

Introduction to Talmud Eser Sefirot

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1. At the outset of my words, I find a great need to break an iron wall that has been separating us from the wisdom of Kabbalah since the ruin of the Temple to this generation. It lies heavily on us and arouses fear of being forgotten from Israel.

However, when I begin to speak to anyone about this study, his first question is: “Why should I know how many angels are in the sky, and what their names are? Can I not keep the entire Torah in all its details and intricacies without this knowledge?”

Second, he will ask: “The sages have already determined that one must first fill one’s belly with Gmarah and Talmud. Thus, how can one deceive himself in that he has finished the entire revealed Torah, and lacks only the wisdom of the hidden?”

Third, one is afraid that he will turn sour because of this engagement, as there have already been incidents of deviation from the path of Torah because of engagement in Kabbalah. Hence, why do I need this trouble? Who is so foolish as to place himself in danger for no reason?

Fourth: Even those who favor this study only permit it to holy ones, servants of the Creator. Not all who wish to take the Lord may come and take.

Fifth, and most importantly: “It is a conduct in our midst that when in doubt, keep this: Do as the people do,” and my eyes see that all those who study Torah in my generation are of one mind, and refrain from studying the hidden. Moreover, they advise the ones who ask them that it is undoubtedly preferable to study a page of Gmarah instead of this engagement.

2. Indeed, if we set our hearts to answer but one very famous question, I am certain that all these questions and doubts will vanish from the horizon, and you will look unto their place to find them gone. This indignant question is a question that the whole world asks, namely, “What is the meaning of my life?” In other words, these numbered years of our life that cost us so heavily and the numerous pains and torments that we suffer for them, to complete them to the fullest, who is it that enjoys them? Even more precisely, to whom do I give delight?

It is indeed true that historians have grown weary contemplating it and particularly in our generation. No one even wishes to consider it. Yet the question stands as bitterly and as vehemently as ever. Sometimes it meets us uninvitingly, pecks at our mind and humiliates us to the ground before we find the famous ploy to flow mindlessly in the currents of life as yesterday.

3. Indeed it is to resolve this great riddle that the verse writes, “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” Those who keep the Torah and *Mitzvot* correctly are the ones who taste the taste of life. They are the ones who see and testify that the Lord is good, as our sages say, that He created the worlds to do good to His creations, since it is the conduct of The Good to do good.

Yet, those who have not yet tasted the taste of life in observing Torah and *Mitzvot* cannot feel and understand that the Lord is good, as our sages say, that when the Creator created us His sole purpose was to benefit us. Hence, we have no other counsel but to keep the Torah and *Mitzvot* correctly.

It is written in the Torah (Parashat Nitzavim): “See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.” It means that prior to the giving of the Torah, we had only death and evil before us, as our sages say, that “The wicked in their life are called dead.” This is so because their death is better than their life since the pain and suffering they endure to attain their sustenance is many times greater than the little pleasure they feel in this life.

However, now we have been granted Torah and *Mitzvot* and by keeping it we acquire the real life, joyful and delightful to its owner. It is written, “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” The writing says in that regard, “See, I have set before thee this day life and good,” which you did not have in reality at all prior to the giving of the Torah.

The writing ends: “therefore choose life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed.” There is seemingly a double phrasing here, “choose life, that thou mayest live.” Yet, it is a reference to life in observing Torah and *Mitzvot*, which is when there is real life. However, a life without Torah and *Mitzvot* is harder than death. This is the meaning of the words of our sages, “The wicked in their life are called dead.”

The writing says, “that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed.” It means that not only is a life without Torah joyless to its owner, but one also cannot delight others. One finds no contentment even in one’s progeny, since the life of his progeny is also harder than death. Hence, what tribute does he leave for them?

However, not only does one who lives in Torah and *Mitzvot* enjoys his own life, but he is even happy to bear children and bequeath them of this good life. This is the meaning of, “that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed,” for one receives additional pleasure in the life of one’s progeny, of which he was the cause.

4. Now you can understand the words of our sages about the verse, “therefore choose life.” It states: “I instruct you to choose the part of living, as a person who says to his son: ‘Choose for yourself a good part in my land.’ He places him on the good part and says to him: ‘Choose this for yourself.’” It is written about this, “O Lord, the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup, Thou maintainest my lot.” You placed my hand on the good fate, to say: “This take for you.”

The words are seemingly perplexing. The verse says, “therefore choose life.” This means that one makes the choice by himself. However, they say that He places him on the good part. Thus, is there no longer choice here? Moreover, they say that the Creator puts one’s hand on the good fate. This is indeed perplexing, because if so where then is one’s choice?

Now you can see the true meaning of their words. It is indeed true that the Creator Himself puts one’s hand on the good fate by giving him a life of pleasure and contentment within the corporeal life that is devoid of content, filled with torment and pain. One necessarily departs and escapes them when he sees a tranquil place, even if it seemingly appears amidst the cracks. He flees there from this life, which is harder than death. Indeed, is there a greater placement of one’s hand by Him than this?

One’s choice refers only to the strengthening. This is because there is certainly a great effort and exertion here before one purifies one’s body to be able to

observe Torah and *Mitzvot* correctly, not for himself but to bring contentment to his Maker, which is called *Lishma*. Only in this manner is one endowed with a life of happiness and pleasantness that come with observing the Torah.

However, before one comes to that purification there is certainly a choice to strengthen in the good way by all sorts of means and artifice. Also, one should do whatever his hand finds the strength to do until he completes the craft of purification and will not fall under his burden midway.

5. According to the above, you will understand the words of our sages in the Talmud (Avot): “Thus is the path of Torah: Eat bread with salt, drink little water, sleep on the ground, lead a sorrowful life, and labour in the Torah. If so you do, happy you will be; happy in this world and happy in the next world.”

We must ask about their words: How is the wisdom of Torah different from the other teachings in the world, which do not require this asceticism and sorrowful life, but the labour itself is enough to acquire those teachings? Even though we labour extensively in the Torah, it is still not enough to acquire the wisdom of the Torah, except through the mortification of bread with salt and a sorrowful life.

The end of the words is even more surprising, as they said, “If so you do, happy you will be; happy in this world and happy in the next world.” This is because it is possible that I will be happy in the next world. Yet, in this world, when I mortify myself in eating and drinking and sleeping, and live a sorrowful life, would it be said about such life, “happy in this world?” Is this the meaning of a happy life in this world?

6. However, it is explained above that the practice of Torah and *Mitzvot* correctly, in its strict condition, is to bestow contentment to one’s Maker and not for self-gratification. It is impossible to come to that except by way of great labour and exertion in purifying the body.

The first tactic is to accustom oneself to not receive anything for one’s pleasure, even the permitted and necessary things for the existence of one’s body, such as eating, drinking, sleeping and other such necessities. Thus, one will disconnect himself completely from any pleasure that necessarily accompanies the satisfaction in the fulfillment of one’s sustenance. At last, one will come to live a sorrowful life in its literal meaning.

After one becomes accustomed to that and his body possesses no desire to receive any pleasure for itself, it is now possible for him to engage in the Torah and keep the *Mitzvot* in that manner too, in order to bestow contentment upon his Maker and not at all for himself.

When one acquires that, one is imparted the taste of a happy life, filled with goodness and delight without any blemish of sorrow, which appear in the practice of Torah and *Mitzvot Lishma*. It is as Rabbi Meir says (Avot 86): “One who engages in Torah *Lishma* (for Her name) is granted many things. Moreover, the entire world is rewarding for him, the secrets of Torah reveal to him and he becomes as a flowing spring.”

It is about him that the verse says, “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” One who tastes the flavour of the practice of Torah and *Mitzvot Lishma* is endowed

with seeing the intention of creation for himself, that it is only to do good to His creations, as it is the conduct of The Good to do good. Then he rejoices and delights in the number of years of life that the Creator imparted him, and the entire world is rewarding to him.

7. Now you will understand the two sides of the coin of engagement in Torah and *Mitzvot*: On the one hand it is the path of Torah, meaning the extensive preparation one must make to prepare the purification of his body before he is actually granted keeping the Torah and *Mitzvot*.

In that state it is necessary that he will practice Torah and *Mitzvot Lo Lishma* (not for Her name), but mixed with self-gratification. This is because he has not purified and cleansed his body from the will to receive pleasure from the vanities of this world. It is at that time that one must live a sorrowful life and labour in the Torah, as it is written in the Mishnah.

However, after one completes the path of Torah, has already purified his body, and is now ready to keep the Torah and the *Mitzvot Lishma*, in order to bring contentment to his Maker, he comes to the other side of the coin. This is the life of pleasure and great tranquility upon which was the intention of creation “to do good to His creations,” meaning the happiest life in this world and in the next world.

8. This explains the great difference between the wisdom of Torah and the rest of the teachings in the world: Acquiring the other teachings in the world does not benefit life in this world whatsoever. This is because they do not even render mere gratification for the torments and suffering one undergoes during one’s life. Hence, one needs not correct his body; the labour that he gives in return for them is quite sufficient, as with all other worldly possessions acquired in return for labour and toil.

However, the sole purpose of engagement in Torah and *Mitzvot* is to make one worthy of receiving all the goodness in the intention of creation, “to do good to His creations.” Hence, one must necessarily purify one’s body to merit that Godly goodness.

9. This also thoroughly clarifies the words of the Mishnah, “If so you do, happy you will be in this world.” They made this precision with deliberate intention to indicate that a happy life in this world is only for those who completed the path of Torah. Thus, the matter of mortification in eating, drinking, sleeping and a sorrowful life that are mentioned here abide only while during the path of Torah. This is why they insisted and said, “Thus is the path of Torah.”

When one completes this path of *Lo Lishma* in sorrowful life and mortification the Mishnah ends, “happy in this world.” This is because you will acquire that happiness and goodness in the intention of creation and the entire world will be rewarding for you, even this world, and all the more so the next world.

10. The Zohar (Bereshit) writes about the verse, “And God said: ‘Let there be light.’ And there was light.” It means that the acts of creation were created in their full stature and form, meaning in their fullest glory and perfection. Accordingly, the Light that was created on the first day came out in all its perfection, which also

contains the life of this world in utter pleasantness and gentleness, as expressed in the words, “Let there be light.”

However, in order to prepare a place of choice and labour, He stood and concealed it for the righteous at the end of days, as our sages say. Hence they said in their pure tongue “Let there be Light for this world.” However, it did not remain so but “and let there be Light for the next world.”

In other words, them who practice Torah and *Mitzvot Lishma* attain it only at the end of days, meaning during the end of days after the end of the purification of their body in the path of Torah. Then they are rewarded with that great Light in this world too, as our sages say, “You shall see your world in your life.”

11. However, we find and see in the words of the sages of the Talmud that they have made the path of Torah easier for us than the sages of the Mishnah. This is because they said, “One will always practice the Torah and *Mitzvot*, even *Lo Lishma*, and from *Lo Lishma* he will come to *Lishma* because the Light in it reforms.”

Thus, they have invented for us a new means instead of the penance presented in the above Mishnah (Avot), which is the “Light in the Torah.” It bears sufficient power to reform one and bring him to practice Torah and *Mitzvot Lishma*.

They did not mention penance here. Only that engagement in Torah and *Mitzvot* alone can provide one with that Light that reforms so that one may engage in Torah and *Mitzvot* in order to bring contentment to his Maker and not at all for his own pleasure. This is called *Lishma*.

12. Nevertheless, we must question their words. After all we have found a few students whose practice in the Torah did not help them to come to *Lishma* through the Light in it. Indeed, practicing Torah and *Mitzvot* in *Lo Lishma* means that one believes in the Creator and in reward and punishment. He engages in the Torah because the Creator commanded the practice, yet associates his own pleasure with bringing contentment to his Maker.

If after all one’s labour in the practice of Torah and *Mitzvot* he will know that no pleasure and self-benefit came to him through this great exertion and strain, he will regret having made all these efforts. This is because one has initially tortured oneself thinking that he will enjoy his exertion. This is called *Lo Lishma*.

Nonetheless, our sages also permitted the beginning of the practice in Torah and *Mitzvot* in *Lo Lishma* because from *Lo Lishma* he comes to *Lishma*. Indeed, there is no doubt that if this student has not acquired faith in the Creator and in His Torah, but still dwells in doubt, it is not about him that our sages say “from *Lo Lishma* he will come to *Lishma*.” It is not about him that they said that by engaging in it “the Light in it reforms.”

The Light in the Torah shines only to those with faith. Moreover, the measure of that Light is as the measure of the force of one’s faith. Yet to those without faith it is the opposite for they receive darkness from the Torah and their eyes darken.

13. Sages have already presented a nice allegory about the verse, “Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! Wherefore would ye have the day of the Lord? It is darkness, and not light.” A parable about a rooster and a bat that were waiting for the Light. The rooster said to the bat: “I await the Light for the Light is mine, but you, why do you need the Light?” (Sanhedrin 98; 72).

Clearly, those students who were not endowed with coming from *Lo Lishma* to *Lishma* because of their absence of faith did not receive any Light from the Torah. Thus, in darkness they walk and shall die without wisdom.

Conversely, those who were imparted complete faith are guaranteed in the words of our sages that because they engage in the Torah even *Lo Lishma* the Light in it reforms them. They will be imparted the Torah *Lishma*, which brings a happy and good life in this world and in the next world, even without the prior affliction and sorrowful life. It is about them that the verse writes, “Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will make thee to ride upon the high places of the earth.”

14. Concerning such a matter as the above, I once interpreted the saying of our sages, “He whose Torah is his trade.” The measure of his faith is apparent in his practice of the Torah because the letters of the word *Umanuto* (his trade) are the same (in Hebrew) as the letters of the word *Emunato* (his faith).

It is like a person who trusts his friend and lends him money. He might trust him with one dollar, and if he asks for two dollars he will refuse to lend him. He might also trust him with one hundred dollars, but not more. Also, he might trust him and lend him half his property but not his whole property. Finally, he might trust him with his entire property without a shred of fear. This last faith is considered “complete faith”, but the previous forms are considered “incomplete faith”. Rather it is partial faith, whether more or less.

Similarly, one allots oneself only one hour a day to practice Torah and work out of the measure of his faith in the Creator. Another allots it two hours, according to the measure of his faith in the Creator. The third does not neglect even a single moment of his free time without engaging in the Torah and the work. Thus, only the faith of the last one is complete since he trusts the Creator with all his property. The previous, however, their faith is still incomplete.

15. Thus it has been thoroughly clarified that one should not expect that the Torah and *Mitzvot* in *Lo Lishma* will bring him to *Lishma* except when one knows in one’s heart that he has been granted faith in the Creator and in His Torah appropriately. This is because then the Light in it reforms and he will attain “the day of the Lord,” which is all Light. The sanctity of faith purifies one’s eyes to enjoy His Light until the Light in the Torah reforms him.

However, those without faith are as bats. They cannot look at the Light of day because the daylight is inverted for them to a more terrible darkness than the darkness of the night, as they are only fed in the darkness of the night.

In this manner, the eyes of those without faith are blinded to the Light of God and hence the Light becomes darkness to them. For them, the potion of life is turned into a potion of death. It is about them that the writing says, “Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! Wherefore would ye have the day of the

Lord? It is darkness, and not light.” Thus, first one must make one’s faith complete.

16. This answers yet another question in the Tosfot (Taanit P. 7): “He who practices Torah *Lishma*, his Torah becomes a potion of life for him. He who practices Torah *Lo Lishma*, his Torah becomes a potion of death for him.” They asked, “Yet, they said, ‘One will always practice the Torah and *Mitzvot*, even *Lo Lishma*, and from *Lo Lishma* he will come to *Lishma*.’”

According to the explained above, we should divide it simply: One who engages in Torah because of the *Mitzva* to study the Torah and believes in reward and punishment, despite associating self-pleasure and benefit with the intention to bring contentment to his Maker, the Light in it will reform him and he will come to *Lishma*.

Conversely, one who studies not for the sake of the *Mitzva* to study the Torah because he does not believe in reward and punishment in that measure, enough to labour so for it, but exerts only for his own pleasure, his Torah becomes a potion of death for him. For him, the Light in it is turned to darkness.

17. Hence, the student pledges prior to the study to strengthen himself in faith in the Creator and in His guidance in reward and punishment, as our sages have written, “Your landlord is liable to reward you for your work.” One should aim one’s labour to be for the *Mitzvot* of the Torah, and thus he will be imparted the pleasure of the Light in it. His faith will strengthen and grow through the remedy of this Light, as they said, “It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones” (Proverbs 3, 8).

Then one’s heart shall rest assure that from *Lo Lishma* he will come to *Lishma*. Thus, even one who knows about himself that he has not acquired faith can hope so through the practice of Torah.

If one sets one’s heart and mind to acquire faith in the Creator through that means, there is no greater *Mitzva* than that, as our sages said, “Habakkuk came and stressed only that: “the righteous shall live by his faith” (Makkot 24).

Moreover, there is no other counsel than this, as it is written: Rabbi said: “Job wished to rid the entire world of judgment. He said before Him: Oh Lord, Thou hath created the righteous, Thou hath created the wicked, who holds you down?”

RASHI interprets there: “Thou hath created righteous by means of the good inclination; Thou hath created wicked by means of the evil inclination. Hence, there is none that is saved from Thine hand, for who holds you down? Coerced are the sinners.” And what did the friends of Job reply? “Yea, thou doest away with fear, and impairst devotion before God” (Job 15, 4), the Creator has created the evil inclination, He has created for it the spice of Torah.”

RASHI interprets there: “Created the Torah, which is a spice that abolishes ‘thoughts of transgression,’” as they said (Masechet Kidushin): ‘If thou cometh across this villain, pull him to the *Beit Midrash* (seminary). If he is hard, he will soften. Hence not coerced are they, for they could save themselves.’”

18. Clearly, they cannot rid themselves of the judgment if they say that they received that spice and still have thoughts of transgression, meaning that they are still in doubt and the evil inclination has not melted. This is because the Creator who created us and gave the evil inclination its strength, evidently knew to create the remedy and the spice that are liable to wear off the power of the evil inclination and eradicate it altogether.

If one practices Torah and fails to remove the evil inclination from himself, it is either that he has been negligent in giving the necessary labour and exertion in the practice of Torah, as it says, “I have laboured but have not found, do not believe,” or perhaps one did put in the necessary labour, but has been negligent in quality.

That means that while practicing Torah they did not set their mind and heart to draw the light in the Torah which brings faith in one’s heart. Rather, they have been absent minded about the principal requirement demanded of the Torah, namely the Light that brings faith. Moreover, although they first aimed for it, their minds went astray during the study.

Either way one cannot rid oneself of the blame by arguing coercion for our sages strictly state: “I have created the evil inclination, I have created for it the spice of Torah.” If there had been any exceptions in that, then Job’s question would have remained valid.

19. Through all that has been explained thus far I have removed a great complaint about the words of Rabbi Chaim Vital in his introduction to Shaar HaHakdamot (Gate to Introductions) by the Ari and the introduction to the Tree of Life. He writes: “Indeed, one should not say, ‘I shall go and engage in the wisdom of Kabbalah before he engages in the Torah, the Mishnah and the Talmud.’ This is because our sages have already said, ‘One should not enter the *PARDES*¹ unless he has filled his belly with meat and wine.’”

This is like a soul without a body. It has no reward or act or consideration before it is connected inside a body when it is corrected in the *Mitzvot* of the Torah, in 613 *Mitzvot*.

Conversely, when one is occupied with the wisdom of the Mishnah and Babylonian Talmud and does not give a share to the secrets of Torah and its concealments as well, it is like a body that sits in the dark without a human soul, God’s candle that shines within it. Thus, the body is dry and does not draw from a source of life.

Hence, a wise disciple who practices Torah *Lishma* should first engage in the wisdom of the Bible, the Mishnah and the Talmud, as long as his mind can tolerate. Afterwards he will delve in knowing his Maker in the wisdom of truth.

It is as King David commanded his son Solomon: “know thou the God of thy father and serve Him.” If that person will find the matter of the study and scrutiny heavy and difficult, he is better off leaving his hand off it, once he tested his luck in this wisdom, and engage in the wisdom of truth.

¹ Pshat – literal meaning, Remez – implied meaning, Drash - delving in search of a deeper meaning, Sod – the hidden meaning.

It is written: “A disciple who has not seen a good sign in his study within five years, will also not see it (Hulin p. 24). Thus, every one whose study is easy for him must dedicate a portion of one or two hours a day to study the Halacha (Jewish code of laws) and explain and interpret the questions in the literal Halacha.

- 20.** These words of his seem very perplexing because he says that before one succeeds in the study of the literal one should already engage in the wisdom of truth. This contradicts his former words that the wisdom of Kabbalah without the literal Torah is as a soul without a body, having no deed, consideration and reward.

The evidence he brings from a disciple who did not see a good sign is even more perplexing, for have our sages said that because of that he should abandon the study of Torah? Certainly, it is in order to warn him to examine his ways and try with another Rabbi or another section, but he must certainly not leave the Torah, even the revealed Torah.

- 21.** It is even more difficult to understand both in the words of Rabbi Chaim Vital and the Gmarah, because it is implied in their words that one needs some specific merit to attain the wisdom of Torah. However, our sages said (Midrash Raba): “The Creator said unto Israel: ‘Regard, the whole wisdom and the whole Torah is an easy thing: any one who fears Me and observes the words of the Torah, the entire wisdom and the entire Torah are in his heart.’” Thus we do not need any prior merit here; only by the virtue of fear of God and observing the Torah is one granted the whole wisdom of the Torah.

- 22.** Indeed, if we examine his words they will clarify before us as pure heavenly stars. The text, “he is better off leaving his hand off it, once he tested his luck in this wisdom,” does not refer to luck of wit and erudition. Rather, it is as we have explained above in the interpretation “I have created the evil inclination, I have created for it the spice of Torah.”

It means that one has delved and exerted in the revealed Torah and still the evil inclination is in power and has not melted at all. This is because he is still not delivered from thoughts of transgression, as RASHI writes above in the explanation to “I have created for it the spice of Torah.”

Therefore he advises him to leave his hands off it, and practice the wisdom of truth for it is easier to draw the light in the Torah while practicing and labouring in the wisdom of truth than in labouring in the literal Torah. The reason is also very simple: the wisdom of the revealed is clothed in external, corporeal clothes, such as stealing, plundering, torts, etc. Hence it is hard and heavy for any person to aim his mind and heart to the Creator during the study so as to draw the Light of the Torah.

It is even more so for a person for whom the study itself is heavy and arduous. How can he remember the Creator during the study, since the scrutiny concerns corporeal matters and cannot come in him simultaneously with the intention for the Creator?

Therefore he advises him to practice the wisdom of Kabbalah, as this wisdom is entirely clothed in the names of the Creator. Then he will certainly be able to

aim his mind and heart to the Creator effortlessly even if he is the slowest learner. This is so because the study in the issues of the wisdom and the Creator are one and the same, and this is very simple.

23. Hence he brings good evidence from the words of the Gmarah: “A disciple who has not seen a good sign in his study after five years, will also not see it.” Why did he not see a good sign in his study? Certainly, it is only due to the absence of the intention of the heart; not because of any lack of aptitude, as the wisdom of Torah requires no aptitude.

Instead, as it is written in the above study: “Regard, the whole wisdom and the whole Torah is an easy thing: any one who fears Me and observes the words of the Torah, the entire wisdom and the entire Torah are in his heart.”

Of course one must accustom oneself in the Light of Torah and *Mitzvot* and I do not know how much. One might remain in waiting all his years. Hence the Braita warns us (Hulin 24) not to wait more than five years.

Moreover, Rabbi Yosi says that only three years are quite sufficient to attain the wisdom of the Torah. If one does not see a good sign within that length of time, one should not fool himself with false hopes and deceit, but know that he will never see a good sign.

Hence, one must immediately find himself a good tactic that will succeed in bringing him to *Lishma* and to be granted the wisdom of the Torah. The Braita did not specify the tactic, but it warns not to remain seated in the same situation and wait longer.

This is the meaning of what the Rav says, that the surest and most successful tactic is the engagement in the wisdom of Kabbalah. One should leave one’s hand entirely from engagement in the wisdom of the revealed Torah since he has already tested his luck in it and did not succeed and he should dedicate all his time to the wisdom of Kabbalah, where his success is certain.

24. This is very simple for these words have no connection to the study of the literal Torah in any thing that one must actually practice, for “it is not the ignorant who is pious, and a mistaken learning makes for evil, and one sinner destroyeth much good.” Hence, one must necessarily repeat them as much as it is necessary to not fail in one’s practice.

However, here it speaks only of the study of the wisdom of the revealed Torah, to explain and scrutinize questions that arise in the interpretation of the laws as Rabbi Chaim Vital deduces there himself. It refers to the part of the study of the Torah that is not performed *de facto*, not to the actual laws.

Indeed, it is possible to be lenient and study from the abbreviations and not from the origins. However, this too requires extensive learning since one who knows from the origin is not like one who knows from a brief scan of some abbreviation. In order to not err in that, Rabbi Chaim Vital says at the very outset of his words that the soul only connects to the body when it is corrected in the *Mitzvot* of the Torah, in 613 *Mitzvot*.

25. Now you shall see how all the questions that we presented in the beginning of the introduction are complete folly. However, they are the obstacles that the evil

inclination spreads in order to hunt innocent souls, to dismiss them from the world robbed and abused.

Examine the first question, where they imagine that they can keep the entire Torah even without the knowledge of the wisdom of Kabbalah. I say to them: Indeed, if you can keep the study of Torah and the observance of the *Mitzvot* correctly, *Lishma*, meaning solely in order to bring contentment to the Maker, then it is said about you, 'One's soul shall teach one.' This is because then all the secrets of the Torah will appear before you like a lush spring, as in the words of Rabbi Meir in the Mishnah (Avot), and you will need no assistance from the books."

However, if you are still engaged in *Lo Lishma* learning, but hope to merit *Lishma* by this means, then I ask you: "How many years have you been doing so?" If you are still within the five years, as the Tana Kama says, or within the three years, as Rabbi Yosi says, then you still have time and can hope.

Yet, if you have been engaged in the Torah *Lo Lishma* for more than three years as Rabbi Yosi says, and five years, as the Tana Kama says, then the Braita warns you that you will not see a good sign in this path you are taking! Why delude your souls with false hopes when you have such a near and sure tactic as the study of the wisdom of Kabbalah, as I have shown the reason above that the study in the issues of the wisdom and the Creator Himself are one?

26. Let us also examine the second question, which is that one must fill one's belly with Mishnah and Gmarah. Everyone agrees that it is indeed so. Yet, this is all true if you have already been endowed with learning *Lishma*, or even *Lo Lishma*, if you are still within the three years or the five years. However, after that time the Braita warns you that you will never see a good sign again, and so you must test your success in the study of Kabbalah.
27. We must also know that there are two parts to the wisdom of truth: The first, called the "secrets of Torah", should not be exposed except by implication, and from a wise Kabbalist to a disciple who understands in his own mind. *Maase Merkava* and *Maase Bereshit* also belong to that part. The sages of the Zohar refer to that part as "the first three *Sefirot*, *Keter*, *Hochma*, *Bina*, and it is also the *Rosh* (Head) of the *Partzuf*."

The second part is called the "flavours of Torah". It is permitted to disclose them and also a great *Mitzva* to disclose them. The Zohar refers to it as the "seven lower *Sefirot* of the *Partzuf*" and it is also called the *Guf* (Body) of the *Partzuf*.

Every single *Partzuf de Kedusha* (of holiness) consists of ten *Sefirot*. These are called: *Keter*, *Hochma*, *Bina*, *Hesed*, *Gevura*, *Tifferet*, *Netzah*, *Hod*, *Yesod*, *Malchut*. The first three *Sefirot* are considered the "*Rosh* of the *Partzuf*" and the seven lower *Sefirot* are named the "*Guf* of the *Partzuf*". Even the soul of the low *Adam* also contains the ten *Sefirot* in their above names and every single *Sefira*, both in the Upper and in the lower.

The reason that the seven lower *Sefirot* which are the *Guf* of the *Partzuf* are called "flavors of Torah" is as the meaning of the verse, "and the palate tasteth

its food.” The Lights that appear under the First three, namely the *Rosh*, are called *Taamim* (flavors) and *Malchut* of the *Rosh* is called *Hech* (palate).

For this reason they are called *Taamim* of Torah. It means that they appear in the palate of the *Rosh*, which is the source of all *Taamim*, which is *Malchut* of the *Rosh*. From there down it is not forbidden to disclose them. Quite the contrary, the reward of one who discloses them is immeasurable and boundless.

However, these first three *Sefirot* and the seven lower *Sefirot* expand both in the general and in the most particular segment that can be divided. Thus, even the first three *Sefirot* of the *Malchut* at the end of the world of *Assiya* belong to the section of the “secrets of Torah” which are not to be disclosed. Similarly, the seven lower *Sefirot* in the *Keter* of the *Rosh* of *Atzilut* belong to the section of the “*Taamim* of the Torah” and are permitted in disclosure, and these words are written in the books of Kabbalah.

28. You will find the source of these words in the Mishnah (Psachim), as it is written (Isaiah 23): “And her gain and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord; it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her gain shall be for them that dwell before the Lord, to eat their fill, and for stately clothing.” What is “stately clothing”? This is what covers things that *Atik Yomin* covered. What are those? The secrets of the Torah. Others say, this is what reveals things that *Atik Yomin* covered. What are those? The flavours of the Torah.

RASHBAM interprets: *Atik Yomin* is the Creator, as it is written, “and *Atik Yomin* sits.” The secrets of the torah are *Maase Merkava* and *Maase Bereshit*. The meaning of “Name” is as it is written, “this is My name for ever.” The “clothing” means that He does not give them to any person, only to those whose heart is anxious. “This is what reveals things that *Atik Yomin* covered” means covering the secrets of the Torah that were first covered and *Atik Yomin* disclosed them and gave permission to disclose them. One who discloses them attains what he said in this verse.

29. Now you can see the great difference between the secrets of Torah, where all who attain them receive this great reward for covering them and not for disclosing them, and the opposite with the *Taamim* of the Torah, where all who attain them receive this great reward for disclosing them to others.

There is no dispute about the first opinion, rather only examination of the different meanings between them. The Lishna Kama states the end, as it says “stately clothing”. Hence they interpret the attainment of the great reward for covering the secrets of Torah.

Others say it states the beginning that reads, “eat their fill” meaning the *Taamim* of the Torah, as it is written, “and the palate tasteth its food” because the Lights of *Taamim* are called eating. Hence they interpret the attainment of the great reward mentioned in the text regarding one who discloses the *Taamim* of the Torah though both think that the secrets of the Torah must be covered and the *Taamim* of the Torah must be disclosed.

30. Thus you have a clear answer about the fourth and the fifth questions in the beginning of the introduction that you find in the words of our sages and also in the holy books that it is only given to one whose heart is anxious. It refers to

that part called “the secrets of the Torah” which is considered the first three *Sefirot* and *Rosh*. This is only given to concealed ones and under certain conditions, but in all the books of Kabbalah, in writing and in print, you will not find even a trace of them because those are the things that *Atik Yomin* covered, as it is written in the Gmarah.

Moreover, do say if it is possible to even think and picture that all those holy and famous righteous which are the greatest and best in the nation, such as Sefer Yetzira (Book of Creation), Sefer HaZohar (the Zohar), and the Braita of Rabbi Ishmael, Rabbi Hai Gaon, and Rabbi Hamai Gaon, Rabbi A. from Garmiza and all the *Rishonim* (first ones) through the RAMBAN and Baal HaTurim and the Baal Shulchan Aruch through the Vilna Gaon and the Ladi Gaon and the rest of the righteous may their memory be blessed.

From them we received the entire revealed Torah and by their words we live and know which act to perform so as to be fancied by the Creator. All of them wrote and published books in the wisdom of Kabbalah. There is no greater disclosure than writing a book because the writer does not know who reads the book. It is possible that utterly evil will scrutinize it. Hence, there is no greater uncovering of secrets of Torah than that.

We must not doubt the words of these holy and pure, that they might infringe even the slightest thing written and explained in the Mishnah and the Gmarah that are forbidden to disclose, as written in Masechet Hagigah.

Rather, all the written and printed books are necessarily considered the *Taamim* of the Torah, which *Atik Yomin* first covered and then uncovered, as it is written, “and the palate tasteth its food.” Not only are these secrets not forbidden to disclose, on the contrary, it is a very good deed to disclose them (as written in Psachim 119).

One who knows how to disclose and discloses them, his reward is plentiful. This is because in disclosing the Lights to many, particularly to the many, depends the coming of Messiah soon in our days Amen.

- 31.** There is a great need to explain once and for all why the coming of the Messiah depends on the study of Kabbalah in the masses, which is so prevalent in the Zohar and all the books of Kabbalah. Laymen have already discussed it futilely and it has become unbearable.

The explanation of this matter is expressed in the *Tikkunim* (corrections) of the Zohar (*Tikun* No. 30). Abbreviated translation: When the Holy Divinity went into exile, this spirit blows upon them who engage in the Torah because the Holy Divinity is among them. They are all as hay eating beasts, every grace that they do, for themselves they do it. Even all of those who do study the Torah, every grace that they do, for themselves they do it. In that time, spirit leaves and never returns. This is the spirit of Messiah.

Woe to them that make the spirit of the Messiah leave and never return. They make the Torah dry and do not want to delve in the wisdom of Kabbalah. These people cause the sprouting of the wisdom, which is the *Yod* (י) in the name *HaVaYaH* (ה"י"ה), to depart.

The spirit of the Messiah leaves, the spirit of holiness, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of

the fear of the Lord.” “And God said: 'Let there be Light.'” This is the Light of love, the love of Mercy, as it is written, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love.”

It is said about that, “if ye awaken, and if ye stir up love, until it please...” then it is love not in order to receive reward. This is because if fear and love is in order to receive reward, it is a handmaid... “a handmaid that is heir to her mistress.”

32. We shall begin to explain the matter of the *Tikkunim* of the Zohar from toe to head: He says that the fear and the love one has in the practice of Torah and *Mitzvot* in order to receive reward, meaning while hoping for some benefit from the Torah and the work, this is considered the maid. It is written about her, “a handmaid that is heir to her mistress.”

This is seemingly perplexing for it is written, “One will always practice the Torah and *Mitzvot*, even *Lo Lishma*,” and why does “the earth doth quake?” In addition, we must understand the correlation of the engagement in *Lo Lishma* specifically to the handmaid, and also the parable that she inherits her mistress. What is the inheritance here?

33. You will understand the matter with everything that is explained above in this introduction that they did not permit the study in *Lo Lishma* but only since from *Lo Lishma* one comes to *Lishma*, since the Light in it reforms. Hence, engagement in *Lo Lishma* is considered a helping handmaid, who performs the ignoble works for her mistress, Holy Divinity.

At last, one will come to *Lishma* and will be imparted the inspiration of Divinity. Then the maid, which is the engagement in *Lo Lishma*, will also be a holy maid, for she supports and prepares the holiness, though she will be considered the world of *Assiya* of the *Kedusha* (holiness).

However, if one’s faith is incomplete and he engages in the Torah and in the work only because the Creator commanded him to study, then we have seen above that in such Torah and work the Light does not appear. This is because one’s eyes are flawed and like a bat turn the Light into darkness.

Such a study is no longer considered a holy maid since he will not acquire *Lishma* through it. Hence, it comes to the dominion of the maid of the *Klipa* (shell), which inherits these Torah and work and takes them for herself.

Hence “the earth doth quake,” meaning Holy Divinity, called earth. It is so because those Torah and work that should have come to her, as possessions of the Holy Divinity, that evil handmaid robs and lowers them to be a possession of the *Klipot* (shells). Thus, the handmaid is heir to her mistress.

34. The *Tikkunim* of the Zohar interpreted the meaning of the oath, “if ye awaken, and if ye stir up love, until it please.” The precision is that Israel will draw the Light of the Upper *Hesed* (Mercy), called “Love of Mercy”. This is what is desired, which is drawn particularly by the engagement in Torah and in *Mitzvot* not in order to receive reward. The reason is that the Light of the Upper Wisdom is extended to Israel through this Light of Mercy, appearing and clothing in this Light of Mercy that Israel extends.

This Light of Wisdom is the meaning of the verse, “And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord” (Isaiah 11). It is said about the King the Messiah: “And He will set up an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the dispersed of Israel, and gather together the scattered of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” This is because after Israel extend the Light of Wisdom through the Light of Mercy the Messiah appears and assembles the dispersed of Israel.”

Thus, everything depends on the practice of Torah and the work *Lishma* which can extend the great Light of Mercy where the Light of Wisdom clothes and extends. This is the meaning of the oath, “if ye awaken, and if ye stir up.” It is so because the complete redemption and the assembling of the dispersed is impossible without it since so are the pipes of holiness arranged.

35. They also interpreted “and the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters.” What is “the spirit of God”? During the exile, when Israel were still occupied in Torah and *Mitzvot Lo Lishma*, if they are in this way because from *Lo Lishma* one comes to *Lishma*, then Divinity is among them, though in exile since they still have not reached *Lishma*.

This is written when Divinity is in concealment. However, they are bound to attain the revelation of Divinity, and then the spirit of the King the Messiah hovers on the engaging and awakens them to come to *Lishma*, as it is written, “the Light in it reforms.” She aids and prepares for the inspiration of Divinity, which is her mistress.

However, if this learning in *Lo Lishma* is not suitable to bring them to *Lishma*, then Divinity regrets it and says that the spirit of man that rises upward is not found among the disciples of the Torah. Rather, they suffice in the spirit of the beast that descends downward, engaging in Torah and *Mitzvot* only for their own benefit and pleasure.

The engagement in the Torah cannot bring them to *Lishma* and the spirit of the Messiah does not hover on them but walks away from them and will not return. The impure maid robs their Torah and inherits her mistress since they are not on the way to come from *Lo Lishma* to *Lishma*.

Even though they do not succeed through the practice in the revealed Torah because it does not have the Light and it is dry because of the smallness of their minds, they could still succeed by engaging in the study of Kabbalah. This is because the Light in it is clothed in the clothing of the Creator, meaning the Holy Names and the *Sefirot*. They could easily come to that form of *Lo Lishma* that brings them to *Lishma* and then the spirit of God would hover on them, as it is written, “the Light in it reforms them.”

Yet, they have no wish at all for the study of Kabbalah and hence they cause poverty, loot, ruin, killing and destruction in the world, because the spirit of the Messiah leaves, the spirit of holiness, the spirit of wisdom and understanding.

36. We learn from the words of the *Tikkunim* of the Zohar that there is an oath that the Light of Mercy and love will not awaken in the world before Israel's acts in Torah and *Mitzvot* will be with the intention to not receive reward and only to bestow. This is the meaning of the oath, "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem."

Thus, the length of the exile and affliction that we suffer depends on us and waits for us to merit the practice of Torah and *Mitzvot Lishma*. If we only attain that, the Light of love and Mercy that has the power to extend will immediately awaken, as it is written, "And the spirit shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding." Then we shall attain the complete redemption.

It has also been clarified that it is impossible that the whole of Israel will come to that great purity except through the study of Kabbalah. This is the easiest way, adequate even for commoners.

However, while engaging in the revealed Torah it is impossible to attain except for a chosen few and after extensive labour, but not for the majority of the people (for the reason explained in item 24). This thoroughly explains the irrelevance of the fourth and fifth questions in the beginning of the introduction.

37. The third question which is the fear that one will turn sour, well there is no such fear here. This is because the deviation from the path of God that occurred in the past was for two reasons: Either they broke the words of our sages with things that they were not to disclose, or because they perceived the words of the Kabbalah in their superficial meaning, meaning as corporeal instructions, breaching "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image."

Hence, indeed until this day there has been a fortified wall around this wisdom. Many have attempted and began to study and could not continue for lack of understanding and because of the corporeal appellations. Thus I have laboured with the interpretation "Panim Meiros and Panim Masbirot" to interpret the great book "Tree of Life" by the Ari, to make abstract the corporeal forms and establish them as spiritual laws above time and space. Accordingly, any novice can understand the matters, their reasons and explanations with a clear mind and great simplicity, no less than one understands Gmarah through the interpretation of RASHI.

38. Let us continue to elaborate on the practice of Torah and *Mitzvot Lishma*. We must understand that name, "Torah *Lishma*". Why is the desirable and whole worship named so, *Lishma*, and the worship that is undesirable is named *Lo Lishma*?

The literal meaning implies that one who engages in Torah and *Mitzvot* to aim his heart to bring contentment to his Maker and to himself should have been referred to as Torah *Lishmo* (for His Name) and Torah *Lo Lishmo* (not for His Name), meaning for the Creator. Why then is this defined by the name *Lishma* and *Lo Lishma*, meaning for the Torah?

There is certainly something more to understand here than the aforementioned since the verse proves that Torah *Lishmo*, meaning to bring contentment to one's Maker is still insufficient. Instead, the study must be *Lishma*, meaning for the Torah. This requires explanation.

39. The thing is that it is known that the name of the Torah is "Torah of Life", as it is written, "For they are life unto those that find them" (Proverbs, 4; 22), "For it is no vain thing for you; because it is your life" (Deuteronomy 32; 47). Hence, the meaning of Torah *Lishma* is that the practice of Torah and *Mitzvot* brings one life and long days, and then the Torah is as its name.

One who does not aim his heart and mind to the aforesaid, the practice of Torah and *Mitzvot* brings him the opposite of life and long days, meaning completely *Lo Lishma*, since its name is "Torah of Life". These words are explained in the words of our sages (Taanit 7, 71) "He who practices Torah *Lo Lishma*, his Torah becomes a potion of death for him; and he who practices the Torah *Lishma*, his Torah becomes a potion of life for him."

However, their words require explanation regarding how and through what does the Torah become to him a potion of death? Not only is his work and exertion in vain and one receives no benefit from his labour and strain, but the Torah and the work themselves become for him a potion of death. This is indeed perplexing.

40. We must first understand the words of our sages (Megillah 6, 72), who said: "I have laboured and found - believe. I did not labour and found – do not believe."

We must ask about the phrase "laboured and found": they to contradict each other. "Labour" refers to work and exertion that one gives in return for any desired possession. For an important possession one makes great efforts and for a lesser possession one makes a lesser effort.

Its opposite is a "find". Its conduct is to come to a person absentmindedly and without any preparation in labour, toil and price. Hence, how does it say, "laboured and found"? If there is effort here it should have stated, "laboured and purchased" or "laboured and acquired" etc. and not "laboured and found".

41. The Zohar writes about the text "and those that seek Me earnestly shall find Me" and asks: "Where does one find the Creator?" They said that the Creator is found only in the Torah. Also, regarding the text "Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself" that the Creator hides Himself in the Holy Divinity.

We must thoroughly understand their words. It seems that the Creator is hidden only in corporeal things and conducts and in all the futilities of this world, outside the Torah. Thus, how can you say the opposite, that He hides Himself only in the Torah?

There is also the general meaning that the Creator hides Himself in a way that He must be sought. Why does He need this concealment? In addition, "All that seek Him shall find Him" which we understand from the text "and those that seek Me earnestly shall find Me." We must thoroughly understand this seeking and this finding, what are they and why are they?

42. Indeed, you should know that the reason for our great distance from the Creator and that we are so prone to transgress His will is for but one reason. It became the source of all the torment and the suffering that we suffer and for all the sins and the mistakes that we fail in.

Clearly, by removing that reason we will be instantly rid of any sorrow and pain. We will immediately be granted adhesion with Him in heart, soul and might. I say that that preliminary reason is none other than the “lack of our understanding in His providence over His creations,” it is that we do not understand Him properly.

43. For example, Let us assume that the Creator conducts open providence with His creations in this manner: Anyone who eats a forbidden thing will immediately suffocate and anyone who performs a *Mitzva* will immediately find a wonderful pleasure in it such as the finest delights in this corporeal world. What fool would even contemplate tasting a forbidden thing, knowing that because of it he will immediately lose his life, as one does not consider jumping into the fire?

Also, what fool would leave any *Mitzva* without performing it as quickly as possible, as one who cannot retire from or linger with a great corporeal pleasure that comes into his hand without receiving it as swiftly as he can? Thus, if providence were open before us, all the people in the world would be complete righteous.

44. Thus you see that all we need in our world is open providence. If we had open providence all the people in the world be completely righteous. They would also cleave to Him with absolute love for it would certainly be a great honor for anyone of us to befriend and love Him with our heart and soul and cleave to Him without losing a minute.

However, it is not so and a *Mitzva* is not rewarded in this world. Moreover, those who defy His will are not punished before our eyes, but the Creator is patient with them.

In addition, we sometimes think the opposite, as it is written (Psalms 73): “Behold, such are the wicked; and they that are always at ease increase riches.” Hence, not all who want to take the Lord may come and take. Instead we stumble every step of the way, until – as our sages wrote about the verse – “I have found one man out of a thousand. A thousand go into a room and one comes out to teach.”

Thus, understanding His providence is the reason for every good, and the lack of understanding is the reason for every evil. It turns out that this is the whole axis that all the people in the world circle, for better or for worse.

45. When we closely examine the attainment of providence that comes to people’s sensations we find four kinds there. Each and every kind receives a special providence by the Creator. Thus, there are four kinds of attainment of providence here, though in fact, they are but two: concealment of the face and revelation of the face, but they are divided into four.

There are two discernments in providence of concealment of the face, which are: a single concealment, and concealment within concealment. There are also

two discernments in the providence of revelation of the face, which are: providence of reward and punishment, and eternal providence.

- 46.** The verse says: (Deuteronomy 31: 17): “Then My anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall come upon them; so that they will say in that day: Are not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us? And I will surely hide My face in that day for all the evil which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods.”

When you regard these words you will find that in the beginning it states “Then My anger shall be kindled... ..and I will hide My face,” meaning one concealment. Afterwards it states “and many evils and troubles shall come upon them... ..And I will surely hide My face,” meaning double concealment. We must understand what is this “double concealment”.

- 47.** We must first understand what is the meaning of the “face of the Creator” about which the writing says, “I will hide My face.” It can be thought of as a person who sees his friend’s face and knows him right away. However, when he sees him from behind he is not certain that in his identity. He might doubt, “Perhaps he is another and not his friend?”

So is the matter before us: Everyone knows and feels that the Creator is good and it is the conduct of the good to do good. Hence, when the Creator bestows upon His creations everyone knows and recognizes Him since He behaves according to His name, as we have seen above regarding open providence.

- 48.** Yet, when He behaves with His creations the opposite from the above mentioned, meaning when they receive suffering and pain in His world, this is considered the posterior of the Creator. It is so because His face, meaning His complete attribute of goodness is entirely concealed from them, and this is not a conduct that suits His name. It is like one who sees one’s friend from behind and might doubt and think, “Perhaps he is another?”

The writing says, “Then My anger shall be kindled... ..and I will hide My face.” During the anger people are afflicted troubles and pains. It turns out that the Creator hides His face, which is His utter benevolence and only His posterior is apparent. In that state, great strengthening in His faith is required in order to beware of thoughts of transgression since it is hard to know Him from behind. This is called “One Concealment”.

- 49.** However, when troubles and torments accumulate to a great extent it causes a double concealment, which the books name “Concealment within Concealment”. It means that even His posterior is unseen, meaning they do not believe that the Creator is angry with them and punishes them but ascribe it to chance or to nature and come to deny His providence in reward and punishment.

- 50.** However, before that, when the writing speaks only from the perspective of one concealment, the text ends: “Are not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?” It means that they still believe in providence of reward and punishment.

They also say that the troubles and suffering come to them because they do not cleave to the Creator, as it is written, “these evils come upon us because our God is not among us.” It is considered that they still see the Creator, but only from behind. For that reason it is called “One Concealment”, meaning only concealment of the face.

- 51.** Now we have explained the two facets of the perception of concealed providence that people feel, “one concealment” and “concealment within concealment”. One concealment relates only to the concealment of the face while the posterior is revealed to them. It means that they believe that the Creator gave them the affliction as punishment.

Even though it is hard for them to always know the Creator through His posterior side, which brings them to transgress, even then they are regarded as “incomplete righteous”. This means that these transgressions are like sins because they come to them as a result of the accumulation of the affliction, as they generally believe in reward and punishment.

- 52.** Concealment within concealment means that even the posterior of the Creator is hidden from them, as they do not believe in reward and punishment. These transgressions of theirs are considered sins. They are considered “complete evil” because they rebel and say that the Creator does not watch over His creations at all, and turn to idolatry, as it is written, “in that they are turned unto other gods.”

- 53.** We must know that the whole matter of the work in keeping Torah and *Mitzvot* by way of choice applies primarily to the two aforementioned facets of concealed providence. It is said about that time (*Avot*): “The reward is according to the pain.”

Since His guidance is not revealed it is impossible to see Him but only in concealment of the face, meaning from behind, as one who sees one’s friend from behind and might and doubt and think he is another. In this manner one is always left with the choice to keep His will or break it.

The troubles and the pains that one receives bring him to doubt the reality of His guidance over His creations, whether in the first manner, which is a mistake, or in the second manner, which is a sin.

Nevertheless, one is still in great pain and labour. The writing says about this time: “Whatsoever thy hand attaineth to do by thy strength, that do” (*Ecclesiastes* 9). This is so because one is not granted the revelation of the face, which is the complete measure of His goodness, before he exerts and does whatever is in his power to do; the reward is according to the pain.

- 54.** When the Creator sees that one has completed one’s measure of exertion and finished everything he had to do in strengthening his choice in faith in the Creator, then the Creator helps him. It is then that one attains the open providence, which is the revelation of the face. Then he is rewarded with complete repentance, meaning he cleaves to the Creator once more with his heart and soul and might, as he is naturally drawn from the perspective of the attainment of the open providence.

55. These above attainment and repentance come to a person in two degrees: The first is the attainment of providence of absolute reward and punishment. Besides attaining the reward for every *Mitzva* in the next world in utter clarity, he is also rewarded the attainment of the wondrous pleasure in immediate observing of the *Mitzva* in this world.

In addition, besides attaining the bitter punishment that extends from every sin after one's death, one is also rewarded with the sensation of the bitter taste of every transgression while being very much alive.

Naturally, one who is imparted this open providence is certain that he will not sin again as one is certain that he will not cut in his flesh and cause himself terrible suffering. In addition, one is certain that he will not neglect a *Mitzva* without observing it the instant it comes to his hand, as much as one is certain that he will not neglect any worldly pleasure or a great profit that comes into his hand.

56. Now you can understand what our sages said: "How will one know that he has repented? When He who knows all mysteries will testify that he will not turn back to folly." These are seemingly perplexing words, for who would rise to the heaven to hear the testimony of the Creator? Also, before whom should the Creator testify? Is it not enough that the Creator Himself knows that the person repented and will not sin again?

From the explanation, the matter becomes quite clear: Indeed, one is not completely certain that he will not sin again before he is awarded the above attainment of reward and punishment, meaning the revelation of the face. It is this revelation of the face by the Creator that is called "testimony" since one's salvation into this attainment of reward and punishment itself is what guarantees that he will not sin again.

It is therefore considered that it is the Creator who testifies for him. It is written: "How will one know that he has repented?" In other words, when will one be certain that he has been endowed complete repentance? For that one is given a clear sign: "when He who knows all mysteries testifies that he will not turn back to folly." Thus, when one attains the revelation of the face, one's own salvation testifies that he will not turn back to folly.

57. This above repentance is called "Repentance from Fear". One returns to the Creator with his heart and soul until He who knows all mysteries testifies that he will not turn back to folly. However, that certainty that he will not sin again is because of one's attainment and sensation of the terrible punishment and wicked torment that come with the transgressions. Because of that one is sure that he will not afflict himself horrible anguish.

However, at last, these repentance and certainty are only because of the fear of the punishment that extends from the transgression. It turns out that one's repentance is only for the fear of punishment. Because of that it is called "Repentance from Fear".

58. With this we understand the words of our sages that "One who repents out of fear, his sins become mistakes." We must understand how this happens. According to the above (item 52) you can thoroughly understand that the sins

one makes extend to him from the reception of providence through double concealment, namely concealment within concealment. It means that one does not believe in providence of reward and punishment.

However, one concealment means that he believes in providence of reward and punishment, yet because of the accumulation of the suffering he sometimes comes to thoughts of transgression. Even though one believes that the affliction came to him as a punishment, he is still like that person who sees his friend from behind and might doubt and think that he is another. These sins are only mistakes since as a whole he does believe in providence of reward and punishment.

- 59.** Hence, when one is granted repentance from fear, meaning a clear attainment of reward and punishment until he is certain that he will not sin again, the concealment within concealment is entirely corrected in him. This is because now he evidently sees that there is providence of reward and punishment. It is clear to him that all the suffering he had ever experienced were a punishment from His providence for the sins he had committed. In retrospect, he made a grave mistake.

However, it is not entirely so, but they become sins. It means that it is like the transgressions he made in one concealment when he failed because of the confusion that came to him because of the multitude of torments that drive one out of one's mind. These are only regarded as mistakes.

- 60.** Yet, in this repentance he did not correct at all the first concealment of the face that he had had before, but only from now on after he has attained the revelation of the face. In the past, however, before he has been awarded repentance, the concealment and the mistakes remain as they were, without any change or correction whatsoever. It is so because then too he believed that the troubles and the suffering came to him as punishment, as it is written, "Are not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?"
- 61.** Therefore he is still considered a complete righteous because he who is rewarded the revelation of the face, namely the complete measure of His goodness, is called "righteous" (item 55). This is so because he justifies His providence as it really is, meaning that He is utterly good and wholesome with His creations, that He is good to the good and to the evil.
- 62.** He is also called "intermediate" since after he attains repentance from fear he also becomes qualified to attain repentance from love through his wholesome engagement in Torah and good deeds. Then one attains being a "complete righteous". Hence, now that one is intermediary, between fear and love, he is named "intermediate". However, before that he was not completely qualified to even prepare himself for repentance from love.
- 63.** This thoroughly explains the first degree of the attainment of the revelation of the face. This means the attainment and the sensation of providence of reward and punishment in a way that He who knows all mysteries will testify that he will not turn back to folly. This is called "Repentance from Fear", when his sins become as mistakes. It is called "incomplete righteous" and also "intermediate".

- 64.** Now we shall explain the second degree of the attainment of the revelation of the face, which is the attainment of the complete providence, true and eternal. It means that the Creator watches over His creations in the form of “Good that doeth good to the good and to the bad”. Now one is considered “complete righteous” and “repentance from love”, when one is granted the turning of his sins to virtues.

This explains all four aspects of the perception of providence that apply in the creations. The first three, meaning double concealment, single concealment and attainment of providence of reward and punishment, are but preparations by which one attains the fourth aspect. This is the attainment of the true, eternal providence.

- 65.** Nevertheless, we must understand why the third aspect is not enough for a person, namely the providence of reward and punishment. We said that he has already been rewarded with He who knows all mysteries testifying that he will not sin again. Hence, why is he still called “intermediate” or “incomplete righteous”, whose name proves that his work is still not desirable in the eyes of the Creator and there is still a flaw and blemish in his work?
- 66.** First let us scrutinize what the interpreters asked about the *Mitzva* of love of God. How did the Holy Torah commit us to a *Mitzva* that we cannot keep? One can coerce and enslave oneself to anything, but no coercion and enslavement in the world will help with love.

They explain that when one keeps all 612 *Mitzvot* correctly the love of God extends to him by itself. Hence, it is considered possible to keep since one can enslave and coerce oneself to keep the 612 *Mitzvot* correctly and then he will also attain the love of God.

- 67.** Indeed, their words require elaborate interpretation. Ultimately, the love of God should not come to us as a *Mitzva*, since there is no act and enslavement on our part in it. It rather comes by itself after completing the 612 *Mitzvot*. Hence, we are quite sufficient with the commandment of the 612 *Mitzvot*, and why this *Mitzva* was written?

- 68.** In order to understand that we must first acquire genuine understanding in the nature of the love of God itself. We must know that all the inclinations, the tendencies and the properties instilled in one to serve one’s friends with, all these tendencies and natural properties are required for the work of God.

To begin with, they were only created and imprinted in a person because of their final function, which is the ultimate purpose of man, as it is written, “he that is banished be not an outcast from him.” One needs them all so as to complement oneself in the ways of the reception of the abundance and to complement the will of God.

This is the meaning of, “Every one that is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory” (Isaiah 43; 7), and also “The Lord hath made all things for His own purpose” (Proverbs 16; 4). However, in the meantime man has been given a whole world to develop and complete all these natural inclinations and

attributes by engaging in them with people, thus yielding them suitable for their purpose.

It is written, "One must say: The world was created for me." This is because all the people in the world are required for an individual since they develop and qualify the attributes and inclinations of every individual to become a fit tool for His work.

- 69.** Thus, we must understand the essence of the love of God from the properties of love by which one person relates to another. The love of God is necessarily shown in these attributes since to begin with they were only imprinted in humans for His name. When we observe the attributes of love between man and man we find four attributes of love, one atop the other, meaning two that are four.

- 70.** The first is "Conditional Love". It means that because of the great goodness, pleasure and benefit that one receives from one's friend, one's soul clings to one's friend with wondrous love.

There are two measures in that: the first is that before they've met and began to love each other, they caused harm to one another. However, now they do not want to remember it for "love covereth all transgressions." The second measure is that they have always done favors and helped one another and there is no trace of harm and detriment between them.

- 72.** The second is "Unconditional Love". It means that one knows the virtue of one's friend to be sublime, beyond any imaginable measure. Because of that his soul clings to him with endless love.

Here too there are two measures: the first is before one knows every conduct and deed of one's friend with others. At that time this love is considered "Less than Absolute Love".

This is because one's friend has dealings with others that, on the surface, seem to be detrimental to others out of negligence. In this manner, if the lover saw them, the merit of one's friend would be entirely blemished and the love between them would have been corrupted. Yet, since he has not seen these dealings, his love is still whole, great and most wonderful.

- 73.** The second attribute of conditional love is the fourth attribute of love in general, which also comes from knowing the merit of one's friend. Yet, in addition to that, one now knows all his dealings and comportment with every person, none missing. One has checked and found that not only is there not a trace of flaw in them, but his goodness is greater than anything imaginable. Now it is "Eternal and Complete Love".

- 74.** Note, that these four attributes of love between man and man also apply between man and God. Moreover, here, in the love of God, they become degrees in the form of cause and consequence.

It is impossible to acquire any of them before one acquires the first attribute of conditional love. After it is completely acquired, that first attribute causes one to

acquire the second attribute. After one has acquired the second attribute to the fullest it causes him to acquire the third attribute. Finally, the third attribute to the fourth attribute, eternal love.

75. Hence the question arises: How can one acquire the first degree of love of God, being the first degree of conditional love, which is love that comes through the multitude of goodness one receives from the loved one, when there is no reward for a *Mitzva* in this world?

Moreover, according to the above, one must go through the first two forms of providence by way of concealment of the face. In other words, His measure of goodness, that the conduct of the good is to do good, is concealed at that time (item 47). Therefore, at that time one experiences pain and suffering.

Nevertheless, we learn that all the practice of Torah and the work out of choice is conducted primarily during that time of concealment of the face. If so, how can it be that one will be awarded the second attribute of conditional love, being that the loved one has always done only wondrous and plentiful good and never caused any harm, and even more so when he attains the third or fourth degrees?

76. Indeed we dive in deep waters here. At the very least, we must fish out a precious gem from this. For that purpose let us examine the words of our sages, “You shall see your world in your life and your end to the life of next world.”

We must understand why they did not say, “You will receive your world in your life,” only “see”? If they wanted to bless they should have blessed wholly, meaning to acquire and receive one’s world in one’s life. We must also understand why a person should see the next world in his life, at least his end will be the life of the next world. Moreover, why did they place this blessing first?

77. We must first understand how is this seeing of the next world in one’s life? Certainly, we cannot see anything spiritual in corporeal eyes. It is also not the comportment of the Creator to change the laws of nature. This is because the Creator originally arranged these conducts in this manner as they are the most successful for their purpose. Through them one comes to cleave to Him, as it is written, “The Lord hath made all things for His own purpose.” We must therefore understand how one sees one’s world in one’s life?

78. I shall tell you that this seeing comes to a person through the opening of the eyes in the Holy Torah, as it is written, “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.” It is about this, that the soul is sworn before it comes to the body (Nida p. 30), and “Even if the whole world says you are righteous, be as a wicked in your own eyes,” specifically in your own eyes.

This means that as long as you have not been awarded the “opening of the eyes” in the Torah, regard yourself as wicked. Do not fool yourself with your publicity in the entire world as righteous.

Now you can also understand why they placed the blessing “You shall see your world in your life” at the beginning of all the blessings. It is because prior to that, one is not even awarded the property of “Incomplete Righteous”.

79. We have yet to understand, if a person knows within himself that he has already kept the whole Torah and the whole world agrees with him in that, why is that not enough for him at all? Instead, he is sworn to continue regarding himself as wicked. Is it because that wondrous degree of opening his eyes in the Torah is missing in him that you compare him to a wicked?

80. Indeed the four measures of people's attainment of His providence over them have already been explained. Two of them are in concealment of face, and two are in disclosure of face.

Also, the reason for the concealment of the face from the creatures has been explained, which is to deliberately give people room for labour and to engage in His work in Torah and *Mitzvot* through their choice. This is because that increases the contentment of the Creator from their work in His Torah and *Mitzvot* more than His contentment from His angels above, who have no choice and whose work is compelled.

81. Despite the above praise for concealment of face, it is still not considered wholeness, but only "transition". It is the place from which the longed for wholeness is attained.

This means that any reward for a *Mitzva* that is prepared for one is acquired only through one's labour in Torah and good deeds at a time of concealment of the face, when he engages out of "choice". This is so because then one feels sorrow in his strengthening in one's faith in keeping His will, and one's reward is measured only according to the pain one suffers from keeping the Torah and the *Mitzva*. Hence it is written, "The reward is according to the pain."

82. Hence, every person must experience that transit period of concealment of the face. When it is completed, one is awarded open providence, meaning the revelation of the face.

Before one is awarded revelation of the face and although he sees the posterior side, he cannot refrain from ever committing a sin. Not only is one unable to keep all 613 *Mitzvot* because love does not come by coercion and compulsion, but one is not even complete in the 612 *Mitzvot*. This is because even one's fear is not fixed as it should be.

This is what it means that the Torah equals 611 in *Gimatria* (and any *Gimatria* is the posterior side), that one cannot even observe 612 *Mitzvot* correctly. This is the meaning of "He will not always contend." In the end one will be awarded the revelation of the face.

83. The first degree of the revelation of the face is the attainment of the providence of reward and punishment in utter clarity. This comes to a person only through His salvation, when one is awarded the opening of eyes in the Holy Torah in wonderful attainment and becomes "a flowing spring" (*Avot* 86). In any *Mitzva* in the Holy Torah that one has already kept of his own choice, one is granted seeing the reward of the *Mitzva* in it, destined for him in the next world and also the great loss in transgression.

- 84.** Even though the reward is not yet in one's hand since the reward for a *Mitzva* is not in this world, the clear attainment is quite sufficient for him from now on, in order to feel the great pleasure while performing each *Mitzva*. This is so because "All that is about to be collected is deemed collected."

For example, take a merchant who made a deal and gained a large sum. Even though the profit will come to his hand after a long time, if he is certain beyond doubt that the profit will come to his hand in time, he is as happy as if the money has come to him immediately.

- 85.** Naturally, such providence testifies to him that from now on he will cleave to Torah and *Mitzvot* with his heart and soul and that he will retire from the sins as if escaping from a fire. One is not yet a complete righteous because he has not acquired repentance from love. Yet, his great adhesion in the Torah and good deeds helps him to slowly be granted repentance from love, meaning the second degree of the revelation of the face. Then one can keep all 613 *Mitzvot* wholly and become a complete righteous.

- 86.** Now we thoroughly understand what we asked concerning the oath, that the soul is sworn before it comes to this world: "Even if the whole world says you are righteous, be as a wicked in your own eyes." We asked: Since the whole world agrees that one is righteous, why must one still consider oneself wicked? Does he not trust the entire world?

We must also add concerning the phrase, "Even if the whole world says." What is the connection between this and the testimony of the entire world? He should have sworn him, "Even if you know for yourself that you are righteous."

Yet, the most perplexing is that the Gmarah states explicitly (Brachor 61) that one must know in one's soul if he is righteous or not. Thus, there is an obligation and possibility to be a genuinely complete righteous.

Moreover, one must delve and know this truth. If this is so, how is the soul sworn to always be wicked in its own eyes, and never know the actual truth, when our sages have obligated the opposite?

- 87.** The words are very precise indeed. As long as one has not been awarded the opening of eyes in the Torah in wondrous attainment, sufficient for him for clear attainment of reward and punishment, he certainly cannot consider himself righteous. This is because one necessarily feels that he lacks the two most comprehensive *Mitzvot* in the Torah, namely Love and Fear.

It is unimaginable that one will attain complete fear before he is awarded complete and clear attainment in providence of reward and punishment in a way that "He who knows all mysteries will testify that he will not turn back to folly" due to his great fear of punishment and the great loss from transgressing.

This refers to the attainment of the first degree of revelation of the face that comes to a person by the opening of eyes in the Torah. It is all the more so with love, which is completely beyond one's ability since it depends on the understanding of the heart and no labour and coercion help here.

- 88.** Hence the oath states, “Even if the whole world says you are righteous.” This is so because these two *Mitzvot*, love and fear, are given only to the individual. No one else in the world can distinguish them and know them.

Hence, since they see that he is complete in 611 *Mitzvot*, they immediately say that he probably has the two *Mitzvot* of love and fear as well. Since human nature compels one to believe the world, one might fall into a grave mistake.

For that reason, the soul is sworn to that before it even comes into this world, and may it do us good. Nonetheless, it is the individual himself who must certainly question and know in his heart if he is a complete righteous.

- 89.** We can also understand what we asked: How can even the first degree of love be attained when there is no reward for a *Mitzva* in this world? Now it is clearly understood that one does not need to actually receive the reward for the *Mitzva* in his life.

Hence their precision “You shall see your world in your life and your end in the next life.” It indicates that the reward for a *Mitzva* is not in this world, but in the next world.

Yet, in order to know, to see and to feel the future reward of the *Mitzva* in the next world, one must really know it for certain while in this life, meaning through the wonderful attainment in the Torah. Then one still attains conditional love, which is the first degree of the exit from concealment of the face and the entrance to the revelation of the face. One must have that in order to keep Torah and *Mitzvot* correctly in a way that “He who knows all mysteries will testify that he will not turn back to folly.”

- 90.** One attains the second degree of revelation of the face by straining to observe Torah and *Mitzvot* in conditional love. It comes to one by knowing the future reward in the next world by way of “all that is about to be collected is deemed collected.” This is regarded as His guidance of the world from His eternity and truthfulness, meaning that He is good to the good and to the bad.

In that state one attains unconditional love and the sins become as virtues for him and from then on he is called “Complete Righteous” since he can keep the Torah and *Mitzvot* with love and fear. He is called “Complete” since he has all 613 *Mitzvot* in completeness.

- 91.** This answers what we asked: One who attains the third measure of providence, namely providence of reward and punishment when He who knows all mysteries already testifies that he will not turn back to folly is still considered “Incomplete Righteous”. Now we thoroughly understand that one still lacks one *Mitzva*, namely the *Mitzva* of love. Of course one is incomplete since he must necessarily complete the number 613 *Mitzvot*, which is necessarily the first step on the threshold of perfection.

- 92.** With all the above said we will understand what they have asked: How did the Torah compel in the *Mitzva* of love when this *Mitzva* is not even in our hands to engage in or even somewhat touch? Now you see and understand that it is about this that our sages warned us, “I have laboured and did not find, do not believe,” and also, “Let one always engage in Torah and *Mitzvot* in *Lo Lishma* because

from *Lo Lishma* one comes to *Lishma*” (Psachim 59). Also, to that the verse testifies, “those that seek Me earnestly shall find Me” (Proverbs 8).

93. These are the words of our sages (Megillah p. 6): “Rabbi Itzhak said, ‘If a person tells you, ‘I have laboured and did not find,’ do not believe; ‘I did not labour and found,’ do not believe; ‘I laboured and found,’ believe.’”

This phrase seems to contradict itself because labour relates to possession, and a find is something that comes without labour at all, absentmindedly. He should have said, “I laboured and bought.”

However, you must know that this term “find” that is mentioned here relates to the verse, “those that seek Me earnestly shall find Me.” It refers to finding the face of the Creator, as it is written in the Zohar that He is only found in the Torah, meaning one finds the face of the Creator by labouring in the Torah. Hence, our sages were precise in their words and said “I laboured and found, believe,” because labouring is in the Torah and finding is in the discovery of the face of the Creator.

They deliberately refrained from saying, “I laboured and won, believe,” or “I laboured and bought.” This is because then there would be a place to err in that the words that the winning of the possessing relate only to the possession of the Torah. Hence, they made the precision with the word “found”, indicating that it refers to another thing besides the acquisition of the Torah, namely the revelation of the face of His providence.

94. That settles the verse: “I did not labour and found, do not believe.” It seems puzzling, for who would think that the Torah can be won without having to labour for it? Since the words relate to the verse, “those that seek Me earnestly shall find Me” (Proverbs 8; 17), which means that anyone, small or great, who seeks Him finds Him immediately. This is what the word “seek” implies.

One might think that this does not require so much labour and even a lesser person, unwilling to make any effort for it will also find Him. Our sages warn us in that regard to not believe such an explanation. Rather, the labour is necessary here and “I did not labour and found, do not believe.”

95. Now you see why the Torah is called “Life”, as it is written, “See, I have set before thee this day life and good” (Deuteronomy 30; 15), “therefore choose life,” and also “For they are life unto those that find them” (Proverbs 4; 22). This extends from the verse, “In the light of the king's countenance is life” (Proverbs 16), since the Creator is the source of all life and every good.

Hence life extends to those branches that cleave to their source. This refers to those that have laboured and found the Light of His face in the Torah, that have been imparted opening their eyes in the Torah in wonderful attainment. They have been imparted the revelation of the face, meaning the attainment of the true providence, fitting for His name, “Good”, and that the conduct of the Good is to do good.

96. Those that won can no longer retire from keeping the *Mitzva* correctly as one cannot retire from a wonderful pleasure that comes into one’s hand. They also run from transgression as one runs from a fire.

It is said about them: “But ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God are alive every one of you this day.” His love comes abundantly to them in natural love through the natural channels prepared for one by the nature of creation.

This is because now the branch cleaves to its root correctly and life is poured to him abundantly and incessantly from its origin. It is because of this that the Torah is called “Life”.

97. For that reason, our sages warned us in many places concerning that necessary condition in the practice of Torah, that it will be specifically *Lishma*, in a way that one will be awarded life through it for it is a Torah of life. For this task it was given to us, as it is written, “therefore choose life.”

Hence, every person must set his mind and heart to labour in the torah during the practice so as to find “the light of the king’s countenance” in it, the attainment of open providence, called “light of countenance”. Any person is fit for it, as it is written, “those that seek Me earnestly shall find Me.” It is also written, “I laboured and did not find, do not believe.”

Thus, one needs nothing in this matter except the labour alone. It is written, “Anyone who practices Torah *Lishma*, his Torah becomes a potion of life for him” (Taanit 7; 71). It means that one should only set one’s mind and heart to attain life. This is the meaning of *Lishma*.

98. Now you can see that the question the interpreters asked about the *Mitzva* of love, saying that this *Mitzva* is out of our hands since love does not come by coercion and compulsion, is not at all a question. This is because it is in our hands entirely. Every person can labour in the Torah until he finds the attainment of His open providence, as it is written, “I laboured and found, believe.”

When one attains open providence the love extends to him by itself through the natural channels. Thus, one who does not believe that he can attain that through his efforts, for whatever reason, he is necessarily in disbelief with the words of our sages.

Rather, he thinks that the labour is not enough for each person, the opposite of the verse, “I laboured and did not find, do not believe.” It is also against the words of the verse, “those that see Me shall find Me”; specifically those that “seek”, whomever they are, great or small. However, it is certainly the labour that he needs.

99. From the above said you will understand the meaning of, “Any one who practices Torah *Lo Lishma*, his Torah becomes a potion of death for him” (Taanit 7; 71), and the verse, “Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself,” that the Creator hides Himself in the Torah.

We asked: It seems reasonable that the Creator is hidden in this world, outside the Torah, not in the Torah itself, which is only the place of the disclosure. We asked further still: This concealment that the Creator hides Himself so as to be sought and found, why should I?

- 100.** From this you can thoroughly see that this concealment that the Creator hides Himself so as to be sought is what the concealment of the face means. He conducts it with His creations in two ways: one concealment and concealment within concealment.

The Zohar tells us that we should not even consider that the Creator wants to remain in providence of concealed face from His creations. Rather, it is like a person who hides himself on purpose so that his friend will seek and find him.

Similarly, when the Creator behaves in concealment of face with His creations it is only because He wants the creatures to seek the disclosure of His face and find Him. In other words, it is because there would have been no way or outlet for people to attain the light of the King's countenance had He not first behaved with them in concealment of face. Thus, the whole concealment is but a preparation for the disclosure of the face.

- 101.** It is written that the Creator hides Himself in the Torah. Regarding the matter of the torments and pains one experiences while in concealment of face, one who possesses few sins and has done little Torah and *Mitzvot* is not like one who has extensively engaged in Torah and good deeds. The first is qualified to sentence his Maker to a scale of merit, meaning to think that the torments came to him because of his sins and scarceness of Torah.

For the other, however, it is much harder to sentence his Maker to a scale of merit. This is because in his mind, he does not deserve such harsh punishment. Moreover, he sees that his friends, who are worse than him, do not suffer so, as it is written, "the wicked; and they that are always at ease increase riches," and also, "in vain have I cleansed my heart."

Thus, as long as one has not attained providence of revelation of the face, the multitude of his Torah and *Mitzvot* make his concealment of face much heavier. This is the meaning of the Creator hiding Himself in the Torah.

Indeed, all that heaviness that he feels by the Torah are nothing but proclamations by which the Holy Torah itself calls him. It awakens him to hurry and give the required sum of labour in order to endow him with the revelation of the face immediately, as God wills it.

- 102.** This is why it writes that all who learn Torah in *Lo Lishma* the Torah becomes a potion of death for them. Not only do they not come out from concealment of face to disclosure of face since they did not set their minds to labour and attain it, the Torah that they accumulate greatly increases their concealment of face. Finally, they fall into concealment within concealment, which is considered death, being completely detached from one's root. Thus, their Torah becomes a potion of death for them.

- 103.** That clarifies the two names the Torah is called by: the "revealed" and the "concealed". We must understand why we need the concealed Torah, and why the entire Torah is not revealed?

Indeed there is a profound intention here. The concealed Torah implies that the Creator hides in the Torah, hence the name "the Torah of the hidden." Conversely, it is called "revealed" because the Creator is revealed by the Torah.

Therefore, the Kabbalists said and so we find in the prayer book of the Vilna *Gaon* that the order of the attainment of the Torah begins in the concealed and ends in the revealed. This means that through correct labour where one first delves in the Torah of the hidden, he is thus granted the revealed Torah, the literal. Thus, one begins with the concealed, called *Sod* (secret), and when he is granted, he ends in the literal.

- 104.** It has been thoroughly clarified how it is possible to attain the first degree of love, being the conditional love. We learned that even though there is no reward for a *Mitzva* in this world, the attainment of the reward for the *Mitzva* exists in worldly life nonetheless. It comes to a person by opening the eyes in the Torah and this clear attainment is completely similar to receiving instantaneous reward for the *Mitzva*.

Hence one feels the wonderful benefit contained in the thought of creation, which is to delight His creatures in His full, good and generous hand. Because of the abundance of benefit that one attains, wondrous love appears between a person and the Creator. It pours to one incessantly by the same ways and channels through which natural love appears.

- 105.** However, all of this comes to a person from the moment he attains onwards. One does not want to remember all the torment caused by the providence in concealment of face that one had suffered before he attained the above disclosure of face, since “love covereth all transgressions.” Nevertheless, it is considered a great flaw, even when compared to love among people, much less concerning the truthfulness of His providence, since He is Good that doeth good to the good and to the bad.

Therefore, we must understand how one can attain His love in that regard, that he will feel and know that the Creator has always done him wondrous good since the day he was born onwards; that He never caused him an ounce of harm. This is the second attribute of love.

- 106.** We need the words of our sages in order to understand that. They said, “one who repents from love, his sins become as virtues.” It means that not only does the Creator forgive his sins, each sin and transgression that one had made is turned into a *Mitzva* by the Creator.

- 107.** After one attains the enlightenment of the face in the amount that each sin he had committed, even the deliberate ones, is turned and becomes a *Mitzva* for him, one rejoices with all the torment and affliction that he had ever suffered since the time he was placed in the two attributes of concealment of the face. This is because it is them that brought one all these sins that have now become *Mitzvot* by the illumination of His face who performs wondrous wonders.

Any sorrow and trouble that drove him out of wits, where he failed with mistakes as in the first concealment, or failed with deliberate sins as in double concealment, has now become a cause and preparation for keeping a *Mitzva* and the reception of eternal and wondrous reward for it. Therefore, any sorrow has turned for him into a great joy and any evil to wonderful good.

- 108.** It is similar to a tale that the world tells about a Jew who was a house trustee for a certain landlord. The landlord loved him dearly. Once, when he went away, he had left his business in the hands of his substitute, who was an anti-Semite.

What did he do? He took the Jew and struck him five times in front of everyone to thoroughly humiliate him.

When the landlord returned the Jew went to him and told him all that had happened to him. His anger was kindled greatly. He then called upon the substitute and commanded him to give the Jew immediately a thousand coins for every time he had struck him.

The Jew took them and went home. His wife found him crying. She asked him anxiously: "What happened to you with the landlord?" He told her. She asked: "Then why are you crying?" He answered: "I am crying because he only beat me five times. I wish he'd beaten me at least ten times since now I would have had ten thousand coins."

- 109.** Now you see that after one has been awarded repentance of the sins in a way that the sins become as virtues, one is then imparted love with the Creator in the second attribute where the loved one never caused any harm or even a shadow of harm. Instead, He performs wondrous and plentiful good always and forever. Thus, the repentance from love and the turning of the sins into virtues come as one.

- 110.** Thus far we have only examined the two degrees of conditional love. Yet, we must still understand how one is awarded to come in the two attributes of unconditional love with one's Maker.

For that, we must thoroughly understand what is written (Kidushin p. 40): "One must always regard oneself half guilty and half pure. If he performs one *Mitzva*, happy is he, for he has sentenced the world to a scale of merit. If he commits one sin, woe unto him for he has sentenced the world to a scale of demerit."

Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, says: "Since the world is judged by its majority, and the individual is judged by the majority, if he performs one *Mitzva*, happy is he for he has sentenced himself and the entire world to a scale of merit. If he commits one sin, woe unto him for he has sentenced himself and the entire world to a scale of demerit. For this one sin that he had committed, the world and he have lost much good"

- 111.** These words seem puzzling from beginning to end. He says that one who performs one *Mitzva*, immediately sentences to a scale of merit, for he is judged by the majority. Yet, this refers only to those who are half guilty and half pure, and Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, does not speak of those at all. Thus, the essence is still absent.

RASHI interpreted his words as referring to the words, "One must always consider oneself half guilty and half pure." Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, adds that one should also regard the world as though they are half guilty and half pure. Yet, the essence is still absent, and thus, why did he change his words if the meaning is the same?

- 112.** It is even more difficult on the object itself, meaning for one to see oneself as only half guilty. If one knows one's many iniquities, will one deceive oneself saying that one is only half this and half that?

The Torah states, "keep thee far from a false matter!" Moreover, it is written, "one sinner destroyeth much good." This is because one sin sentences the person and the entire world to a scale of demerit. Thus, it is about a true reality, not some false imagination by which a person should regard himself and the world.

- 113.** Also perplexing: Can it be that there are not many people in each generation who perform one *Mitzva*? Thus, how is the world sentenced to a scale of merit? Does that mean that the situation does not change at all and there is nothing new under the sun? Indeed, great depth is required here for the words cannot be understood superficially at all.

However, this does not regard a person who knows his sins are many, to teach him deception, that he is half this and half that. It rather relates to one who feels and imagines himself as being completely and utterly righteous and finds himself utterly whole. It is so because he has already been awarded the first degree of love by opening his eyes in the Torah and He who knows all mysteries will testify that he will not turn back to folly.

To him the writing shows the way and proves that one is not yet righteous, only intermediate, meaning half guilty, half pure. This is so because one is still short of one *Mitzva* from the 613 *Mitzvot* in the Torah, namely the *Mitzva* of love.

The whole testimony of He who knows all mysteries that he will not sin again is only because of the clarity in one's attainment of the great loss in the transgression. This is considered fear of punishment and is therefore considered "repentance from fear".

- 114.** We also learned above that this degree of repentance from fear still does not correct one, except from the time of repentance onward. Yet, all the sorrow and the anguish one had suffered before he was granted the revelation of the face remain as they were, uncorrected. In addition, the transgressions one had made were also not entirely corrected, but remain as mistakes.

- 115.** It is therefore said that such a person, who is still short of one *Mitzva*, will regard himself as half guilty and half pure. It means that one should imagine that the time when he was granted the repentance was the middle of his years.

Thus, he is still half guilty, meaning in that half of his years that had passed before he has repented. Then one is certainly guilty since repentance from fear does not correct them.

It follows that he is also half pure, in that half of his years since he repented onward. At that time one is certainly pure for he is certain that he will not sin again. Thus, one is guilty in the first half of his years and pure in the second half of his years.

- 116.** One is told to think that if he performs one *Mitzva*, that *Mitzva* that he lacks from the number 613, he will be happy for he has sentenced himself to a scale

of merit. It is so because one who is granted the *Mitzva* of love by repentance from love is imparted, his sins being turned to virtues through it.

Then, every sorrow and grief that he had ever suffered, before he has been granted the repentance, is turned for him to wondrous, endless pleasure. Moreover, one regrets not having suffered twice as much and more, as in the parable about the landlord and the Jew who loved him.

This is called “sentencing to a scale of merit”, since all one’s emotions, the mistakes and the sins, have become virtues. Thus, sentencing to a scale of merit means that the whole cup that was filled with demerits has now been turned into a full cup of merits. In the words of the sages, this inversion is called “sentencing”.

- 117.** It further warns us and says that as long as one is intermediate and has not been granted the one *Mitzva* that is missing from the number 613, one should not believe in oneself until one’s dying day. He should also not rely himself on the testimony of He who knows all mysteries that he will not turn back to folly, but one might still transgress.

Hence, one should think for oneself that if he sins once, woe unto him for he has sentenced himself to a scale of demerit. One will then immediately lose all his wonderful attainment in the Torah and all the disclosure of the face that he has been granted, and he will return to concealment of face. One will sentence oneself to a scale of demerit for he will lose all the virtues and the good even from the latter half of his years. To that verse testifies, “one sinner destroyeth much good.”

- 118.** Now you understand the addition that Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, adds, and also why he does not bring the phrase of “half guilty and half pure.” This is so because it speaks there of the second attribute and the third attribute of love, while Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, speaks from the fourth attribute of love, namely the eternal love. This is the disclosure of face as it really is, Good that doeth good to the good and to the bad.

- 119.** We learned there that it is impossible to attain the fourth attribute except when one is thoroughly knowledgeable in all the dealings of the loved one and how he behaves with others, none of them missing. This is also why the great privilege, when one is granted with sentencing himself to a scale of merit, is still not enough for one to attain whole love, meaning the fourth attribute. It is so because now he does not attain His virtue as being Good that doeth good to the good and to the bad, but only His providence on him.

Yet, one still does not know of His providence in sublime and wonderful manner with the rest of the people in the world. Thus, we learned above that as long as one does not know the dealings of the loved one with others until none of them is missing, the love is not eternal. Hence, one must also sentence the entire world to a scale of merit. Only then does the eternal love appear before him.

- 120.** Rabbi Elazar says: “The world is judged by its majority and the individual is judged by its majority.” Since he speaks of the entire world he cannot say as it is

written, that he will regard them as half guilty, half pure. This degree comes to a person only when he is granted the disclosure of the face and repentance from fear.

Yet, how is this said about the entire world when they have not been granted this repentance? Thus, one must only say that the world is judged by its majority and the individual is judged by its majority.

Interpretation: One might think that one does not become a complete righteous except when one has no transgressions and has never committed a sin. Yet, them that have failed with sins and transgressions no longer merit becoming complete righteous.

For that reason Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, teaches us that it is not so. Rather, the world is judged by its majority and so is the individual. This means that after one is no longer considered intermediate, meaning after he has made repentance from fear, he instantaneously attains the 613 *Mitzvot* and is called “intermediate”. In other words, in half his years he is guilty, and in half his years he is pure.

After that, if one adds but a single *Mitzva*, namely the *Mitzva* of love, it is considered that he is mostly pure and sentences everything to a scale of merit. Thus, the scale of transgression becomes a scale of merit too.

It turns out that even if one has a full scale of transgressions and sins, they all become virtues. Then one is as one who has never sinned and is considered “complete righteous”.

This means that the world and the individual are judged by the majority. Thus, the transgressions in one’s hand from before the repentance are not taken into any account for they have become virtues. Accordingly, even “complete wicked” are considered “complete righteous” after they are granted repentance from love.

- 121.** Therefore, I shall say that if an individual performs one *Mitzva*, meaning after the repentance from fear, since then one is short of only one *Mitzva*, then “he is happy for he has sentenced himself and the entire world to a scale of merit.” Not only does one sentence oneself to a scale of merit by the repentance from love, but one is even awarded sentencing the entire world to a scale of merit.

This means that one is awarded rising in wonderful attainments in the Holy Torah until he finds how all the people of the world will finally be awarded repentance from love. When they too will discover and see all that wonderful attainment that he has attained for himself, they too will be sentenced to a scale of merit. Then “sins will cease out of the earth and the wicked be no more.”

The people of the world themselves have not yet been granted even the repentance from fear. Nevertheless, after an individual attains that sentencing to a scale of merit, destined to come to them in clear and absolute attainment, it is similar to “You shall see your world in your life,” said about one who repents from fear. We said that one is impressed and delighted by it as though he had it instantly since “All that is about to be collected is deemed collected.”

Also, here it is considered for that individual who attains the repentance of the entire world precisely as though they have been granted and came to repentance

from love. Each and everyone of them sentenced their demerits to merits sufficiently to know His dealings with every single person in the world.

This is why Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, says, “Happy is he for he has sentenced himself and the entire world to a scale of merit.” From now on, one thoroughly knows all the conducts of His providence with every single creation, by way of disclosure of His real countenance, meaning Good that doeth good to the good and to the bad. Since one knows that, one has therefore been granted the fourth attribute of love, namely “eternal love”.

Like the verse, so Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, also warns that even after one has sentenced the entire world to a scale of merit, one should still not believe oneself until his dying day. Should one fail with a single transgression he will immediately lose all his wonderful attainments, as it is written, “one sinner destroyeth much good.”

This explains the difference in what Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, writes: The writing only speaks from the second attribute and the third attribute of love; hence it does not mention the sentencing of the entire world.

Yet Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, speaks from the fourth degree of love, which cannot be depicted except by attaining the sentencing of the entire world to a scale of merit. However, we must still understand with what we attain this wonderful attainment of sentencing the entire world to a scale of merit.

- 122.** We must understand what is written (Taanit 11; 71): When the public is in grief one should not say, ‘I shall go to my house and eat and drink and have my soul at peace.’ If one does that, the writing says about him, ‘And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine--’ Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die!’ What does it say about that? “And the Lord of hosts revealed Himself in mine ears: Surely this iniquity shall not be expiated by you till ye die.”

Thus far regarding the attribute of intermediate. Yet, it is written about the attribute of wicked, ‘Come ye, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow shall be as this day.’

What does it say about that? ‘The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart, ...that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.’ Instead, when one grieves with the public, one is granted the consolation of the public.”

- 123.** These words seem completely irrelevant. He wishes to bring evidence from the text that one must pain oneself with the public. Hence, why should we divide and separate the attribute of intermediate from attribute of wicked? Furthermore, what is the precision that it makes regarding the “attribute of intermediate” and “attribute of wicked”? Why does it not say “intermediate” and “wicked”, why do I need the attribute?

Also, where does it imply that the writing speaks of an iniquity where one does not pain oneself with the public? Still more, we do not see any punishment in the attribute of the wicked, but in what is written, “The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart.” If the wicked sin, what does the righteous do that he should be punished, and why should the wicked cry if the righteous perisheth?

- 124.** Yet, you should know that all these attributes, “intermediate”, “wicked” and “righteous”, are not in special people. Rather, all three are found in every single person in the world. These three attributes are discernible in every person. During one’s period of concealment of the face. Before one attains even repentance from fear, he is considered wicked.

Afterwards, if one is granted repentance from fear, he is considered intermediate. If one is then granted repentance from love too, in its fourth measure, namely eternal love, he is considered “complete righteous”. Hence, they did not say merely intermediate and righteous, but the attribute of intermediate and the attribute of wicked.

- 125.** We should also remember that it is impossible to attain the above fourth measure of love without first attaining the revelation of the face which is destined to come to the entire world. That gives one strength to sentence the entire world to a scale of merit, as Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon says.

We have already learned that the matter of the disclosure of the face will inevitably turn every grief and sadness that came during the concealment of the face into wondrous pleasures, until one regrets having suffered so little.

Hence, we must ask: When one sentences oneself to a scale of merit he certainly remembers all the grief and pain he had had during the concealment of the face. This is why it is possible that they will all be turned into wondrous pleasures, as we have said above.

Yet, when one sentences the entire world to a scale of merit, how does one know that measure of grief and pains that all the people in the world suffer so as to understand them? Also how are they turned to merits in the same manner we have explained regarding one’s own sentencing?

To avoid having the scale of merit of the entire world wanting when one is qualified to sentence them to a scale of merit, one has no other tactic but to always pain himself with the troubles of the public just as with his own troubles. Then the scale of demerit of the entire world will be ready within him like his own scale of demerit. Thus, if one is granted sentencing himself to a scale of merit he will be able to sentence the entire world to a scale of merit too and attain the measure “complete righteous”.

- 126.** Thus, if one does not pain himself with the public, then even when he is granted repentance from fear, namely the attribute of intermediate, the writing says about him: “And behold joy and gladness.” It means that one who has acquired the blessing of “You shall see your world in your life” and sees the entire reward for his *Mitzva* that is prepared for the next world is certainly “filled with joy and gladness.”

One says to oneself: “slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine--' Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die!” It means that one is filled with great joy because of one’s guaranteed reward in the next world. That is why he says so gladly “for tomorrow we shall die” and I will collect my life in the next world from The Whole after I die.

Yet, it is written about that: “And the Lord of hosts revealed Himself in mine ears: Surely this iniquity shall not be expiated by you till ye die.” This means that the text rebukes him for the mistakes in his hand.

We learned that the sins of one who repents from fear become mere mistakes. Hence, since he did not pain himself with the public and cannot attain repentance from love, at which time the sins are turned to virtues, it is necessary that the mistakes in his hand will never be repented in his life.

Thus, how can he rejoice in his life in the next world? That is why it is written, “Surely this iniquity shall not be expiated by you till ye die,” meaning the mistakes. “Until you die,” meaning before he dies. Thus, he is devoid of repentance.

- 127.** It is also written that it is the “attribute of intermediate”, meaning that this text speaks of a time when one has repented from fear onwards. At that time one is considered “intermediate”.

Yet, what does it write about the “attribute of wicked”? In other words, what shall become of the time when one was in concealment of the face, which was then called “attribute of wicked”? Also, we learned that repentance from fear does not correct one’s past before he has repented.

Hence, the text brings another verse: “Come ye, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day.” It means that those days and years that one has been through since the time of concealment of the face when he has not corrected them, called “attribute of wicked”, they do not want him to die. It is so because they have no part after in the next world the death, as they are the attribute of the wicked.

Therefore, at the time when the attribute of intermediate is glad and rejoicing in a person “for tomorrow we shall die” and will attain the life of the next world, at the same time the attribute of wicked in a person does not say so. It rather says, “and tomorrow shall be as this day.” It means that it wants to live and be happy in this world forever for it still has no part for the next world. This is because one has not corrected it since it is only corrected by repentance from love.

- 128.** It is written, “The righteous perisheth,” meaning the attribute of complete righteous that that person should merit is lost from him. “And no man layeth it to heart, ...the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.”

This means that because that intermediate did not pain himself with the public he cannot attain repentance from love, inverting sins to virtues and evils to wonderful pleasures. Instead, all the mistakes and the evil one had experienced before he acquired repentance from fear still stand in the attribute of wicked that feel evils from His providence. Because of these evils that they still feel he cannot be awarded being a complete righteous.

The writing says: “and no man layeth it to heart.” It means that that person does not notice “the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.” In other words, because of the evils that one still feels from past times in His providence, “the righteous perisheth,” meaning one lost the attribute of righteous, he will die and pass away from the world as mere intermediate.

All that concerns he who does not pain himself with the public and is not awarded seeing the consolation of the public for he cannot sentence them to a scale of merit and see their consolation. Hence, he will never attain the attribute of righteous.

- 129.** From the aforementioned we have come to know that there is no woman-born who will not experience the three above attributes: attribute of wicked; attribute of intermediate; attribute of righteous.

They are called attributes since they extend from the measure of their attainment of His providence. Our sages said that, “one is measured to the extent that he measures” (Sutta 8). They who attain His providence in concealment of the face are considered wicked. Incomplete wicked from the perspective of the single concealment, or complete wicked, from the perspective of the double concealment.

Because they feel and think that the world behaves in bad guidance, it is as though they condemn themselves since they receive torments and pains from His providence and feel only bad all day long. They condemn the most in thinking that all the people in the world are watched over like them, in bad guidance.

Hence, those who attain providence from the perspective of the concealment of the face are called “evil”, since that name appears in them out of the depth of their sensation. It depends on the understanding of the heart. The words or the thought that justifies His providence do not matter at all when it opposes the sensation of every organ and sense, which cannot force themselves to lie as it does.

Hence, they who are in this measure of attainment are considered to have sentenced themselves and the entire world to a scale of demerit, as it is written in the words of Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon. This is because they imagine that all the people in the world are watched over as they, in bad guidance, as fits His Name “Good that doeth good to the good and to the bad”.

- 130.** They that are granted the sensation of His providence in the form of disclosure of the face in the first degree, called “repentance from fear”, are considered intermediate. This is because their emotions are divided into two parts, called “two cups of the scales”.

Now that they have acquired the disclosure of the face in the form of “You shall see your world in your life,” at the very least they have attained His good providence as fits His name, “Good”. For that reason they have a scale of merit.

Yet, all the sorrow and the bitter torment were thoroughly imprinted in their feelings in all the past days and years that they received providence of concealed face meaning before they were endowed the above repentance. They remain standing and are called “a scale of demerit”.

They have these two scales that stand one opposite the other. The scale of demerit is from the moment of their repentance and before, and the scale of merit is from the moment of the repentance and afterward. Thus, their repentance stands “between” the merit and the demerit. Hence they are called “intermediate”.

- 131.** The ones who merit the disclosure of the face in the second degree, “repentance from love”, when sins become as virtues for them, are considered to have sentenced the scale of demerit to a scale of merit. It means that all the sorrow and the affliction that were engraved in their bones while they stood under the providence of concealment of the face have now been sentenced and inverted to a “scale of merit”.

This is so because every sorrow and grief has now been turned into a wonderful, endless pleasure. Now they are called “righteous” for they justify His providence.

- 132.** We must know that the above attribute of intermediate applies even when one is under providence of concealment of the face. By great exertion in faith in reward and punishment a Light of great confidence in the Creator appears to them. For a time, they are granted a degree of disclosure of the face in the measure of the intermediate. The drawback is that they cannot remain in their degrees permanently since standing permanently in a degree is possible only through repentance from fear.

- 133.** We should also keep in mind what we said that there is choice only when there is concealment of the face. That does not mean that after one has attained a providence of revealed face one has no further labour and exertion in the practice of Torah and *Mitzvot*.

On the contrary, the proper work in Torah and *Mitzvot* begins primarily after one has been blessed with repentance from love. Only then is it possible to engage in Torah and *Mitzvot* with love and fear as we are commanded, and “The world was not created but for the complete righteous” (*Brachot*, 61).

It is rather like a king who wished to select for himself the most loyal of his subjects in the state and bring them in to work inside his palace. What did he do? He issued an open proclamation in the state that anyone who wished it, young or old, would come to his palace to engage in the works of his inner palace.

However, he appointed many of his servants to guard the palace gate and all the roads that lead to it. He ordered them to cunningly mislead all those nearing his palace and divert them from the way that leads to the palace.

Naturally, all the people in the state began to run to the king’s palace. Yet, the diligent guards cunningly rejected them. Many of them overpowered them and came near the palace gate, but the guards at the gate were most diligent. Even when someone approached the gate, they diverted him and turned him away with great craftiness, until one despaired and returned as he had come.

So they came and went, and regained strength and came again and so on and so forth for several days and years, until they grew weary of trying any further. Yet, only the heroes amongst them whose patience endured and they defeated the guards and opened the gate, were instantly awarded seeing the King’s countenance, and He put each person in his right position.

Of course, from that moment on, they had no further dealings with those guards who diverted and mislead them and made their life bitter for several days and years, running back and forth around the gate. This is because they have been

blessed with working and serving before the glory of the king's face in inside His palace.

So it is with the work of the complete righteous. The providence applied during the concealment of the face certainly does not apply when they have opened the door to attain open providence.

Indeed, they begin the actual work in disclosed face, at which time they commence the journey on the many rungs in the ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reaches to heaven, as it is written, "The righteous shall go from strength to strength."

Our sages say, "Each and every righteous is covered by the cover of his friend." These works qualify them for the will of God, to realize in them His thought in the purpose of creation, which is to "delight His creatures" according to His good and generous hand.

- 134.** It is desirable to know this law since there is no disclosure except in a place where there was concealment, as in matters of this world where the absence precedes the existence. The growth of wheat appears only in the place it was sown and rotted.

It is the same with higher matters where the concealment and the disclosure relate to each other as the wick to the light that holds to it. Any other concealment that comes for correction causes the disclosure of the light ascribed to that kind of concealment. The light that appears, clings to it like light to a wick, and remember this in all your ways.

- 135.** Now you can see what our sages wrote, that the whole Torah is the names of the Creator. It seems puzzling as we find many indecencies such as names of wicked, Pharaoh, Balaam etc. prohibition and impurity, ruthless curses in the admonitions and so on. How can we perceive all those as names of the Creator?

- 136.** In order to understand that, we must know that our ways are not His ways. Our way is to reach from the imperfect to perfection. In His way, all the revelations come to us from perfection to the imperfect.

First, complete perfection emanates and comes out of Him. This perfection comes down from His face and hangs down, restriction after restriction, through several degrees. Finally it comes to the last, most restricted phase, suitable to our material world and then the matter appears to us here in this world.

- 137.** From the aforementioned, you will learn that the Holy Torah, whose height is endless, did not emanate and come out from before Him as it is here before us in our world right away. Rather, it is known that "The Torah and the Creator are one," and this is not at all apparent in our world. Moreover, one who engages in it in *Lo Lishma*, his Torah becomes a potion of death for him.

Rather, when it was emanated from before Him, it emanated and came out in utter perfection, meaning in the actual form of "The Torah and the Creator are one." This is the meaning of "Torah *de Atzilut*" in the Introduction to the Corrections of the Zohar (p. 3), "He, His Light and His deeds are one." Afterwards it came down from His face and was gradually restricted through

many restrictions until it was given at Sinai when it was written as it is before us here in this world, clothed in the crude dresses of the material world.

- 138.** You should know that the distance between the dresses of the Torah in this world and the dresses of the Torah in the world of *Atzilut* is more than can be evaluated. Yet, the Torah itself, meaning the Light within the dresses is unchanged at all between the Torah of *Atzilut* and the Torah of this world, as it is written, “I the Lord change not” (Malachi 3; 6).

Moreover, these crude dresses in our Torah of *Assiya* are not at all of inferior value with regard to the Light that is clothed in it. Rather, their importance is much greater from the perspective of the end of their correction than all its pure dresses in the Upper Worlds.

It is so because the concealment is the reason for the disclosure. After its correction during the disclosure, the concealment becomes to the disclosure, as a wick for the light that clings to it. The greater the concealment, the greater Light will cling to it when it is corrected. Thus, all these crude dresses that the Torah is clothed in, in this world, their value is not at all inferior to the Light that clothes it, quite the contrary.

- 139.** This is Moses’ triumph over the angels with his argument, “Is there envy among you? Is the evil inclination among you?” (Shabbat 89). It means that the greater concealment discloses a greater Light. He showed them that in the pure clothes that the torah clothes in, in the world of the angels, the greater Lights cannot appear through them as they can in dresses of this world.

- 140.** We thus learn that there is no change whatsoever from the Torah *de Atzilut*, where “The Torah and the Creator are one” through the Torah in this world. The only difference is in the clothing, as the dresses of this world conceal the Creator and hide Him.

Know, that because of His clothing in the Torah, it is called “Teaching”. It tells you that even during the concealment of the face and even during the double concealment, the Creator is instilled and clothed in the Torah. He is the “Teacher” and it is the Torah, but the crude clothes of the Torah before our eyes are as wings that cover and hide the Teacher who is clothed and hides in them.

However, when one is granted the revelation of the face in repentance from love in its fourth manner, it is said about him, “yet shall not thy Teacher hide Himself any more, but thine eyes shall see thy Teacher.” From then on the clothes of the Torah no longer hide and conceal the “Teacher”, and one discovers for all time that “The Torah and the Creator are one.”

- 141.** Now you can understand the meaning of the words, “Forsake Me and keep My law.” It means, “I wish that they had left Me and kept My Torah; the Light in it reforms” (Yerushalmi, Hagiga, 81).

This is perplexing. They mean that they fasted and tormented to find the revelation of His face as it is written, “they delight to draw near unto God” (Isaiah 58; 2). Yet, the text tells them in the name of the Creator, “I wish that you would leave Me, for all your labour is in vain and fruitless. I am found nowhere but in the Torah.” Therefore, keep the Torah and look for Me there,

and the Light in it will reform you and you will find Me,” as it is written, “those that seek Me shall find Me.”

- 142.** Now we can somewhat clarify the essence of the wisdom of Kabbalah, enough for a reliable perception in the quality of that wisdom. Thus, one will not deceive oneself with false imageries as the masses envisage.

You should know that the Holy Torah is divided into four elements that encompass the entire reality. Three elements are discerned in the general reality of this world. They are called “World”, “Year”, “Soul”. The fourth element is the conduct of existence of the above three parts of reality, meaning their nourishment and all their incidents.

- 143.** The outer part of reality, like the sky and the firmaments, the earth and the seas etc. that are written in the Torah, all these are called “World”. The interior part of reality, man and beast, animals and various birds etc. brought in the Torah, which are the above places called “outer part”, are called “Soul”.

The evolution of reality throughout the generations is called cause and consequence. For example, in the evolution of the heads of the generations from *Adam ha Rishon* to Joshua and Caleb, brought in the Torah, the father is considered the “cause” of the son, who is “caused” by him. This evolution of the details of reality by way of the above cause and consequence, is called “Year”. Similarly, all the conducts of the existence of reality, both external and internal, in their every incident and conduct that is brought in the Torah, are called “the existence of reality”.

- 144.** Know, that the four worlds are named in the wisdom of Kabbalah, *Atzilut*, *Beria*, *Yetzira*, and *Assiya*. When they came out and evolved, they stemmed from one another like a seal and imprint, as anything that is written in the seal necessarily appears in what is imprinted from it, no more and no less. So it was in the evolution of the worlds as well.

Thus, all four elements, WYS (World, Year, Soul), with all their modes of sustenance that were in the world of *Atzilut*, came out, became imprinted and manifested in their image in the world of *Beria* as well. It is also the same from the world of *Beria* to the world of *Yetzira* and through the world of *Assiya*.

Thus, all three discernments in the reality before us, called WYS, with all their modes of sustenance that are set before our eyes here in this world, extended and appeared here from the world of *Yetzira*, and in *Yetzira* from its superior.

In this manner, the source of all the multitude of details before our eyes is in the world of *Atzilut*. Moreover, even the innovations that appear in this world today, each novelty must first appear above in the world of *Atzilut*, and from there hang down and appear in our world.

This is the meaning of the words of our sages: “There is not a blade of grass below that does not have a fortune and a guard watching over it from above that strike it and say to it: ‘Grow!’” (*Bereshit Rabba*). This is the meaning of the text, “One does not move one’s finger before one is declared from above” (*Hulin* p. 7).

- 145.** Know, that because of the clothing of the Torah in the three elements of reality, “World”, “Year”, “Soul”, and their existence in this material world, produce the prohibitions, impurities and interdictions found in the revealed Torah. It has been explained above that the Creator is clothed in it in the form of “The Torah and the Creator are one,” but in great concealment. This is because these material dresses are the wings that cover and hide Him.

However, the clothing of the Torah in the form of the pure WYS and their existence in the three Upper Worlds, called *Atzilut*, *Beria*, *Yetzira*, are generally named “The Wisdom of Kabbalah”.

- 146.** It turns out that the wisdom of Kabbalah and the revealed Torah are one and the same. Yet, while one receives from a providence of concealed face and the Creator hides in the Torah, he is considered to be studying the revealed Torah. In other words, he is incapable of receiving any luminescence from the Torah of *Yetzira*, not to mention higher than *Yetzira*.

When one is granted the revelation of the face he begins to engage in the wisdom of Kabbalah. This is because the dresses of the revealed Torah themselves were purified for him and his Torah became the torah of *Yetzira*, called “The Wisdom of Kabbalah”.

Even for one who is granted the Torah of *Atzilut* it does not mean that the letters of the Torah changed for him. Rather, the very same dresses of the revealed Torah have purified for him and became very pure dresses. They have become like the verse, “yet shall not thy Teacher hide Himself any more, but thine eyes shall see thy Teacher.” At that time they become as, “He, His Light and His deeds, are one.”

- 147.** Let me give you an example in order to bring the matter a little closer to our mind. For instance: While one was in concealment of the face, it was necessary that the letters and the dresses of the Torah hide the Creator. For that reason he failed by the sins and the mistakes he had made and for that reason he was laid under the punishing rod, the crude dresses in the Torah, which are impurity, prohibition and interdictions etc.

However, when one is awarded open providence and repentance from love his sins become as virtues. Then all the sins and the mistakes that he had ever failed in since he was under the concealment of the face now strip off their crude and very bitter clothes. They clothe in clothes of Light, *Mitzva* and merits.

This is so because the same crude clothes have turned to virtues themselves. Now they are as clothes that extend from the world of *Atzilut* or *Beria* and do not cover and hide The Teacher. On the contrary, “thine eyes shall see thy Teacher.”

It follows, that there isn't any sort of replacement of anything between the Torah of *Atzilut* and the Torah in this world, meaning between the wisdom of Kabbalah and the revealed Torah. Instead, the only difference is in the person who engages in the Torah. Two may study the Torah in one manner and one tongue, but only one will have that Torah be as the wisdom of Kabbalah and the Torah of *Atzilut*, while for the other it will be the Torah of *Assiya*, revealed.

- 148.** Now you will understand the truth in the words of the Vilna *Gaon* in the prayer book in the blessing for the Torah. He wrote that the Torah begins with the *Sod* (secret), meaning the revealed Torah of *Assiya*. It is considered hidden because the Creator is completely hidden there.

Then he moves on to the *Remez* (implied), meaning that He is revealed further in the Torah of *Yetzira*. Finally, one attains the *Pshat* (disclosed), which is the Torah of *Atzilut*. It is called *Pshat* for it is stripped off all the clothes that conceal the Creator.

- 149.** Once we have reached thus far we can provide some idea and discernment in the four worlds known in the wisdom of Kabbalah by the names *Atzilut*, *Beria*, *Yetzira*, *Assiya* of *Kedusha* (holiness), and the four worlds *ABYA* of the *Klipot* (shells). They are set one opposite the other, opposite the *ABYA* of *Kedusha*.

You will discern that in the four discernments of the attainment of His providence and the four degrees of love. We shall begin with explaining the four worlds *ABYA* of *Kedusha*, and we shall start from below, from the world of *Assiya*.

- 150.** We have explained the first two forms of providence of concealment of the face above. Know, that they are both considered the world of *Assiya*. That is why it is written in the book “Tree of Life” that the world of *Assiya* is mostly evil. Even the little bit of good contained in it is also completely mixed with evil and is unrecognizable.

From the perspective of the first concealment it follows that it is mostly bad, meaning the torments and the pains that those who receive this providence feel. From the perspective of the double concealment, the good is also mixed with the bad and the good is completely indiscernible.

The first discernment of revelation of the face is considered “the world of *Yetzira*”. Hence it is written in the book “Tree of Life” (Gate 48; p. 3) that the world of *Yetzira* is half good and half bad.

This means that he who attains the first discernment of the revelation of the face, which is the first form of conditional love, called merely “repentance from fear”, is called “Intermediate”. He is half guilty half pure.

The second form of love is also conditional, but there is no trace of any harm and detriment between them. Also, the third form of love is the first form of unconditional love. Both are regarded as the world of *Beria*.

Hence it is written in the book “Tree of Life” that the world of *Beria* is mostly good and only its minority is bad, and that minor bad is indiscernible. It means that since the intermediate is awarded one *Mitzva*, he sentences himself to a scale of merit. Because of that he is considered “mostly good”, meaning the second form of love.

The minute, indiscernible evil that exists in *Beria* extends from the third form of love, the unconditional. Also, one has also sentenced himself to a scale of merit, but he has not yet sentenced the entire world, hence, a minority in it is bad since this love is not yet considered eternal. However, this minority is indiscernible since one has not felt any harm and detriment even toward others.

The fourth form of love, the unconditional love, which is also eternal, is regarded as the world of *Atzilut*. That is the meaning of the text in the book, “Tree of Life”, that in the world of *Atzilut* there is no evil whatsoever, and there “evil shall not sojourn with Thee.”

This is because after one has sentenced the entire world to a scale of merit too, love is eternal, complete, and no concealment and cover will ever be conceived. This is so because there is the place of the absolute revelation of the face, as it is written, “yet shall not thy Teacher hide Himself any more, but thine eyes shall see thy Teacher.” This is because now one knows all the engagements of the Creator with all the people as true providence that appears from His name “Good that doeth good to the good and to the evil”.

- 151.** Now you can also understand the discernment of the four worlds of *ABYA* of *Klipa* (shell), set vis-à-vis the *ABYA* of *Kedusha* as in the verse, “God hath made even the one as well as the other.” This is because the chariot of the *Klipot* of *Assiya* comes from the discernment of the concealed face in both its degrees. That chariot dominates in order to make one sentence everything to a scale of demerit.

The world of *Yetzira* of *Klipa* catches in its hand the scale of demerit, which is not corrected in the world of *Yetzira* of *Kedusha*. Thus the intermediate that receive from the world of *Yetzira* control, as it is written, “God hath made even the one as well as the other.”

The world of *Beria* of *Klipa* has the same power to cancel the conditional love, meaning cancel only the thing that love depends on. This refers to the incompleteness in the love of the second form.

The world of *Atzilut* of *Klipa* is what captures in its hand that minority of evil whose existence is not apparent in *Beria* because of the third form of love. This is a true love because He is Good that doeth good to the good and to the bad, which is considered *Atzilut* of *Kedusha*. Yet, because one has not been awarded sentencing the entire world to a scale of merit, there is power in the hands of the *Klipa* to fail the love with regard to providence over others.

- 152.** This is the meaning of what is written in the “Tree of Life” that the world of *Atzilut* of the *Klipot* stands opposite the world of *Beria*, not opposite the world of *Atzilut*. It is so because only the fourth discernment of love extends from the world of *Atzilut* of *Kedusha*.

Hence, there is no dominion to the *Klipot* there whatsoever since one already knows that he has sentenced the entire world to a scale of merit. One also knows all the conducts of the Creator in His providence on people, from the providence of His name, “Good that doeth good to the good and to the evil.”

However, in the world of *Beria*, from which extends the third discernment, there is still no sentencing of the entire world. Therefore there is still a hold for the *Klipot*. Nevertheless, these *Klipot* are considered the *Atzilut* of the *Klipot* since they are opposite the third discernment, which is the unconditional love, and this love is considered *Atzilut*.

153. Now we have thoroughly explained the four worlds *ABYA* of *Kedusha* and the *Klipot* vis-à-vis each and every world. They come from the discernment of the shortcoming that exists in their corresponding world in *Kedusha* and they are the ones named “four worlds *ABYA* of *Klipot*”.

154. These words are sufficient for any student to feel the essence of the wisdom of Kabbalah to some degree. You should know that most of the authors of Kabbalah books did not direct their words, but only to such readers that have already attained a disclosure of the Face and all the sublime attainments.

We should not ask: If they have already been granted attainment, then they know everything through their own attainment. Why then would they still need to delve in the books of Kabbalah of other authors?

Indeed, it is not wise to ask that. It is like one who engages in the literal Torah, who has no knowledge of the conducts of this world, the World, Year, Soul of this world, who does not know people’s behavior and their comportment with themselves and with others. Also, he does not know the beasts and the birds in this world.

Would you even consider that such a person would be able to understand even a single issue in the Torah correctly? He would overturn the issues of the Torah from good to bad and from bad to good, and would not find his legs and hands in any thing.

So is the matter before us: Even if one has been awarded attainment, and even at the level of the Torah of *Atzilut* he will still not perceive more than relates to his own soul. Yet, one must know all three attributes, World, Year, Soul, in their every incident and conduct in full consciousness so as to be able to understand the matters of the Torah that relate to that world.

These issues are explained in the book of Zohar and the genuine Kabbalah books with all their details and specifications. Thus, every sage and one that has acquired one’s own attainment must meditate therein day and night.

155. Therefore we must ask: why then, did the Kabbalists obligate each person to study the wisdom of Kabbalah? Indeed there is a great thing in it, worthy of being publicized: There is a wonderful, invaluable remedy to those who engage in the wisdom of Kabbalah. Although they do not understand what they are learning, through the yearning and the great desire to understand what they are learning, they awaken upon themselves the Lights that surround their souls.

This means that every person from Israel is guaranteed to finally attain all the wonderful attainments that the Creator has calculated in the Thought of Creation to delight every creature. One who has not been awarded in this life will be granted in the next life etc. Finally, one will be awarded completing the thought that He preliminary planned for him.

While one has not attained perfection, these Lights that are destined to reach him are considered Surrounding Lights. That means that they stand ready, and wait for one to purify one’s vessels of reception. At that time these Lights will cloth the able vessels.

Hence, even when one does not have the vessels, when one engages in this wisdom, mentioning the names of the Lights and the vessels related to one's soul, they immediately shine upon us to a certain measure. However, they shine for him without clothing the interior of his soul for lack of the able vessels to receive them. Despite that, the illumination one receives time after time during the engagement draws upon one grace from above, imparting one with abundance of sanctity and purity, which bring one much closer to reaching perfection.

- 156.** Yet, there is a strict condition during the engagement in this wisdom, to not materialize the matters with imaginary and corporeal issues. That is because by that they breach, "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness."

In that event, one is rather harmed instead of benefited. Therefore, our sages cautioned to study this wisdom only after forty years or from a Rav, and other such cautions. All of that is for the above reason.

Therefore, in order to rescue the readers from any materialization, I compose the book Talmud Eser Sefirot (The Study of the Ten Sefirot) by the Ari. There I collect all the principal essays concerning the explanation of the ten Sefirot in as simple and easy language as I could. I have also arranged the table of questions and table of answers for every word and issue. "...and that the will of God will succeed in His hand."