heed the words of his holy master, the Arizal, and even conveyed him to the point of spiritual death. Moreover, had the Arizal been unable to revive him, his small burst of anger would have caused the entire world and all future generations to lose the wondrous Torah taught by Rav Chaim Vital. It is known that the Arizal stated that his singular purpose in this world was to teach Torah to Rav Chaim Vital, and that only he was capable of transmitting the Torah of Kabbalah to future generations of *Klal Yisrael*. How terrible to consider that all his Torah could have been lost in a single moment of foolish anger, and how great a lesson this is that every Jew must strive to avoid anger at all costs!
- K. *Sha'ar Ruach HaKodesh* p. 45b, *Yichud* 8 describes the terrible damage caused by anger to the extent that it stole the power of speech from him. Ostensibly, the power of speech mentioned in the *sefer* does not refer to simple speech, but a lofty spiritual speech that he lost.
- L. See Rav Chaim Vital, *Sha'ar Ma'amarei Raz"al*, *Maseches Nedarim* 22 and *Sha'ar Ruach HaKodesh* p. 18-19, *Yichudim* 13-15 which describe the intentions and spiritual rectifications necessary to repent from anger. This section also describes the spiritual injury created by anger. Also see *Azharos Moreinu Chaim Vital*, in his introduction to *Sefer Eitz Chaim* p. 5b.

Part VII

- A. A paramount rule regarding anger is that the less the amount and period of anger, the less it affects the person. Many people face tremendous challenges in the realm of overcoming anger, and not always are they successful in vanquishing anger from their heart. Thus, one who does fall prey to anger should strive to overcome it as quickly as possible in order to minimize the damage inflicted upon his soul.
- B. Moreover, even if one does become angry, one should ensure never to speak angrily or argue as a result of his emotions, as this will inevitably lead him to sins in the realm of forbidden speech, hurting another person verbally or humiliating another person, etc.
- C. In addition, angry words also further distance his pure soul from him. Thus, even if one did become angry in one's mind, one should never allow oneself to speak out in anger.
- D. The Rashash writes in *Sefer Nahar Shalom* in his explanation of the blessings, 'Clothes the naked' and 'Who removes sleep,' that every person has five aspects of his soul that are called *nefesh chitzona*—external soul. Deeper in the soul, loftier and more important are the *ruach*, *neschama*, *chaya* and *yechida*, respectively. The order of the levels of the souls is influenced in both ways. Thus, if one injures the outer *nefesh*, one can also destroy the other, deeper levels of his soul. [However, the Vilna Gaon in *Tikkunei HaZohar* writes that this does not necessarily occur, as there are many people who possess an evil *nefesh*, but a pure *ruach*, etc.]
- E. The Rashash explains that *mitzvos* that are fulfilled through action are rooted and rectified by the *nefesh*, and sins committed through action are also rooted in the *nefesh*. Speech, in contrast, is rooted in the *ruach*. Intentions are rooted in the *neschama*; thoughts in the *chaya*. [The difference between intentions and thoughts is that thoughts are created with greater concentration, as explained by the *Bnei Aharon's* commentary on *Sha'ar HaGilgulim*.] Finally, *re'usa ila'ah*, inner passion, is experienced by the *yechida*.
- F. Thus, even if a person sins with thoughts of severe anger and loses a portion of his lofty *neschama*; by guarding himself from speaking out in anger, he safeguards his *ruach* from abandoning him.

Speech, itself, encompasses three levels:

1. Man speaking to himself.
2. Man speaking to another person—which is the main essence of speech.
3. Man speaking in public to many people.

Speaking out in anger in any of these categories qualifies as angry speech, and the severity of the sin is based on the level of speech. Thus, one who sins by speaking angrily should at least guard himself from falling to the next level of angry speech in order to protect himself from greater spiritual loss.

- G. Finally, one who sinned in thinking angry thoughts and speaking out in anger should still strive to guard himself from acting out in fury, which is the worst expression of anger of all. Examples of furious actions include breaking objects or hitting another person, as these terrible actions severely increase the injury to one's soul.

According to the Rashash, such actions will have terrible effect on the *nefesh* aspect of his soul, although they may not affect the other, more essential aspects. However, a person should not think that it is inconsequential if his *nefesh* is affected, since it is the least important aspect of his soul, as each and every one of the five soul aspects are vital to his whole soul. Indeed, proof that the *nefesh* is central to the essence of the soul is that the Torah delivers the most severe punishments for sins that are committed with action. Moreover, when a person injures his *nefesh*, he weakens and/or destroys the foundational pillar of the more elevated aspects of his soul—the *ruach*, *neschama*, *chaya* and *yechida*—which causes all these to falter. In contrast, by rectifying the foundation of the soul, he endows strength and force to the other, loftier aspects of his soul.

Hence, a Jew should pray constantly and wholeheartedly to Hashem to safeguard him from the challenge of anger and any occasion that may lead him to anger.

Part VIII

- A. Chazal teach at the end of *Maseches Uktzin*, the last of the Six Orders of the *Mishnah*: “Rabbi Shimon *ben* Chalafta said: ‘The Holy One Blessed is He did not find a better vessel to contain blessing for Yisrael than peace, as written, ‘Hashem will grant strength to His nation; Hashem will bless His nation with peace.’”
- B. Sentiments of peace protect man from anger and thus act as a vessel to contain blessing. One who merits many blessings but sins in anger may not merit keeping or enjoying them if his soul is transferred to another person. Thus, only through peace, is one assured protection from anger and will merit retaining the blessing that he truly deserves.
- C. The *Mishnah* inscribes the phrase ‘*machzik bracha*’—contains blessing as *mem*, *ches*, *zayin* and *kuf* (without the vowel letter *yud*). The numerical equivalent of the word *machzik* is 155, which is equal to the numerical equivalent of *ka’as*—anger; this teaches that the force to counteract anger is that which contains blessing—peace.
- D. The Sages conclude the Six Orders of the *Mishnah* with this beautiful message in order to underscore that a person who merits completing all of *Shas* (Talmud)—a learning that conveys great radiance to the soul—must constantly beware of losing this vast spiritual light to his anger. He must safeguard himself against the quality of anger in order to merit enjoying the bounty of spiritual Torah light eternally.

Part IX

- A. *Sefarim* relate that a Jew encounters spiritual challenges in the form of temptation to anger specifically at those auspicious moments when he is deserving of an added portion to his *neschama*. It is easier for the forces of evil to appropriate the parts of his *neschama* that he received due to his merits than it is for them to steal the *neschama* that he was bequeathed at birth by causing him to sin in anger. Thus, when a person senses that he is about to become angry, he should realize that it is the forces of evil at work, endeavoring to steal the great

spiritual gift that he is about to receive; and this understanding will help him surmount the challenge of anger.

- B. This is the foremost reason why so many face challenges that lead to anger and discord on Friday afternoon, just before *Shabbos*. *Shabbos* is the auspicious day of the week upon which a Jew receives an added portion of his *neshama*, and the forces of evil wish to eliminate those portions of his soul by goading him to fury and dissension.

Part X

- A. Rav Chaim Vital's letters in *Sefer Eitz Chayim Sha'ar Ha'Akudim (Sha'ar 6)*, Ch. 2 p. 25 column 2 illustrate the importance of a Jew holding fast to the new, added portions of his *neshama* and guarding them from the forces of evil. He writes: "And you should understand and see that when a person is on the level of *nefesh*, then he is under the hold of the evil inclination which is the *klipah* of the *nefesh*... And when he is on the level of *ruach*, he does not fall prey to sin so easily... The level of *neshama* is already far removed from sin, yet still requires protection to avoid being lured from behind; and the level of *neshama* does not permit man to sin at all."
- B. It is important to qualify the above statement that one who has achieved the higher spiritual levels will not sin with the words of the *Gemara*: "One who is greater than his friend, his evil inclination is greater than his" (*Sukkah* 52a).

The Rashash explains in his commentary on *Eitz Chayim Sha'ar 26* Ch. 1 p. 15 column 1 that although the person who is on a lofty spiritual level has distanced himself from the evil inclination, the evil inclination itself possesses more powerful tools against him. Thus, even the greatest *tzaddikim* must beware, lest they fall prey to the clutches of the evil inclination.

- C. Paragraph A above refers mainly to the concept of acquiring added portions to his own *neshama* in the order of *nefesh*, *ruach*, *neshama*, *chaya* and *yechida*. However, there is also a concept of meriting a spark from the souls of the greatest *tzaddikim*, including Sages from the Talmud or even the prophets, as clarified in *Sefer Sha'ar HaGilgulim*.
- D. *Sha'ar HaGilgulim* describes that one who merits a spark of the *tzaddikim* automatically merits exceedingly lofty spiritual levels. Rav Chaim Vital thus describes at length how greatly man should strive to achieve these extraordinary levels.
- E. One who has merited these levels must exercise extreme caution to avoid anger at all times in order to ensure that he does not lose all he has acquired. As aforementioned, it is easier for the forces of evil to seize the added portions of his soul which were not entrenched within the person's original soul. Thus, one who senses that he has been endowed with a vast spiritual gift must take extreme caution to guard himself from pitfalls of anger.

Addendum

- A.** *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* Ch. 568:12 states: “One who is fasting, whether he is fasting individually for a hardship or a dream or whether he is fasting together with the public for their hardship, should not permit himself enjoyment and should not act lightly or be glad. Rather, he should be anxious and moan, as written, “What should the living man lament?”
- B.** The *Mishnah Brurah* adds in Paragraph 50: “And he should guard himself from anger. And if he has business, he should do so with faith and calm, so he will never arrive at anger. {This is also included in the *Be’er Heitiv* citing the *Chessed L’Avraham*.}
- C.** The sages emphasize this point since a person who is hungry is automatically more inclined to anger and irritation.
- D.** Hence, any time a person feels hungry—whether or not he is fasting—should be extra careful to guard himself from anger, as he is extra prone to emotions of anger and distress at such times.

Chapter 9: The Ramban regarding *dveikus hamachshava*.

- A. Chapter 7 above quotes the Ramban's commentary on *Parshas Eikev* and *Parshas Va'eschanan* regarding the *mitzvah*, 'To cling to him.' Aside from presenting a clear explanation of this imperative *mitzvah*, the Ramban also teaches significant points regarding *dveikus hamachshava* to Hashem Yisborach.

He states: "That you shall remember Hashem and His love always, and your thoughts should not depart from Him when you are walking, when you lay down to sleep and when you rise, until one perceives one's verbal and mental interactions with other people as not with them, but before Hashem. And it is possible that people who attain this spiritual level merit that their souls are bound in eternal life even during their lifetimes, as they themselves act as a dwelling place for the *Shechina*." (See *ibid.*)

- B. The Ramban inscribes similarly in his commentary on *Parshas Acharei Mos* Ch. 18:4: "And you shall know that man's life in *mitzvos* is according to his spiritual preparation.

[There are four categories of people:]

1. "One who fulfills the *mitzvos* not for the sake of heaven, but in order to acquire reward will merit many days of wealth, prosperity and honor in this world, as written 'In her left, there is wealth and honor' (*Mishlei* 3:19). *Chazal* elucidate, 'For the left-handed, riches and honor' (*Shabbos* 63a).
 2. "Those who engage in *mitzvos* in order to merit the next world, those who serve Hashem out of fear, will merit with their intentions to escape evil decrees; and their souls will rest in good.
 3. "And those who engage in *mitzvos* because of their love, as is the *Halacha* and proper with the matters of this world, as mentioned in the Torah in *Parshas Bechukosai* 26:5, 'And he will acquire for you threshing and vintage...' They will merit a good life in this world, and their merits are complete in the next world.
 4. "And those who abandon all aspects of this world and pay no heed of it, as if they do not own a body, and all their thoughts and intentions are directed solely toward their Creator, like Eliyahu, whose soul cleaved to the Honored Hashem; they will live forever in their body and their soul, as explicitly written of Eliyahu and as known from the secrets of Kabbalah, and as understood from the teachings regarding those who merit being restored at the time of the Resurrection of the Dead."
- C. *Parshas Vayishlach* 35:1 states, "And Hashem said to Yaakov, 'Get up and ascend to Beit-Kel, and settle there and build an Altar to the G-D Who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother, Eisav.'"

The Ramban writes in his commentary on this verse: "And I did not understand the meaning of 'settle there.' It is possible that Hashem was commanding him to settle there first before

building the Altar, in order to purify himself from idols... And perhaps Hashem commanded him to 'settle there' in order to clear his thoughts in order to cling to Hashem."

The Ramban's second explanation teaches that Hashem directly commanded Yaakov *Avinu* to clear his mind of any thoughts in order to focus his mind and heart absolutely to the goal of achieving *dveikus hamachshava* to Hashem Yisborach.

- D. Rav Chaim Vital in *Sefer Sha'arei Kedusha* Vol. 4 and *Sefer Reishis Chochmah* cite the Ramban's *Iggeres HaKodesh* (printed in *Kisvei HaRamban*) which states that the groundwork for acquiring the ability to perform miracles and wonders is *dveikus hamachshava* to Hashem Yisborach. [It is necessary to delve deeper into this issue in order to discover whether the Ramban refers to all forms of miracles or only to those wonders which entail increasing the bounty in the world. However, even if the Ramban refers only to the latter, many *Rishonim* and Kabbalists clearly state the same in reference to all miracles and wonders.]

Chapter 10: The *Ibn Ezra's* comments on *dveikus ba'Hashem* as generating miracles and wonders that transcend the forces of nature.

Part I

Cited from the *Ibn Ezra on Bereishis 1:26*

- A. The *Ibn Ezra's* commentary on *Parshas Bereishis 1:26* states as follows: "The Upper Soul of man that never expires is compared to Hashem, in that it is eternal, without a body, and encompasses the whole body. Thus, man's body is as a tiny world... And the prophet says, he perceived the Honor of Hashem in the vision of a man [(*Yechezkel 1:28*). Obviously, this is only a parable, as Hashem does not have a corporeal body]. And Hashem is One and He Created all. He is All."
- B. The above *Ibn Ezra* compares man's soul relative to his body, to a certain extent to Hashem Yisborach Whose Presence fills the entire universe.
- C. *Sefer Nefesh HaChaim Sha'ar C* emphasizes this concept at length, describing that there is no place in the world that is void of Hashem's Presence.
- D. The meaning of the *Ibn Ezra's* statement, "Hashem is All" is that the only absolute reality is Hashem, as nothing else in the world harbors independent force or power. Hashem is One and Only, and He causes every creation to exist at each and every moment. Nothing in the world has any substance other than Him. [See Ch. 4 above for the *Nefesh HaChaim's* discussion of this concept.]
- E. The *Ibn Ezra* does not actually mention the concept *dveikus* in the above quote; yet the knowledge and in-depth study of this concept will automatically convey one to acquire very powerful *dveikus*.

Part II

Cited from the *Ibn Ezra on Shmos 3:15*

The root of acquiring supernatural powers is *dveikus* to Hashem

- A. The *Ibn Ezra's* commentary on *Shmos 3:15* states: "The Upper World is the world of the holy angels that do not possess bodies and are not encased in bodies as the soul of man is. Their lofty levels are unfathomable for minds lower than theirs. And that is the World of Honor. They are all stationary; there is no changing in spiritual status. It is all continuity; there is no one by himself. All is for Hashem.
- B. "And man's soul is of a similar nature, as it derives an Upper Force according to the system of those who serve it. And every servant represents a great army from the time that it was created. If the soul becomes wise, it will attain in the secrets of the angels and will acquire a great power

from the Upper Powers that it first received from the lights of the angels. And then it will cleave to the Honored Hashem.

- C. “And this is the meaning of Yaakov’s vow, ‘And Hashem will be for me a G-D’ [*Parshas Vayeitzei* 28:21]. He had secluded himself throughout his lifetime in order to cleave to Hashem with all his heart. And this is why he said, ‘Remove the idols’ [*Vayishlach* 35:2], but did not command this previously, as only then did he begin serving Hashem as per his vow.”
- D. “This is also why Yisro asserted, ‘Now I know that Hashem is Greater than all gods’ [*Yisro* 18:11]. He was a very wise man, and proof of this is ‘And each man asked his friend’ [*Yisro* 18:7] and ‘And they bowed down,’ and he did not fear him.
- E. “And as he foresaw that Odom would die, he had a child in order to preserve the species; and behold, he received a force of continuity. This is why Chava said, ‘I acquired a man with Hashem’ (*Bereishis* 4:1).
- F. “The *Bnei HaNevi'im* (students of prophecy) would seclude themselves, each hoping that they would acquire *dveikus*, each man according to his capacity.
- G. “And with this Name, miracles and wonders will renew themselves in the world. And when the Name of Honor [most likely referring to the Name *Ha-va-ya* or *A-ki-k* (see *Ibn Ezra* above and the *Rashbam*)] was told to him [*Moshe Rabbeinu*], he requested miracles and wonders. Therefore, one will not find this Name in *Sefer Koheles*, which only discusses the eternal aspects of the world that cannot be increased or diminished, as there is never anything new to them except for the Upper Wisdom.

Part III

Explanation of *Ibn Ezra's* Commentary on *Shmos* 3:15

- A. In his discussion of the concept of *dveikus*, the *Ibn Ezra* writes that *dveikus* endows man with the power to perform miracles and wonders that transcend the forces of nature.
- B. He explains further that people receive their spiritual bounty from a special lofty place in the heavens where Hashem establishes the forces of nature. Angels, who exist on a higher spiritual plane than men of flesh and blood, receive their spiritual bounty from a higher place in the heavens, a place that is not limited by the laws of nature.
- C. When a person merits a lofty level of *dveikus*, he obtains his bounty from the place where the angels derive their bounty. This bounty that they draw transcends the forces of nature and empowers them with supernatural abilities, similar to the angels.
- D. As long as man continues receiving his bounty from the place that is designated for human bounty, it is difficult, if not totally impossible, to attain total and constant *dveikus*. Indeed the bounty intended for human beings is not a completely spiritual bounty, but mixed with other elements, which is why the *dveikus* that a person who derives bounty from the lower levels can attain is limited, combined with periods and aspects that lack *dveikus*. Indeed, only one who

merits receiving the spiritual bounty from the lofty plane usually designated for the angels can merit cleaving to Hashem constantly and fully, just as the heavenly angels do.

- E. The primary method of achieving the loftier spiritual bounty is striving. Man must exert all physical and spiritual energies at his disposal to complete the aspects of his *dveikus* that are lacking, by investing both additional hours and thoughts to achieving his goal. These endeavors will ultimately be rewarded with a gift of spiritual bounty from the loftiest level, one that will augment his capacity to reinforce his *dveikus* to Hashem.

Part IV

Ibn Ezra on Va'eirah 6:3

The Root of Acquiring Supernatural Powers is *Dveikus* to Hashem

- A. See the *Ibn Ezra's* commentary on *Bereishis* 6:3 regarding the verse, "And I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov with the Name *Kel Shakai*; and I did not appear to them with the name *Hava-ya*. He writes, "We know that Hashem created three worlds, as I mentioned [in his commentary on 3:6, some of which is cited in different parts of this booklet.] The lower world receives all aspects from the intermediate world, each aspect of the world receiving from the world above it.
- B. "And as man's soul is loftier than the intermediate world; if the soul would become wise and recognize that Hashem's doings are without an intermediary and abandon the desires of this lower world and isolate itself to cleave to Hashem. Then, if the heavenly constellations have decreed evil upon him on a specific day, Hashem—to Whom he cleaves—will instigate occurrences that will rescue him from evil. And if the constellations decree that he will be childless, Hashem will rectify this, and he will bear a child.
- C. "Thus, the Sages taught that Hashem commanded Avraham, "Leave your stargazing," [*Shabbos* 156a].
- D. "Similar to this is the concept, 'There is no *mazal* for Yisrael; and I will explain this later in *Parshas Ki Sisa* (33:21).
- E. "Thus, Hashem told Avraham first, 'And I will make your descendants many; I am *Kel Shakai*' (*Bereishis* 17:1). This is explained as, 'through the powers of the constellations (upper world).'
- F. "It is not that the constellations destroy. But one who cleaves to Hashem shall know that it is good that he is not subject to the powers of the constellations them.
- G. "This is why Yaakov said, 'The angel who redeems me from all evil,' [*Vayechi* 48:16], as there was an angel prepared to come upon him.
- H. "And this is the secret of the Torah, as I will explain there.

- I. “And the forefathers did not attain the lofty level of cleaving totally to Hashem, as Moshe *Rabbeinu* who saw Hashem face to face, did. This is why Moshe was able to transform the laws of the lower world and enact miracles and wonders that surpassed the abilities of the forefathers.
- J. “Moshe said two things. The first is, ‘Why did You send me?’ and the second is, ‘And rescue, You did not rescue Your nation.’
- K. “And [Hashem] answered [Moshe] on the latter, ‘Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh,’ and on the former, ‘And He said to him, “I am Hashem.”’ The reason for this is Hashem appeared to the forefathers with the Name ‘*Kel Shakai*,’ yet He appeared to Moshe with the Name Hashem, as written, ‘Thus, tell *Bnei Yisrael*, “I am Hashem” and, behold, I have sent you to announce that Hashem” will redeem them.

Part V

Explanation of *Ibn Ezra's* Commentary on *Va'eira* 6:3

- A. The *Ibn Ezra* above clearly alludes to the fact that the ability to perform supernatural miracles and wonders is largely contingent on the level of *dveikus* that a person attains. In order to achieve *dveikus*, one must totally abandon the physical reality of this world; and to the extent that one succeeds in attaining *dveikus*, he will likewise acquire the capacity for supernatural strengths and powers.
- B. The *Ibn Ezra* asserts strongly, “And this is the secret of the entire Torah.” Indeed, why does he state that the achievement of *dveikus* represents the entire Torah when there are 613 *mitzvos*?

It is possible that his statement is actually a general reference to all aspects pertaining to fulfilling the Will of Hashem, rather than a specific reference to *dveikus* alone. In essence, he could be stating that the key to Torah is myriad spiritual connections to Hashem that surpasses everything natural and instigates miracles and wonders that transcend the forces of nature.

However, the words of the *Ibn Ezra* can also be taken literally in order to grasp the tremendous weight and importance *dveikus*, which surpasses all other *mitzvos* in the Torah. [See *Rambam, Moreh Nevuchim* Vol. 3 Ch. 51-2 which highlights the importance of *dveikus hamachshava* to Hashem Yisborach and states that the achievement of *dveikus* is the ultimate goal of all other *mitzvos*, although other sages do differ. *Kisvei Ha'Ar"*i describes that every *mitzvah* and the specific aspects and particulars of every *mitzvah* harbor special keys to spiritually rectify the Upper Worlds and the soul.]

- C. See the *Ramban* in *Parshas Va'eira* which cites the *Ibn Ezra* above. He writes: “[Hashem] appeared to the forefathers with this Name [*Kel Shakai*], as He was conquering the decrees of the constellations in order to perform great miracles, as the forces of nature had power over them. He rescued them from hunger, from death, from war and the sword; and He granted them

riches and honor and all goodness. And this is as all the fated decrees described in the Torah, both in the blessings and the curses. Man does not merit goodness as reward for a *mitzvah* or evil as punishment for sin. Rather, it is all a miracle. If Hashem would abandon man to the forces of nature or his fate, his actions would not affect him at all—either positively or negatively. However, the reward and punishments for observing and transgressing the Torah are in this world; and it is all hidden miracles. One who looks with the naked eye will think that this is just the custom of the world.”

- D. The *Ramban* writes further, following in the *Ibn Ezra's* theme: “And, behold, Hashem said to Moshe, ‘I appeared to the forefathers with the Force of My Hand that I take from the constellations and mold to benefit My chosen ones. However, I did not appear to them with the Name *Yud-Key*, the Name that conjured everything into existence in order to create new or change the laws of nature. Therefore, tell *Bnei Yisrael*, ‘I am Hashem,’ and teach them the Great Name a different time, because it is with this Name that I create them so perfectly. And then they will know that I am Hashem who fashions all.”
- E. The *Ramban* concludes “And all that Rabbi Avraham [Ibn Ezra] said regarding this topic is true, yet he is a prophet but doesn’t know it.”
- F. See *Nefesh HaChaim Sha’ar C* regarding the miracles that Hashem performed on behalf of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov and those that Hashem performed for Moshe *Rabbeinu*. Following the *Ibn Ezra's* theme, he explains the root of the difference between these two. He also adds an explanation of the roots of each and their essences. (See Ch. 4 above) which elucidates segments of the *Nefesh HaChaim*.

Part VI

Ibn Ezra on Ki Sisa 33:21

- A. The *Ibn Ezra on Parshas Ki Sisa 33:21* states: “And, behold, Moshe was able to know and see with his heart how the creations clung to the Creator of the universe.”
- B. This topic is discussed at length by the *Nefesh HaChaim* (see there).

Part VII

Ibn Ezra on Chukas 20:8

Dveikus to Hashem Grants the Ability to Perform Miracles

- A. The *Ibn Ezra* states in his commentary on *Chukas 20:8*: “I will only hint to what I believe is the true explanation. You should know that when the part knows the Whole, it will cleave to the Whole and then acquire the ability to perform new wonders.”

- B. The 'part' is a reference to man [specifically a Jew, as written, "For a portion of Hashem is with him."] And the Whole is the Creator and Master of the world, as explained in the *Ibn Ezra's* commentary on *Bereishis*, as cited above.
- C. The *Ibn Ezra's* overall message is that the aspects that pertain to *dveikus hamachshava* to Hashem endow man with the ability to enact miracles and wonders that transcend the forces of nature.
- D. Even Moshe *Rabbeinu*, whose capacity to perform miracles and wonders surpassed that of all human beings in history, garnered his awesome powers from the tremendous level of *dveikus hamachshava* to Hashem that he achieved.

Part VIII

Explanation of the *Ibn Ezra* on *Parshas Chukas*

- A. The *Ibn Ezra's* statement indicates that there is an added dimension to *dveikus* which leads to the capacity to perform miracles, specifically as those enacted by Moshe *Rabbeinu*.
- B. The *Ibn Ezra's* commentary on *Bereishis* 1:26 inspires better understanding of this concept: "The Upper Soul of man that never expires is compared to Hashem; in that it is eternal, without a body, and encompasses the whole body ... And Hashem is One and He Created all. He is all, and I cannot be properly explained." [See Part I above for the *Ibn Ezra's* complete commentary on this verse and its explanation which is critical to the understanding of this section.]
- C. Returning to the quote from the *Ibn Ezra*, as cited above in Part VII A "When the part knows the Whole." The word 'know' refers to *Yedi'as Hashem* (knowing Hashem), which is the foundation of all belief and faith in Hashem.
- D. The *Ibn Ezra* calls Hashem the 'Whole' and 'All,' as it is insufficient for man to merely know that Hashem exists. Rather, man must appreciate that Hashem Yisborach is everywhere, that He encompasses everything, and that He causes everything to exist, as He is the Only True Reality in the universe. Indeed, it is this patent knowledge that inspires tremendous *dveikus hamachshava* to Hashem Yisborach, the type of *dveikus* in which man's thoughts are constantly cleaving to the idea that Hashem is All.
- E. Chapter 4 above presents a clear description of this type of *dveikus*, as expressed by the *Nefesh HaChaim* in *Sha'ar* C. The *Ibn Ezra* writes that it is this form of *dveikus* that grants man the ability to enact supernatural events. He also explains that this *dveikus* was the source of Moshe *Rabbeinu's* spiritual strength and ability to perform the miracles that he did on behalf of Bnei Yisrael.
- F. The *Ibn Ezra* writes, "And he will perform miracles in all." This alludes to his commentary in *Parshas Bereishis*, when he writes that Hashem Yisborach is "Present in all." Indeed, as A Jew focuses on his *dveikus*, he should simultaneously focus on Hashem's Strength which causes the

existence of everything or upon the miracle that he wishes to enact. However, according to the *Nefesh HaChaim*, it appears that the loftier spiritual level that allows one to perform miracles is achieved by removing any thought from one's mind that is connected to the physical aspects of this world. Based on the content of Chapter 4, it is possible to resolve this apparent contradiction by man focusing both on the miracle that he wishes to enact together with the truth that there is nothing in the world other than Hashem.

- G. The *Ibn Ezra* refers to man as the 'part,' and to Hashem as the 'Whole.' This would seem to hint that it is insufficient for man to focus on the Greatness of Hashem as One and All. Man is only a part, whereas Hashem is the Whole. As such, man must also focus on his goal to fuse all five aspects of his soul (*nefesh, ruach, neshama, chaya, yechida*) to the spiritual Unity that is Hashem and to draw the desired bounty from Hashem into the world and his own soul. Indeed, this is the intention and utmost desire that grants man the awesome powers that he desires.

Part IX

Ibn Ezra on Chukas 20:8

Explaining the Incident at Mei Meriva

- A. The *Ibn Ezra* on *Parshas Chukas 20:8* expounds upon the underpinnings of *Bnei Yisrael's* sin at Mei Meriva. He challenges the explanations of other commentaries and then concludes, "I will only hint to what I believe is the true explanation. You should know that when the part knows the Whole, it will cleave to the Whole and then acquire the ability to perform new wonders and miracles. And the truth is that Hashem told Moshe and Aharon, 'And you will speak,' but they didn't speak because the nation was fighting with Moshe. And behold the part separated, and he hit the rock; and water did not emerge until he hit it a second time. And, behold, they did not sanctify the Name of Hashem, and they defied Him and rebelled accidentally."
- B. Indeed, Moshe *Rabbeinu's* capacity for miracles derived from his perpetual *dveikus* to Hashem, and specifically his *dveikus hamachshava*. [See the *Nefesh HaChaim* which describes Moshe's fantastic ability to perform miracles.] At that time, however, something was lacking in Moshe's *dveikus* (due to his friction with *Bnei Yisrael*), which inhibited his ability to perform miracles properly and caused a lessening of *Kiddush Hashem* in the world. Thus, it would seem that the *Ibn Ezra's* usage of the word 'separated' referred to a separation from *dveikus*.
- C. The *Ibn Ezra's* statement, 'Inhibited his ability to perform miracles properly would seem to follow *Rashi's* commentary, which explains that Moshe was supposed to have drawn the water from the rock with words as opposed to hitting it. Had he ordered the rock to release water, water would have flown from it. However, the *Ibn Ezra's* message harbors a deeper element in that he seems to say that, at the time, Moshe's level of *dveikus* was on a lower level which made him incapable of performing the miracle through his speech alone. As such, Moshe had no choice but to hit the rock in order to release its water, which is a lesser miracle requiring a lower level of *dveikus* to Hashem.

- D. The *Ohr HaChaim* elucidates the event similar to the *Ibn Ezra*, stating that due to Moshe *Rabbeinu's* temporarily diminished level of *dveikus*, the water emerged only after he hit the rock twice, whereas had his *dveikus* been on its normal lofty level, the water would have certainly flowed after his first strike.
- E. According to the *Ohr HaChaim's* explanation of the incident, it is unclear whether Moshe automatically regained his regular level of absolute *dveikus* after his first strike did not yield a miracle, which was how he was thus able to enact the miracle of Mei Meriva; or if the miracle that he performed by hitting the rock twice was simply a lesser miracle that did not require such a lofty level of *dveikus*. However, it would seem that Moshe *Rabbeinu* did return to his absolute level of *dveikus* before hitting the rock a second time and drawing the water from it.
- F. See the *Ohr HaChaim* to better understand the incident of Mei Meriva, when *Bnei Yisrael* challenged Moshe *Rabbeinu* about the lack of water.
- G. The *Ibn Ezra's* commentary on Mei Meriva teaches a powerful lesson about the awesome responsibility of *Kiddush Hashem* and the grave sin of failing to sanctify Hashem's Name properly. Indeed, the lack of *Kiddush Hashem* that occurred at Mei Meriva derived from a miracle itself—something that most human beings could never fathom doing! Because Moshe *Rabbeinu's* spiritual level at the time did not allow him to perform the miracle immediately, he was punished severely for failing to ascend to the spiritual level expected of him. Moshe *Rabbeinu* performed a tremendous miracle that transcended all forces of nature; he drew enough water from a rock to quench the thirst of millions of people and their livestock. Yet, he was still censured for failing to perform an even greater miracle that would have increased *Kiddush Hashem* in the world. (*Rashi* adds that, moreover, had Moshe caused the miracle by commanding the rock to spew water, then *Bnei Yisrael* would have internalized a deep lesson regarding their obligation to heed the words of Hashem; and this was the essence of his failure.)
- H. Regardless of the Sages' critique of Moshe *Rabbeinu* for causing a lapse in *Kiddush Hashem*, it must be emphasized that Moshe *Rabbeinu* was the greatest of all prophets and the human being who achieved the greatest level of *dveikus* in all of history. Indeed, he was capable of performing miracles and wonders on behalf of millions of people, supernatural events that surpassed all others since the beginning of time. No human being has ever been able to perform miracles of the likes of Moshe *Rabbeinu's* miracles—even the one for which he was censured! Indeed, *Parshas V'Zos HaBracha* asserts, "No prophet arose in Yisrael as Moshe who knew Hashem face-to-face..." *Parshas Be'ha'aloscha* likewise describes Moshe *Rabbeinu's* spiritual magnitude as surpassing that of every other prophet.
- I. Notwithstanding, *Nefesh HaChaim Sha'ar C* describes at length that the essential elements of Moshe *Rabbeinu's* *dveikus* can be achieved by every person in every generation on his own individual level. He adds that these elements are fantastic *segulos* for achieving supernatural powers—those that eliminate evil from the world and those that convey positive tidings.
- J. The *Bi'ur HaGr"o* in *Sifra D'Tzniusa* Ch. 5 p. 34 column 1 explains that everything that applied to Moshe *Rabbeinu* in his generation exists in each and every generation within each and every

man, in an inner, spiritual sense (as not every person actually faces the threats that existed at the time of the Splitting of the Sea.) However, each person harbors the potential to achieve absolute *dveikus* and perform miracles on his own level and in his own situation.

Part X

Ibn Ezra on Parshas Ha'azinu **Regarding the Tree of Life**

- A. The *Ibn Ezra* states in his commentary on *Parshas Ha'azinu* 32:39: "The reward of the World to Come is dependent on the soul's service of Hashem and his obligation to reflect upon the workings of Hashem, as this is the ladder that leads him to ascend to the level of knowing Hashem, which is the absolute goal. And the Torah describes the concept of the Tree of Life for the one who is wise; and there was a certain power that existed to overcoming *Kruvim* (angels guarding the entrance to *Gan Eden*) and the fruit of the Tree of Life which grants man eternal life, just as the heavenly angels...as occurred to Chanoch and Eliyahu."
- B. The *Ibn Ezra* states that the Torah grants man the ability and means to fully understand the concept of the Tree of Life and how to achieve this.
- C. Although the *Kruvim* were placed in front of the Tree of Life to prevent humans from reaching it, as described in *Parshas Bereishis*, there is a special power that allows one to vanquish the *Kruvim* and reach the fruit of the Tree of Life in order to attain eternal life.
- D. He alludes that this is what occurred to Eliyahu and Chanoch, who ascended to the heavens alive, as they were able to grasp the conceptual Tree of Life.
- E. Attaining the conceptual Tree of Life is totally dependent on man's thoughts and intentions.
- F. See *Rambam, Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* which describes the pathways toward achieving love of Hashem and fear of Hashem by reflecting upon the wonders of Creation. The *Ibn Ezra* above likewise discusses pondering the miracles of Hashem's Hand as a rung on the ladder, whose top is Knowledge of Hashem.
- G. See the *Tanna Divrei Eliyahu* on *Parshas Bereishis* regarding Eliyahu *HaNavi's* ascent to the heavens.

Chapter 11: The Vilna Ga'on's discussion of the wonders of the Torah during the Exile.

Part I

- A. *Bi'ur HaGr"a* on *Tikkunei HaZohar*, *Tikkun* 21 p. 61 column 3 states: "In the final exile, all the wonders mentioned in the Torah will be realized; the sea of the Torah will split, and all of the miracles. These will follow the example of the miracles that occurred in Egypt. And exile of mortar and bricks will be found in the Torah; and all toil will be in Torah, as written in the *Ra'aya Me'hemna*." (See there for complete discussion of this subject and the Vilna Gaon's notes regarding the *Tikkunei HaZohar* p. 52.)
- B. The Vilna Gaon's choice of words seems to indicate that wonders that will befall those who study Torah will be supernatural occurrences, as opposed to a reward for those who study Torah.
- C. Still, there is also an aspect of reward to those who invest in the study of Torah. As one merits succeeding in the study of Torah, he automatically connects to the roots of these miracles; and this grants him excess strength to perform miracles in other realms of life as well.
- D. The *Tikkunei Zohar HaChadash* (p. 26 in *Sha'am* edition) states: "Come and see, every miracle and wonder that occur in this world are drawn from the letters of the Torah which are encompassed within the *Shechina*. The Vilna Gaon explains that all wonders that transpire in this world are drawn from Torah. The Hebrew word *os* has two meanings: Wonders and letters. This is as written, "Show of the wonders to come in the future," (*Yeshaya* 41:23). [In this verse, the word 'wonders' is written as *osios*, with the extra letter *yud* that usually connotes the word letters. (See the Vilna Gaon's essay on this topic, as this possibly expands upon our subject.)

Part II

- A. It is important to explain why the force of learning Torah stimulates the power to perform miracles and wonders that transcend the forces of nature.

In the final portion of the Torah, *Parshas Zos HaBracha* 34:9-12 relate: "(9) And Yehoshua bin Nun was filled with a spirit of wisdom, for Moshe placed his hands upon him; and Bnei Yisrael heeded him as Hashem commanded Moshe. (10) And there never arose a prophet in Yisrael as Moshe, who knew Hashem face to face. (11) For all the miracles and wonders that Hashem commanded him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land. (12) And for all the strong hand and for all the great fears that Moshe did before the eyes of all of Yisrael."

- B. These final verses in the Torah praise Moshe Rabbeinu for the extraordinary miracles and wonders that he merited performing on behalf of our nation. Commentaries teach that the source of Moshe's unnatural powers stemmed from his unwavering closeness to Hashem Yisborach that allowed him to merit, 'Knowing Hashem face to face.' The juxtaposition and

grammar of verses 11 and 12, which discuss the miracles that Moshe enacted and directly follow verse 10 which describes Moshe's singular relationship with Hashem Yisborach, indicate a strong connection between the two concepts. Indeed, both verses 11 and 12 state, 'For all the miracles... For all the strong hand,' as opposed to a seemingly more grammatically-correct, 'All the miracles...All the strong hand.' This clearly alludes to a connection between these verses and the previous one which describes the source of these strengths. [Several commentaries do point out that Moshe's relationship with Hashem in Egypt had not reached the level of face-to face (see *Ibn Ezra, Parshas Ki Sisa*); yet, Hashem's revelation to Moshe was certainly on an extraordinary level even then, and it was this level that eventually allowed him to attain the pinnacle of seeing Hashem face-to-face and accomplishing these extraordinary miracles.]

- C. Verse 9 relates: "And Yehoshua bin Nun was filled with a spirit of wisdom, for Moshe placed his hands upon him." This is the source of *Pirkei Avos* 1:1, "Moshe received the Torah from Sinai and relayed it to Yehoshua."

The continuation of Verse 9 states: "And Bnei Yisrael heeded [Yehoshua] as Hashem commanded Moshe." This was the expression of Yehoshua transmitting the intense spiritual light from him to all of Yisrael.

Part III

- A. Each and every Jew harbors a spark of Moshe *Rabbeinu* inside his soul, as stated in many holy *sefarim* including *Bi'ur HaGr"a l'Sifra d'Tzniusa* Ch. 6 page 34 column A.
- B. As one engages in the study of Torah, which was given to us directly from Hashem Yisborach through Moshe *Rabbeinu*, one arouses that sacred spark of Moshe that exists within his soul—a spark that harbors infinite connection and closeness to Hashem Yisborach and harbors the potential to perform miracles and wonders. Thus, through the study of Torah, one draws oneself ever nearer to attaining supernatural powers.

Part IV

- A. An additional aspect regarding learning Torah as a means to attaining supernatural forces is the power that it has to overcome the evil inclination. *Sukkah* 52b and *Kiddushin* 30b state: "Rabbi Yishmael taught: 'My son, if the evil inclination strikes you, pull him toward the *Beis Midrash*. If he is a stone, it will dissolve; and if it is iron, it will explode. If it is stone, it will dissolve, as written: "Stones were smoothened by water," and water is Torah, as written, "All who are thirsty, go to the water." And if it is iron, it will explode, as written, "Behold My words are as fire, said Hashem, and as a hammer, it will smash rock."'"
- B. There are many who challenge this *Gemara*, arguing that they spent many a long hour in the *Beis Midrash*, but are remote from conquering their evil inclination. The answer to their argument, however, is clear: Had they kept away from the *Beis Midrash* and failed to invest their hours and efforts into learning Torah, the evil inclination would possess a much stronger hold upon their

souls. Thus, even if they have not yet fully escaped the clutches of the evil inclination, they should increase their hours and efforts of Torah study, which will ultimately lead them to vanquish the evil inclination totally.

- C. There are special messages to be gleaned from the specific verses that *Chazal* employed to describe how one must conquer the evil inclination. *Chazal* advise us to 'soften' the *yetzer hara* with water, as written, 'All who are thirsty, go to the water.' Indeed, a Jew must approach Torah with a powerful thirst and yearning, learning with the intensity and craving as one would drink after being stranded in the powerful desert heat without water.
- D. The *Rashash* writes that the soul of every Jew is encased both in layers of *chitzoniyus* (externality) and *pnimiyus* (pure, internal layers). When a person learns Torah or serves Hashem without fierce desire for connectin to Hashem, only minute rays of light penetrate into these pure, internal layers—which are the most important layers of the soul. However, when a person learns Torah and serves Hashem with intense desire for spiritual closeness, a radiant, powerful light penetrates into the deepest recesses of his soul.

The same, unfortunately, is true of evil. When a person sins purposefully, with lust for evil, a dark impurity penetrates his heart deep into his soul. Tragically, there are times when the evil inclination causes man to sin with lust, and this impurity does penetrate; and man aspires to banish this impurity through the study of Torah. The only way to truly cleanse the heart of impurity is to learn Torah with a desire and love that surpasses the lust that he had for evil. If he does not learn Torah with that same craving, the radiance will fail to penetrate as deeply as the impurity, which is why the person will believe that *Chazal's* advice failed him. Hence, *Chazal* emphasize that one must learn Torah with the desperate yearning of one thirsting for water. (*Sefer Nahar Shalom*, printed in the back of *Sefer Eitz Chaim* p.22 column 4)

- E. *Chazal* also taught, "If it is as iron..." If the evil inclination is stronger than stone, and the above counsel is ineffective, then one must smash it, as written, "Behold, My word are as fire, said Hashem, and as a hammer that will smash rock."

The *Ba"ch* in *Orach Chaim* Ch. 47 in *Hilchos Birkas HaTorah* explains that the Torah is a spiritual conduit connecting man to Hashem and drawing the light of Hashem into man's soul. If man truly aspires to connect his soul to Hashem and benefit from His heavenly light through his study of Torah, then the light that he will merit will be an intensely powerful light that will obliterate the evil inclination from his heart and allow him to merit an even greater light of Torah directly from Hashem.

- F. These two messages from *Chazal* are not only useful in man's quest to eliminate the evil inclination from his heart, but they also elevate man's capacity to absorb and learn Torah, as well.

Part V

- A. It is interesting that the *Gemara* cites the verse, “Behold, My word are as fire, said Hashem, and as a hammer that will smash rock,” to prove its point of the unimaginable force of Torah, when *Rashi* manifestly states that this verse in *Sefer Yirmiyahu* is a clear reference to the power of prophecy.
- B. *Sefer Yirmiyahu* relates that there were many sinners in Yirmiyahu’s era whom the prophet rebuked and warned with the message that if they would fail to repent, the king of Bavel would conquer the land and destroy the *Beis HaMikdash*, as ultimately occurred. His rebuke seems to allude that had *Bnei Yisrael* heeded his warnings and repented to Hashem, they would have been spared this terrible decree.
- C. Yet unfortunately, there was many a false prophet in that generation, as well, who feigned being prophets of Hashem and reported that they had received a prophecy that nothing would happen to the nation, even if they failed to repent. As such, Yirmiyahu’s words did not have the desired effect on the nation, and there were many who spurned him and his efforts to inspire their repentance.
- D. Yirmiyahu then rebuked the false prophets for their lies, asserting that they could not even pretend to claim that they had dreamed and mistook the dream for a prophecy. He explained that there is a marked difference between a dream and a prophecy; prophecies arrive as a burning fire, as written, “Behold, My word are as fire, said Hashem, and as a hammer that will smash rock.” It thus emerges that the above verse is a certain reference to prophecy, as opposed to Torah, which leads us to question why the *Gemara* employed this verse to portray the force of Torah over the evil inclination.
- E. The answer is embedded in *Gemara Shabbos* 146a which relates that the soul of every Jew—present and future—stood at the foot of Mount Sinai at the time of the Revelation and the giving of the Torah. (Also see *Shvu’os* 39a).
- F. Why was it necessary for every soul to attend the Revelation? Certainly the vast majority has no recollection of the Revelation and giving of the Torah, especially if they do learn of it. [The *Yismach Moshe* relates that he does recall the historical event, and even those who stood beside him!]

There are many responses to this question. The *Chafetz Chaim* answers that, at the time of the Revelation, the soul of every Jew—both present and future—received his portion of Torah; and throughout man’s sojourn in the physical world, he is obliged to realize the potential for Torah that exists within his soul. (*Shem Olam*, Vol. 2 Ch. 6)

- G. *Parshas Va’eschanan* 5:4 states in regard to the Revelation: “Face to face was the word of Hashem with you on the mountain from within the fire.”

The commentaries ask how the Torah can state this in reference to the entire nation when the final verses in the Torah assert, “And there never arose a prophet in Yisrael as Moshe who knew Hashem face to face.” The *Divrei Yaakov* presents a list of answers (see there for complete responses), all of which attest to the point that every member of *Klal Yisrael* merited an intense moment of prophecy at the time of the Revelation. The *Rashba* likewise asserts that not only did every Jew merit prophecy at that moment, but that the prophecy that they merited was of the loftiest form possible.

- H. Indeed, each and every Jew from every generation received his unique portion in the Torah at the time of the Revelation through this moment of intense prophecy. The soul of each and every Jew harbors the greatest spiritual prophetic lights that encompass his vast portion in Torah. Hence, when a person engages in Torah study, he draws upon this latent potential in Torah and makes it into a reality; and this Torah reality ignites the prophetic lights in his soul, thus granting his soul immense supernatural strengths.
- I. The above serves to clarify the discrepancy in *Sukkah* 52b and *Kiddushin* 30b that quote the verse in *Yirmiyahu*, “Behold, My word are as fire, said Hashem, and as a hammer that will smash rock,” in reference to the study of Torah. Indeed, the study of Torah calls upon the latent prophetic powers that dwell in the soul of every Jew, especially when he learns with an intense desire to draw close to his Creator.
- J. The type of prophecy dormant within the soul that can be aroused and activated through the study of Torah is a very lofty level of prophecy, as alluded to within the verse, “Face to face were the words of Hashem with you on the mountain from within the fire.” It is this tremendous level of prophecy that serves as the root of one’s potential to acquire the capacity for miracles and wonders.

Impassioned study of Torah is the primary tool to activating the latent potential for prophecy, and obviously the more a person cleaves to Torah, the greater his capacity for realizing his latent abilities.

There are two primary means of cleaving to Torah:

1. Invest the maximal hours into learning by exploiting every second for Torah study, and intensify one’s concentration and focus while learning.
2. Increasing one’s desire and yearning to grasp, understand, absorb and remember each and every word that one learns with the ultimate goal of drawing ever closer to Hashem.

Part VI

- A. There is another essential lesson to be learned from the fact that *Chazal* equated Torah to prophecy. Dovid *HaMelech* inscribed in *Tehillim*, “Forever, Hashem, Your Words are stationed in

the heavens” (119). The meaning of this verse is that every Word spoken by Hashem exists and must be upheld forever.

- B. When a person studies Torah, he connects to these Words spoken by Hashem at Mount Sinai.
- C. *Brachos* 5a states that the Oral Torah was also relayed by Hashem at Mount Sinai.
- D. The *Talmud Yerushalmi* and *Midrash Rabba* likewise teach that even the Torah thoughts conceived by scholars in latter generations were relayed to Moshe *Rabbeinu* at Mount Sinai. (See commentaries on *Brachos* 5a.)
- E. The “words of Hashem” that were spoken to Moshe were prophecy. Thus, whenever a Jew studies Torah, he connects to the G-dly light intrinsic in the ‘words of Hashem’ relayed to Moshe at Mount Sinai. See commentaries on *Parshas Pekudei* for expanded explanation on this subject.
- F. This concept is closely intertwined with the acquisition of supernatural forces through the study of Torah. Indeed, many a miracle transpired at the time of the Revelation. *Chazal* teach that all who were sick or disabled were cured at the time of *Matan Torah* and of many other miraculous events that transpired when Hashem revealed Himself to his nation. Thus, every time a person engages in the study of Torah, he arouses a similar potential for miracles; and the more intense his study of Torah, the more he stirs that potential for miracle.

Part VII

- A. *Shabbos* 104a and *Megilla* 2b relate: “Rav Chisda said, ‘The *mem* and *samech* of the Tablets stood through a miracle.’” The writing on the Tablets, upon which were written the Ten Commandments, was engraved from both sides. All the letters, except the end *mem* and *samech*, touched the Tablets; however the inner circle and square of the *mem* and *samech*, which had nothing on which to grasp, were supported through a miracle.
- B. The Tablets, in general, were beyond the forces of nature as they were fashioned and handwritten by the Hand of Hashem as opposed to a human hand. (Even the second set of Tablets was written by the Hand of Hashem.)
- C. Aside from the two letters, once the Tablets were completely fashioned, their existence became natural, as anything constant—whether or not it was originally considered a supernatural entity—is considered “natural,” a product of the “forces of nature.” (This subject is explained at length in Chapter 4 above, which quotes the *Nefesh HaChaim*.)
- D. However the letters *mem* and the *samech* in the Tablets continued to be a manifest miracle, as the inner parts of the letter continued to stand.
- E. The *mem* and *samech* in the Tablets teach a fundamental lesson in Judaism. There are letters in the Torah that are completely surrounded, without any breaks, interruptions or connection to

the part of the stone Tablets. This hints to the message that with continuous, uninterrupted connection to Torah, a Jew can rise spiritually until he overcomes the forces of nature and merits the capacity for miracles and wonders.

- F. There are times when a person is deeply connected to the Torah, but still harbors aspects of his personality that have yet to complete that perfect link. Thus, he feels shaky, insecure and feels that he should stabilize himself in the lower world in order to ensure his security. In the parable of the *mem* and *samech*, this would translate into the letters breaking their continuity, their perfect circle/square in order to maintain their hold onto the stone. However, it is the exact opposite that is true. Only if one completes the circle of his link to Torah—an absolute connection, without interruption, without any break, like the *mem* and the *samech*—will he acquire the capacity to transcend the forces of nature and stand alone through a miracle.
- G. It is vital to emphasize that all the above must be fulfilled with clear regard to the mandates of *Halacha*. A Jew is obligated to adhere to physical laws and preserve his health, as well as to abide by the directives and Halachic guidance of our spiritual leaders and mentors. Still, one should bear in mind that, oftentimes, it is through this complete connection to Torah that matters in life resolve themselves miraculously to one's benefit.

This connects to the following chapter, which quotes the *Maggid Meisharim* who taught the *Beis Yosef* that by directing one's thoughts to Hashem Yisborach and His holy Torah without interruption one can acquire a vast capacity for miracles and wonders that transcend the forces of nature. This is similar to the *mem* and *samech* which stand, despite—or more accurately—only as a result of the continuous connection in Torah.

Chapter 12: *Sefer Maggid Meisharim* regarding attaining supernatural powers.

Part I

- A. The soul of every Jew is a magnificent Upper Light that shines directly from Hashem Yisborach and enters the body. The Jewish soul harbors immense spiritual capacities and powers.
- B. The soul, however, is limited, as it is encased within a corporeal body. Aside from the soul, the physical body also possesses its own element of spirituality which limits the powers of the soul.

Man must do two things in order to merit attaining supernatural powers: The first is strengthening the powers of the soul beyond its original capacity, which endows it with the power to overcome the force of the body. The second is striving to purify the body in order to diminish the grasp that it has on the soul.

- C. Observing the *mitzvos* and learning Torah are two aspects that empower the *neshamah* and weaken the strength of the body. Hashem, Who created the universe and bequeathed the Torah to His people, molded the world in the sense that the fulfillment of *mitzvos* and study of Torah draw a spiritual light from Hashem down to the world, increasing the power of the soul and purifying the body. The Torah states in *Parshas Va'eschanan*, "And for you, who cleave to Hashem your G-D, there is life always." Indeed, man's soul-connection with Hashem endows life and vigor to the *neshamah*.
- D. For every moment that a Jew learns Torah, prays, fulfills a *mitzvah* and refrains from *aveirah*, he merits an indescribable spiritual light from Hashem, which fuses with his *neshamah* and further enhances its original light. The added spiritual radiance remains with him always; and it is with this enormity of spiritual radiance that a Jew merits attaining the supernatural powers for which he strives.

Part II

- A. In order to understand the concept of the spiritual lights that lead a Jew to attain supernatural powers and the means of acquiring them, it is necessary to emphasize two important points:
 1. There are many forms of supernatural powers, and not always is one able to choose which specific power(s) he will merit due to the spiritual light of his *neshamah*.
 2. There are many levels and intensities of supernatural powers; and a Jew's capacity to achieve the loftier levels is dependent on the extent of his spiritual endeavor. Moreover, even if one does achieve a strong power, there will be time when this power will be stronger and weaker within him.
- B. One example of supernatural powers is as described by Chazal in *Midrash Shmuel Parsha 22* elucidating *Shmuel A 19:18*. The *Midrash* relates that Dovid *HaMelech* learned from Shmuel

HaNavi in a single night more than a disciple can learn from his teacher in 100 years. [This is also cited in *Yalkut Shimoni, Shmuel 24*. The *Chid"ra* writes in *Shem HaGedolim, Ma'areches Gedolim* Letter 10: "The only hindrance is sullied material; and Dovid *HaMelech a"h*, using the spiritual strength of Shmuel *HaNavi*, successfully removed all materialism, and his soul absorbed all."]

One hundred years is a tremendous amount of time, encompassing tens of thousands of nights! It is thus clear that the combined learning that Shmuel and Dovid acquired upon that night transcended the forces of nature. Indeed, there are times when a person is capable of learning something that would normally take him much longer, but it is physically impossible to condense 100 years—36,500 times the amount of hours that he learned—into a single night! The only possible explanation is that their learning contained an obviously supernatural element to it. Indeed, even if a person was able to condense 500 nights of learning into a single night, it would be a clear sign of a supernatural occurrence; and the same would be true for 200 nights, 100 nights, or even 50 nights. The only difference between these manifest miracles is the intensity of the supernatural force itself.

- C. When a Jew merits experiencing a supernatural occurrence, as the one mentioned above; the greatness of the actual event is accompanied by vast spiritual lights that settle upon his *neshama*. (See *Ohr HaChaim al HaTorah, Parshas Acharei Mos* which alludes that the root is the spiritual light; and the miraculous event (i.e. ability to absorb a vast amount of Torah in a short time) is merely the outgrowth. Regardless, however, man does merit both simultaneously.
- D. A Jew who acquires these intense spiritual lights derives enormous pleasure, a gratification that cannot be encapsulated in words. Notwithstanding, his motive for acquiring these lights and supernatural forces cannot be to derive enjoyment, but to endow spiritual pleasure to his Creator, a goal which, in itself, bestows absolute pleasure to man's soul. It is well-known that all the combined pleasures of the universe are as nothing compared to a fleeting moment of pleasure in the world of Truth.

Part III

- A. The first prerequisites toward acquiring supernatural powers is increasing Torah study, prayer, *mitzvah* observance, and avoiding sin.
- B. Aside from enhancing one's meticulous observance of *mitzvos* that are fulfilled with action and words, albeit these are actually the weightiest as demonstrated by the severity of the punishments for sins perpetrated through activity (i.e. desecrating Shabbos); it is also vital to enhance one's service of Hashem in thought in order to acquire supernatural powers.
- C. Serving Hashem in thought can be divided into two main categories:
 1. Establishing set times for intense *dveikus hamachshava* to Hashem and yearning for Him.
 2. Connecting one's thoughts to Hashem at all hours of the day to the greatest possible extent.

- D. Hence, a Jew should endeavor to avoid binding his thoughts to the material aspects of this world, even when he is obliged to engage in physical activities and needs. Rather, he should strive to direct his mind and heart with *dveikus* to Hashem and immerse his thoughts in Torah at all times.

Part IV

- A. *Sefer Maggid Meisharim* is one of many sources which emphasize that *dveikus hamachshava* is the first prerequisite to acquiring supernatural powers. A heavenly angel once appeared to Rabbi Yosef Karo, *zt"l*, author of the *Beis Yosef* and *Shulchan Aruch*, and taught him Torah and the foundations of achieving levels of tremendous piety. Rabbi Yosef Karo then compiled many of these teachings into a *sefer* entitled *Maggid Meisharim*. This work has become one of the main reliable sources discussing the concept of attaining supernatural forces as it was relayed to Rabbi Yosef Karo directly by an angel, and Rabbi Yosef himself merited many miracles, including the wondrous appearance of this angel. Exploiting the vast spiritual powers that he acquired at this auspicious hour, he merited transmitting Torah to the entire nation.
- B. *Maggid Meisharim, Parshas Bereishis* states: "That you shall cleave to Me only, and not as you do only occasionally. For if you only knew how many worlds you build and how many worlds you separate when you separate your thoughts, you would not separate your thoughts for even one hour. Thus, strengthen yourself to unite all your thoughts toward Me; and if you do this, you will merit that miracles will be performed through you, just as they were done by the *Tanna'im*; and the whole world knew that there is G-D among Yisrael. And do not be swayed by the Satan and his legions who imbue thoughts in your mind to distract you from uniting your thoughts toward Hashem."
- C. *Maggid Meisharim, Parshas Vayeitze* states similarly: "That you shall cleave to Me only, for with fear of Me and with learning, you will rise and merit performing miracles with your hand, as in the days of the Talmudic Sages; and the Name of Hashem will be sanctified in the world through you, for they will know that there is G-D among Yisrael. The key to the miracles performed by the Sages is that their thoughts always cleaved to the Congregation of Yisrael, as their thoughts were constantly immersed in Torah and fear of heaven without interruption. And when she ascends to a level of *binah* (understanding), all those who cleave to her rise together with her to the level of *binah*. As their souls cleave to it, they all harbor a power to obtain all that they desire."
- D. In *Parshas Mikeitz*, he adds: "If you affix your thoughts always to me without even a moment's interruption, then I will grant you the merit of performing miracles and wonders, as in the days of old. For, presently, the greater world does not appreciate Torah scholars, as they do not own the power of miracles and wonders as in previous eras. Indeed, the reason that they were once capable of enacting miracles and wonders is because their thoughts clung to Me, to My Torah and to fear of heaven, always; and it did not depart from Me for even a moment. And because of this, they would ascend to great heights, and they clung to the Heavenly Qualities... And I will do the same for you, if you shall only bind yourself to Me and never move from me for even a moment."

- E. In *Parshas Shmos*, he says: “Hashem is with you. Only that you shall cleave to Me with fear of Me and love of Me, and you shall not detach your thoughts for even a moment... And you will be destined to perform miracles, following the example of the Talmudic Sages, so that the generation will know that there is G-D among Yisrael. For just as you merited speaking mouth to mouth as I am speaking to you, which is something that you never dreamed nor fancied, so I will grant you the merit of performing actual miracles.”
- F. The above quotes from the *Maggid Meisharim* refer to the extraordinary miracles experienced by the Sages of the *Mishnah* and *Gemara*, many of which are described in the *Gemara* and *Midrash*, specifically in *Maseches Ta’anis*. [The Steipler’s *Sefer Chayei Olam* also includes a partial list of these miracles.]
- G. In his message to Rav Yosef Karo, the *Maggid Meisharim* teaches that all the supernatural miracles and wonders that human beings merit experiencing are dependent on their level of uninterrupted *dveikus hamachshava* to Hashem Yisborach. [See *Nefesh HaChaim Sha’ar C* regarding the above and the *dveikus* achieved by the forefathers and Moshe *Rabbeinu*, as well as the miracles that they personally and collectively merited as a nation as a result of their superlative service of Hashem.]

The goal of *dveikus hamachshava* and the means of attaining it, which can impel a Jew to acquire supernatural powers, are concepts that require a great deal of in-depth study and concerted effort. Several of the previous chapters in this booklet described these concepts at length; and one who studies them carefully and endeavors to fulfill all that is written here will be able to sense as his spiritual powers acquire greater strength and vigor.

Chapter 13: *Gemara Ksubos 111b* defines the *mitzvah* of *dveikus* as cleaving to Torah scholars; verses in the Torah that mention the *mitzvah* of *dveikus*; the *Mesilas Yesharim's* explanation of the *mitzvah*; *Gemara Sotah 14a*; an overview of *Rashi* and the *Rishonim's* opinions on the subject.

Part I

The Mitzvah of *Dveikus* as Elucidated by *Gemara Ksubos*

- A. *Ksubos 111b* cites the renowned verse in *Parshas Va'eschanan 4:4*: "You, who cleave to Hashem your G-D, you are all alive today." The *Gemara* posits the famous question: "Is it possible to cleave to the *Shechina*? It is written, 'For Hashem your G-D is a consuming Fire.' However, one who marries his daughter off to a Torah scholar and one who does business with a Torah scholar and who allows a Torah scholar to benefit from his assets; the Torah credits him as if he cleaved to the *Shechina*."
- B. The *Gemara* also quotes a verse in *Parshas Netzavim 30:20*: "To Love Hashem your G-D, to heed His Voice and to cleave to Him." *Chazal* queried, "Is it possible for a man to cleave to the *Shechina*? However, one who marries his daughter off to a Torah scholar and does business with a Torah scholar and who allows a Torah scholar to benefit from his assets; the Torah credits him as if he cleaved to the *Shechina*."

Part II

Additional Verses in the Torah that Refer to the *Mitzvah* of *Dveikus*

- A. The concept of *dveikus* is mentioned in five places in the Torah, all in *Sefer Devarim*:
1. *Parshas Va'eschanan 4:4*: "You, who cleave to Hashem your G-D, you are all alive today."
 2. *Parshas Eikev 1:20*: "Hashem, your G-D, you shall fear; you shall serve Him; and to Him you shall cleave; and in His Name you shall vow."
 3. *Parshas Eikev 11:22*: "For if you shall guard all this *mitzvah* that I am commanding you to do, to love Hashem your G-D, to follow in His ways, and to cleave to Him."
 4. *Parshas Re'eh 13:5*: "After Hashem your G-D you shall walk; and Him you shall fear; and His *mitzvos* you shall guard; and His voice you shall heed; and Him you shall serve; and to Him you shall cleave."
 5. *Parshas Nitzavim 30:20*: "To Love Hashem your G-D, to heed His Voice, and to cleave to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days, in order that you shall dwell on the land that Hashem pledged to your forefathers, to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov, to give to them."

- B. The *Gemara* in *Ksubos* cites the first and the last of these five verses in its discussion of the *mitzvah* of *dveikus*. Since *Chazal* define the '*dveikus*' mentioned in these two verses as 'cleaving to Torah scholars,' it would seem logical that this applies to the other three verses as well.
- C. Why did the *Gemara* specifically cite the two verses in *Parshas Va'eschanan* and *Eikev* as opposed to all or another one of those five verses? The simplest reason would be that the first and last verses encompass all five verses, and *Chazal* thereby implied that cleaving to Torah scholars is the fulfillment of all five verses.

Rashi on *Eikev* 11:22, "And to cleave to Him," likewise quotes the explanation in *Gemara Ksubos* above, which indicate that the definition would apply to all verses that discuss cleaving to Hashem. *Rashi*, however, does not cite the *Gemara's* explanation in his elucidation of the other verses. (See Part IV below explaining that *Rashi* apparently elucidates the verse in *Parshas Re'eh* differently.)
- D. It is unclear why *Rashi* did not quote *Gemara Ksubos* in reference to *Parshas Va'eschanan* and *Parshas Nitzavim*, as cited by the *Gemara*, and instead chose to apply it to *Eikev* 11:22 which is preceded both by *Va'eschanan* and *Eikev* 1:20 in the Torah.
- E. See *Yehoshua* 22:5, 23:8; *Melachim* B 18:6; and *Tehillim* 63:9, 119:31.

Part III

Gemara Sotah 14a on *Parshas Re'eh*

A Discussion of *Dveikus* as Gleaned from *Gemaras Ksubos* and *Sotah*

- A. *Gemara Sotah* 14a quotes *Parshas Re'eh* 13:5: "After Hashem your G-D you shall walk; and Him you shall fear; and His *mitzvos* you shall guard; and His voice you shall heed; and Him you shall serve; and to Him you shall cleave."

Rabbi Chama *ben* Chanina taught: "Is it possible for man to walk after the *Shechina*? Behold, it is written, 'For Hashem your G-D is a consuming Fire.' Yet, you shall follow Hashem's Qualities. Just as he clothes the undressed, as written, 'And Hashem made for Odom and his wife leather garments, and He dressed them;' so you shall clothe the undressed. He visited the sick, as written, 'And Hashem appeared to him in Eilonei Mamrei;' so you shall visit the ill. The Holy One comforted mourners, as written, 'And it was after Avraham passed away, and Hashem blessed Yitzchak his son;' so you shall comfort mourners. Hashem buried the dead, as written, 'And He buried them in the valley;' so you shall bury the dead."

- B. The *Gemaras* in *Ksubos* 111b and *Sotah* 14a pose similar queries, yet respond differently. There is no reason to question the difference in their answers however, as their questions actually regard two different concepts. *Ksubos* 111a refers to the *mitzvah* of cleaving to Hashem, whereas *Sotah* 14a regards following in Hashem's ways, which *Chazal* defined as emulating His superlative qualities.
- C. Still, the conclusion of the verse in *Re'eh* does mention the *mitzvah* of *dveikus*, as written, "After Hashem your G-D you shall walk; and Him you shall fear; and His *mitzvos* you shall guard; and His

voice you shall heed; and Him you shall serve; *and to Him you shall cleave.*” It emerges that *Chazal* should have asked the same question on two parts of a single verse. Yet, because *Chazal* already presented their answer in reference to the verses in *Va’eschanan* and *Nitzavim*, it stands to reason that the same applies to the verse in *Re’eh*.

- D. It emerges that *Re’eh* 13:5 encompasses two vital messages: The beginning of the verse is the commandment to emulate Hashem in all His qualities, and the conclusion of the verse is the commandment to cleave to Torah scholars.

Part IV

Rashi’s Commentary on the Above

- A. In his commentary on the Torah, *Rashi* does not elucidate the beginning of the verse in *Re’eh* 13:5 at all, whereas he does expand upon the words, “And to Him you shall cleave,” as follows: “Cleave to His ways, perform acts of loving-kindness, busy the dead, visit the ill as *Hakaddosh Baruch Hu* did.”
- B. *Rashi* teaches that one is obliged to emulate the qualities of Hashem from the words, “And to Him you shall cleave.”
- C. This requires further explication, as *Gemara Sotah* 14a derives the *mitzvah* of emulating the qualities of Hashem from the beginning of the verse in *Re’eh*, “After Hashem you shall walk,” whereas *Rashi* states the same in reference to the end of the verse, albeit there is no mention of this in the *Gemara*.
- D. Moreover, following the basic explanation of *Gemara Ksubos* 111a, it is apt to explain the final words of the verse in *Re’eh* as an obligation to cleave to Torah scholars.

Part V

The Mitzvah of Dveikus is Dveikus Hamachshava

- A. *Mesilas Yesharim* Ch. 19 defines the *mitzvah* of *dveikus* to Hashem differently than the surface explanation of *Ksubos* 111a. He writes, “*Dveikus* is that man’s heart should so cleave to Hashem *Yisborach* that he will not think or consider anything other than Him.... And the Torah commanded us with the *mitzvah* of *dveikus* numerous times, ‘To love Hashem your G-D...and to cleave to Him;’ ‘And to cleave to Him;’ ‘To Him you (singular) shall cleave;’ ‘To Him you (plural) shall cleave.’ And *Dovid HaMelech* wrote, ‘My heart cleaves after You.’ The point in all these verses...is that the *dveikus* with which a person cleaves to Hashem does not allow him to separate or even move from Him.” [He cites this in reference to four verses: *Nitzavim* 30:20, *Eikev* 10:20; *Re’eh* 13:5, *Tehillim* 63:9.]
- B. It would seem that the above contradicts *Chazal’s* statement in *Gemara Ksubos* 111a, which defines *dveikus* as ‘cleaving to Torah scholars.’
- C. One explanation is that the Torah contains *pshat* (surface explanation), *remez* (allusion), *drash* (deeper explanation), and *sod* (secrets of the Torah)—four levels of understanding, and these

are simply two different levels. *Chazal* likewise taught, “There are seventy faces to the Torah,” meaning that there are seventy ways of explaining the Torah.

- D. However, the difficulty in resolving the contradiction according to the above is that it appears that the *Gemara* negated the possibility of elucidating the verse according to its surface explanation as Hashem is a “Consuming Fire.”
- E. Indeed, the word ‘*dveikus*’ can be defined in several ways, and all are correct. One possible definition would have been a physical connection, not just a connection of thought. The *Gemara* thus negates the possibility of cleaving physically to the *Shechina* and clarifies that any physical connection must refer to Torah scholars.
- F. *Targum Unkelus* translates *Va’eschanan* 4:4: “And, you, who cleave to Hashem your G-D,” as “And, you who cleave with fear to Hashem your G-D.” In *Parshas Eikev*, he translates, ‘And to Him you shall cleave as “Draw close to fear of Him.” He translates, “And to cleave to Him” as “To draw near to fear.” In *Parshas Re’eh*, he translates, “And to Him, you shall cleave,” as “To the fear, you shall draw near.” In *Parshas Nitzavim*, “And to cleave to Him,” as “To draw near to the fear.” It is necessary to study this in greater depth to learn if *Unkelus*’s translation corresponds with the *Mesillas Yesharim*’s explanation, or whether it is a different perspective. (See commentaries from the *Rishonim* who discuss this issue.)
- G. See the sections below that cite the *Ibn Ezra* and *Ramban* in *Parshas Eikev* and the *Rambam*, *Sefer HaMitzvos* Imperative *Mitzvah* 7 and the *Sforno*’s commentary on this.
- H. The *Ramban*’s comments correspond to the teachings of the *Mesillas Yesharim*.
- I. The reason that this section quotes the *Mesillas Yesharim* as opposed to the *Ramban* is because the *Ramban* defines *dveikus* in several ways, noting that *dveikus hamachshava* is encompassed within the concept; whereas the *Mesillas Yesharim* defines *dveikus* in terms of *dveikus hamachashava* only.
- J. However, see Chapter 14 below which cites the *Rambam* in *Sefer HaMitzvos* who abides by the explanation of *Gemara Ksubos* and defines the *mitzvah* of *dveikus* only in terms of cleaving to Torah scholars.

Part VI

***Ramban*’s Commentary on “And to cleave to Him” (*Eikev* 11:22)**

- A. *Parshas Eikev* 11:22 states, “For if you shall guard all this *mitzvah* that I am commanding you to do, to love Hashem your G-D, to follow in His ways, and to cleave to Him.”

The *Ramban* comments, “‘And to cleave to Him.’ Rabbi Avraham [Ibn Ezra] said, ‘It is a great secret at the end.’ But the secret is not from here. Perhaps he is saying, ‘To love Hashem and follow in His ways until you are worthy of cleaving to Him at the end.’”

- B. “It says in *Yehoshua* [32:7-8]: ‘And in the Name of Hashem your G-D, you shall not mention, and you shall not vow, and you shall not serve and not bow down to them; but only to Hashem your G-D you shall cleave, as you have done until this day.’ This is one of the warnings against idol-

worship, that their thoughts should not depart from Hashem to other gods, that they shall not believe that idols have any essence, but that all is nothing and non-existent.

- C. “And this is as written above, [*Parshas Re’eh* 13:5]: ‘And Him you shall serve, and to Him you shall cleave.’ The point is to warn them that they shall not serve both Hashem and another god; but rather that they shall serve Hashem Alone in his heart and actions.
- D. “And it is possible that *dveikus* also encompasses remembering Hashem and loving Him always, that one’s thoughts should not depart from Him ‘When you are going on your way, when you lie down and when you rise,’ until one’s physical and verbal interactions with other people are not even with them, but before Hashem. And it is possible that people who exist on this spiritual level, their lives in this world are bound in the eternity of life, for they themselves are dwelling places for the *Shechina*, as the *Kuzari* hints and as I mentioned previously regarding forbidden relationships [*Acharei Mos* 18:4]. As Yehoshua said, ‘As you’ve done until today, for when you were in the Desert and Hashem’s Cloud was upon you and the manna descended from the heavens and the quail rose and the Well was before you always, and all their actions were in the hands of the heavens with miracle,’ behold, their thoughts and actions were constantly with Hashem. Thus, Yehoshua commanded them that once they reached the Land, and these wondrous miracles would depart, they would still be obligated to cleave to the Honored, Awesome Hashem in thought, and that their focus should never leave Hashem.”
- E. The *Ramban* explains the *Ibn Ezra’s* words as the soul cleaving to Hashem after death, and the essence of this concept is a deep secret. Indeed, relative to Hashem Yisroch, even the soul is a material entity, and it is thus impossible to link the soul to Hashem Yisroch. Nonetheless, there still is a type of connection that can be forged, and it is an intensely powerful connection that surpasses any connection that can be found in this world.
- F. The *Ramban* then cites Yehoshua’s commandment to the nation. On the surface, it appears that this is a basic commandment to believe solely in Hashem and not other gods, and the *Ramban* connects the concept of *dveikus* here as well. The reason the *Ramban* discusses this at greater length in *Parshas Re’eh* is because *Parshas Re’eh* mentions the concept of a prophet who commands the nation to worship idols, which is an obvious prohibition; but the *Ramban* also indicates that it connects to the *mitzvah* of *dveikus* listed in *Eikev* 11:22., as well.
- G. The *Ramban* defines the *mitzvah* of *dveikus* in *Eikev* 11:22 as the constant *mitzvah* of *dveikus hamachshava* to Hashem Yisroch, as quoted in Paragraph 4 above.
- H. The *Ramban* also wrote that the *dveikus* mentioned in *Sefer Yehoshua* can also be defined as the constant *mitzvah* of *dveikus hamachshava* to Hashem Yisroch. It is important to note that, despite his lengthy discussion of the subject and his three explanation of the verse mentioning *dveikus*, he does not once mention *Gemara Ksubos* 111a which defines *dveikus* to Hashem as cleaving to Torah scholars. Even if this is a *drash* explanation of the verse, it is logical that he should have mentioned it and preempted his statement with the point that the *mitzvah* of “cleaving to Hashem” has yet to be defined according to a surface explanation.
- I. See *Ramban Parshas Va’eschanan* 6:13 on the words, ‘And in His Name you shall vow.’ The *Ramban* cites the *Midrash Tanchuma* which mentions the concept of *dveikus* in its explanation

of this topic and defines *dveikus* as cleaving to Torah scholars. There, the *Ramban* does clearly note that *dveikus* could also refer to cleaving to Torah scholars.

- J. See *Rambam, Sefer HaMitzvos Imperative Mitzvah 7* regarding the *mitzvah*, “And to Him you shall cleave.” Chapter Nine below also cites the *Ramban* in several places regarding *dveikus hamachshava* to Hashem Yisborach.
- K. The *Sforno* in *Parshas Eikev* 11:12 states: “And to cleave to Him—that all your actions should be directed to fulfill His Will, as written, ‘Know Him in all your ways.’” Also see *Sforno, Parshas Re’eh* 13:5.

Part VII

Unanimous Consensus that *Dveikus Hamachshava* Is an Essential *Mitzvah*

- A. In spite of any source that defines the *mitzvah* of *dveikus* according to the explanation of *Ksubos* 111b, it is clear that *dveikus hamachshava* to Hashem is one of the foundations of the Torah and an essential *mitzvah*. The *Gemara* in *Ksubos* does not negate this in any way. Thus, every Jew is obligated to strive to his maximal abilities to achieve *dveikus*; and the primary means of attaining this desired level of *dveikus* is toiling in Torah and heartfelt prayer.
- B. Even the *Rambam*, who in both *Sefer Hamitzvos* and *Hilchos De’os* clearly defines the *mitzvah* of *dveikus* as the obligation to cleave to Torah scholars (see below in Chapter 14), emphasized at length in *Moreh Nevuchim* Vol. 3 Ch. 51-2 that *dveikus* to Hashem is one of the fundamentals of the Torah and our religion.
- C. The *Rambam* himself stated that it is not recommended for everyone to study certain sections *Moreh Nevuchim*. Still, all the Rabbinical authorities quoted by the *Rama* in *Orach Chaim* Ch. 1:1 concur with the above point; and the *Rama* even copied the foremost words of the *Rambam*, “I place Hashem before me, always. This is an essential rule in the spiritual levels of the righteous.”
- D. However, whereas the *Rambam* wrote in *Moreh Nevuchim* that *dveikus* “Is the ultimate purpose of the *mitzvos*,” there are many other authorities who disagreed. The *Kisvei Ar”i* discusses this issue at length, explaining that every *mitzvah* effects vast *tikkunim* in the Upper Worlds; and many other sources describe the motive of the *mitzvos*. Notwithstanding, the *Rambam’s* underlying message is that *dveikus* is an essential, paramount aspect in Judaism and a very fundament of the Torah; and there is no one who argues this point.
- E. *Bi’ur HaGr”a* in the *Shulchan Aruch* 1:1 comments on the *Rama’s* quote of the *Rambam*, “I place Hashem before me always; this is an essential rule in the spiritual levels of the righteous.” The Vilna Gaon adds that the act of “Placing Hashem before me always,”—*dveikus* is essentially the lofty spiritual level of the righteous. He cites several verses in order to prove his point. [See *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 1:1 *Bi’ur HaGr”a* regarding ‘*Kedoshim*—holy people,’ whom the *Gr”a* defines as “Who stand constantly before Hashem.” Similarly, in his *Sefer Toras HaKabbalah*, the *Gr”a* also vividly describes the importance of *dveikus hamachshava* to Hashem Yisborach.

- F. Chapter Nine above cites the *Ramban's* writings regarding the magnitude of *dveikus*.
- G. *Nefesh HaChaim Sha'ar C* writes lengthily of the unparalleled significance of *dveikus*. "This was the service of the holy forefathers throughout the days of their lives." He also adds that this is what *Chazal* intended when they stated: "Reish Lakish said, 'The forefathers were the chariot, and so was the service of Moshe *Rabbeinu*' (*Bereishis Rabba Parsha 47*, as quoted by *Rashi* in *Bereishis 11:22*). The *Nefesh HaChaim* expands upon this subject, distinguishing between the *dveikus* exhibited in the *Avos'* service of Hashem and Moshe *Rabbeinu's* service of Hashem.

Addendum

- A. Later, I saw that is cited in *Sefer Da'as Noteh* Vol. A in the *Biu'rim* that the *Sefer HaChareidim* Ch. 9 Letter 10 quotes the *Ramban al HaTorah* in *Devarim* 11:22.
- B. The beginning of the *Chayei Odom* states that this *mitzvah* of *dveikus* refers to *dveikus hamachshava* to Hashem Yisborach.
- C. The *Pnei Yehoshua*, *Ksubos* 111b cites the *Gemara's* query, "How can one cleave to Hashem?" and its reply, which is "Cleave to Torah scholars." He explains that the reason for this is that the verse must be applicable to every Jew, and not every individual is capable of achieving *dveikus hamachshava*.
- D. The *Haflo'ah* on *Ksubos* 96a also writes similarly. [The above is all cited in *Sefer Da'as Noteh* p. 19.]
- E. If the fulfillment of *dveikus* is to cleave to Torah scholars, how do the scholars fulfill this *mitzvah*?
- F. The *Rambam*, *Moreh Nevuchim* Vol. 3 Ch. 51-2 cited above explains that the *seichel* (intellect) is that which binds the Creator to His creations. [This is also stated in *Chazon Ish*, *Kilayim* Ch. 1:1 and *Yoreh De'ah* 150:8 and in the *Ibn Ezra*.] The *Rambam* adds that the amount of this connection depends largely on the amount of time and extent to which the *seichel* is occupied with thoughts of Hashem and His Torah. (See there for complete essay.)

Chapter 14: The *Rambam* in *Sefer Hamitzvos* and *Halachos* which defines the *mitzvah* of *dveikus* according to *Gemara Ksubos* as cleaving to Torah scholars; his discussion of the *mitzvah*, ‘And you shall follow in his ways’ and other explanations of *Gemara Ksubos*; cleaving in thought to Hashem and desiring a soul-connection with Him is an imperative Torah-based commandment encompassed in the *mitzvah* of loving Hashem.

Part I

**The Rambam’s in *Sefer HaMitzvos*, Imperative *Mitzvah* 6 and other sources regarding the *mitzvah* of *dveikus* which state that the elucidation of this *mitzvah* as presented by *Gemara Ksubos* 111—
cleaving to Torah scholars--constitutes its basic definition**

- A. The Rambam inscribes in *Sefer HaMitzvos*, Imperative *Mitzvah* 6, ‘And you shall cleave to Him’: “The sixth *mitzvah* is that He commanded us to connect to the sages and to unite with them and to spend time in their presence in every means of serving Hashem. And one should remain in their company while eating and drinking and all engagements so we will strive to emulate their ways and believe the truth of their words. This is what Hashem said, ‘And you shall cleave to Him.’ And this commandment was doubled with the later commandment, ‘And to cleave to Him.’ It states in the *Sifri*, ‘And to cleave to him—Cleave to the sages and their disciples.’ They present proof of this through man’s obligation to marry the daughter of a scholar and to feed Torah scholars and support them in business. These are [all fulfillments of] ‘And you shall cleave.’ [The Sages query,] ‘Is it possible for man to cleave to the *Shechina*? Behold, it is written, “For Hashem your G-D is a consuming fire.” Indeed, one who marries his daughter to a Torah scholar or marries the daughter of a Torah scholar and grants the scholar pleasure from his assets, the Torah credits him as if he cleaved to the *Shechina*.”
- B. The Rambam writes further in *Hilchos De’os* Ch. 6:2: “It is an imperative *mitzvah* to cleave to scholars and their disciples, in order to learn from their actions as written, “‘And you shall cleave to Him.’ [The Sages query,] ‘Is it possible for man to cleave to the *Shechina*?’” The Sages taught in the clarification of this *mitzvah*, “Cleave to the sages and their disciples.” Thus, man is obligated to endeavor to marry the daughter of a Torah scholar and marry his daughter off to a Torah scholar and to provide food and drink to scholars and to support a scholar’s business and to join in their company in every possible way, as written, ‘And you shall cleave to Him.’ And the sages also instructed, ‘And you shall become dusty with the dust of their feet and drink their words thirstily.”
- C. The Rambam also writes in his list of *mitzvos* in *Hilchos De’os*, “And you shall cleave to those who know Him.”
- D. The Rambam likewise inscribes in his General List of *Mitzvos* in the beginning of *Yad HaChazakah*, Imperative *Mitzvah* 6: “‘To cleave to Him,’ as written, ‘And to Him, you shall cleave.’” Here, the Rambam did not elaborate as he did elsewhere in the sources listed above. However, it is clear that this is what he gleaned from the text, and he wrote this in brief while basing his writings on his lengthier explanation in *Hilchos De’os*, *Sefer HaMitzvos* and the List of

Mitzvos commencing *Hilchos De'os*. In this case, however, he simply wrote, 'Cleave to those who know Him,' as he apparently wished to expand as per the actual text in the verse.

- E. Hence, it is clear that the Rambam regards the words of *Gemara Ksubos* 111b as the basic definition of the *mitzvah*, and not as the deeper one. As such, he counts the above rules pertaining to remaining in the company of a Torah scholar as actual *Halacha* and the fulfillment of the *mitzvos d'oraysa* "And to Him you shall cleave" and "To cleave to Him." He did not include other *Halachos* as the fulfillment of these verses.

Part II

Some Commentaries Include *Dveikus HaMachshava* within the *Mitzvah* 'And To Cleave To Him; The Rambam Cites These as Imperative *Mitzvos* Based on the *Mitzvah* of Loving Hashem

- A. As stated above in Part I, the Rambam in *Sefer HaMitzvos*, Imperative *Mitzvah* 6 and *Hilchos De'os* defines the *mitzvah*, 'And to Him you shall cleave,' as the commandment to cleave to Torah scholars, as per *Gemara Ksubos* 111b. The Rambam does not mention the concept of *dveikus hamachshava* in regard to the *mitzvah* of cleaving to Hashem, albeit other sages do state that the *mitzvah* to cleave to Hashem encompasses *dveikus hamachshava* as well.
- B. Although he does not include *dveikus* in cleaving to Hashem, the Rambam does use very compelling language when stating that the *mitzvah* 'To love Hashem' encompasses *dveikus hamachshava*.
- C. The Rambam inscribes in *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* Ch. 2:1: "It is a *mitzvah* to love and fear our Exalted G-D, as written, 'And you shall love Hashem your G-D,' and it is said, 'And Hashem, your G-D, you shall fear.'" In *Halacha* 2, he wrote in regard to loving Hashem: "Immediately, he loves and praises and exalts and yearns with a powerful yearning to know the Great Hashem, as Dovid said, 'My soul thirsts for G-D, for a living G-D.'"
- D. The essence of the Rambam's words regarding the details of the *mitzvah* to love Hashem is inscribed in *Hilchos Teshuva* Ch. 10: "One who serves Hashem with love, engages in Torah and *mitzvos* and walks along the path of wisdom not because of anything in the world, not because he fears evil and not because he wishes to be rewarded, but acts for the sake of truth because it is truth and the good will emerge regardless. This level is an extremely lofty level, and not every scholar merits attaining it. It is the attribute of Avraham *Avinu*, whom Hashem called, 'My beloved,' as he served Hashem totally with love. And this is the level that Hashem commanded us through Moshe *Rabbeinu* to attain, as written, "And you shall love Hashem your G-D with all your heart, and all your soul and all your means.' When man loves Hashem with this ideal level of love, then he will automatically fulfill all the *mitzvos* with love.
- E. "And what is the ideal love with which man must love Hashem totally? With a great, powerful love, to the extent that his soul is bound in the love of Hashem, and his soul flourishes with it... When he sits and when he rises; when he eats and when he drinks, love of Hashem should flourish in his heart, as commanded, 'With all your soul, and all your soul and all your means.'" (It

is unclear why the Rambam wrote this here instead of in *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*, where he described the essence of the *mitzvah*.)

- F. He adds in *Halacha* 6: “It is clearly known that love of Hashem does not bind itself to the heart of man until he flourishes in it always and abandons everything in the world except for [the love], as He commanded and said, ‘With all your heart and all your soul.’”
- G. The Rambam writes In *Sefer HaMitzvos*, Imperative *Mitzvah* 3: “The commandment ‘To love Him’ is that we must reflect upon and become wise in his *mitzvos* and actions until we can grasp His wisdom. And we will revel in this attainment that is the greatest pleasure; and this is the required love.”

The meaning of the Rambam’s words is that this love of Hashem—this ultimate connection of man’s soul to Hashem—is the pinnacle pleasure that can be achieved in the world. The Rambam concludes that this is the level of love that man is obligated to attain.

- H. From where did the Rambam learn that the ultimate pleasure of man is an imperative *mitzvah*?

The Torah states, “And you shall love Hashem your G-D with all your heart and all your soul and all your means.” The ninth chapter in *Gemara Brachos* defines ‘*With all your heart*—with your two inclinations; *with all your soul*—even if He takes your soul; *with all your means*—with every measurement that they measure for you, you should thank Him very much.’ This elucidation is certainly a deeper explanation of the text, as *Gemara Pesachim* 24 and *Sanhedrin* 74 teach that one is obligated to sacrifice one’s life rather than transgress the cardinal sin of idol worship.

Still, the Rambam’s writings adhere to the rule that a verse can always be defined according to its simple explanation; and thus these phrases of ‘with all your heart and all your soul and all your means’ must indicate a complete and absolute love of Hashem. Thus, the Rambam asserts that in order to fulfill these three conditions of the *mitzvah* of loving Hashem, a Jew is actually *obligated* to achieve that unadulterated connection to Hashem and the pleasure that accompanies it.

- I. The Rambam writes in *Hilchos Teshuva* that the definition of the verse “And you shall love Hashem your G-D with all your heart and all your soul and all your means,” obligates a Jew to focus on this *mitzvah* constantly, that his mind must not stray from it during any hour of the day or night, to the extent that this *mitzvah* encompasses his very being. This, he writes, is the *ideal* fulfillment of the ‘love’ that man is expected to achieve.

In *Sefer HaMitzvos*, however, the Rambam defines loving Hashem as ‘It is the epitome of pleasure...this is the *required* love.’ Perhaps specifically because love of Hashem is the greatest pleasure that man can possibly attain, the Rambam asserted that man is obligated to achieve it. In contrast, he did not state similarly in reference to the lofty spiritual levels that he mentions in *Hilchos Teshuva*, which he notes that “not even all Torah scholar merit.”

- J. Despite the discrepancy in the texts, it is not certain that the above should be derived from the words of the Rambam, since both are gleaned from the same verse, ‘With all your heart and all your soul and all your means.’ (See *Rambam Hilchos Teshuva* Ch. 10:6)

- K. Furthermore, since the *Sefer HaMitzvos* that we have today is actually a translation of the Rambam's original text in Arabic, it is also possible that the actual translation would have been 'the ideal love.'
- L. See the end of Chapter 13 above regarding the Rambam in *Sefer Moreh Nevuchim* regarding the significance of *dveikus* to Hashem.

Part III

Details of the Imperative *Mitzvah* of Cleaving to Torah Scholars

- A. There is an interesting discussion regarding the imperative Torah commandment of *dveikus* to Torah scholars, as explained above according to the Rambam. If this is an actual commandment, how do scholars themselves fulfill this *mitzvah*?
- B. One possible answer is that every Torah scholar is obligated to cleave to one who is greater than he. The Rambam's wording is, "It is a *mitzvah* to cleave to the Torah scholars and their disciples." Laypeople learn from the sages by cleaving to them; a student learns and grows in service of Hashem when he cleaves to his teacher.
- C. So how do the venerable Torah sages and leaders of the nation fulfill this imperative *mitzvah*? Perhaps the answer is just as the simple person's fulfillment of the *mitzvah* is to cleave to a Torah sage in order to learn from his righteous ways and follow them, so too the Torah scholar's fulfillment of the *mitzvah* is to strive to act as a spiritual model for others.

One could argue this point, as the *Gemara* does stipulate, 'cleave to Torah scholars,' as opposed to 'follow in the ways of serving Hashem.' Yet, perhaps as the Torah scholar fulfills both the source and purpose of the *mitzvah*, it is considered as if he fulfilled the *mitzvah* itself.

- D. Still, the Rambam did present many specifications of this *mitzvah*, both in *Sefer HaMitzvos* and *Hilchos De'os*; and he did not note that the *mitzvah* encompasses following in the ways of Hashem and serving Hashem. Only when he wrote, 'cleave to Torah scholars' did he expand, 'as he learns from them, he fulfills this *mitzvah*.' It thus emerges that he can only fulfill the *mitzvah* as such.

Part IV

Cited from the Rambam in *Sefer HaMitzvos* Regarding The Imperative Commandment 'V'halachta B'drachav—And You Shall Follow In His Ways' & 'Acharei Hashem Telchu—After Hashem You Shall Go' & *Gemara Sotah 14*

- A. The Rambam writes in *Sefer HaMitzvos* Imperative *Mitzvah* 8: "It is that He commanded us to emulate Him according to the best of our abilities, and this is as it says, 'And you shall follow in His ways.' This commandment was doubled, as written 'To follow in all His ways.' And it is explained, 'Just as Hashem is called Merciful, also you shall be merciful. Just as Hashem is called

Compassionate; also you shall be compassionate. Just as Hashem is called Righteous; so you shall be righteous' [*Sotah* 14]. This concept is repeated twice, as written 'After Hashem you shall go.' The explanation is that you shall emulate His benevolent actions and the honorable qualities and parables used to describe Hashem."

- B. The Rambam also writes in *Hilchos De'os* Ch. 1 *Halacha* 5-6: "And we are commanded to traverse the middle path, which are the good, straight paths, as written, 'And you shall follow in His ways.' *Chazal* explained, 'Just as Hashem is called Merciful, so you shall be merciful. Just as Hashem is called Compassionate; so you shall be compassionate. Just as Hashem is called Holy; so you shall be holy.' The Prophets employed these terms to describe Hashem, 'Slow to Anger, Master of Great Kindnesses, Righteous, Straight, Pure, Valiant, Strong,' etc. in order to teach that these are the positive, straight paths, and that man is obligated to direct himself along these paths and emulate Hashem to the best of his abilities." (The above does not mean that one should not strive to serve Hashem beyond the middle path. Indeed, the Rambam wrote in *Halacha* 5 that 'The way of the pious is to go beyond the middle road; and this is called '*lifnim mi'shuras hadin*—going beyond the letter of the law. His emphasis on the middle road is to prevent one from falling to the improper path.]
- C. The Rambam inscribed in the General List of the *Mitzvos* that commences the *Yad HaChazakah*: "The eighth *mitzvah* is to emulate His benevolent, straight Ways, as written, 'And you shall follow in His ways.'"
- D. In his List of *Mitzvos* commencing *Hilchos De'os*, the Rambam likewise asserts that the first imperative *mitzvah* is to "Emulate His ways."
- E. Note the difference in the Rambam's texts in *Hilchos De'os* and *Sefer HaMitzvos*: "Just as He is called Holy; so you shall be holy" and in *Sotah* 14a. Indeed, all these qualities pertain to behavior between man and his fellow man.

Part V

***Gemara Ksubos* & the Rambam**

Regarding Spending Time in the Company of and Benefiting a Torah Scholar *Sanhedrin* 52 Regarding the Concern that the Above Degrades the Status of a Torah Scholar in the Eyes of the Layman

- A. *Ksubos* 111b quotes the verse from *Parshas Va'eschanan* 4:4, "And you, who cleave to Hashem your G-D, you have life always." The *Gemara* asks, "Is it possible to cleave to the *Shechina*, as written, 'For Hashem, your G-D, is a consuming Fire.' Hence, one who marries off his daughter to a Torah scholar; does business with Torah scholars; and grants pleasure to Torah scholars from his assets; it is considered as if he cleaves to the *Shechina*."
- B. The *Gemara* also cites *Parshas Nitzavim* 30:20, "To love Hashem your G-D and to listen to His Voice and to cleave to Him." *Chazal* ask here as well, "Is it possible for man to cleave to the *Shechina*? Hence, one who marries off his daughter to a Torah scholar; does business with Torah

scholars; and grants pleasure to Torah scholars from his assets; it is considered as if he cleaves to the *Shechina*.”

- F. Part I above cites the Rambam in *Sefer HaMitzvos*, Imperative *Mitzvah* 6—““The sixth *mitzvah* is that He commanded us to connect to the sages and to unite with them and to spend time in their presence in every means of serving Hashem. And one should remain in their company while eating and drinking and all engagements so we will strive to emulate their ways and believe the truth of their words. This is what Hashem said, ‘And you shall cleave to Him.’ And this commandment was doubled with the later commandment, ‘And to cleave to Him.’ It states in the *Sifri*, ‘And to cleave to him—Cleave to the sages and their disciples.’ They present proof of this through a man’s obligation to marry the daughter of a scholar and to feed Torah scholars and support them in business. These are [all fulfillments of] ‘And you shall cleave.’ Indeed, [the Sages] query, ‘Is it possible for man to cleave to the *Shechina*? Behold, it is written, “For Hashem your G-D is a consuming fire.” Indeed, one who marries his daughter to a Torah scholar or marries the daughter of a Torah scholar and grants the scholar pleasure from his assets, the Torah credits him as if he cleaved to the *Shechina*.””
- G. The Rambam writes further in *Hilchos De’os* Ch. 6:2: “It is an imperative *mitzvah* to cleave to scholars and their disciples, in order to learn from their actions as written, ““And you shall cleave to Him.’ [The Sages ask,] ‘Is it possible for man to cleave to the *Shechina*?’” Rather, the Sages taught in the clarification of this *mitzvah*, “Cleave to the sages and their disciples.” Thus, man is obligated to endeavor to marry the daughter of a Torah scholar and marry his daughter off to a Torah scholar and to provide food and drink to scholars and to support a scholar’s business and to join in their company in every possible way, as written, ‘And you shall cleave to Him.’ And the sages also instructed, ‘And you shall become dusty with the dust of their feet and drink their words thirstily.’”
- C. *Sanhedrin* 52a states: “Rabbi Elazar said: How does a Torah scholar appear to the layman? At first as a golden vessel. Once [the scholar] speaks to him, he appears as a silver vessel. Once [the scholar] benefits from him, he appears as an earthenware vessel, which if it breaks, is impossible to fix.”
- D. According to the above, it would seem that by man fulfilling the *mitzvah* of granting the scholar pleasure from his assets and spending too much time in his company, his appreciation of the spiritual status of the Torah scholar plummets until it is no more valuable than an earthenware jug, as illustrated by the *Gemara* and Rambam.
- E. It is implausible to claim that there is a dispute here. Indeed, the *Gemara* states the rules of cleaving to Torah scholars twice without attributing them to any particular sage, thus indicating that this is the unanimous opinion and certain *Halacha*. (*Gemara Ksubos* does explain that the speaker was Rav Elazar, student of Rav Yochanan; and in *Sanhedrin*, when it states that the speaker was Rav Eliezer, the *Mesores HaShas* notes that it should really say Rav Elazar, disciple of Rav Yochanan.)

- F. It would seem that there are potential positive and negative outcomes to remaining in the constant presence of Torah scholars; yet it is unclear whether this debate can be resolved as such. Indeed, the Rambam clarifies that the primary purpose of remaining in the company of Torah scholars is to learn from their ways. Yet, if man's respect for the scholar wanes through constant time in his proximity, how can one expect to learn from the scholars?

One explanation is that the positive outcome simply outweighs the negative, as a layman has so much to learn from the Torah scholar that he will inevitably benefit from the time spent in his presence.

- G. However, the above seems to disagree with *Gemara Ksubos* 111b, which describes a Torah scholar who benefits from material items as an earthenware jug. Thus, based on the Rambam in *Sefer HaMitzvos* and *Hilchos De'os*, it appears that it is still ultimately to man's benefit to grant the scholar pleasure from his belongings, eat and drink with him and spend the maximal time in his company.
- H. The Rambam's apparent disagreement with the *Gemara* can perhaps be resolved if one defines the Rambam's statement as referring to a regular person who is not necessarily a Torah scholar, but is not a total layman either. Indeed, the *Gemara's* statement only regarded a complete ignoramus; yet the author did not delve into this point conclusively, and it is questionable whether one should resolve this matter as such.

Ksubos 111b states: "Rabbi Elazar said, 'Ignoramuses are not revived during the Resurrection of the Dead.' And Rabbi Yochanan answers, 'Hashem does not want people to speak as such.' When Rav Elazar saw that Rav Yochanan was displeased, he said, 'Rebbi, I found a rectification for them; they should fulfill the *mitzvah*, 'And, you, who grasp...'" This is how the *Gemara* develops this concept of 'And you who cleave.' This emphasizes that the Torah is certainly referring to the layman. However, it is possible to still say that there are two types of ignoramuses—those who detest Torah scholars, as stated in *Pesachim* 49b and those who admire and connect to Torah scholars; but this is suspect.

- I. One could also say that the statement in *Sanhedrin* 52b is not necessarily a rule; however, one must be cautious to avoid degrading the Torah and its scholars. The *Gemara* in *Sanhedrin* instructs a Jew to fulfill the *mitzvah* in a way that is not degrading to Torah; however, if one is unable to be cautious, one should avoid it totally. *Gemara Ksubos*, in contrast, refers to a person who is able to exert caution in the fulfillment of this *mitzvah*.

Chapter 15: List of the miracles enacted by Eliyahu and Elisha.

Preface

One of the most effective means of acquiring supernatural powers is to study the sections of the Torah that relate of past miracles and wonders and learn about the saintly people in the Torah who owned these abilities. The mere act of studying these topics inevitably endows a person with intense spiritual bounty and a holy spark from the souls of these lofty individuals, or at least a radiance from their souls, which are invaluable tools to achieving these powers.

This concept is discussed at length in the Torah regarding our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, and Moshe; and we have already presented this in the *Ibn Ezra's* commentary on *Parshas Va'era*, where he wrote that the principal secret of Torah study is attaining supernatural powers. (See *Sefer Chayei Olam, Kehillos Yaakov* Vol. 1 regarding the list of miracles recorded in the Torah.)

This chapter will list the miracles and wonders performed in *Sefer Melachim* by Eliyahu *HaNavi* and Elisha *HaNavi*, who are celebrated amongst the prophets as having acquired the loftiest spiritual levels and ability to perform miracles that transcended all forces of nature.

Part I

- A. *Melachim* B 5:1 relates: "And Na'aman, army general of the King of Aram, etc." This chapter details the wondrous miracle enacted by Elisha *HaNavi* in healing Na'aman of leprosy by immersing seven times in the Jordan River.

Rashi expounds upon this verse as follows: "And Na'aman, army general; [these are] the miracles performed by Elisha..."

- B. *Rashi's* commentary seems to indicate that the miraculous tales related in *Melachim* B—beginning with Eliyahu's ascent to the heavens in a tempest in Ch. 2 and concluding with the demise of Elisha *HaNavi* in Ch. 13:20—were recorded in order to teach of the many miracles that Elisha merited performing.

Since it is important to understand the extent of these miracles, the author has presented them in a list format. (*Sefer Shoftim* emphasizes the importance of appreciating miracles through its juxtaposition of the demise of the Elders, who merited witnessing the wondrous miracles enacted during the Exodus, and following statement that *Bnei Yisrael* began to sin. *Kiddushin* 33a also relates: "Rabbi Yochanan would stand before the elders of the gentiles as he said, 'How many miracles they have endured!'")

- C. *Melachim* A 19:16 first mentions the prophet Elisha *ben Shafat* when Hashem commanded Eliyahu to anoint him as a prophet in his stead. Chapter 19:20-21 portrays the forging of a

teacher-disciple relationship between Eliyahu and Elisha; and *Melachim B* 2:1-12 describes Elisha escorting Eliyahu to the place where he ascended to the heavens.

- D. This chapter will also cite the list of miracles that happened to Eliyahu *HaNavi*. With the exception of Moshe *Rabbeinu*, there were no prophets in all of Tanach who experienced more miracles than Eliyahu and Elisha.

Paragraph C above indicates that Elisha's powers were drawn from his mentor, Eliyahu *HaNavi*, and, thus, from Moshe *Rabbeinu* as well, with the majority of these powers derived from Moshe *Rabbeinu* (see *Melachim B* Ch. 2, *Rashi*). Indeed, from the day that Eliyahu *HaNavi* ascended to the heavens, *ruach hakodesh* was diminished in the world; whereas during his lifetime, his vast spiritual powers inspired a prevalence of prophecy in the world, even amongst other prophets.

- E. The above praise refers only to the number of miracles enacted by Eliyahu and Elisha; however, it is impossible to quantify the quality of a miracle. For example, Yehoshua bin Nun halted the sun and moon; and the verses describing this historic event contain tremendous lessons. *Rashi* adds that the miracle was so extraordinary that Yehoshua's burial site was stamped with the image of the sun in order to commemorate the event.
- F. The importance of acknowledging and learning about miracles is exceedingly important, as indicated in *Sefer Yehoshua* and *Shoftim* which relate that *Bnei Yisrael* continued serving Hashem faithfully as long as the Elders who witnessed the miracles of the Exodus were still alive. However, when the last of the Elders restored his soul to his Maker, the nation ceased serving only Hashem and turned to sin.
- G. The *Ramban* notes at length that Moshe *Rabbeinu* possessed a gift of miracles that surpassed both Eliyahu's and Elisha's (see *Parshas Zos HaBracha* 34:11, *Ramban*). This is obvious as the capacity for miracles that Eliyahu and Elisha possessed was drawn from the bounty of Torah by Moshe *Rabbeinu*.

Part II

List of Miracles Enacted by Eliyahu *HaNavi* As Described in *Melachim A* Ch. 17 – *Melachim B* Ch. 2

- A. *Melachim A* 17:1: Elisha stops the rain from falling.
- B. *Melachim A* 17:4, 17:6: Eliyahu is sustained by the ravens.
- C. *Melachim A* 17:14: The contents of the widow's flour pitcher and oil flask never diminishes.

- D. *Melachim A 17:19*: The widow's son is resurrected from the dead.

- E. *Melachim A 18:34-35, ibid Rashi*: The water swells during the debate between Eliyahu and the Prophets of the Ba'al on Mount Carmel. (*Chazal* relate of additional miracles that occurred during this episode, including the cow speaking to Eliyahu and the cow's refusal to budge until Eliyahu spoke to it. Also see *Yalkut Shimoni* regarding the snake that killed Chiel Beis Ha'Eli, who hid beneath the altar of the Ba'al.)

- F. *Melachim A Ch. 18:35*: The fire descends from the heavens (and consumes the water).

- G. *Melachim A Ch. 18:1*: Eliyahu's certainty that it would begin raining and the fulfillment of his knowledge.

- H. *Melachim A Ch. 18:41*: Torrents of rain pelt from the heavens immediately after Eliyahu begins praying.

- I. *Melachim A Ch. 19:5-9*: The story of the angel with the broiled cake and water flask. (It is likely that several other miracles occurred simultaneously.)

- J. *Melachim A Ch. 19:5*: The above sustains him throughout a forty-day and night trek without food or water.

- K. *Melachim A 19:9-18*: The revelation and future prophecies on Mount Chorev, both in and out of the cave.

- L. *Melachim A Ch. 21:19*: Eliyahu's knowledge of Achav and Izevel's clandestine activities regarding Navos HaYizraeli.

- M. *Melachim A Ch. 2:19; Melachim B Ch. 9-10*: The future prophecies that Eliyahu prophesies to Achav and his family and the fulfillment of these prophecies.

- N. *Melachim B 1:6, 16, 17*: The prophecy of Achaziyahu son of King Achav and its fulfillment. (It is likely that his knowledge that they went to serve idols was also drawn from his prophetic abilities.)

- O. *Melachim* B Ch. 2:6, 12: The heavenly fire that destroys both officers and their fifty soldiers.
- P. *Melachim* B Ch. 2:8: Crossing the Jordan River.
- Q. *Melachim* B 2:11: Eliyahu's ascent to the heavens and the miracle of the fiery horses and chariot.
- R. *Melachim* B Ch. 2:14: Elisha's miraculous crossing of the Jordan River. This miracle occurred with Eliyahu *HaNavi's* cloak, which is perhaps reason to include it under the category of miracles enacted by Eliyahu *HaNavi*. (In any case, all miracles performed by Elisha derived from the powers that he received from Eliyahu when their relationship was first forged in *Melachim* A Ch. 19 when Eliyahu was commanded to anoint Elisha as a prophet in his stead. The supernatural strengths that he received from Eliyahu at the time of his ascent to the heavens resulted from his request, 'May a double portion of your spirit be upon me.'")

Part III

List of Miracles Enacted by Elisha

- A. *Melachim* B Ch. 2:3,5: Elisha's knowledge that Eliyahu is destined to leave him.
- B. *Melachim* B Ch. 2:12: Elisha's vision of Eliyahu ascending to the heavens in a tempest. *Chazal* debate whether this was actually a miracle, or if anyone present at the time would have witnessed the astounding event. However, Ch. 6:17 relates that Elisha's servant-boy could not have witnessed the scene of the fiery chariot and horses without Elisha's prayers.

The *Malbim* expounds that the vision was an actual miracle, an instance of *yesh me'ayin* (creating something from nothing), as it is the only recorded instance in history that a person who was not a prophet witnessed such an event. Hence, it would seem that Elisha's witnessing of the event was also a miracle. However, it is possible that the fiery horses and chariot that carried Eliyahu to the heavens were concrete enough to be manifest to the naked eye.

- C. *Melachim* B Ch. 2:14: The splitting of the Jordan River with Eliyahu's cloak.
- D. *Melachim* B Ch. 2:18-22: The healing of the evil waters of Jericho with salt.

- E.** *Melachim B Ch. 2:23-25:* The story of the two bears and forty-two boys.
- F.** *Melachim B Ch. 3: 16, 20:* The rising of the river with neither wind nor rain to quench the thirst of the masses.
- G.** *Melachim B Ch. 18, 22:* The victory against Moav and the prophecy.
- H.** *Melachim B Ch. 4:* Ovadya's wife receives extra oil.
- I.** *Melachim B Ch. 4:15:* The Shunamis is blessed with a son.
- J.** *Melachim B CH. 4:33-34:* The revival of the Shunamis's son.
- K.** *Melachim B Ch. 4:38-41:* Repairing the broken fields by placing flour in a pot.
- L.** *Melachim B Ch. 4:42:* Many people were sustained from a small quantity of bread.
- M.** *Melachim B Ch. 5:10:* Healing Na'aman from leprosy by immersing seven times in the Jordan River.
- N.** *Melachim B Ch. 5:26:* His knowledge of Geichazi's activities.
- O.** *Melachim B Ch. Ch. 5: 27:* The transfer of Na'aman's leprosy to Geichazi.
- P.** *Melachim B Ch. 6:6:* Raising the metal from the water by throwing a tree atop it.
- Q.** *Melachim B Ch. 6:8:* His warning to the king of Yisrael regarding the Aram ambush.
- R.** *Melachim B Ch. 6:17:* Opening the eyes of the servant-boy to allow him to witness the scene of the fiery horses and chariot.

- S. *Melachim* B Ch. 6:18: Blinding the army of Aram, taking them into captivity and opening their eyes.
- T. *Melachim* B Ch. 6:32-33: His knowledge of the King of Yisrael's intention to slay him.
- U. *Melachim* B Ch. 7:1: Elisha prophesying the end of the hunger in the Shomron, and its fulfillment. (The actual conclusion of the hunger also itself a miracle, see *Melachim* B 7:6-7: "And Hashem sounded in the camp of Aram the voice of a chariot; the voice of a horse; a giant army. And they said... and they fled." It is questionable whether this miracle can be attributed to Elisha or whether it would have occurred without him as well. In this case, the miracle was Elisha's certain knowledge of a miraculous future.)
- V. *Melachim* B Ch. 8:1: Forewarning the Shunamis of the imminent hunger.
- W. Several other prophecies regarding the future. (See *Melachim* B Ch. 8:7 and onward regarding the King of Aram; Ch. 13:14 and onward.)
- X. *Melachim* B Ch. 13:20-21: Reviving the corpse who touched Elisha after his death.

Part IV

Eliyahu HaNavi's Letter to Yehoram ben Yehoshafat in *Divrei HaYamim* Commentaries State That It Arrived After His Ascent to the Heavens

- A. *Divrei HaYamim* Ch. 2:12-15 describes an incident that occurred in the era of Yehoram ben Yeshoshfat, King of Yehuda: "And a letter arrived for him from Eliyahu HaNavi saying, 'So said Hashem, G-D of your father Dovid...'" (see *ibid*).
- B. *Rashi* comments, "'And a letter arrived for him from Eliyahu HaNavi.'" This letter of prophecy arrived after [Eliyahu] ascended to the heavens." Commentaries including the *Metzudas Dovid* and *Malbim* concur, indicating that this event was a miracle.
- C. How is it known that the letter arrived after Eliyahu's ascent to the heavens?

Melachim B 3:11 relates that when they sought a prophet in the times of King Yehoshafat (Yehoram's father), Elisha HaNavi appeared. This indicates that both Yehoshafat and Yehoram must have lived in the period after Eliyahu's ascent to the heavens, since they would have certainly brought Eliyahu—the teacher—as opposed to Elisha, his disciple, had Eliyahu still been

in the world. Moreover, the story of Eliyahu's ascent to the heavens was recorded several chapters earlier in *Sefer Melachim*.

- D. Although the above does seem to indicate that Eliyahu was no longer present during the era of Yehoram, not all commentaries concur. Eliyahu's ascent to the heavens ostensibly transpired during the reign of Yoram *ben Achav*, King of Yisrael, who ruled after the death of his brother Achaziyahu *ben Achav* whose death was prophesied by Eliyahu in *Melachim B Ch. 1*. (See *Melachim B Ch. 1-3*, which seems to indicate that Eliyahu ascended to the heavens during Yoram's reign.)
- E. The verses seem to indicate that the entire reign of Yehoram *ben Yehoshafat*, King of Yehuda, transpired during the reign of Yoram *ben Achav*, King of Yisrael (see *Melachim B Ch. 8:16* describing the reign of Yehoram *ben Yehoshafat*, King of Yehuda, simultaneous to Yoram *ben Achav*, King of Yisrael).
- F. *Melachim B Ch. 8:25* likewise relates that the start of Achaziyahu *ben Yehoram*, King of Yehuda's reign also transpired in the times of Yoram *ben Achav*, King of Yisrael. If this is the case, then certainly the entire reign of Yehoram *ben Yehoshafat* occurred during the reign of Yoram *ben Achav*. Hence, as Eliyahu ascended to the heavens in Yoram's times, it must still be proven that there was no period at all during the reign of Yehoram *ben Yehoshafat* that Eliyahu was still on the earth.
- G. The most concrete proof is as stated in Paragraph 2, which describes the appearance of Elisha before Yehoshafat King of Yehuda in *Melachim B Ch. 3*.

Part V

Miracles Enacted by the *Tanna'im* and *Amora'im* In the Talmudic Era

- A. The *Kehillos Yaakov*, in *Sefer Chayei Olam Vol. 1 Ch. 30*, presents a long list of over 100 acts of miracles and wonders performed by the righteous *Tanna'im* and *Amora'im*, as described in the *Talmud Bavli* and *Yerushalmi*.
- B. The original printing of the *Kehillos Yaakov* listed only the sources or the miracles in brief. The recent 5766 expanded edition, however, includes the actual tales of the miracles as originally recorded by the Sages of the *Gemara*.

Chapter 16: The power of prayer surpasses the forces of nature and instigates salvation.

Preface

This book has discussed the means of acquiring supernatural powers through methods that require intensive study and effort. However, there is also one very simple method to generate wondrous salvation and miracles, as described in the Torah, Prophets and Scriptures, and this is the power of Prayer.

Part I

The Extraordinary Power of Prayer Can Transform Man and Life Situations & A List of Miracles That *Bnei Yisrael* Merited through Prayer

- A.** Prayer harbors inordinate power to instigate boundless salvations, both on a personal and national level. Chapters in Jewish history and generation-old miracles attest to the potent force of prayer which successfully transformed dire, formidable situations of despair and certain death to wondrous instances of salvation and joy.

Shmos Ch. 2:23-24 states that the Exodus from Egypt itself was initiated with prayer: “And they cried; and their shouts ascended to Hashem from the labor; and Hashem heard their wailing, and Hashem recalled his covenant, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov.”

Shmos Ch. 3:7: “And I heard their cries from their oppressors.”

Shmos Ch. 6:5: “And also I heard *Bnei Yisrael’s* groaning, as Egypt oppresses them, and I recalled My covenant.”

Devarim 26:7: “And we cried out to Hashem, the G-D of our fathers; and Hashem heard our voice, and He saw our suffering and our toil and our terrible pressures.”

Shmuel A 12:8: “When Yaakov descended to Egypt, *Bnei Yisrael* cried out to Hashem; and Hashem sent Moshe and Aharon; and they redeemed your fathers from Egypt and settled you in this place.”

- B.** The above verses all indicate that *Bnei Yisrael’s* sincere prayers to Hashem heralded their redemption from Egypt. (Several of these verses are also mentioned in the *Mussaf* prayer of *Rosh Hashanah*.)

Hashem pledged to Avraham that He would redeem his children from a 400-year exile, yet *Bnei Yisrael’s* heartrending cries and entreaties instigated an early, swift redemption. The original decree ordained that *Bnei Yisrael* would suffer under Egyptian exile for 400 years, yet the nation’s poignant prayers caused Hashem to count the 400 years from the time of Yitzchak’s birth; and *Bnei Yisrael* remained exiled in Egypt for but 210 years (see *Shmos* 12:40, *Rashi*).

- C.** The Exodus from Egypt featured astonishing miracles, including the Ten Plagues, which contradicted the very forces of nature; and all these resulted from *Bnei Yisrael’s* tearful prayers.

- D. *Shmos* 14:10 vividly describes the miraculous event of the Splitting of the Sea: “And Pharaoh approached; and *Bnei Yisrael* raised their eyes; and behold, Egypt is pursuing them. And *Bnei Yisrael* were very afraid; and *Bnei Yisrael* cried out to Hashem.”

At this historic moment, an entire nation faced the threat of imminent death. Locked between the sea and a furious enemy nation, their only choice was prayer. *Bnei Yisrael* turned in desperate plea to their Father, and their heartfelt cries rent the heavens. It was at that moment that *Bnei Yisrael* witnessed one of the greatest miracles of all times, as the Red Sea split before them, manifestly contradicting the very laws of nature.

- E. *Shmuel A* 12:8 states that it was only in the merit of prayer that *Bnei Yisrael* merited redemption from Egypt and settling in *Eretz Yisrael*.

The subsequent verses relate: “And they forgot Hashem their G-D; and He sold them into the hands of Sisra, army general of Chatzor, and into the hands of the Philistines and into the hand of the King of Moav; and they fought against them. And they cried out to Hashem and said, ‘We sinned as we abandoned Hashem, and we worshipped idols. And now, Hashem, deliver us from the hands of our enemies, and we will serve You!’ And Hashem sent Yeruba’al (Gideon) and Bedan (Shimshon) and Yiftach and Shmuel; and He delivered you from the enemies surrounding you, and you sat in security, and you feared Him...”

- F. The above verses reveal that the many miracles that *Bnei Yisrael* merited throughout history, including those which transpired during the wars in *Sefer Shoftim* and *Sefer Shmuel*, resulted from their heartfelt prayers. (These prayers were linked with a deep-seated commitment to repent fully and return to Hashem, as quoted above, ‘We sinned... And now, save us from the hands of our enemies and we will serve You.’)

Part II

Meriting Personal Salvation through Prayer

- A. Many a tale in *Tanach* relates of individuals who merited extraordinary miracles and salvation in the merit of heartfelt, tearful prayer.

Perhaps the most famous example is the prophetess Chana, mother of Shmuel *HaNavi*, who spilled her heart in poignant prayer in what became known as *Tefillas Chana* (Chana’s {Prayer}). It was this hour of earnest supplication that rent the heavens and blessed her with a son as remarkable as Shmuel *HaNavi*, whose spiritual stature and prophetic powers earned him the status of *Rabban shel Nevi’im* (Teacher of the Prophets). Indeed, the only prophet in history to surpass him was Moshe *Rabbeinu* who merited speaking face-to-face with Hashem. (See *Kisvei Ha’Ari*, *Sha’ar Ruach HaKodesh* 1b; *Sha’ar Hagilgulim*, Preface 22 36a; beginning of *Shmuel A*, discussing that Shmuel *HaNavi* was of the greatest of all prophets, second only to Moshe *Rabbeinu*; and the prophetic powers of all the prophets who followed him were drawn from his spiritual strength. Prior to the era of Shmuel *HaNavi*, heavenly barriers blocked the bestowal of prophecy to the lower world; yet Shmuel overcame these barriers and unleashed a bounty of prophecy. Thus, with her prayers, Chana not only merited a son as spiritually great as Shmuel *HaNavi*, but she also indirectly restored prophecy to the world.

- B. In *Shmuel A* 1:15, Chana describes her prayer to Eli HaKohein: “And I spilled my soul before Hashem.”

Chana’s prayers rose passionately from the depths of her heart until they burst out in tearful entreaty. Her prayer, by definition, was a ‘spilling of the heart.’

The Jewish soul derives from an exceedingly lofty, holy place, directly beneath Hashem’s Throne of Honor. When the soul descends to the lower world and fuses with the corporeal body, it still maintains its spiritual connection to Hashem, albeit in a far weaker form than the intense connection that previously existed. During times of prayer—direct communication with Hashem—the soul regains this connection to Hashem as it overflows in its craving to cleave to its Upper Source—Hashem.

- C. *Midrash Rabba* in *Parshas Vayeitzei* underscores the untold power of tearful prayer through the story of Leah *Imeinu*, who was intended as a bride for Eisav *HaRasha*, while her sister Rachel was betrothed to marry Yaakov. Leah’s incessant prayers and bitter tears compelled Hashem to annul the decree and, moreover, altered destiny in allowing her to wed Yaakov before Rachel.
- D. The story of Leah highlights the awesome potential and inconceivable power of heartfelt prayer, to the point that Leah merited giving birth to six of the twelve Tribes (in addition to the two Tribes born to her maidservant Zilpah, who drew her spiritual strength from Leah.) Leah was the ancestress of Moshe *Rabbeinu*, who delivered the Torah to *Bnei Yisrael* and was the greatest prophet of all times; of Aharon *HaKohein* and all the Priests; and also of Dovid *HaMelech* and our future *Mashiach*. All this, she merited through heartfelt prayer.
- E. Leah’s prayers were replete with endless supplication and entreaties. The Torah’s foremost description of Leah is, “And Leah’s eyes were sensitive.” The Sages elucidate that Leah’s eyes were sensitive due to her constant weeping and tearful prayers.
- F. Rationally, the basic explanation of this verse indicates that Leah’s unending flow of tears and her raw, sensitive eyes detracted from her physical beauty, a factor that should have diminished her marriage prospects. Yet, in this case, Leah’s unremitting prayers and tears caused the direct opposite to occur; and she merited linking her destiny with Yaakov *Avinu*, greatest of our forefathers.

Part III

The Miracles Enacted by Elisha HaNavi Were Instigated by Prayer

- A. *Melachim B* relates of the myriad wonders and miracles performed by Elisha *HaNavi*, which ranged from splitting the Jordan River to increasing the quantity of oil in the flask, granting a child to a barren woman, reviving the dead, and blinding an entire army (see Ch. 15 Part III for complete list.)
- B. *Megilla 27a* states that the force of Elisha’s prayers generated all these miracles.

C. The above *Gemara* cites *Melachim* B Ch. 25 in its description of the Babylonian destruction of Yerushalayim: “And he burned the House of Hashem and the house of the king and all the houses of Jerusalem; and the Great House he burned in fire.”

D. The Sages dispute the exact meaning of the phrase ‘And the Great House.’

“Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Yehoshua *ben* Levi both taught, ‘A place where Torah is made great.’ One said, ‘A place where prayer is made great.’ Torah, as written: ‘Hashem desires for his righteousness, to make the Torah great and glorify it.’ Prayer, as written, ‘Relate of the great things that Elisha did; and Elisha toiled in prayer’” (*Melachim* B 8:4).

E. The above exemplifies the untold power of prayer, to the extent that it can reverse the very laws of nature.

F. The words of the *Gemara* are vague, seeming to indicate that the adjective ‘great’ refers to the miracles and wonders enacted by Elisha, albeit in this case, the word ‘great’ should describe prayer (as it was the force of Elisha’s prayer that instigated these miracles.)

This question is resolved based on the quote from the *Ohr HaChaim* in Ch. 2 above regarding the miracles enacted by the righteous men of all generations. He explains that miracles are actually by-products of an absolute goal, which is *dveikus*. Thus, when Elisha immersed himself in heartfelt prayer to Hashem and achieved the coveted *dveikus*, the miracles occurred almost on their own. This message is a poignant reminder of the unlimited potential of prayer.

Part IV

Elisha’s Request to Eliyahu, “May A Double Portion of Your Spirit Be Upon Me” & Its Fulfillment

The Double Power of Miracles & Its Connection to Prayer

A. *Melachim* B Ch. 2:9-10, which relates of the events preceding Eliyahu *HaNavi*’s ascent to the heavens, states: “And it was when they passed, and Eliyahu said to Elisha: ‘Ask what I may do to you before I am taken from you.’ And Elisha said, ‘Please, may a double portion of your spirit be upon me.’ And he said, ‘You have requested a hard thing, nevertheless if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so upon you. And if not, it will not be so.’” The next verses relate that Elisha did, indeed, remain with Eliyahu until he ascended to the heavens, which indicates that his request was fulfilled.

B. *Sanhedrin* 47a states: “Eliyahu revived the son of the widow from the dead [*Yerushalmi Sukkah* adds that the child was Yonah *HaNavi*]; and Eliyahu revived the son of the Shunamis from the dead [*Zohar* in *Parshas Beshalach* states that this was Chavakuk *HaNavi*]. It would seem that Elisha should have been able to revive another person in order to aptly fulfill the blessing, ‘May a double portion of your spirit be upon me.’”

C. However, the ‘double portion’ that Elisha requested was fulfilled in other miracles and wonders that he performed, as opposed to this miracle alone. Moreover, the ‘double portion’ was not necessarily

the actual blessing, but a result of it. In any case, it would seem that the above miracle was encompassed within that blessing.

- D. *Megilla* 27a lists the many miracles that Elisha performed through prayer; and his request for a 'double portion' specifically with regard to miracles. This teaches that, following Eliyahu's ascent to the heavens, Elisha's power of prayer surpassed that of even his mentor, Eliyahu *HaNavi*. (*Likutei Muharan* Vol. 1 Ch. 66)
- E. Elisha's exceptional power of prayer, which surpassed Eliyahu *HaNavi's*, was expressed in his capacity to focus more intently on his prayers. (ibid)
- F. Other opinions dispute that although Elisha's prayers instigated greater miracles than Eliyahu *HaNavi's*; it is not necessarily a reflection of Elisha's extraordinary intensity or concentration during prayer. On the contrary, it is quite possible that the prayers of both prophets harbored equal intensity; but since Elisha acquired a spirit that was double Eliyahu *HaNavi's* before his ascent, his prayers soared to a loftier place in the heavens and instigated greater miracles on earth.

Tehillim 30 states: "To you, Hashem, I cry; and to Hashem, I beseech." The first name of Hashem in the verse is *Y-K-V-K*, while the second is *Adnus*. This verse teaches that a heartfelt supplication that reaches the *Adnus* level of Hashem's Throne equals that which a regular cry of prayer can activate by reaching the *Y-K-V-K* level of Hashem's Throne. (Obviously, a supplication that attains the *Y-K-V-K* level of Hashem's Throne will produce even greater miracles.)

Indeed, the greater and more spiritual a person is, the greater and more intense are the concentration and spiritual thoughts that he can achieve during prayer. Obviously, this does not refer to differences in thoughts between prophets and laymen, but rather in regard to a vast spiritual understanding regarding the power of prayer that transcends the forces of nature.

- G. Every Jew must appreciate the untold significance of focusing and achieving utmost concentration in prayer, as the spiritual outcomes and miracles that he can instigate through powerful prayer are truly boundless.

Part V

- A. In *Sefer Ma'ase Ish Toldos* Vol. 7 p. 19, the *Chazon Ish* emphasizes that focused prayer harbors the potential to annul any evil decree. He would often comfort the brokenhearted with the assurance, "Hashem awaits your prayers!" [Although in most cases, it is also necessary to take physical action to bring about results; one must, first and foremost, place his belief and trust in Hashem and pray from the bottom of one's heart.
- B. *Igros Chazon Ish* states that a Jew's most powerful tool is prayer, and he is obliged to utilize it in order to transform his path in life. Whenever man feels that he is drowning in troubles and tribulations, he should recall that his heartfelt prayers and supplications to Hashem harbor the force to extricate him from it all.

- C. The *Chazon Ish* uses the phrase *matte oz*—staff of strength to describe this marvelous spiritual ‘tool’. It is possible that this term alludes to the Splitting of the Red Sea, a miracle which resulted from Bnei *Yisrael*’s desperate pleas and which was activated through Moshe *Rabbeinu*’s staff.

Parshas Beshalach 14:15 states: “And, you, lift your staff and stretch out your hand upon the sea and split it.

Verse 19 describes: “And Moshe stretched out his hand upon the sea...”

Verse 26 relates of the waters being tossed upon the Egyptians. “And Hashem said to Moshe, stretch out your hand upon the sea; and the waters will return.” The next verse describes this event in detail.

- D. The Sages elucidate these verses in two ways:

Yonasan *ben* Uziel and *Zohar*, *Tikkun* 21 translate ‘*Nette yadcha*—Stretch out your hand’ (verses 16, 21) as explained above: Hashem commanded Moshe to miraculously split the sea with his staff.

Kli Yakar quoting *Midrash Rabba*, *Parsha* 21, Ch. 9, elucidates phrase, ‘*Nette yadcha*—Stretch out your hand,’ as commanding Moshe to perform the miracle only with his hand, without the staff.

Part VI

Inspiring Oneself to Focus on Prayer

- A. *Brachos* 6b states: “They said to Rav Bibi *bar* Abayei; and Rav Bibi said to Rav Nachman and Rav Yitzchak, ‘What is the meaning of the verse, ‘*Krum zulus l’vnei odom?*’ (*Tehillim* 12). They answered him, “These are the things that stand in the upper levels, but which people disgrace.””

Rashi elucidates, “‘*Things that stand in the upper levels,*’ as prayer which ascends heavenward.”

Sadly, few truly appreciate the inestimable worth of sincere prayer. A Jew must endeavor to appreciate prayer, esteem it, and view it as an absolute goal in life, a means through which he can draw close to Hashem. One of the most effective means of arriving at this recognition is studying about the essence of prayer, as will be explained shortly.

- B. Prayer is divided into three sections: Praise, entreaty, thanks.

Brachos 34a states in regard to *Shemone Esrei* (silent prayer): “Rabbi Chanina said, the first [blessings of *Shemone Esrei*] resemble [the words] of a servant praising his Master; the middle ones resemble [the words] of a servant requesting a gift from his Master; the last resemble [the words] of a servant who has received a gift from his Master and is now taking leave of Him.”

- C. A Jew’s service of Hashem and his feelings during prayer mirror the above division. The first section is devoted to sensing feelings of *dveikus* to Hashem *Yisborach*. The middle section implores Hashem to direct all of man’s entreaties to positive results; and the third section thanks Hashem for fulfilling this request. The very act of beseeching Hashem for these requests solidifies one’s knowledge that

everything in the world, and all that one possesses, is an absolute gift from Hashem and there is no Source of goodness Who can grant his request except Hashem.

Part VII

***Dveikus HaMachshava* to Hashem during Prayers & All Other Times**

- A. The concept of *dveikus hamachshava* is a great *mitzvah* and exceedingly lofty level of serving Hashem, as emphasized by numerous *Rishonim* and *Acharonim*. It is also a constant *mitzvah*, one that applies to a Jew at all times, as opposed to only applying during times of prayer. (See *Nefesh HaChaim Shaar C* Ch. 13-14 regarding the *Avos* and *Moshe Rabbeinu* who clung to Hashem in thought every moment of their lives).
- B. Although constant *dveikus hamachshava* is a very lofty level of serving Hashem and, thus, unattainable to most; every Jew must strive to cleave to Hashem whenever possible. For many people, the easiest time to achieve this connection is during prayer, as it is an hour when one is already 'conversing' with Hashem. One who cannot maintain *dveikus hamachshava* throughout the entire duration of prayers should still strive to achieve and retain it to his maximal abilities and for as long as possible.

In general, a Jew's capacity to reach and remain on the level of *dveikus hamachshava* is largely contingent upon the spiritual roots of his soul and present spiritual state. Hence, if a person is unable to attain this goal, he should not despair or surrender his efforts, as he can still arrive at extremely lofty levels of serving Hashem and will ultimately realize his goal of *dveikus hamachshava*.

Regardless of a person's spiritual state and the physical and spiritual circumstances into which Hashem placed him in this world; with concerted effort, devotion and willpower, he can certainly attain exceptionally lofty spiritual levels and merit serving Hashem with his complete soul.

- C. Many people erroneously believe that *dveikus hamachshava* is a sentiment that washes over a person's heart. However, although *dveikus* may express itself as feelings of closeness to Hashem, noted *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* explain that *dveikus* is an actual entity (see *Shaarei Kedusha* of *Rabbeinu Chaim Vital* Vol. 3 Shaar E). It is a reality that increases man's soul-connection to Hashem, thereby strengthening the bond between them and conveying an added bounty of spiritual radiance from Hashem onto man.
- D. It is difficult to explain exactly how *dveikus hamachshava* occurs, as the concept is rooted in esoteric Kabbalistic thought; yet eminent *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* present the parable of two wooden slats to clarify this point.

Physical objects, as two wooden slats, can be physically joined with nails and a hammer. Similarly, man can bind his soul spiritually to Hashem via *dveikus hamachshava*. Although mankind is unable to conceive of Hashem's essence, we are aware that the expression and result of our spiritual binding to Hashem is that He will, henceforth, rain a sacred, spiritual bounty upon the soul of the one who cleaves to Him in thought.

Indeed, the proof that *dveikus hamachshava* is so much more than a thought or feeling is the existential evidence of it—a firmer, more intense spiritual connection between Hashem and man throughout the time that *dveikus* is achieved.

- E. While the *dveikus* connection is an entirely spiritual entity, there is also a physical reality to it that surpasses any feeling. The physical reality of this connection can be compared to the existence of heavenly angels, who are intangible beings, but who undeniably exist in the world.
- F. It is important to remember that even if one does not attain *dveikus*, his Jewish soul is still intensely connected to Hashem, and he perpetually benefits from the spiritual radiance that Hashem showers upon him at all times. *Dveikus* serves to intensify that connection, deepen it, and increases the shower of spiritual radiance, but it is not the essence of the connection itself.
- G. Each *mitzvah* and every hour of Torah study bolsters the soul-connection between Hashem and a Jew, albeit man is not always aware of it. (This lack of awareness and sense of the connection was discussed at length in Ch. 10 above.) The *dveikus hamachshava* described in this chapter contains both that element of feeling and also the lofty spiritual connection that cannot be normally sensed.

Part VIII

Dveikus HaMachshava

- A. Although many people desperately seek to achieve *dveikus*, few achieve it. Instead of investing one's energies and thoughts into attaining *dveikus*, one should rather pray from the depths of one's heart and focus on the meaning of the sacred words of prayer, which will ultimately cause the *dveikus* to wash over him on its own.

Appreciating the magnitude of *dveikus* inspires one to concentrate more intensely upon the inherent meaning of prayer—which ultimately leads one to attain the *dveikus* that he so desires. Moreover, when one actually merits that *dveikus*, he should ensure that he does not lose it.

- B. In *Sefer Adir Ba'Marom*, the *Ramchal* writes that *dveikus hamachshava* to Hashem atones for all sins, as this infinitely-close soul-connection to Hashem cleanses the Jewish soul of all impurities. Obviously, the ability to achieve *dveikus* does not absolve one of fulfilling the *mitzvah* of repentance or condone transgression of sin. However, every Jew—even those who are meticulous in their observance of *mitzvos* and scrupulously avoid sin—still require vast spiritual rectification; and this spiritual rectification can be achieved through *dveikus*.
- C. The *mitzvah* of *dveikus* is exceedingly precious, to the point that it cannot be fathomed. Thus, one who attains a level of *dveikus* even on rare occasion should clutch onto that invaluable moment with all his might. All the more so, one who merits arriving at *dveikus* more frequently, either during prayers or at any point during the day, should endeavor to maintain it and never allow it to depart.
- D. *Nefesh HaChaim Sha'ar D* teaches that one who is immersed in learning Torah need not reflect upon his goal of achieving *dveikus hamachshava*, as he is already cleaving to the Torah, which is an aspect of cleaving to Hashem Yisborach, as Torah is the Word of Hashem. Notwithstanding, the loftiest,

most coveted spiritual level is achieving both *dveikus* in learning and *dveikus hamachshava* to Hashem simultaneously (see *ibid* Sha'ar C Ch. 14). Indeed, there are those who actually arrive at *dveikus* via learning the holy Torah, as the words of Torah elevates their souls and draws them ever nearer to Hashem.

Part IX **Personal Entreaties during Prayer**

- A. One of the basic foundations of prayer is the knowledge that Hashem is a Compassionate, Merciful Father Who heeds the requests of those who beseech Him and endows man with all his needs. Sacred *sefarim* affirm that no prayer is unheard, and that every prayer engenders salvation in the world, albeit there are times when Hashem employs a prayer for a purpose other than that which the person who offered it desired. Still, a Jew is obligated to know and believe that his sincere prayers do instigate the salvation for which he prays.
- B. Man should solidify this faith in his heart, until he is aware that the fulfillment of his prayer is entirely dependent upon Hashem's Will. It is written that this belief, while a lofty goal, is an indistinguishable aspect of the *mitzvah* of prayer, testimony to the fact that everything in the world—all our aspirations and desires—can only be fulfilled by Hashem. These two convictions—that only Hashem can fulfill one's desires, and that prayer, itself, can render salvation—are the two most fundamental, essential aspects of prayer.

Part X **Pleading with Heart & Soul**

- A. Man must entreat Hashem for his personal needs with emotion and fervor. Prayer rising from a supplicating heart is accepted swiftly in the heavens.
- B. Tearful prayer is especially beloved to Hashem and exceedingly desirable in the heavens, as written, 'The gates of tears were not locked.'
- C. *Kisvei Ha'Ari* describes that tears harbor a special power that cause man's prayers to be accepted.
- D. The *Zohar* explains that genuine, heartfelt prayer causes tears to well in man's eyes and emotions to churn in his soul; and it is this deep-seated emotion which causes the prayer to be accepted.
- E. *Igros HaChazon Ish* advises one to arouse himself to tearful prayer on behalf of success in Torah study by contemplating the negligible amount of Torah that he has acquired. The painful realization of his lowly spiritual state will reduce him to tears and spark genuine sorrow that will provoke inspired, tearful prayer.
- F. Some people are naturally emotional and quick to conjure deep-seated prayers from the bottom of their hearts. It is Halachically permissible to communicate a personal prayer to Hashem at the end of *Shemone Esrei* prior to the final "*Yehi ratzon.*" Likewise, one is always welcome to turn to his Master and entreat Hashem for his needs and desires at any hour. (One should never request anything that

could potentially cause harm to befall another, even if one is suffering deeply. Prayer to Hashem should only focus upon positive needs.)

- G.** Above all, prayer should primarily focus upon success in Torah and service of Hashem. *Sefer HaChassidim* describes that although every prayer is accepted in the heavens; a prayer rendered on behalf of success in Torah and service of Hashem is accepted swifter, as the prayer, itself, is a reflection of the Will of Hashem Yisborach. (See *Pri Chadash on Yoreh De'ah* which indicates that lofty spiritual levels in Torah and wisdom result mainly from heartfelt prayer.)

<i>Amora'im</i>	Talmudic Sages
<i>Atzilus</i>	Lofty level of Odom that surpasses the ten <i>sefirot</i>
<i>Aveirah/aveiros</i>	Sin(s)
<i>Avinu/Avos</i>	Patriarch(s)
<i>Avodas Hashem</i>	Service of Hashem
<i>Beis Din</i>	Halachic Court
<i>Beis HaMikdash</i>	Holy Temple
<i>Beis Midrash</i>	House of Study
<i>Bnei HaNevi'im</i>	Students of prophecy
<i>Bria, Yetzira and Asiya</i>	Lofty spiritual worlds
<i>Chametz</i>	Leavened bread
<i>Chazal</i>	Sages
<i>Cheilev</i>	Suet
<i>D'oraysa</i>	Commanded by the Torah
<i>Dveikus</i>	Cleaving to Hashem
<i>Dveikus hamachshava</i>	Cleaving to Hashem in thought
<i>Eretz Yisrael</i>	Land of Israel
<i>Erev Shabbos</i>	Sabbath Eve
<i>Gemara</i>	Talmud
<i>Hakaddosh Baruch Hu</i>	The Holy One Blessed Is He
<i>HaKohein</i>	The Priest
<i>HaMelech</i>	The King
<i>HaNavi</i>	The Prophet
<i>Har Sinai</i>	Mount Sinai
<i>HaRasha</i>	The Wicked
<i>Hashem</i>	G-D
<i>Hashem Yisborach</i>	Blessed G-D
<i>Imeinu</i>	Matriarch
<i>Issur kareis</i>	Prohibition punishable by being cut-off in the world-to-come
<i>Kareis</i>	Cut-off in the world-to-come
<i>Kashrus</i>	Kosher laws
<i>Kedusha</i>	Holiness
<i>Kiddush Hashem</i>	Sanctifying the Name of Hashem
<i>Klal Yisrael</i>	Nation of Israel
<i>Klipah</i>	Outer shell of the soul referring to negative forces
<i>Korban Asham Taluy</i>	Offering of one who is unsure whether or not he sinned
<i>Korban Chatas</i>	Sin offering
<i>Lav d'oraysa</i>	Prohibition listed in the Torah
<i>Lishmah</i>	For the sake of heaven
<i>Mashiach</i>	Messiah
<i>Matan Torah</i>	Giving of Torah
<i>Megillah</i>	Scroll
<i>Mesirus nefesh</i>	Sacrificing oneself for the sake of heaven

Mitzvah/mitzvos	Commandment(s)
Mitzvah d'oraysa	Commandment listed in the Torah
Mussaf	Additional prayer (recited on Shabbos, holidays)
Nefesh	Soul
nefesh chitzona	External soul
Nefesh, ruach, neshama, chaya & yechida	Five levels of the soul
Neshama/neshamos	Soul(s)
Niddah	Menstruational impurity
Ona'as devarim	Harming a person verbally
Onah	Mitzvah of physical relations
Parsha	Torah portion
Pesach	Passover
Pilpul	Sophisticated Torah debates
Rabbeinu	Our Teacher
Rishonim	Early Sages
Ruach hakodesh	Spirit of holiness
Sefer/sefarim	Holy book(s)
Sefirah/sefiros	Sphere(s) of holiness
Segula	Auspicious (action/time)
Shechina	Divine Presence
Shabbos	Sabbath
Shechita	Kosher slaughtering
Shemone Esrei	Silent prayer
Takana	Rabbinical institution
Tikkun/Tikkunim	Spiritual rectification(s)
Tanach	Holy Scriptures
Tanna'im	Sages of the Mishnah
Treif	Non-kosher
Tzaddikim	Righteous sages
Yedi'as Hashem	Spiritual level of knowing Hashem
Yezter hara	Evil inclination
Yiras hacheit	Fearing sin
Yiras Hashem	Fear of G-D
Yisrael	Israel
z"l	Of blessed memory