

# **BSD**

## **SELECTIONS ON THE SUBJECT OF HUMILITY**

### Selections from The Seder of Chok le Israel

#### Mishpatim Yom Chamishi Selected from Ethical Books

The correction required of penitents is to be humble and sincerely brokenhearted. Humility is as great as bringing all the sacrifices. It is a vehicle for the Divine Presence and prevents a person's prayer being rejected. The Sages, of blessed memory, said that if death was decreed upon a person or upon his children, humility causes the decree to be nullified and his sins to be forgiven. And in any case he gains that it also atones for him the transgression of blemishing the covenant. Instead of being rejected, loathed, and abhorred, now, if he will be sincerely humble, he will become a vehicle for the Divine Presence and will increase the Divine outpouring. Indeed, he will become a conduit to draw forth the Divine outpouring. For the outpouring is brought about by the righteous person, who is a conduit and a path for the life force of the world. This is the meaning of the statement (Ta'anit 24b), "The whole world is sustained for the sake of [bishvil] My son Chanina." For Rabbi Chanina was a path [shvil] and a conduit for bringing down the Divine outpouring [of blessings] to the world.

#### Teruma Yom Rishon Shaare Kedusha Part 2, Chapter 4

Pride is the root of many sins, both between man and G-d and between man and man, for it causes a person to harm another, to hate him, to speak evil about him, and many similar things. Between man and G-d: As it is written (Deuteronomy 8:14), "Then your heart will grow haughty and you will forget the Lord, your G-d." And our Sages, of blessed memory, said (Sota 5b), "Whoever has pride is called an abomination, as it says (Proverbs 16:5), 'Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination of G-d.' " They said that whoever is prideful should be excommunicated; that he deserves to be cut down like an asheira [a tree used for idolatry]; that his dust will not be resurrected; and that the Divine Presence wails over him. He is considered like someone who worships idols and denies G-d's existence. It is as if he engaged in all the forbidden relationships. It is as if he built a high place [forbidden altar].

Even if he were to acquire heaven and earth for the Holy One, blessed is He, as our father Avraham did, he would not be cleansed of the judgement of hell [Gehinomm]. In the end, he is diminished and is taken out of the world before his time.

Even Yeravam, who, when the Sages of his generation were compared to him they were considered as mere weeds, [he] whose Torah was flawless, and who learned one hundred and fifty explanations of Torah, was punished and removed from this world and the next only because of his pride.

**Teruma Yom shelishi**  
**Sha'arei Kedusha, Part 2, Chapter 4**

Even though it is written regarding fear of G-d (Job 28:28), "The fear of G-d - that is wisdom," and it is written (Isaiah 33:6), "The fear of G-d - that is His treasure," our Rabbis, of blessed memory, said (Yerushalmi Shabbat 1:3) that it is only the heel of humility, as is written (Proverbs 22:4), "The heel of humility is the fear of G-d." They also said (Sota 5b; Sanhedrin 43b); Anyone who is humble is like he brought all the sacrifices, as it says (Psalms 51:19), "The sacrifices of G-d are a broken spirit." Furthermore, his prayer is not rejected ... . And they said (Sota 5a); A person's prayer is not accepted unless he makes himself [soft] like meat, as it says (Isaiah 66:23); "And it will be that every month ... all flesh will come to bow down ... ." They also said (Mekhilta Yitro 9); It is written (Isaiah 66:2); "And at this I will look: at the poor and broken of spirit." Whoever is humble causes the Divine Presence to rest upon man on earth. It says (Exodus 20:17), "Moshe approached the thick cloud ...." What enabled him to do this? His humility, as it says (Numbers 12:3), "The man Moshe was exceedingly humble." It was taught (Avoda Zara 20b; Sota 9:14), Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair says: Caution leads to zeal [in fulfillment of the commandments], zeal leads to cleanliness, cleanliness leads to purity, purity leads to abstinence, abstinence leads to holiness, holiness leads to humility ... And humility is the greatest of them all because it leads to [possessing the] Divine spirit. As it says (Isaiah 61:1); "G-d's spirit was upon me, [for G-d appointed me to bring tidings to the humble; He sent me to heal the brokenhearted]."

**Teruma Yom revii**  
**Sha'arei Kedusha, Part 2, Chapter 4**

"They [the Sages] sent from there [i.e. from the Land of Israel]: Who has a share in the World to Come? He who is meek and humble, who stoops upon entering and when leaving, who studies Torah constantly, and who does not give himself credit." (Sanhedrin 88b) In the future, the Holy One, Blessed is He, will be a crown on the head of every righteous person. You might think all of them. However, learn from what the verse says; (Isaiah 28:5) "To the remnant of His people" - only to those who make themselves as a remnant [i.e., of no value or humble (ibid., 111 b; Megillah 15b)] In the Zohar on the Torah portion of Shlach, it states; The head of the academy began [speaking and said]; Meritorious is one who makes himself small in this world, how exalted he is in the World to Come! Whoever is [i.e., makes himself] small [in this world], is great [in the next world]. Whoever is great [in this world], is small. It further states there on the Torah portion of Terumah: Why is Yechezkel called the son of Buzi? Because he would belittle (mebaze) himself in the presence of anyone who was greater than he. For this he merited to be called "son of man," which no other person was called. And he was called "Ram" [exalted], as is written (Job 32:2), "Brakhel the Buzite of the family of Ram." And our Rabbis, of blessed memory, said: (Derech Eretz Zuta 8) Why is the Torah compared to water? Because just as water flows only to a low place, so, too, Torah rests only with those whose spirit is low.

**Teruma Yom Chamishi**  
**Ethical Teaching:**  
**Sha'arei Kedusha, Part 2, Chapter 4**

Fortunate is he who does not become angry, who is meek and very humble. And so it says; (Psalms 51:19) "G-d's sacrifices are the broken spirit." Fortunate is he who is patient about everything, who bears everything for the will of his Creator, and who makes himself [humble] as a

remnant. So, too, it says; (Micah 7:18) "Who bears sin and passes over iniquity for the remnant of His heritage" - for he who makes himself as a remnant. (Sanhedrin 111b; Megilah 15b). Fortunate is the person who makes himself as dust on which everyone tramples, who is as the threshold on which everyone steps and like the low peg on which everything is hung. Anger is a branch of pride and is considered just as evil. Our Rabbis, of blessed memory, state; (Nedarim 22a) Whoever becomes angry, is exposed to the torments of hell. Our Rabbis, of blessed memory, also stated; (Shabbat 105b) If someone tears his clothes, throws away his money, or breaks vessels in his anger, consider him as if he worships idols, as it says; (Psalms 81:10), "Let there be no strange G-d in you." And Our Rabbis, of blessed memory, said; (Nedarim 22b), Whoever becomes angry, the Divine Presence has no importance to him ... he forgets his learning and increases his stupidity, and it is certain that his sins are more than this merits ... as it says; (Proverbs 29:22) "An ill-tempered person has much sin."

#### Teruma Yom Shishi

##### Sha'arei Kedusha, Part 2, Chapter 4

Our Rabbis, of blessed memory, stated; (Pesachim 66b) Whoever becomes angry, if he is a Torah scholar, his learning leaves him ... From whom do we see this? From Moshe [who forgot a law when he became angry] and [from] Elisha [from whom the Divine Spirit departed, when he became angry] .... Eliyahu, of blessed memory, said to Rav Yehuda; Do not become angry and you will not sin (Berakhot 29b). In the Zohar on the Torah portion Tetzaveh, it states: If a person becomes angry, he uproots from himself his supernal, holy soul and sets the other [evil] side in its place. He is a person who rebels against his Master. And it is forbidden to come close to him. And this is the one who (Job 18:4) "Tears his soul in his anger ..." for he tears his soul and sets in its place a foreign G-d ... `For in what [Ki bameh,] is he to be accounted for?' [Here a play on the word bamah, which refers to a forbidden altar, meaning; He is considered to be a forbidden altar.] (Isaiah 2:22) He is called an idol, and whoever associates with him is as though he joins himself to an actual idol, for actual idolatry rests upon him. It is forbidden to look at his face. And regarding him it is written, (Leviticus 19:4) "Do not turn to the worthless idols." And about this it is written (Exodus 34:17), "You must not make for yourself molten gods" [meaning; You must not make of yourself]. All defilements can be purified except for this because this person defiles himself inside and outside, and his whole soul becomes defiled. And though this person comes and uproots that alien from within him completely and permanently, and then strives to sanctify himself and to draw upon himself that sanctity of the holy soul, then propitiously perhaps he may sanctify himself. For since this person uprooted his soul from himself once, he must try hard to return it to its place.

#### Tetzave Yom Rishon

##### Shaare Kedusha Part 2, Chapter 4

The trait of being particular and exacting is a branch of the traits of pride and anger. Our Rabbis, of blessed memory, said (Pesachim 110b), Whoever is particular, they are particular concerning him. And his sins are not forgiven, as it says; (Micah 7:18) "Who bears sin and passes over iniquity." [I.e.,] for whom does He bear sin? For one who passes over iniquity and forgives insults. They also said; A person should always ask for mercy that he not become angry - every day and at every moment. "Let him put his face in the dust ... let him give his cheek to the one who strikes him; let him be sated with insult." (Lamentations 3:29-30) Fortunate is he who hears himself being insulted and does not respond. So, too, it is written; (Isaiah 50:6) "I gave my back

to those who struck me." So said the Sages (Yoma 23a; Megilla 28a; Derech Eretz Zuta 8), Whoever forgoes retaliation and forgives, his sins are forgiven, as it says (Micah, *ibid.*), "He bears sin and passes over iniquity ...." It is written, in [the book called] Chupat Eliyahu, of blessed memory, (see Pesachim 113b) There are three whom the Holy One, Blessed is He, loves: One who does not become angry, one who does not become drunk, and one who is not particular about insults [and does not retaliate].

#### **Tetzave Yom shlishi**

#### **Sha'arei Kedusha, Part 2, Chapter 4**

Our Rabbis, of blessed memory, said; (Chullin 89a) The world continues to exist only in the merit of one who bridles (bolem) his mouth during a quarrel ... as it says; (Job 26:7) "He suspends the earth on nothingness (blimah)." Rabi Avahu says, On one who makes himself as though he is naught [i.e., one who is humble]. And our Rabbis taught; (Shabbat 88b) Those who are insulted and do not insult, who hear themselves shamed and do not respond, regarding them Scripture says; (Judges 5:31) "But those who love Him are like the coming out of the sun, in its strength." And Eliyahu [HaNavi], of blessed memory, said; Always be forbearing of insults with people, and with the members of your family most of all. And Abba Eliyahu, of blessed memory, [also] said, Torah can be interpreted only by those who are not particular about insults. I, too, am revealed only to one who is not particular. Fortunate is the person who recognises his value, who has the day of death before his eyes, and is aware that he stands before the Creator, may His Name be blessed; who remembers that He gives him life in order to serve Him and to occupy himself with His Torah, and [fortunate is he] who does so. He is certainly beloved above and found pleasant below and G-d is with him.

#### **Sha'arei Kedushah, Part 2, Section 7**

The worst two characteristics are: [Anger and pride.] Anger is considered equal to idolatry. In one's anger, he destroys his soul. It is uprooted from him, and departs, and is exchanged for [i.e., he receives] a different, evil soul. Worse than anger, is pride and arrogance, which is considered equal to idolatry, an asherah [i.e., a tree of idolatry], and the denial of G-d's existence, and as though one engaged in all the forbidden relationships. His dust will not be awakened at the resurrection of the dead. With regard to punishment for a negative commandment, there are those which are simple prohibitions, for which flogging is not given, such as a negative commandment that does not involve an action, or which is connected to a [rectifying] positive commandment, and so on. Worse than these, are those [negative commandments] for which flogging is given and these two categories, as well as the non-performance of any positive commandment except for the two severe ones mentioned above, all of these are called light sins. Any of the severe positive commandments, as we previously mentioned, as well as any negative commandment except for these two categories mentioned above, are all called severe sins. They have many levels, namely: all those for which one deserves karet, death by the hand of Heaven, or capital punishment. Not taking G-d's Name in vain, even though it is not punishable by karet, from a certain standpoint is gravest of all, because punishment is exacted from the perpetrator, from his family, and from the whole world, even from someone who was not capable of preventing it. Concerning the desecration of G-d's Name and what is considered a desecration of G-d's Name: Rav said, "I, for example - if I were to buy meat and not pay immediately." Rabbi Yochanan said, "I, for example - if I were to walk four cubits without Torah and tefillin because I

felt ill, and whoever saw did not know that it was due to illness and learned from me to be lax about Torah and tefillin." Rabbi Yannai said, "If he did anything which causes his friends to be embarrassed to be seen talking to him, because it gives them a bad reputation." Abaye said, "Like that which was taught: 'Love the Lord your G-d' (Deuteronomy 6:5) - that the name of Heaven be beloved because of you. That one should study Scripture and Mishnah ... and his business dealings be honest and he speak gently with other people. But if his business dealings are not honest ... the name of Heaven is desecrated through him."

"When the Holy Baal Shem Tov knew that he was leaving the world, he instructed his followers to find a Rebbe to lead them and teach them. They were to travel around to various tsadikim and ask them, 'what is the best advice to save us from ga'avah?' Whoever gave any kind of original advice, it was a sign that he was a phony. They would know their true Rebbe when they heard, 'G-d can help. Only G-d can save you from ga'avah.' " (Sefer Baal Shem Tov, Parshat Metsorah, footnote 13.)

23) A person who wants honor is a fool (Likute Moharan 194).

#### **BEWARE LEST YOU FORGET HASHEM**

10. And it shall be, when Hashem your G-d shall have brought you into the land which he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Ytzhak, and to Yaakov, to give you great and goodly cities, which you did not build, 11. And houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, and wells dug, which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees, which you did not plant; when you shall have eaten and be full; 12. Then beware lest you forget Hashem, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery.

Devarim 6: 10 - 12

10. When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless Hashem your G-d for the good land which he has given you. 11. Beware that you forget not Hashem your G-d, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command you this day; 12. Lest when you have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses, and lived there; 13. And when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; 14. Then your heart be lifted up, and you forget Hashem your G-d, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery; 15. Who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, where were venomous serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought you water out of the rock of flint; 16. Who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers knew not, that He might humble you, and that he might test you, to do you good in the end; 17. And you say in your heart, My power and the might of my hand has gotten me this wealth. 18. And you shall remember Hashem your G-d; for He is who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish his covenant which he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. 19. And it shall be, if you do forget Hashem your G-d, and walk after other G-ds, and serve them, and worship them, I warn you solemnly this day that you shall surely perish. 20. Like the nations which Hashem destroys before your face, so shall you perish; because you would not be obedient to the voice of Hashem your G-d.

Devarim 8: 10 – 20

**12 FOR THERE IS A DAY TO HASHEM TZEVAKOT UPON ALL THAT IS PROUD AND HAUGHTY  
AND UPON ALL THAT IS LIFTED UP, AND IT SHALL BE BROUGHT LOW**

**13 And upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan; 14 And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up; 15 And upon every lofty tower, and upon every fortified wall; 16 And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all delightful imagery. 17 And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; and Hashem alone shall be exalted in that day. 18 And the idols shall utterly pass away. 19 And men shall go into the caves of the rocks, and into the holes of the earth, from before the terror of Hashem, and from the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake mightily the earth. 20 In that day a man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship, to the moles and to the bats; 21 To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the crevices of the crags, from before the terror of Hashem, and from the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake mightily the earth. (Yeshayahu 2, 12-21).**

Look at the generation of the flood, whose main transgression was their arrogance, as the Midrash states (Bereshit Rabba 36:1), for arrogance is the root of all sins in the world. So much so that the Almighty Himself says (As brought in the Sotah 5a), “I and he who is arrogant cannot dwell in one place.” And gird yourself in the matter of not listening to the evil inclination that persuades you to be arrogant. If you conquer him in the matter of arrogance then you will be able to conquer him in all matters that he will try to convince you. Because if the root evaporates (the arrogance) as a matter of fact, the branches (the rest of the transgressions) fall by the way.  
Sefer Shevet Mussar 2:5

**Sefer Shevet Mussar Perek 2**

**A FEW REASONS NOT TO BE ARROGANT**

**“AND I THEREFORE TEACH YOU NOT TO FALL INTO THE IMPURITY OF ARROGANCE”**

First, realize that you are not free, that there is a ruler over you and you are on the level of a slave. So it is really a joke that the slave should have arrogance. Then why will you show your lowliness?

Second, if you dress with silk clothing and you are arrogant because of that, you should realize that it is nonsense. You are holding yourself up very high in arrogance with something that originated in worms, as if wearing it makes you important. In this way, you make the worm more important than yourself. And if you are dressed with wool clothing and you are arrogant because of that, do you believe that this animal is more important than you, that you become proud through it? And if you are dressed with flax clothing, you should know that it sprouts out of the earth, and you are a person who can speak, so you are certainly more important. How can you be arrogant with all of the aforementioned?

Third: remember that your beauty and your strength will not last forever. And when you become old, then you won't be able to continue to conduct your life in arrogance. Everyone who knows you, will make fun of you. They will say, “This is the person who used to praise himself always. Now look how he has fallen down from his level.”

Fourth, you should think of the time when you will have to take care of your needs when you are just like an animal; a body that converts everything good and tasty into garbage. Do you have anything to be proud about?

**Fifth:** think about the days of sickness that are coming upon you, when your heart will be broken and your strength will be taken away from you, when your tongue will stick to your palate, when you will feel bitterness in your mouth, and you will fall upon your bed in pain. You will have trouble breathing, the blood from your heart will be diminished and the Angel of Death will be hovering at your door.

**Sixth,** consider how a person's thin skin covers his body, which is his main attractiveness, if it is turned inside out or removed, everyone upon seeing what is underneath would close his eyes, and would not want to look upon such an ugly thing. A person who has this in mind, how arrogant can he hold himself?

**Seventh,** think about a man who has leprosy, how ugly it is to look at him, what a shame it is to gaze at him, and it can happen that anyone can contract this disease. How can you hold yourself arrogant?

**Eighth: Remember: (Mishle 27: 24) "Riches are not forever".** Is there anyone who can promise you that you can conduct yourself in arrogance as long as you will live? And if today or tomorrow you will fall from your level, you will see that everyone has become your enemy, no one will console you, no one will have pity on you, and that which you have done to others, they will do to you.

**Ninth,** imagine all those people who came before you who acted in arrogance. What was their end? They were put to shame in front of all the people that they knew. Look what happened with Nebuchadnezzar, how his arrogance caused him to be converted into an animal, and Haman, because of his overflowing arrogance, was lowered into the lowest grave in hell. And the generation of the flood became a curse word among all people that are born, for they would say (Baba Metzia 44a) He who punished the generation of the flood, He who gave castigation to that generation, that same One will punish the person that takes back his word".

**Tenth,** visualize that you can conduct your life with arrogance only when you are awake. But when you are asleep, people can surround you and make fun of you, and they can spit on you and you are lying there like a stone. Is there a greater shame than this?

**Eleventh:** When you become hungry, does your arrogance have the strength to make you stronger and keep you alive without eating or drinking? You know it is not so. Your face is changed and your strength is removed from you. Such a person, whose life hangs on a piece of bread, can he hold himself so big and arrogant?

**Twelfth:** he who holds himself arrogant because of his wisdom, should think about the wisdom of the first tannaim like Rabbi Akiva, who, on every letter and crown in the Torah spoke discourses as high as mountains, and Doeg and Achitofel, that when talking about a tower that flies in the air they asked 300 questions. And the wisdom of Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai who, during his life did not fail to learn anything, who went through all of knowledge and wisdom there is, the language of the angels, of the demons, of the trees. How our wise men wondered at his Torah and his wisdom. He should also think about the wisdom of all the righteous people who studied the Gemara. If he thinks about all of these wise people, he will recognize his own lack, his lowliness, his darkness, and he will lower down his arrogance. If he holds himself arrogant with his wealth, he should look at the wealth of monarchs all around the world, and he will see that he is not at all important with all his riches. And if he is arrogant with his strength, he should think about this: I have not attained the physical strength of Judah and Shimshon, whose voices alone destroyed great cities and moved a huge rock away from its place. What kind of strength do I have that I should hold myself so great in comparison? Also, one should think that his strength is not something eternal. If he is arrogant about having many children, he should think, are they all

wise? all understanding? all wealthy? all without defect? Is he sure that they will not die during his lifetime? We find that Rabbi Yochanan announced and showed (Berachot 5b) “This is the bone of my tenth son that died during my lifetime.” If man were sure that his children would live to a ripe old age and die normally then he could be happy with that. But it is possible that one should fall into the water and drown, or fall off a roof or something similar, and all of these things can happen in the world. And if he is arrogant with his beauty, he should think about this: Can I be more attractive than Joseph? And he was not arrogant about his beauty. And if he is unusually beautiful, he should know that when he gets old his face will change, and his wrinkles will multiply, and young children will make fun of him, because he will look like a monkey, as our wise men say in Midrash Kohelet (1: 1).

Thirteenth: He should always think about his roots, that he was born from a woman and that he passed through a disgusting place twice. Once: When his father gave birth to him and twice: When his mother gave birth to him. How can someone to whom this happened be arrogant still?

Fourteenth: Greater than all the rest, He should remember the day of his death, then surely his heart will become submissive and his strength will weaken and his arrogance will depart from him.

Fifteenth: He should think in his heart: One whose hope is to be turned over to the worms immediately upon his death, because only then (Iyov 14: 22) “But his flesh grieves for him” how can this man hold himself [arrogant]? As the Holy Rabbi Yosef Yaabetz Zt'l commented on the Mishna of Avot (4: 4) “Be very very humble because the worms are the hope of man” meaning: The hope of a man is to be turned into worms immediately upon his death [To end the suffering in the grave the body has to decompose, that's why he wishes to be turned to worms immediately] .

These are 15 different things according to the numerology or gematria of the word ga'ava (arrogance), because the person should gaze upon these 15 things to break his arrogance.

Also, the person should think that that which is low can never fall. For if a person sits on the ground, he cannot fall as low as a person who sits on a chair. He should also think that the root of the tree that is inside the earth is the most important and strongest, and the branches that go out from the tree are soft and can be torn off. He should look carefully at the domestic and wild animals, how strong they are. Nonetheless, they are overpowered by man, and flies that are very thin and small, man cannot catch them. Look at the high cedar trees. Because of their height they are chopped off and buildings are made from them, and the grass and the garden which is very low, no one touches it. Look at Abraham, our father, may peace be upon him, who compared himself to dust and ashes, yet he merited to be a chariot for the Shechinah. The Satan who was in the heavens and became arrogant and reneged on his Maker was thrown down to earth (Zohar ha Kaddosh Hashmattot 263b) Nebuchadnezzar held himself arrogant, and said: (Yeshayahu 14, 14) “I will rise to the heavens.” Instead went down to hell. Look at Noach, because he did not hold himself arrogant towards the people of his generation, merited to reach the level of Adam, the first man, to be the father of all humanity. And all people are therefore called “the sons of Noach”, because he who holds himself low is uplifted from the heavens, as it is stated in the Zohar (Chaye Sarah 122b) “Fortunate is he who makes himself lowly in this world, how elevated and worthy he is in the World to Come. Therefore the Rosh Yeshiva opened and said: He who is big [In this world] is small [In the World to Come]...

Sefer Shevet Mussar Perek 2

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## SEFER MESILAT YESHARIM

### CHAPTER 11 CONCERNING THE PARTICULARS OF CLEANLINESS

There are innumerable traits; for as all of a person's worldly actions, so are his traits. It is from them that his actions flow. But just as we discussed those Mitzvot which there was a greater need to consider, because of the greater frequency of lapses in relation to them, so shall we discuss the chief traits in greater detail because of the relative frequency with which they come into play. These are pride, anger, envy, and lust - all evil traits, whose evil is widely recognized and need not be demonstrated. They are evil both in themselves and in their results, for they are all outside the realm of intelligence and wisdom. Each one of them has it within itself to lead a person into severe sins. In relation to pride we are explicitly warned (Devarim 8:14), "And your heart will be proud and you will forget Hashem, your G-d." Concerning anger our Sages of blessed memory said (Shabbat 105b), "One who becomes angry should be in your eyes as one who serves idols." About envy and lust we were told explicitly (Avot 4.21), "Envy, lust and honor-seeking remove one from the world." The necessary insight in relation to them is to flee all of them and all that derives from them, for they are all as one, "deviant offshoots of a strange vine" (Jeremiah 2:21). We shall now proceed to discuss them individually.

Pride consists in a person's priding himself with his self and considering himself worthy of praise. There can be many different reasons behind this. Some deem themselves intelligent; some, handsome; some, honored; some, great; some, wise. In fine, when a man attributes to himself any of the good things of the world, he puts himself in immediate danger of falling into the pit of pride. However, a person's convincing himself of his significance and of his meriting praise leads not to one result only, but to many different results. It is even possible for opposing reactions to stem from similar causes and to be directed to the same end.

One type of pride reflects itself in a person's thinking that since he is deserving of praise and is impressively unique (as he imagines) in the possession of his particular attribute, he should deport himself, too, in a manner that is impressively unique, highly dignified, in walking, sitting, rising, speaking in all of his actions. He will walk only in an unhurried manner, with measured step; he will sit only erect; he will rise only little by little, like a snake; he will not speak with all people, but only with men of eminence; and even with them, he will utter only terse, oracular remarks. And in all of his other actions -- his movements, his manipulations, his eating, his drinking, his dressing, and in all of his ways - he will conduct himself with great pompousness, as if all of his flesh were lead and all of his bones, stone or earth.

Another type of pride manifests itself in a man's thinking that since he is worthy of praise and possessed of many superior qualities he must become the terror of the earth and everyone must tremble before him. He feels that it would be insolent on the part of people to speak with him or to ask anything of him. If they dare to approach him, he will confound them with his voice and drive them into a turmoil with the breath of his lips, with his biting retorts. And his face will continuously fume.

A third type of pride reveals itself in one's thinking that he is already so great and so invested with honor that honor is inseparable from him and that, consequently, he need not pursue it. To impress this upon others, he fashions his deeds after those of humble men and goes to very

great lengths to exhibit unusual and unfathomable humility, his heart all the time swelling within him, as if to say, "I am so exalted and so greatly honored that I no longer have any need for honor and might just as well decline it, for it resides with me in great measure."

Yet another type of pride expresses itself in a person's desiring to be widely renowned for his outstanding qualities and for the uniqueness of his ways, to the point where it is not enough for him to be praised by all the world for the qualities he imagines himself to possess, but he desires to be praised even more for being the humblest of the humble. Such a one prides himself upon his humility and desires honor because he shows himself to flee it. He puts himself beneath those who are far inferior to him, or beneath the derelicts of society, seeking to display thereby the essence of humility. He shuns all imposing titles and refuses all dignities, his heart all the while saying within him, "There is no wiser and humbler man than I in all the land." Those who possess this type of pride, though they give the impression of humility, face no few pitfalls, for without their being aware of it, their pride will be revealed, as a flame escaping from shards. Our Sages of blessed memory have already compared (Bamidbar Rabba 18.13) a person with this kind of pride to a house full of straw. The straw enters into cracks in the walls, and, after a few days, begins to emerge, so that everyone realizes the house is full of it. Similarly, those men who possess this type of pride will not always be able to conceal their true identity. Their evil intent will show through their deeds and their seeming self-effacement will be recognized as specious humility and deceitful lowliness.

There are others whose pride remains buried in their hearts without receiving expression in deed, but who nurse the thought that they are great sages who know things to their very depths, and that not many can hope to be as wise as they. And so thinking, they pay no heed to the thoughts of others, reasoning that what they cannot comprehend no one can. What is dictated to them by their intelligence is so clear and obvious to them that they cannot even consider any arguments to the contrary, regardless of the stature of those who put them forward. They have no doubts whatsoever as to the correctness of their views.

All of these reactions stem from pride, which sets back sages and stultifies their minds, which perverts the hearts of the highest in wisdom. And even raw students whose eyes have barely opened, are caused by pride to fancy themselves the wisest of the wise. Concerning all forms of pride it is said (Proverbs 16:5), "The proud of heart are the abomination of G-d." One who wishes to acquire the trait of Cleanliness must cleanse himself of all forms of pride and he must know and understand that pride is blindness itself and that man's reason cannot see its defects and recognize its meanness, for if a man could see and recognize the truth, he would depart from all of these evil, destructive elements and remove himself very far from them. We shall speak further of this with the help of Heaven, when we come to the trait of Humility, which, because of the difficulty of its attainment was placed among the last of the traits in the order formulated by Rabbi Pinchas.

We shall now discuss anger. There is the furious man, about whom it was said (Shabbat 105b), "If one becomes angry, it is as if he serves idols." He is angered by any opposition to his will and becomes so filled with wrath that his heart is no longer with him and his judgment vanishes. A man such as he would destroy the entire world if it were within his power to do so, for he is not in any way directed by reason and is as devoid of sensibility as any predatory beast. About him it was said (Job 18:4), "You who tear your soul in your wrath, shall the earth become desolate because of you" He can easily commit any conceivable sin to which his rage brings him, for he is bound by nothing but his anger and he will go where it leads him.

There is another type, who is far removed from the first in degree of anger. He will not become enraged over every lack of conformity with his will, small or great. But when he reaches the point of anger, he will become greatly enraged and give vent to his wrath. It is he whom our Sages of blessed memory characterized (Avot 5.11) as "difficult to arouse and difficult to appease." This form of anger, too, is unquestionably evil, for much that is very damaging may proceed from him during his fit of anger and he will not afterwards be able to straighten what he has made crooked. There is a lesser form of anger in which one is not easily aroused; and even when he is aroused, his anger is restrained and does not cause him to abandon his intelligence, but he still nurses his wrath. One who becomes angry in this manner stands to lose far less than the others, but there is no question that he has not attained to Cleanliness. What is more, he has not even acquired Watchfulness, for as long as anger moves him, he has not removed himself from the classification of "a man of anger."

There is another who is even less inclined to anger than the aforementioned type. It is very difficult to arouse him, and his anger is neither destructive nor all consuming, but mild. It lasts no more than a minute, the amount of time it takes from the awakening of anger within him until the awakening of his understanding against it. Our Sages of blessed memory characterized him (Ibid.) as "difficult to arouse and easy to appease." His is certainly a goodly portion, for a person's nature moves him to anger and if he masters his anger to the extent that it does not flare strongly and overpower him even during the period of its presence and so that even the small amount of anger that he feels does not linger with him, but passes and departs, he is certainly deserving of praise. Our Sages have said (Chullin 89a), "'He suspends the earth on nothingness' (Job 26:7) - the world endures only because of him who bridles his mouth during a quarrel." The reference is to a situation in which a person has already been awakened to anger, but, mastering his nature, bridles his mouth.

The attribute of Hillel the Elder, however, transcends all of the others, for he took offense at nothing and felt not even a stirring of anger. Such a man is absolutely Clean of anger. Our Sages of blessed memory warned against anger even for the sake of a Mitzvah, even in a teacher's relationship with his student and in a father's with his son. This is not to say that the offenders should not be reprimanded - they certainly should be; but without anger, with no other purpose than their being set on the right path. Any anger shown to them should be anger of the face and not anger of the heart. Shlomo said (Ecclesiastes 7:9), "Do not be hasty-spirited to become angry." And it is stated (Job 5:2), "For the fool is killed by anger." And our Sages of blessed memory said (Eruvin 65b), "A man is recognized in three ways - through his goblet, through his pocket and through his anger."

Envy, too, is nothing but want of reason and foolishness, for the one who envies gains nothing for himself and deprives the one he envies of nothing. He only loses thereby, as is indicated in the verse that I mentioned (Job 5:2), "Envy kills the fool." There are those who are so foolish that if they perceive their neighbor to possess a certain good, they brood and worry and suffer to the point that their neighbor's good prevents them from enjoying their own. As the Sage said (Proverbs 14:30), "Envy is the decay of the bones." There are others who, though not caused much suffering and pain by envy, still experience some hurt. They will at least feel some sinking of spirit upon seeing one rise to a higher level if he is not one of their dearest and closest friends, more so if he is not especially loved by them, and even more so if he is a stranger from a different land. They might say things which would seem to reflect their happiness and thankfulness over his good fortune, but their hearts will be faint within them. This is a very common reaction with

most people, for though they may not be characterized by envy, they are still not entirely clean of it. They are especially affected if one who plies the same trade as they prospers in it for "Every craftsman hates his fellow" (Bereshit Rabba 19.6), especially if the latter is more successful than he. They will not acknowledge and understand the fact that "A man cannot touch even a hair's-breadth of what is set aside for his neighbor" (Yoma 38b). If they recognized that everything proceeds from G-d in accordance with His wondrous judgment and unfathomable wisdom, they would have no reason whatsoever to suffer over their neighbor's good. This is what the Prophet foretells about the time to come, that the Holy One Blessed be He will eradicate this ugly trait from our hearts so that Israel's good will be complete. At that time no one will feel pain over another's good and he who is successful will not be compelled to conceal himself and what relates to him for fear of being envied. As it is written (Isaiah 11:13), "And the envy of Ephraim will depart and the oppressors of Judah will be cut off. Ephraim will not envy Judah..." This is the kind of peace and serenity experienced by the ministering angels, who all rejoice in their service, each in his place, none envying the other; for seeing the truth to its very depths, they rejoice over the good that they possess and are happy in their portions.

The sister of envy is desire and lust, which wears a man's heart until the day of his death, as stated by our Sages of blessed memory (Kohelet Rabba 1.34), "A man does not die with half of his desire fulfilled." There are two main branches of desire, desire for wealth and desire for honor, each as evil as the other and each bringing about many evil consequences.

It is the desire for wealth which binds a man with worldly bonds and places the thongs of labor and preoccupation upon his arms, as it is written (Ecclesiastes 5:9), "The lover of silver will not be satiated with silver." It is this desire which removes one from Divine service, for many prayers are lost and many Mitzvot forgotten because of excessive preoccupation and the pursuit of a wealth of stores. This is especially true in relation to Torah study, concerning which our Sages of blessed memory have said (Eruvin 55a), " 'It is not across the seas' (Devarim 30:13) - it does not reside with those who cross the seas for business," and (Avot 2.5), "Not all who engage in business become wise." The quest for wealth exposes one to many dangers and weakens him with much worrying even after he has acquired a great deal. We also learned (Ibid.), "He who multiplies belongings multiplies worries." And it is this quest which often causes one to trespass against the laws of the Torah and even against the natural laws of reason.

The desire for honor is even greater than the desire for wealth, for it is possible for a person to overcome his inclination for wealth and the other pleasures and still be pressed by the desire for honor, being unable to tolerate being, and seeing himself beneath his friends.

Many were caught and destroyed by the desire for honor. Yeravam Ben Nevat was barred from the World to Come only as a result of his desire for honor. As was stated by our Sages of blessed memory (Sanhedrin 102a), "The Holy One Blessed be He seized his garment and said to him, 'Repent, and you and I and the son of Yishai will promenade in the Garden of Eden.' Yeravam asked, 'Who will go first?' The Holy One Blessed be He answered, 'The son of Yishai:' and Yeravam said, 'If so, I refuse.' " What, if not the desire for honor, brought about the destruction of Korach and his entire congregation? As Scripture explicitly states (Bamidbar 16:10), "And would you also seek the priesthood? " Our Sages of blessed memory have told us (Bamidbar Rabba 18.1) that his entire rebellion stemmed from his seeing Elizaphan Ben Uziel as prince and desiring to be prince in his place. This same desire, according to our Sages of blessed memory (Zohar to Bamidbar 13:3), was responsible for the spies' speaking ill of the land, thus bringing about their death and the death of the entire generation. They feared a diminution of their honor

in the possibility that after entry into the land they would no longer be princes of Israel and others would be appointed in their place. What, if not a concern for his honor caused Saul to begin to seek an opportunity to kill David? As it is written (I Samuel 18:7ff), "And the women sang one to another in their play, and said: Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands..." and Saul eyed David from that day forward." What, if not concern for his honor, caused Joab to kill Amasa? (For David had said to Amasa (II Samuel 19:14), "... if you will not always be my general...")

In fact, the desire for honor tugs at a person's heart more than any of the other longings and desires in the world. If not for concern over his honor, a person would be content to eat whatever was at hand, to clothe himself with whatever would cover his nakedness, and to dwell in a house which would afford him protection from the elements. He would obtain his livelihood with little effort and would feel no need to exert himself to become rich. But so as not to see himself as lower and lesser than his friends, he places a yoke upon his neck, and there is no end to all his labors. It is with this in mind that our Teachers of blessed memory said (Avot 4.20), "Envy, lust and honor-seeking remove a person from the world," and warned us (Ibid. 6.4), "Do not seek greatness or desire honor." How many starve themselves and stoop to feeding themselves from charity so as not to engage in an occupation which they feel is lacking in respectability, for fear of a diminution of their honor? Is there anything sillier? They prefer to dwell in idleness, which leads to stagnation, lewdness and theft, and to all of the major sins in order not to lower themselves and detract from the honor which they imagine themselves to possess. Our Sages of blessed memory, who constantly exhorted us to follow the path of truth and conducted us upon it, said (Avot 1.9), "Love work and hate position," and (Pesachim 113a), "Flay a carcass in the marketplace and do not say, 'I am an important person; I am a priest,' " and (Baba Batra 110a), "A man should rather do work that is strange to him than have need of others."

In fine, the desire for honor is one of man's greatest stumbling blocks. He cannot be a faithful servant to his Master as long as he is concerned with his own honor; for whatever the case, his foolishness will lead him to detract from the honor of Heaven. As King David, may Peace be upon him, said (II Samuel 6:22), "I will become even lesser than this; I will become low in my eyes." The only true honor is true knowledge of the Torah. In the words of our Sages of blessed memory (Avot 6.3), "There is no honor but Torah, as it is said (Proverbs 3:35), 'The wise will inherit honor.' " Anything else is seeming, delusive honor, completely meaningless and worthless. One who would be Clean should cleanse himself of the desire for honor and purify himself of it; he will then be successful.

...The Torah did not exhort us in relation to the beauty and style of clothing and adornments, requiring for their permissibility only that they not contain a mixture of wool and linen and that they be fitted with Tzitzit. But who is not aware of the fact that fancy headgear and embroidered material pulls one towards pride and brings one to the border of licentiousness, aside from giving rise to envy, lust and exploitation, which attach to anything that is very desirable to a person. And our Sages of blessed memory have already remarked (Bereshit Rabba 22.6), "As soon as the evil inclination sees a man assuming delicate stances, straightening his garments and curling his hair, it says, 'He is mine.' "

## CHAPTER 17

### CONCERNING THE MEANS OF ACQUIRING PURITY

**ONE WHO HAS ALREADY** persevered and acquired the aforementioned traits will find it easy to acquire the trait of Purity, for when he will consider and contemplate the inferior quality of worldly pleasures and worldly goods, he will come to despise them and to regard them as evils and as defects of earthy, dark, gross nature. When the truth of this understanding impresses itself upon him, there is no question that he will find it easy to separate himself from them and remove them from his heart. The more time one devotes to thinking deeply into the matter in order to recognize the lowly nature of earthiness and of its pleasures, the easier he will find it to purify his thoughts and his heart so that they have no recourse to the evil inclination in any deed whatsoever; and his role in any earthy activities that he does perform will be one of compulsion only.

But just as we have divided purity of thought into two sections, one dealing with bodily actions and the other with Divine service, so are there two distinct operations required for their acquisition. To purify one's thoughts in relation to one's bodily actions, a person must engage in constant observation of the inferior nature of the world and of its pleasures, as stated above. And to purify his thoughts in relation to Divine service, he must give much thought to the falseness of pride and its deceits, and train himself to flee from pride. If he does so, he will be clean during the time of his Divine service of any strivings for the praises and encomiums of men, and his mind will be directed solely to our Lord, who is our praise, and all our good, and our perfection, and beside whom there is nothing, as it is said (Devarim 10:21), "He is your praise and He is your G-d."

## CHAPTER 22

### CONCERNING THE TRAIT OF HUMILITY

**WE HAVE ALREADY** discussed the shamefulness of pride and have been made aware, by inference, of the praiseworthiness of Humility. We shall now discuss Humility directly, and the nature of pride will become clear of itself.

The essence of Humility is in a person's not attaching importance to himself for any reason whatsoever. This trait is the very opposite of pride and its results are the very opposite of the results of pride. Analysis will reveal that Humility is dependent upon thought and deed. Before a man conducts himself in the way of the Humble, he must first be Humble in thought. One who attempts to be Humble in deeds without first having cultivated an attitude of Humility belongs to that class of wicked, deceitful, "humble" men which we mentioned previously, that class of hypocrites, than which there is nothing more evil in the world.

We shall now explain these divisions.

Humility in thought consists in a person's reflecting upon and recognizing as a truth the fact that he does not deserve praise and honor (let alone elevation above his fellow men), both because of his natural limitations and because of his accumulated defects. As far as natural limitations are concerned, it is obvious that it is impossible for any man, regardless of the level of perfection he has reached, to be without many faults, whether because of his own nature, because of his family and relatives, because of certain experiences he has had, or because of his deeds. ("For a man is not righteous in the land who will do good and will not sin" [Kohelet 7:20] ) All of these are defects in a person which allow no room at all for the feeling of self-importance; for though he may possess many virtues, these faults suffice to overshadow them.

The factor that is responsible more than any other for a person's coming to feel self-important and proud is wisdom. This is so because wisdom is a superior quality of the person himself, a function of his most honored faculty, intelligence. But there is no sage who will not err and will not need to learn from the words of his friends and, very often, even from those of his disciples. How, then, can he pride himself in his wisdom? In truth, one who is possessed of an honest intelligence, even if he has managed to become a toweringly great sage, will see, when he looks into the matter, that there is no room at all for pride and self-importance. For a man of intelligence, one who knows more than others, acts only according to the dictates of his nature, as it is natural for a bird to fly, and as it is dictated for an ox to pull with his strength. One is wise only because his nature has led him to be so. And one who is not so wise now, were he in possession of the sage's natural intelligence, would become just as wise as he. There is no place, then, for self-importance and pride in respect to wisdom. Rather, if one possesses much wisdom, he is duty-bound to impart it to those in need of it. As stated by Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai (Avot 2.9), "If you have learned much Torah, do not take credit for it, for you were created to do so." One who is wealthy may rejoice in his lot, but at the same time he must help those in need. If one is strong, he must assist the weak and rescue the oppressed. The situation is analogous to that of a household where there are different servants assigned to different tasks, and where each servant must fulfill his appointed task if the affairs and requirements of the household are all to be attended to. In truth there is no place for pride here.

This is the type of analysis and reflection that should be engaged in by every man of honest, unperverted intelligence. And when this idea becomes clear to him, he will be reckoned the truly Humble man, Humble in his heart and in his very being. As David said to Michael (II Samuel 6:22), "And I was lowly in my eyes." And as our Sages of blessed memory have said (Sotah 5b), "How great are the Humble in spirit! In the time of the Temple if one sacrificed a burnt offering, he was accredited with a burnt offering; if he sacrificed a meal offering, he was accredited with a meal offering. But if one possesses a Humble spirit it is considered by Scripture as if he had offered all of the sacrifices, as it is said (Tehillim 51:19), 'The sacrifices of G-d are a broken spirit.' " This is the praise of the lowly in spirit, the Humble in heart and in thought. Elsewhere it is said (Chullin 89a), " 'Not because you are more numerous than the other nations' (Devarim 7:7) - the Holy One Blessed be He said to Israel, 'My sons, I desire you because even when I impart greatness to you, you demean yourselves before Me. I gave greatness to Abraham and he said (Bereshit 18:27), 'And I am dust and ashes.' I gave greatness to Moshe and Aharon and they said (Exodus 16:7), 'What are we?' I gave greatness to David and he said (Tehillim 22:7), 'And I am a worm and not a man.'" All this because the man with an honest heart does not permit himself to be deceived by any virtue that he might possess, knowing the truth - that he does not thereby emerge from his lowliness, because of all of the faults that he must perforce possess. He realizes, too, that even in relation to those Mitzvot which he has attained he has not arrived at the ultimate goal. And he is aware that even if he possessed no other shortcoming than that of being flesh and blood, being born of woman, it would be more than enough to render him so lowly and inferior as to cause the feeling of self importance to be completely unbecoming him; for every virtue that he attains represents nothing more than G-d's loving-kindness to him, G-d's desire to be gracious to him, in spite of the fact that in point of his nature and his earthiness he is extremely lowly and shameful. His reaction, then, should be to thank Him who has been so gracious, and to constantly grow in Humility.

The situation is analogous to that of a pauper who accepts the gifts of kindness and cannot help but be ashamed because of them. The more kindness he receives the greater grows his shame.

The similarity in situations will be perceived by anyone whose eyes are open enough to see himself as attaining virtues through the Blessed One. As King David said (Tehillim 116:12), "What can I return to G-d for all of his loving-kindness to me?" We are acquainted with instances of great Saints who were punished because, with all of their Saintliness, they took credit for themselves. In relation to Nehemiah Ben Chachaliah our Sages of blessed memory said (Sanhedrin 93b), "Why was his work not called by his name? Because he took credit for himself." And Hezekiah said (Isaiah 38:17), "Peace is very bitter for me," because the Holy One Blessed be He had answered him (Ibid. 37:35), "And I will protect this city. I will come to its aid for my sake and for the sake of David, my servant." As our Sages of blessed memory say (Berachot 10b), "That which one attributes to his own merit will be attributed to the merit of another." We see, then, that a man should not even take credit for the good things he has done, let alone become self-important and proud because of them.

But, in truth, all that we have said is intended for those who are like Abraham, Moshe, Aharon and David and the other Saints that we have mentioned, but we, who are orphans of orphans, do not need all this, for we, have so many faults that we need not engage in much analysis to see our lowliness and to realize that all of our wisdom is of no account. The greatest sage among us is no more than the disciple of the disciples of the early generations. It would do for us to understand and acknowledge this truth so that our hearts do not swell in vain. Let us recognize that our minds are insubstantial and our intelligence very weak, that we are very ignorant and very much subject to error, and that what knowledge we do possess is extremely minute. This being the case, there should certainly be no room in a person's feelings for self-importance, but only for shame and lowliness. This is self-evident.

We have thus far spoken of Humility of thought. We shall now speak of Humility of deed. This latter area is divided into four parts: conducting oneself with lowliness, bearing insults, hating authority and fleeing honor, and apportioning honor to all men.

Conducting oneself with lowliness: This applies to one's manner of speaking, walking and sitting, and to all of one's movements. In relation to one's speech our Sages of blessed memory have said (Yoma 86a), "A man should always speak gently with his fellow men." And Scripture explicitly states (Ecclesiastes 9:17), "The words of the wise, spoken gently, are accepted." One's words must be words of honor and not words of shame, as it is said (Proverbs 11:12), "One who shames his friend is lacking a heart," and (Ibid. 18:3), "When the wicked man comes, there also comes shame."

In relation to one's manner of walking our Sages of blessed memory said (Sanhedrin 88b), "They sent from the Holy Land, 'Who will inherit the World to Come? A humble man, whose knee is low, who is bent coming in and bent going out.' " One should not walk erect, nor in a formalized, mincing manner, but as one going about his tasks. Our Sages of blessed memory have said (Kiddushin 31a), "If one walks erect it is as if he pushes the feet of the Divine Presence." And it is written (Isaiah 10:33), "Those of great stature will be cut down."

As far as one's manner of sitting is concerned, a person should see to it that his place is among the lowly and not among the high. In this, too, Scripture is explicit (Proverbs 25:6), "Do not glorify yourself before a king and do not stand in the place of the great . . ." Along the same lines, our Sages of blessed memory said in Vayikra Rabba (1.5), "Withdraw two or three levels from your place so that they will say to you, 'Come forward,' rather than go forward and be told, 'Get back.'

"And concerning those who belittle themselves they said (Baba Metzia 85b), "All who belittle themselves for the sake of Torah in this world are elevated in the World to Come." They added further (Yalkut Ezekiel 361), " 'Remove the turban and lift off the crown' (Ezekiel 21:31) - all who are great in this world are small in the World to Come;" and, conversely, if one is small in this world, his time of greatness is in the World to Come. Elsewhere they said (Sotah 5a), "A man should learn from the example set by his Master. The Holy One Blessed be He bypassed all the mountains and hills, and caused his Divine Presence to come to rest upon Mount Sinai." This because of its lowliness. And (Rosh Hashanah 17a), "To the remnant of His inheritance' (Michah 7:18) - to those who act as if they considered themselves remnants."

Bearing insults: Our Sages of blessed memory have explicitly stated (Ibid.), "Whose sins does He forgive? The sins of those who overlook the wrong committed against them." And (Shabbat 88b), "Concerning those who are insulted but do not insult in return, who are shamed, but do not shame in return, it is said (Judges 5:31), 'His lovers are like the emerging of the sun in its strength.' " They told of the great Humility of Bava Ben Buta (Nedarim 66b): "A Babylonian went up to Israel and got married. One time he said to his wife, 'Cook for me ... Go and break them over the head of the door [Bava in Aramean].' While Bava Ben Buta was sitting in judgment, she, having mistaken her husband's meaning, broke them over his head. He asked her, 'Why have you done this?' and she answered, 'My husband told me to.' He said, 'You did the will of your husband. May the Shechinah bring forth from you two sons like Bava Ben Buta.' " They spoke likewise of the great Humility of Hillel (Shabbat 30b), "Our Rabbis learned, 'One should always be humble in the manner of Hillel. . . ' " And Rabbi Abahu, with all of his Humility, found that he was not yet worthy of being considered Humble (Sotah 40a) : "Rabbi Abahu said, "At first I thought I was Humble, but when I saw that Rabbi Abba of Akko gave one reason and his interpreter another, and he still did not become angry. I said to myself, 'I am not humble."

Hating authority and fleeing honor are explicitly treated in the Mishnah (Avot 1.10) : "Love labor and hate authority." (Ibid. 4.9), "One whose heart swells in his handing out of legal decisions is foolish, wicked and haughty." (Eruvin 13b), "If one pursues honor, honor flees from him." (Pesikta Rabbati), " 'Do not be quick to enter into controversy' (Proverbs 28:8) - do not pursue authority, for what will you do afterwards? The next day they will come and put questions to you. How will you answer them?" "Rabbi Menachama in the name of Rabbi Tanchum said, 'All who accept positions of authority for their personal satisfaction are like adulterers who derive enjoyment from the body of a woman.' " "Rabbi Abahu said, 'I [the Holy One Blessed be He] am called "holy"; if you do not possess all of My traits, do not assume authority.' " The incident of the disciples of Rabbi Gamliel bears out this idea. Although they were sorely pressed by their poverty, they declined positions of authority. In the words of our Sages of blessed memory (Horiot 10a), "Do you think I give you lordship? I give you servitude..." And (Pesachim 87b), "Woe to lordship, which buries its possessors." How do we know this? Through Joseph, who, because he conducted himself authoritatively, died before his brothers (Berachot 55a).

In sum, authority is only a great burden upon the shoulders of those who bear it; for as long as a man is alone, dwelling in the midst of his nation, just one among many, he is held responsible only for himself, but once he ascends to lordship and authority he is held responsible for all who come within his authority and jurisdiction. He must look to the welfare of all of them, lead them with knowledge and intelligence, and set their actions aright. And if he does not do so, he comes,

according to our Sages of blessed memory (Devarim Rabba 1.10) within the province of "And their guilt is on your heads" (Devarim 1:13).

Honor is nothing but the vanity of vanities, which causes a man to defy his own mind and that of his Master and to forget his entire duty. One who recognizes it for what it is will certainly find it despicable and will hate it. The praise of men will be a burden to him, for when he sees men heaping praises upon him for qualities he does not even possess, he will only be ashamed and will grieve, feeling that it is not bad enough that he does not possess the virtues he is being praised for, but men must add to his shame by praising him falsely.

Apportioning honor to all men: We have learned (Avot 4.1), "Who is honored? One who honors his fellow-men." They said further, "How do we know that one must accord honor to his neighbor if he knows him to be greater than himself in even one respect ... (Pesachim 113b). "Hasten to greet every man" (Avot 4:15), It was said (Berachot 17a) about Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai that no man ever preceded him in the pronunciation of the greeting, even a gentile in the market place." One must act with honor towards his neighbors, both in word and deed. Our Sages of blessed memory (Yevamot 62b) have told of the twenty-four thousand disciples of Rabbi Akiva who died because they did not accord honor to each other.

Just as shame is identified with the wicked, as seen in the aforementioned verse (Proverbs 18:3), "When the wicked man comes, there also comes shame," so is honor identified with the righteous. Honor dwells with them and does not separate itself from them, as Scripture states (Isaiah 24:23), "And before His elders there is honor."

The chief divisions of Humility have been explained. Decisions in relation to particular instances, as in all such cases, are subject to considerations of situation, time and place. "Let the wise man listen and add to his understanding" (Proverbs 1 :5).

Unquestionably, Humility removes many stumbling blocks from a man's path and brings him near to many good things; for the Humble man is little concerned with worldly affairs and is not moved to envy by its vanities. Furthermore, his company is very pleasant and he gives pleasure to his fellowmen. He is perforce never aroused to anger and to controversy; he does everything quietly and calmly. Happy are those who have been privileged to attain this trait! Our Sages of blessed memory have said (Yerushalmi Shabbat 1.3), "That which wisdom made a wreath for its head, Humility made a heel for its sandal." All of wisdom cannot approach it. This is clear.

## CHAPTER 23

### CONCERNING THE MEANS OF ACQUIRING HUMILITY

THERE ARE TWO FACTORS which bring a person to Humility: habit and thought. Habit, in this respect, consists in a person's accustoming himself little by little to Humility by conducting himself with lowliness after the fashion previously mentioned - occupying a humble seat, walking at the end of the company, and wearing modest garments (respectable but not showy). By accustoming himself to this mode of conduct, he will cause Humility to enter into his heart and to inhabit it little by little until it has securely imbedded itself there. For since it is a person's nature to swell with self-importance, it is difficult to root out this inclination at its source. It is only through outward actions, which are under his control, that he can affect his inner self, which is not to a similar extent subject to his direction, as we explained in relation to Zeal. All of this is contained in the statement of our Sages of blessed memory (Berachot 17a), "A man should

always be subtle in his fear of G-d;" that is, he should seek devices by which to counteract his nature and its inclination until he is victorious over them.

Thought in respect to the acquisition of Humility resolves itself into several considerations. The first is contained in the words of Akavia Ben Mahalalel (Avot 3.1), "Know whence you come -from a putrid drop; and where you are going - to a place of dust, worms and maggots; and before whom you are destined to give an accounting - before the King of Kings, the Holy One Blessed be He." In truth, all of these thoughts counteract pride and promote Humility. When a man regards the lowliness of his earthly nature and his inferior beginnings, he has no reason to feel self-important at all, but to be ashamed and degraded. The situation is analogous to that of a swineherd who has attained lordship. As long as he remembers his early days it will be impossible for him to become proud. If one considers also that after all of his greatness he will return to the earth to be food for maggots, it is certain that his pride will be humbled and his grandeur forgotten. For what is his good and his greatness if the end is shame and disgrace? And if he will reflect further and picture the moment of his entering the great court of the heavenly host, seeing himself in the presence of the King of Kings, the Holy One Blessed be He, holy and pure to the limits of holiness and purity, in the midst of holy ones, servants of strength, strong in power, doing His bidding, entirely free of imperfection - and he standing before them, deficient, lowly and shameful in point of his nature; unclean and ugly in point of his actions -will he be able to raise his head, to open his mouth? And if he is asked, "Where then is your mouth? Where is the pride and honor that you knew in your world?" what will he answer? How will he meet this rebuke? There is no question that if a person would for one moment form a true, forceful impression of this idea, all pride would take flight from him, never to return.

The second consideration that should be reflected upon for the purpose of acquiring Humility is the variation of circumstances that is produced by time and the many changes to which it gives rise. The rich may easily become poor; the rulers, servants; and the honored, insignificant. If one can so easily be reduced to a condition which he finds so shameful today, how can he feel pride in his own condition, with which he cannot be secure? How many different kinds of sicknesses (G-d forbid) is a person prone to, which could make it necessary for him to beg others for help and assistance, for a little relief? How many afflictions (G-d forbid) may visit him, which could cause him to seek out many whom he formerly disdained to greet in order to gain their help. We see these things with our own eyes every day. They should serve to remove a man's pride from his heart and to clothe him in humility and lowliness.

And if a person thinks further into his duty in relation to the Blessed One and considers how much he forsakes it and how weak he is in its performance, he will certainly be ashamed and not proud. He will feel degraded and his heart will not swell. As stated by Scripture (Jeremiah 31:17,18), "I have heard Ephraim lamenting . . . `For after I repented I knew regret, and after I understood, I smote my thighs. I felt ashamed and degraded ... " Above all, one should constantly reflect upon the weakness of human intelligence and the many errors and deceits to which it is subject, upon its always being closer to error than to true understanding. He should constantly be in fear, then, of this danger and seek to learn from all men; he should give ear to advice lest he go astray. As our Sages of blessed memory have said (Avot 4.1), "Who is wise? One who learns from all men." And it is stated (Proverbs 12:15), "One who gives ear to advice is wise."

Among the deterrents to Humility are an abundance of the goods of this world and satiation with them; as Scripture explicitly states (Devarim 8:12), "Lest you eat and become satiated... And your heart be uplifted. .." It is for this reason that the Saints found it beneficial for a man to afflict

himself at intervals - to suppress the inclination to pride, which grows strong only through abundance. As our Sages of blessed memory have said (Berachot 32a), "A lion does not roar over a basket of straw, but over a basket of meat."

Heading the list of deterrents are ignorance and insufficiency of true understanding. It is to be observed that pride is most prevalent among the more ignorant. Our Sages of blessed memory have said (Sanhedrin 24a), "A sign of pride is poverty of Torah" and (Zohar Balak), "A sign of complete ignorance is self-praise" and (Bava Metzia 85b), "One coin in a pitcher makes a great deal of noise" and (Bereshit Rabba 16.3), "The barren trees were asked 'Why are your voices heard?' and they answered, 'So that at least our voices might be heard and remembered.' " We have seen that Moshe, the choicest of men, was the humblest of all men.

Another deterrent to Humility is keeping company with or being served by flatterers, who, to steal a person's heart with their flattery so that he will be of benefit to them, will praise and exalt him by magnifying to their very limits the virtues that he does possess and by attributing to him virtues that he does not possess, his attributes sometimes being the very opposite of those he is being praised for. And since, in the last analysis, a person's understanding is insubstantial and his nature weak, so that he is easily deceived (especially by something towards which his nature inclines), when he hears these words being uttered by someone he has faith in, they enter into him like poison and he falls into the net of pride and is broken. A case in point is that of Yoash, who acted virtuously all the days that he was taught by Yehoyada Hakohen, his mentor (II Kings 12:3). When Yehoyada died, Yoash's servants came and began to flatter him and to magnify his virtues until, after they had virtually deified him, he gave heed to them. It is to be clearly seen that most officers and kings, and men in a position of influence in general, regardless of their level, stumble, and are corrupted by the flattery of their subordinates.

One whose eyes are open will, therefore, exercise more care and vigilance in relation to the actions of one he would choose as his friend or advisor or as the overseer of his household than he would in relation to his food and drink. For food and drink can injure one's body alone, whereas companions and overseers can destroy his soul, his might and all of his honor. King David, may Peace be upon him, said (Tehillim 101:6,7), "One who walks uprightly, he will serve Me "(Hashem). A deceiver will not dwell within My house..." A person's good, then, is to seek honest friends, who will open his eyes to what he is blind to and rebuke him with love in order to rescue him from all evil. For what a man cannot see because of his natural blindness to his own faults, they will see and understand. They will caution him and he will be protected. Concerning this it is said (Proverbs 24:6), "There is salvation in much counsel."

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*Sefer Maale ha Middot*  
*VIII*  
Humility

My sons, come and I shall teach you humility. Know, my sons, that humility is a great and noble virtue, wherewith to attain to all of the others. For thus do we find with the exalted Blessed One, that He conducts Himself with humility towards His creations. For thus have our sages of blessed memory said in the *aggadah (Tanchuma Vayera 2)*: In seven

places we find that the Holy One Blessed be He placed Himself on a plane with the lower creations: (*Devarim* 10:17): "For Hashem your G-d is the G-d of G-ds ..." followed by (18): "He performs judgment for the orphan ..."; (*Tehillim* 138:6): "For high is Hashem, and He sees the lowly one"; (*Isaiah* 57:15): "For thus has said the high and exalted one, who dwells eternally ... with the contrite one and the humble of spirit"; (*Ibid.* 66:1): "Thus has said Hashem: `The heaven is My throne ... (2): "And upon this one will I look - upon the poor one and the contrite of spirit ..."; (*Tehillim* 10:16): "The L-rd reigns forever ... (2): The desire of the humble do You hear, O L-rd"; (*Ibid.* 68:5): "Extol Him who rides upon the heavens; the Everlasting is His name ... (6): The father of orphans and the judge of widows"; (*Ibid.* 146:7): "The Maker of heaven and earth ... (7): He executes judgment for the oppressed."

And our sages of blessed memory said further (*Megillah* 31a): Wherever you find the greatness of the Holy One Blessed be He, there you find His humility. This is stated in the Torah, repeated in the *Prophets*, and stated a third time in the *Writings*: In the Torah - (*Devarim* 10:17): "For Hashem your G-d is the G-d of G-ds and the lord of lords, the great, mighty, awesome G-d, who does not show favor and does not take a bribe," followed by (18): "He performs judgment for the orphan and the widow and loves the stranger." Repeated in the *Prophets* - (*Isaiah* 66:1): "Thus has said Hashem: `The heaven is My throne, and the earth My footstool ... (2): And upon this one will I look - upon the poor one and the contrite of spirit," and (*Ibid.* 57:15): "For thus has said the high and exalted one, who dwells eternally, whose name is holy: `High and holy do I dwell, and with the contrite and humble of spirit." That is, though I dwell high and holy, with Me is the contrite one and the humble of spirit. And a third time in the *Writings* - (*Tehillim* 68:5): "Extol Him who rides upon the heavens; the Everlasting is His name ... (6): The father of orphans and the judge of widows, G-d, in the abode of His holiness."

And David king of Israel, may peace be upon him, prayed to the Holy One Blessed be He that He increase in him the trait of humility, viz. (*Tehillim* 13:36): "And You gave me the shield of Your salvation, and Your right hand shall sustain me, and Your humility increase in me." And our sages of blessed memory have said in the *aggadah* (*Tanchuma Vayera* 2): What is the intent of "and Your humility increase in me"? When the Holy One Blessed be He revealed himself to Abraham, he was in pain from his circumcision. The Holy One Blessed be He, thereupon said to the angels: "Go to him," viz. (*Bereshit* 18:2): "And, behold, three men standing over him, etc." What follows? (*Ibid.* 22): "And Abraham was still standing before Hashem." (*Shemot Rabba* 41:4): This is "an amendment of the scribes" [*tikkun sofrim*]. Scripture [if not for the *tikkun sofrim* in consideration of G-d's honor] would have stated: "And Hashem was still standing before Abraham." Is there any humility greater than this? [G-d's waiting for Abraham] This is the intent of: "and Your humility increase in me." And they stated further (*Midrash Tehillim* 18-29): A disciple follows behind his master. Who holds the lantern for whom? Is it not the disciple who holds it for his master? But here (*Exodus* 13:21): "And Hashem went before them by day (... and in a pillar of fire to light them"). This is the intent of: "and Your humility increase in me." Likewise, when the Holy One Blessed be He desired to give Torah to Israel, He first asked leave of Moshe, viz. (*Exodus* 20:1): "And Hashem spoke all of these things, saying." What is the intent of "saying"? He asked leave of him. Does the greater ever ask leave of the smaller? This is the intent of: "and Your humility increase in me." (*Midrash Tehillim*): In the way of the world, the master speaks and the disciple answers; but here (*Exodus* 19:19): "Moshe spoke, and G-d

answered him in a voice."

My sons, come and see the greatness of humility. For Moshe our teacher, may peace be upon him, was the master of all the prophets and the choicest all the creations from Adam until this day. (For thus have our sages of blessed memory stated [Rosh ha Shanah 21b]: Fifty gates of binah [understanding] were created in the world, and all were given to Moshe with the exception of one, viz. (Tehillim 8:6): "And You placed him but little below G-d.") And yet he was praised only for humility, viz. (Bamidbar 12:3): "And the man Moshe was exceedingly humble [anav], more than any other man on the face of the earth." "Anav" is written defective, without the "yod," indicating that he was humble and lowly to the very ends of humility and lowliness, this [likewise] being connoted by "exceedingly." And our sages of blessed memory, in exhorting to humility, said (Avot 4:4): "Exceedingly, exceedingly, be lowly of spirit, for the expectation of man is worms."

Great is humility, which brings a man to fear of Heaven and whereby he merits three goodly gifts in this world: wealth, honor, and life. For thus do we find with Moshe, who, conducting himself with humility and lowliness, merited all of them.

Wealth? Thus have our sages of blessed memory stated: A sapphire quarry was revealed to Moshe from the midst of his tent, from which he hewed the tablets of the covenant. And the Holy One Blessed be He said to him (Exodus 34:1): "Hew for yourself - the hewings shall be yours. Honor? (Ibid. 33:10): "And all the people rose and bowed down, each man at the door of his tent," and (Ibid. 11:3): "Also the man Moshe was very great ... in the eyes of Pharaoh's servants and in the eyes of the people." Life? (Devarim 34:7): "And Moshe was one hundred and twenty years at his death, etc." And thus have our sages of blessed memory stated (Sanhedrin 14a): "Heve kval ukyim." That is, be "dark and lowly" in your eyes and you will endure in this world and live. And this is the intent of the interchange between Alexander of Macedonia and the sages of the south (Tamid 32a). He asked them: "What should a man do to live?" They answered: "Let him die." That is, let him "put himself to death"; let him regard himself as being at the nethermost level of lowliness, as if he were dead - naught. He asked: "What should a man do to die?" They answered: "Let him live." That is, let him indulge himself in this world with food, drink, delights, and bodily pleasures, and then his soul will die.

My sons, come and see how great is humility and [how great is] one who lowers himself in His eyes, as it is written (Devarim 7:7): "Not because of your numerical superiority to all the peoples did Hashem desire you [(suggestive of: Because of your non self-aggrandizement did Hashem desire you)]; He chose you because you are the smallest of all the peoples." Concerning this our sages of blessed memory said: The Holy One Blessed be He hereby said to Israel: I desire you because even when I confer greatness upon you, you do not vaunt yourselves before Me, as these other nations do, but you lower yourselves before Me. I conferred greatness upon Abraham - he said (Bereshit 18:27): "And I am dust and ashes." I conferred greatness upon Moshe and Aharon - they said (Exodus 16:7): "And what are we?" David said (Tehillim 22:7): "And I am a worm and not a man, shamed of man and despised of people." (And what is the intent of "He desired you" and "He chose you"? He desired you in this world, and He chose you for the world to come.) Not so the nations of the world. I conferred greatness upon Nimrod - he

said (*Bereshit 11:4*): "Come, let us build a city for ourselves." I conferred greatness upon Pharaoh - he said (*Exodus 5:2*): "Who is Hashem that I should heed His voice?" I conferred greatness upon Sancheriv - he said (*II Kings 18:35*): "Who are they among all the G-ds of the countries, that have delivered their country out of My hand?" Chiram [king of Tyre] said (*Ezekiel 28:2*): "A G-d am I; in the seat of the G-ds do I dwell. Nebuchadnezzar said (*Isaiah 14:14*): "I will ascend the heights of the clouds."

My sons, love humility and cleave to lowliness, for they bring one to honor, viz. (*Proverbs 15:33*): "And before honor, humility." What is more, they elevate a man to greatness, viz. (*Job 22:29*): "When they are lowered, You shall say: 'Let them be raised!' and He will save the downcast of eye." Know this to be so, for Saul merited kingdom only by virtue of his humility. Where is this seen? (*I Samuel 9:21*): "Am I not a son of Benjamin, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribes of Benjamin?" And, similarly, (*Ibid.* 5): "... lest my father cease from [his concern over] the asses, and [start] worrying about us." And what transpired with him? (*Ibid.* 14:47): "And Saul strengthened the rule over Israel."

David, too, attained to kingship only because he possessed the trait of humility and lowered himself, viz. (*Ibid.* 17:14): "And David was the smallest." And where is it seen that he lowered himself? (*II Samuel 7:18*): "Who am I ... and what is my house that You have brought me thus far?" And (*Tehillim 22:7*): "And I am a worm and not a man, shamed of man and despised of the people." And (*I Samuel 18:23*): "And David said: 'Does it seem so light in your eyes to become the king's son-in-law? And I, a poor, common man.'" And (*II Samuel 6:22*): "And I would demean myself even more! And I would be even lower in my eyes, etc." And our sages of blessed memory said (*Midrash Rabba 6:4*): (*Bereshit 10:25*): "And the name of his brother, 'Yaktan.'" Why was he called "Yaktan"? Because he would belittle ["maktin"] himself. And it is for this reason that he merited the establishment of thirteen great families. Now does this not follow a fortiori, viz.: If it is thus with a lesser person who lowers himself, how much more so will the Holy One Blessed be He elevate to greatness a greater person who does so!

The early saints would select for themselves the trait of saintliness as being among the choicest of the traits. Some of them would go so far in this as to pardon personal insult, saying: "May the Creator forgive all who aggrieved me!" And this is one of the ways of humility.

Our sages of blessed memory said (*Shabbat 30b*): "Let one always be humble as Hillel, etc." And a certain sage said: "Men envy all virtues - except humility." Another said: "He who is humble will be a lord."

And our sages of blessed memory said in the aggadah: Who are the humble? All in whom people find pleasure, all who do not vaunt themselves over others, who hear themselves shamed and remain silent, all who are not intransigent when angry, who receive all men graciously, and all who overlook personal slights.

Consider, my sons, what is written (Bamidbar 12:1): "And Miriam and Aharon spoke against Moshe, etc." Because Moshe remained silent and did not answer them, this was deemed humility in him, for which he was praised, as stated afterwards (Ibid. 3): "And the man Moshe was exceedingly humble."

It is of the ways of humility that a man not return insult when insulted, that he answer softly and turn back wrath, that he foster peace with his father, his mother, his teacher, and his neighbor in the street (even a gentile), so that he be beloved above and below and accepted by his fellow men. Our sages of blessed memory have said: "Humble yourself to all men, and to those of your household more than to all." And he should be lowly in his eyes, and despised to himself, of lowly spirit, suppressing his inclination, humbling his heart, muzzling his mouth in a quarrel, being first in greeting to all men, holding all men more honored than he, fleeing eminence, not pursuing honor, and sitting in the lowest of seats, unaffected.

Great is humility in the eyes of Hashem, for thus have our sages of blessed memory stated (Chullin 89a): The world exists only in the merit of those who make themselves as nothing, it being written here (Job 26:6): "He suspends the earth on belimah" [lit., "without what"], and, elsewhere, (Exodus 16:7): "And what are we [Moshe and Aharon]?"

All who possess humility merit inheriting the land and rejoicing therein all of their days in peace, viz. (Tehillim 37:11): "And the humble shall inherit the land, and they shall delight in an abundance of peace." What is more, the Holy One grants him [the humble one] the desire of his soul, and He heeds his prayer, viz. (Ibid. 10:17): "The desire of the humble You hear, O L-rd; You ready their hearts - Your ears hear." And (Ibid. 34:19): "The L-rd is near to the broken of heart, and the contrite of spirit He saves."

My sons, be circumspect in this noble trait; for it is among the most exalted of traits. Through it, all of your affairs will be perfected, and by virtue of it you will inherit a good name and the love of all men, and you will find rest and tranquility in your world. As stated by one sage: "The fruit of lowliness is love and peace." Another said: "The counselor of knowledge is humility," and: "The fruit of humility is victory, and the fruit of lowliness, peace and contentment. We have never seen a humble man regretting [his humility] or a lowly man [i.e., one who lowers himself] failing." A certain sage exhorted his son: "Swallow one thing, so as not to have to hear too many others," and: "He who holds little of himself will be honored by others," and: "How much better is the humbling of the humble one's mouth than the two-mouthed sword of the hero."

A certain sage said: "Humility is revealed in times of anger." Another: "Humility is defense [against] the scoffer, and a shield against injury by the foe." There is no better way to wage war with the scoffer than to be silent. By doing so, you will humble him, and turn back upon him "the flint of his sword," and unleash against him the swords of the onlookers, who, seeing your submission, will undertake to avenge you of him.

Great is humility, for if one possesses humility, the Holy One Blessed be He pardons all

of his sins and passes over all of his offenses, viz. (Micha 7:18): "He forgives transgression and passes over offense." In this regard, our sages of blessed memory have said: If one "passes over" slights against himself, all of his offenses are "passed over," as it is written: "He forgives sin and passes over transgression to the remnant of His inheritance" - to those who make themselves [humble] as "remnants." And, what is more, the Holy One Blessed be He grants him life in this world and awakens him to life in the world to come, as it is written (Isaiah 57:15): "to revive the spirit of the lowly and to give life to the heart of the contrite." And it is accounted to him as if the temple were in existence and he had offered up therein all of the sacrifices, viz. (Tehillim 51:19): "The offerings of G-d are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O G-d, You will not despise. Concerning this, our sages of blessed memory said (Vayikra Rabba 7:2): What was invalidated [as an offering] in a beast, was validated in a man. Invalidated in a beast - (Vayikra 22:22): "Blind or broken"; validated in a man - "The offerings of G-d are a broken spirit." They stated further in the aggadah (Vayikra Rabba, Ibid.): If a plain person uses a broken vessel, it is demeaning to him. Not so, the Holy One Blessed be He. All of His "vessels" are broken [and yet He does not despise them], viz. (Tehillim 34:19): "The L-rd is close to the broken of heart"; "the offerings of G-d are a broken spirit"; (Ibid. 147:3) "He heals the broken of heart"; "a broken and contrite heart, O G-d, You will not despise."

Since the Holy One Blessed be He conducts Himself with humility towards His creations, and loves humility in all things and in all places, a man must strengthen himself in the trait of humility over all his inclinations so that he be humble and lowly. And this follows a *fortiori*, viz.: If the Holy One Blessed be He, the King of kings, the Sovereign of the universe, who does in it as He wills, the G-d of eternity, grandeur, and glory, proud above all the proud and exalted above all the exalted, the Source of wealth and glory - if, in spite of all this, He conducts Himself with humility towards His creations, how much more so should flesh and blood - vanity and emptiness, worm and maggot, a withered blossom, a blown leaf, today here, tomorrow in the grave, always fearful of death and the day of judgment - how much more so should he lower himself to the very extreme of lowliness and humble his inclination to the very extreme of abasement and humility, break his heart and spirit before Hashem, conduct himself with humility and lowliness towards others, trodden by all, like the lower peg, which all hang their things upon.

My sons, conduct yourselves with humility. For through it your friends will multiply and your enemies diminish. Your helpers will multiply and your despoilers diminish. As stated by one sage: "One whose suffering is great and his humility manifest - his despoilers will diminish and his helpers multiply." Another said: "The first profit of the humble man is being aided by others against the overbearing." Another said: "Strength and victory - to the man of humility."

Therefore, my sons, fix your intent upon the excellence of this trait and strengthen it over all your inclinations. For through it you will ascend to all of the other goodly traits with the help of the Almighty. As one sage said: "Just as mussar and wisdom are manifest success, so [readiness to] pardon and humility are the embodiment of uprightness and the means of attaining [spiritual] eminence. May our G-d, in His mercies, prosper us in this.

Having thus far spoken in praise of humility and lowliness and of those who possess these traits, we shall now speak in derogation of pride and haughtiness of spirit and of those who embody them, in order to direct them to the trait of humility with the Almighty's help.

Know, my sons, that the trait of pride and haughtiness of spirit is greatly hated by the Holy One. For thus have our sages of blessed memory said (*Sotah* 5a): If one is haughty of spirit, the Holy One Blessed be He says [of him]: "I and he cannot live [together] in the world," viz. (*Tehillim* 101:5): "The high of look and the proud of heart, *otho will I* not abide" - Read it "*ito*" ["with him"] will I not abide. And David attested of himself that he did not deport himself with pride. viz. (*Ibid.* 131:1): "O L-rd, my heart was not proud, nor my eyes high, an I did not walk in what was too great or too removed from me."

My sons, go and see how repugnant is this trait before Hashem. For thus do we find with three of the world's great ones, that because they became proud they came to forgetfulness. Who were they? Moshe, Samuel, and David. Moshe our teacher, may peace be upon him, because he vaunted himself over the judges that he had appointed, saying (*Devarim* 1:17): "And the thing that is too difficult for you, you shall bring near to me and I shall hear it," the Holy One Blessed be He withheld from him the judgment of the daughters of Tzelafchad [i.e., the ruling in their case], and he had to inquire as to their judgment of Hashem, viz. (*Bamidbar* 27:5): "And Moshe brought forth their judgment before Hashem."

And Samuel, because he gave way to pride, saying (*I Samuel* 9:19): "I am the seer," when he came to anoint David, the Holy One Blessed be He concealed him [David] from him [as the one to be anointed], viz. (*Ibid.* 16:6): "And he [Samuel] saw Eliav and he said [erroneously]: 'Surely, Hashem's anointed is before Him'" whereupon the Holy One Blessed be He said to him: "Samuel, did you not say: 'I am the seer'? Upon your life, I hereby make it known to you that you are not the seer," viz. (*Ibid.* 7): "Regard not his [Eliav's] appearance nor the height of his stature, for I have rejected him."

And David, because he gave way to pride, saying (*Tehillim* 119:54): "Songs were Your statutes to me" (the effect of this being that all of the Mitzvot were as light and "familiar to his mouth" as songs), the Holy One Blessed be He said to him: "Upon your life, you are destined to go astray in something that even the school children know" [that it is forbidden to transport the ark on a wagon]. When they brought up the ark, David erred and had it placed in a wagon, viz. (*II Samuel* 6:3): "And they conveyed the ark of G-d in a new wagon." The ark was suspended in the air and the oxen slipped beneath it, whereupon Uzzah came forward to steady it and (*Ibid.* 7): "And G-d smote him there for the error." Why so? For unwittingness [i.e., forgetfulness] in learning is accounted willfulness. Immediately, (*Ibid.* 8): "And David was wroth over Hashem's having breached a breach in Uzzah." At this the Holy One Blessed be He said to him: "David, did you not say: [As familiar as] 'songs were Your statutes to me'? Did you not learn (*Bamidbar* 7:9): 'And to the sons of Kehat he did not give [wagons]; for the service of the holy things upon them, on the shoulder they bore'?" - whereupon David said (*I Chronicles* 15:13): "The L-rd our G-d made a breach [forgetfulness] in us, because we did not seek Him as was fit."

My sons, be extremely heedful not to deport yourselves with pride, for it is the mantle of the Holy One Blessed be He, viz (psalms 93:1): "The L-rd reigns; He has clothed Himself with pride." Concerning this our sages of blessed memory have said in the

aggadah: "If one clothes himself with the vestment of a king of flesh and blood, will he remain alive? How much more so one who clothes himself in the mantle of the King of kings, the Holy One Blessed be He!"

They stated further in the aggadah (Shemot Rabba 23:13): Four proud ones were created in the world: The proudest of the creations - man. The proudest of the birds - the eagle. The proudest of the beasts - the ox. The proudest of the animals - the lion. And all acquired kingdom and were granted greatness - and they are all affixed under the chariot of Him who spoke and caused the world to come into being, viz. (Ezekiel 1:10): "And the likeness of their faces [the creatures in the Divine Chariot]: the face of a man, and the face of a lion ... and the face of an ox, and the face of an eagle." Why all this? So that they not vaunt themselves in this world, knowing that the kingdom of Heaven is above theirs.

And all who vaunt themselves, the Holy One Blessed be He brings them low, viz. (Proverbs 29:23): "A man's pride brings him low." And if he lowers himself, he ascends to greatness and glory, viz. (Ibid.): "And the lowly of spirit will achieve honor."

And our sages of blessed memory have said in the aggadah (Vayikra Rabba 1:5): "Remove yourself two or three seats from your place, so that they tell you: 'Come up'; and do not go up, so that they not say to you: 'Go down.' Better that they say to you: 'Come up, come up' than 'Go down, go down.'"

And thus was Hillel wont to say (Shemot Rabba 45:5): "My rising is my lowering, and my lowering is my rising." Why so? (Tehillim 113:5): [homiletically]: "When I raise myself, [it is to be made] to sit" [by others]; (Ibid. 6): "When I lower myself, [it is to be made] to see" [by being raised by others].

And they said further: "Go down - go up; go up - go down." That is, if a man lowers himself, he is raised; and if he raises himself, he is lowered.

My sons, flee dominion and hate pride, for they are the harbingers of many misfortunes, viz. (Proverbs 16:18): "Pride comes before the fall, and haughtiness of spirit before failure."

And our sages of blessed memory have said in the aggadah: "The herald of ruin is pride; and the herald of failure, haughtiness of spirit. There is a covenant forged with the world that there be no haughtiness of spirit which is not followed by ruin and failure."

Go out and see what transpired with Pharaoh, Sancheriv, and Hiram, king of Tyre. Because they vaunted themselves, the Holy One Blessed be He brought them to the very nadir of lowliness, so that all would know that there is a G-d and Master above them. Similarly, (Isaiah 3:16): "Because the daughters of Zion are proud, and walk with stretched-forth necks, winking their eyes, etc." What is the end of this pride? (Ibid. 18): "On that day Hashem will remove the beauty of their tinkling shoe-buckles, etc." He reduced them to the very nadir of lowliness and shame.

My sons, scorn pride and detest haughtiness of spirit, for they are greatly despised by Hashem. For thus have our sages of blessed memory said (Sotah 4b): If one is haughty of spirit, it is as if he would serve idols, it being written (Proverbs 16:5): "The abomination of

Hashem are all the haughty of heart; hand to hand, he will not be cleansed." We are hereby taught that even if he possessed Torah as Moshe our teacher, may peace be upon them, who received Torah from the hand of the Holy One Blessed be He into *his* hand - if he possesses pride, he will not be cleansed of the judgment of Gehinnom.

And all who are haughty of spirit and vaunt themselves over others, in the end, in a short time, they dwindle and vanish from the world, viz. (*Job 24:24*): "They are exalted but a little, and they are no more, etc." That is, the elevation of the wicked is for a short time only. Haman is a case in point, viz. (*Esther 3:1*): "After these things, King Achashverosh elevated Haman ... and he exalted him, and he placed his seat above those of all the other officers who were with him." What happened in the end? (*Ibid. 7:10*): "And they hanged Haman on a tree, etc." Concerning this, our sages of blessed memory said in the aggadah: "Glass vessels are breakable in proportion to their `swelling.'" What is more, all who are haughty of spirit are denied life in the world to come, and the fire of Gehinnom consumes them. As stated in Tanna d'bei Eliyahu: "The coarse-spirited, the slanderers, the liars, the sages in their own eyes - of them Scripture states (*Malachi 3:19*): "For, behold, the day is coming; it burns like an oven. And all the presumptuous, and all the doers of evil will be stubble. And the day that is coming will set them ablaze, etc."

And all who are haughty of spirit are ruled by the evil inclination and deny Hashem, viz. (*Tehillim 10:4*): "The wicked one, in the pride of his wrath, will not inquire [of Hashem]. `There is no G-d' is all of his thought." And Moshe, likewise, exhorted Israel, saying (*Devarim 8:14*) "And your heart be lifted, and you forget Hashem your G-d ..."

And a certain sage said: "Wealth is the cloak of pride, and pride is the chariot of wickedness." Another said: "On the heels of pride - wicked acts."

And we find in the *aggadah* (*Yerushalmi Yevamot 12:6*): The men of Simonia came to Rabbi and asked him to give them one man who would serve as Torah scholar, sexton, judge, preacher, teacher...He gave them Levi Ben Sissi. They built a big platform for him, set him thereon, and asked him: "How can a *gidemeth* [a woman whose hand is amputated] administer *chalitzah* [the act of release from levirate marriage (by taking off the levir's shoe, etc.)]?" He could not answer them. They said: "Perhaps he is not versed in *halachah*; let us ask him *aggadah*." They asked: "How do you understand (*Daniel 10:21*): `But I will tell you, what is inscribed in the writing, true'? If `true,' why [need it be stated] `inscribed'? And if `inscribed,' why [need it be stated] `true'?" He could not answer them. At this, they went to Rabbi and said to him: "The man you gave us could not answer any of our questions!" He said: "I gave you a great man," saying which, Rabbi sent for him and asked him in their presence: "How can a *gidemeth* administer *chalitzah*?" He answered: "Even with her teeth." Rabbi: "What is the *halachah* in the instance of a *Yevamah* who spits blood?" Levi: "If it contains particles of spittle, it [her *chalitzah*] is valid." Rabbi: "If `true,' why `inscribed'? And if `inscribed,' why `true'?" Levi: "Before the decree has been sealed, it is [merely] `inscribed' [but may yet be annulled through repentance]; once it has been sealed, it is `true' [i.e., irrevocable]. Rabbi: "Why did you not answer them thus in the beginning when they asked you?" Levi: "They built me a big platform and seated me upon it, and `my head started swelling,' and I did not know what to answer them" - whereupon Rabbi pronounced over him (*Proverbs 30:32*): "If you have become foolish, by being exalted." "What caused you to

become `foolish' in your Torah learning? Becoming `exalted' through it."

Woe, to the havoc wrought by haughtiness of spirit! It causes G-d to be forgotten; it causes learning to be forgotten; it causes good deeds to be forgotten; it causes proper conduct to be forgotten; and it keeps one from his work.

Our sages of blessed memory have said (Pesachim 87b) "Authority buries its possessors!" For thus do we find with Joseph ha Tzaddik. Because he deported himself with an air of authority, he died before his brothers, viz. (Exodus 1:6): "And Joseph died [(first)] and [then] all his brothers, and all that generation" (Berachot 55a). And thus did our sages of blessed memory exhort us (Avot 1:6): "Love work and hate authority". And our sages of blessed memory have said (Avot d'Rabbi Nathan): "All who make themselves great are not great unless a greater one than they makes them so." "All who pursue authority - authority flees from them; and all who flee authority - authority pursues them!" (See Eruvin 13b). And a certain sage said: "He who has not been proud in his soul has helped it; and he who has been proud in it has lowered it." And: "He who relies upon his counsel errs; and he who trusts to his wisdom fails; and he who vaunts it over others is lowered." And: "I wonder how someone who has gone through the passage of urine and blood can be proud!"

All who despise pride and abhor hauteur and haughtiness of spirit and deport themselves with lowliness before men are to be praised, for they make do with whatever they have, little or more. As a certain sage said: "The entire world and all that is in it does not suffice for one into whom pride and hauteur have entered; [it cannot accommodate] the haughtiness of his heart and the largeness of his lust; but whatever the humble one has suffices for his food and sustenance."

Woe to the proud, who are judged by the very substance of their pride! Learn this from the generation of the flood, the generation of the "division" [of mankind (i.e., the generation of the Tower of Babel)], the men of Sodom and Amarah, and the Egyptians - the Holy One blessed be He exacting punishment of them by the very substance of their pride. In respect to the generation of the flood it is written (*Bereshit* 6:12): "And G-d looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth" - they lived with their neighbors' wives. And our sages of blessed memory have said (*Sanhedrin* 108b) that even beasts, animals, and birds mated out of their species. "They sinned through `boiling' [flaming passion], and they were punished through `boiling'" - the waters of the flood. In respect to the generation of the division it is written (*Ibid.* 11:4): "Come, let us build a city for ourselves and a tower whose top reaches to heaven; and let us make a name for ourselves lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." What is written in that regard? (*Ibid.* 8): "And Hashem scattered them!" This is the intent of the verse (*Proverbs* 10:24): "The fear of the wicked one - it itself shall come upon him!" In respect to the men of Sodom it is written (*Job* 28:4): "He breached a [fiery] stream from its course, and [poured it upon] those who made forgotten the [law of the] wayfarer." For because they were miserly with their possessions, not availing wayfarers of them, the poor did not pass through there. Because of this their land was overturned and made desolate - without passerby. In respect to the Egyptians it is written (*Exodus* 18:11): "For by the thing that they [the Egyptians] plotted against them [Israel]." They destroyed their males through water, for which reason He drowned them in water [at the splitting of the sea]. And thus is it written (*Isaiah* 27:8): "By

measure [of her transgression], in sending her [to destruction] did You contend with her" - whence it is derived that "as one metes it out, so is it meted out to him" (*Sotah* 8b).

My sons, take care not to join the company of the proud and the haughty of spirit and flee them "the full distance of your eyes," as one flees a vicious bull. For you will be placed in danger by these traits. And Shlomo, likewise, exhorts us in his wisdom (*Proverbs 16:19*): "Better lowliness of spirit with the humble than dividing spoil with the proud."

Go out and learn from Zecharyah the son of Yehoyada the priest, who, because his heart grew proud in him and he vaunted himself, was killed, and for whose blood many souls in Israel were killed, viz. (*II Chronicles 24:20*): "And the spirit of G-d clothed Zecharyah the son of Yehoyada the priest, and he stood above the people." What is connoted by "And he stood above the people"? He saw himself higher than all the people - son-in-law of the king, priest, prophet, and judge - and he began to speak "great things," for which reason he was killed.

A certain sage said: Four things destroy a man - pride, stubbornness, laziness, and haste. They said that a certain poor-proud man once walking on the road and seeing a golden dinar lying there, but, not wishing to bend down to pick it up, called out to another to take it. The other did so and asked the first [why he himself had not taken it]. He responded that he was an eminent, honored personage and that it was beneath his dignity to do so - whereupon the other said to him: "How much more degraded are you than the rotten rags upon you in not bending down to pick up a golden dinar!"

I heard that King Frederick once saw a copper *perutah* lying on the road and bent down to pick it up. When asked why he had done so, he answered: "to teach proper conduct to others."

And know, my sons, that it is better for a man to keep company with a lunatic, when this cannot be avoided, than with a proud man. For the lunatic must be borne with because of his lunacy, but the proud man will vaunt it over another to the point where he can no longer be tolerated, and dissension and strife will ensue, so that all may be lost.

A wise man was once asked: "What is pride?" He answered "Unabandonable folly." And: "If the proud man knew his self-worth he would not be proud."

What is pride and how does it enter a man's heart? It is a man's vaunting himself in some excellence that he fancies himself to possess. He might fancy himself of surpassing wisdom, or beauty, or wealth, or strength, or any other attribute - for which reason he regards himself as of the highest eminence, puffing himself up to the point where no other man has any worth in his eyes, where the ways of mankind are unacceptable to him, and where his own modes of behavior are unique to him - to the point of his isolating himself and becoming a recluse. He sees himself as too far above the common herd to mingle with them. And when he walks on the road, he does so "heel-to-toe," the [mincing] manner of pride and arrogance.

It is said about one of the kings that once, when asked why he walked so quickly, he replied that in doing so he was farther from pride and closer to the attainment of his objective. And there are yet other undesirable traits associated with the proud man: When he walks with others, he straightens himself and walks with erect carriage. He is not beforehand in greeting others. He does not treat others with respect, but desires that *they*

treat *him* so. And all of his words and deeds and contacts with men are so fraught with vanity and haughtiness of spirit that men tire of him, recoil from him, and keep the farthest possible distance from him - all because of his pride.

One of the manifestations of this ugly trait is arrogance, which is especially despised and abhorred by G-d and men. For thus do we find with Elisha, that because he said (II *Kings* 3:14): "Were it not that I have regard for Yehoshafat, the king of Judah, I would not look at you [Yehoram, son of Achav], nor see you," he was divested of the holy spirit, viz. (*Ibid.* 15): "But now [that the holy spirit has departed from me], bring me a minstrel. And it was, when the minstrel played, that the hand [i.e., the spirit] of Hashem was [again] upon him." And our sages of blessed memory have said (*Pesachim* 66b): If one vaunts himself - if he is a sage, his wisdom departs from him; if he is a prophet, his prophecy departs from him. If he is a sage, his wisdom departs from him - as in the instance of Hillel. When the men of Bethairah asked him whether or not the Pesach offering overrides the Shabbat, he answered [i.e., he proved] that it does, and they appointed him Nassi over them. He sat and expounded the *halachoth* of Pesach the entire day. Then he began to taunt them: "What brought about my coming up from Bavel and being appointed Nassi? Your laziness, your not ministering to the two great men of the generation, Shemayah and Avtalyon!" They asked him: "If he forgot and did not bring the knife before the Shabbat, what can he do?" He answered: "I heard this halachah and forgot it, but leave it to Israel. If they are not prophets, they are the sons of prophets."

The next day [the fourteenth of Nissan, Shabbat], those [who had forgotten to bring the knife before] - if their Pesach offering were a lamb, they stuck the knife in its wool; if it were a kid, they stuck it between its horns. Beholding the deed, Hillel remembered the *halachah*, and he said: "Thus, indeed, did I receive it from the mouth of Shemayah and Avtalyon." Now was Hillel not an exceptionally humble person, whose taunting of them certainly represented not haughtiness of spirit, but [sincere] reproval? Notwithstanding this, however, because his reproval took the form of taunting, the *halachah* escaped him, so that he had to say: "I heard this *halachah* and forgot it."

And if he is a prophet, his prophecy departs from him - as in the instance of Devorah [the prophetess]. She vaunted herself, saying (*Judges* 5:7): "Open cities ceased in Israel; they ceased! Until I, Devorah, arose; I arose as a mother in Israel!" And, in the end, her prophecy departed from her, viz. (*Ibid.* 12): "Awake [your prophecy], awake, Devorah; awake, awake, utter a song!" - the holy spirit having departed from her.

And our sages of blessed memory said (*Sotah* 47b): The haughty are not even accepted by the members of their households, viz. (*Habakkuk* 2:5): "... the proud man and not *yinveh*." [He is disdained even] *bineveh shelo* ["in his habitation"].

And all who give way to pride and vanity, in the end inherit shame and disgrace, viz. (*Proverbs* 11:2): "When pride comes, disgrace comes, etc." What is more, he is called "letZ" ["scoffer"], viz. (*Ibid.* 21:24): "The proud presumptuous one - `letZ' is his name." What is more, all who vaunt themselves fall into Gehinnom, it being written (*Ibid.*): "His presumptuousness is done for *evrah*," "*evrah*" being nothing other than Gehinnom, viz. (*Tzeiphaniah* 1:15): "A day of *evrah* [wrath] is that day [of judgment in Gehinnom]."

Therefore, my sons, hear me, so that you not come to haughtiness of spirit and arrogance. First, consider yourselves. In a short while - death. And lift your eyes on high and see. Who created sun, moon, stars, constellations, the entire host of heaven? All created things - all reveal the Blessed One's understanding and His lovingkindness for each and every creature - all depend upon the word of His lips, viz. (*Tehillim 33:6*): "By the word of Hashem the heavens were created, and by the breath of His mouth, all of their hosts." And go back and consider man and beast, the birds of the sky and the fishes of the sea, the sustenance of each one in His hand, the soul of each one in His hand, viz. (*Job 12:10*): "In His hand is the soul of every living thing and the spirit of all the flesh of man," and: (*Tehillim 31:6*): "In Your hand will I repose my spirit."

Therefore, a man must bless, praise, exalt, and sanctify the name of Him who spoke and caused the world to come into being for the spirit and the soul deposited with "the Owner" in the evening and restored to him in the morning. Therefore, a man must lower himself and humble his heart before his Creator and before all men and not conduct himself with pride. For pride is not found among the saints and the fearers of the Almighty, it being a base trait. And all who resort to it cannot humble their [evil] inclinations and break their [recalcitrant] hearts towards service of their Creator.

However, if one is proud and rejoices in his heart over the good deeds that he performs constantly, every day (not vaunting himself over others because of them, but his soul being proud and his heart rejoicing within him because the Almighty "opened the eyes of his heart" and "enlightened the eyes of his intellect" to choose the way of life and good) - this in no way undermines humility and submissiveness [to Hashem] and lowliness of spirit. This attitude, to the contrary, removes from one's path the evil [variety of] pride and gives him courage and strength to persevere in the ways of the Almighty.

And thus do we find with Yehoshafat king of Judah, who rejoiced in his heart, and whose heart swelled within him, because he walked in the ways of Hashem, as it is written of him (*// Chronicles 17:6*): "And his heart rose in the ways of Hashem." And our sages charged us in this regard (*Avot 8:20*): "Be strong as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and courageous as a lion to do the will of your Father in heaven."

May G-d grant us success in doing His will and may He bow our necks to His service in His many mercies.

## SEFER MAALE HA MIDOT

### X

#### Shame-facedness

My sons, come and I will teach you the quality of shamefacedness. Know, my sons, that the quality of shame-facedness is an extremely noble one, for all who possess shame-facedness are saved from sin and transgression, as it is written (*Exodus 20:20*): "And Moshe said to the people: `Do not fear, for G-d came in order to test you and so that His fear be upon your faces that. you not sin.'" Concerning this our sages of blessed memory have said (*Nedarim 20a*): "'So that His fear be upon your faces' - this is shame-facedness. `That you not sin' -

this teaches us that shame-facedness leads to fear of sin." From here they deduced that it is a good sign for one to be shame-faced.

A certain wise man said (Tikkun Middot Hanefesh 1:3): "A sign of virtuous sons is the shame that appears upon their faces." This noble trait is found only in those who are saintly and who fear sin, as our sages of blessed memory have said (Nedarim 20a): "All who are shame-faced do not quickly sin, and all who are not shame-faced, it is certain that their forefathers did not stand at Mount Sinai."

My sons, come and see how great is shame-facedness before the Holy One Blessed be He. For even if one committed many transgressions, if he is ashamed of them and does not repeat them, the Holy One Blessed be He forgives him for all of his transgressions, as it is written (Ezekiel 16:63): "So that you remember and be ashamed and be no longer able to open your mouth in your humiliation, then it will be forgiven you for all that you have done, says Hashem G-d."

And so we find with Saul. When he raised the spirit of Samuel through the medium-woman, Samuel asked him (I Samuel 28:15): "Why have you disquieted me to bring me up? And Saul answered: I am greatly distressed and the Philistines are warring against me, and G-d has departed from me; and He no longer answers me, neither by prophets nor by dreams, and so I have called you to make known to me what I should do." But he did not mention [having resorted to] the urim vetumim [worn on the breast-plate of the high priest], being ashamed to mention this because of his having killed the priests of Nov. And because of this he was forgiven, as it is written (Ibid 19): "And tomorrow you and your sons will be with Me" - in my domain [in the world to come]. And our sages of blessed memory have said (Chagigah 5a): "All who commit a transgression and regret it are immediately pardoned, as it is written (Malachi 3:5): 'And I will draw near to you in judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against the false swearers, and against those who oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the orphan, and those who turn aside the stranger and do not fear me.'" But if they do fear me, they are forgiven, as it is written (Proverbs 28:13): "But he who confesses and forsakes [sin] will be granted mercy."

A certain wise man said (Mivchar Hapninim 12:1): "Be circumspect in the quality of shame-facedness, for shamefacedness is the mark of a noble countenance," and (Ibid 2): "He whom the Creator has wrapped in a mantle of shamefacedness, his blemishes will be concealed from the eyes of men."

Great is the quality of shame-facedness, for by means of it one merits worthy deeds. What is more, he merits Gan Eden thereby, as our sages of blessed memory have said (Avot 5:20): "The brazen-faced to Gehinnom, and the shame-faced to Gan Eden." And a certain wise man said (Mivchar Hapninim 12:3): "Shame-facedness and faith go together; if one leaves, the other leaves too."

What is shame-facedness? One's being ashamed of his character and of his deeds within himself and also in the presence of others, being modest in all his ways and affairs and being circumspect in them that they not give rise to anything that is wrong or demeaning - so that if others see or hear of them he need not be ashamed of them. He must be circumspect before initiating an action so that he can arrange to do it in such a way that it not redound to his shame. And he must be modest in eating and drinking so that he not be degraded, shamed, and cheapened by his fellow men. (Chullin 44b): "He must keep far from

what is revolting and from anything like it." In sum, he should be ashamed in the presence of his Creator, for then he will attain the quality of shame-facedness to perfection. As a certain wise man said: "When you do something in your house, be ashamed of the members of your household; when you do something in the market-place, be ashamed of the people who are there; if not, be ashamed of yourself. If you are not ashamed of yourself; be ashamed of your soul. And if you are not ashamed of your soul, be ashamed of the Creator, who sees you."

My sons, be circumspect in the trait of shame-facedness. For when one is ashamed of people, he keeps himself from things which are foul and revolting and does not go astray in them. And certainly, if he is ashamed of the Creator, he will not fall prey to transgression and sin.

If one does not possess shame-facedness, all of the Torah [i.e., what is prohibited by the Torah] has become permitted in his eyes, as a certain wise man said (Compare Tikkun Middoth Hanefesh 1:3): "The summation of received prophecy is this: if you have no shame, do whatever you wish." And: "Suspicion will not attach itself to the shame-faced one, as the clamor of robbery or theft will not reach the honest one." A wise man was asked: "What is shame?" He answered: "Intellect." "And what is intellect?" "Shame." Another one said: "Shame is the path to long life." And yet another: "Men live many days in the merit of faith and fear, and afterwards by virtue of shame-facedness, humility, and lowliness."

My sons, be careful not to shame your friends, even to their faces, much more so in public; for this is one of the gravest transgressions in the Torah. Thus have our sages of blessed memory said (Baba Metzia 58b): "If one shames his neighbor in public, it is as if he sheds blood, for we see red retreating [on his face] and white taking its place." They said further (Kallah): "One who shames his friend is destined to be shamed himself. What is more, he will even be pushed aside by the ministering angels, who will reveal his shame to all men." And further (Baba Metzia 58b): "All who descend to Gehinnom descend and arise again, except three: one who lives with another man's wife, one who spreads an evil report about his neighbor, and one who shames his neighbor in public." Know this to be so, for because Bar Kamtza was shamed in public (Gittin 55b) the Holy One Blessed be He abetted him and the Temple was destroyed.

But though I have exhorted you to shame-facedness, I shall warn you that if you err in something, you should not be ashamed to reverse yourself and admit the truth. For anyone who is ashamed to reverse himself and admit the truth is without question considered brazen-faced. If you have sinned inadvertently or deliberately in any area of Torah or Mitzvot, do not be ashamed to confess this to the Holy One Blessed be He. Similarly, if you are in doubt in anything relating to Torah, tradition, or Mitzvah, do not be ashamed to ask - even of one who is lesser than you in eminence or in years. Do not be ashamed to say of anything you do not know: "We do not know," and of anything you have not heard: "We have not heard." Or, if you have heard but do not remember, to say: "We heard and we forgot." For Moshe our teacher of blessed memory admitted and was not ashamed to say: "I have not heard," as it is written (Vayikra 10:20): "And Moshe heard and it was good in his eyes."

And our sages of blessed memory have said (Avot 2:5): "He who is ashamed does not learn and he who is fastidious should not teach," And (Tana d'bei Eliyahu Rabba 13:28):

"Let a man inquire about a verse even though everyone laughs at him, and about a halachah, even though everyone laughs at him. Let a man immerse himself in the body of Torah even though he is completely unacquainted with the halachah, as it is written (Proverbs 30:32): 'If you demean yourself [in the above manner], you will [eventually] be elevated, but if you muzzle [your mouth in fear of shame], you will [perpetually hold] your hand to your mouth [in ignorance].'" Likewise, do not be ashamed to exhort men and to guide them in the right path, for this [i.e., shame to exhort in this manner] is not an attribute of those who are perfect in their traits. Such shame is worse than audacity.

Therefore, my sons, be circumspect in the trait of shame-facedness so that the fear of the Almighty be constantly upon your faces that you not sin. And G-d in His mercy will grant us success in this endeavor.

Having thus far spoken in praise of shame-facedness and its possessors, we shall now speak in condemnation of audacity and its possessors, so as to guide them to the trait of shame-facedness with the help of the Almighty.

Know, my sons, that the trait of audacity is despised by the Holy One Blessed be He, for it is like a facet of idol worship. What is more, because of the brazen-faced the heavens hold back the dew and the rain, as it is written (Jeremiah 3:3): "And the showers have been withheld and there has been no latter rain, because you had the forehead of a harlot; you refused to be ashamed." And our sages of blessed memory have said (Shabbat 119b): "Jerusalem was destroyed only because they were not ashamed of each other, as it is written (Jeremiah 8:12): 'Neither were they ashamed; nor did they know humiliation...'" This despicable trait is not found among the saintly ones or those of virtuous deeds, but only among the wicked, as it is written (Ibid 5:3): "They hardened their faces more than rock; they refused to repent." And our sages of blessed memory have said (Taanit 7b): "If a man is brazen-faced, it is permitted to call him wicked to his face, as it is written (Proverbs 21:29): 'If a man is brazen, [you may call him] wicked to his face.' What is more, it is a Mitzvah to hate him, as it is written (Ecclesiastes 8:1): 'And the boldness of his face will be changed.' Do not read it 'will be changed' [yeshune], but 'will be hated' [yisanei]." And all who are brazen-faced are destined to be broken and to fall, viz. (Tanna d'bei Eliyahu Rabba 15:28): "The intimidators, the ostentatious, the brazen-faced, the brawny - about them Scripture says (Tehillim 37:17): 'For the arms of the wicked shall be broken.'"

My sons, come and see how grave is the trait of audacity, for when a man is brazen-faced, he falls into wickedness, as it is written (Proverbs 21:29): "If a man is brazen-faced [you will soon call him] wicked to his face." What is more (Taanit 7b): "If one is brazen-faced, it is certain that he has been promiscuous, as it is written (Jeremiah 3:3): 'Because you had the forehead of a harlot' - it is not written 'will have,' but 'had.'"

Our sages of blessed memory have said in the aggadah (Bamidbar Rabba, 18:10): "Four are called wicked: one who stretches out his hand to strike his neighbor, although he does not actually strike him, as it is written (Exodus 2:12): 'And he said to the wicked one: "Why would you strike your friend?"' It is not said 'did strike,' but 'would strike'; one who borrows and does not repay, as it is written (Tehillim 37:21): 'The wicked one borrows and does not repay'; one who is brazen-faced and not ashamed, as it is written (Proverbs 21:29): 'If a man is brazen-faced, [you may call him "wicked" to his face,' and one who is given to contention, as it is written (Bamidbar 16:26): 'Turn away, now, from the tents of these wicked men.' And Datan and Aviram possessed both of these attributes, brazen-facedness and contentiousness." There are none among the brazen-faced who do not possess some taint

of birth. For thus have our sages of blessed memory said (Kallah Rabbati 2): "The brazen-faced - Rabbi Eliezer says: a bastard; Rabbi Yehoshua says: the son of a niddah; Rabbi Akiva says: a bastard and the son of a niddah."

What is brazen-facedness? Transgressing in the sight of men and not being ashamed of them, transgressing and repeating, walking erect and with a thrust-out forehead and not being ashamed of people. For all who are brazen-faced and not ashamed, it is as if they served idols, as it is written (Jeremiah 6:15): "They should have been ashamed when they had committed abomination; but they were not at all ashamed; neither were they humiliated. Therefore, they shall stumble, says Hashem." And it is said: "The end of audacity is contention, and the end of contention, regret," and: "Brazen-facedness is the gravest illness, and its purge, one as brazen-faced as himself."

However, to stand up audaciously against the wicked and the forsakers of Torah in order to reprove and to chastise them - this is extremely commendable, as it is written (Ibid 1:18): "I have made you this day a fortified city, and an iron pillar, and walls of brass ..." And this was Shlomo's behest (Proverbs 26:5): "Answer a fool according to his folly."

Therefore, my sons, be wary of this ugly trait and remove it far from yourselves; and do not employ it, so that it not gain ascendancy over you. All who possess this ugly trait are kept at a distance by their fellows and are forsaken by them.

May G-d protect us from base, mean traits and elevate us to the higher virtues in the abundance of His mercy and lovingkindness.

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## SEFER ORCHOT TZADDIKIM

In the first gate we shall discuss the trait of pride. It is fitting that it precede all of the other gates because man has an obligation to separate himself from it, for it is the gateway to many evils and we have not seen anything as evil as it among all the other traits. Therefore, a man must be wise and use it with discretion and he must reject it completely whenever it is not in its proper place.

### THE FIRST GATE

#### The Gate of Pride

Pride is the coin which the great, Blessed King has invalidated and which He has exhorted us about in His Torah, as it is written (*Devarim* 8:11): "Take heed lest you forget Hashem your G-d." For the proud man forgets his Creator, as it is written (ibid. 8:13-18): "And when your cattle and flocks multiply, and gold and silver accrue to you...then your heart will grow haughty and you will forget Hashem your G-d ... and you will say in your heart: My power and the might of my hand have wrought this wealth for me. Then you should remember Hashem your G-d, for it is He who gives you the strength to amass wealth." And in relation to a king it is written (ibid. 17:20): "That his heart not be lifted above his brothers." If the Torah exhorts even a king in this respect, it goes without saying that average men should not vaunt their wealth in front of each other.

Pride takes two forms. The first is the pride a man has in his body; the second, the pride a man has in his actions, in the quality of his wisdom, and in his good deeds. The pride a man has in his body takes two forms - one good, the other evil. The following is the evil variety:

When pride grows in a man's heart, it rules over him from the crown of his skull to the sole of his foot. In his head and his throat, as it is written (Yeshayahu 3:16): "Because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with outstretched necks." In his hands and his feet, as it is written (Tehillim 36:12): "Let the foot of pride not come upon me and the hand of the wicked not move me." For the foot of pride the daughter of Rabbi Chanina Ben Tradyon was punished, it being decreed upon her that she dwell in a brothel. For once, passing before some Roman dignitaries and hearing them say: "How beautiful are the strides of this young woman," she took special pains with her walk (Avodah Zarah 18a, see Rashi). It is manifest in one's eyes as it is written (Tehillim 6:17): "Haughty eyes." It is manifest in one's ears by not paying heed to the words of the poor, unfortunate ones. It is manifest in one's nose if, when standing near the poor or upon entering their houses, they smell offensive to him. And it is even in his speech, when he speaks impudently and with pride against the righteous. Pride can also be manifested in eating and in drinking and in clothing oneself ostentatiously in gentile apparel. We have been exhorted against this in the Torah of Moshe, as it is written (Vayikra 20:23) : "And do not walk in the ways of the nations," and (ibid. 18:3): "Do not walk in their ways," and (Devarim 12:30): "Take heed lest you be ensnared after them." The point is the same in all of these instances: Israel is exhorted to stay separate from the nations in its apparel, its speech, and all of its customs, as it is written (Vayikra 20:26) : "For I have set you apart from the peoples."

The proud are despicable in the eyes of Hashem, as it is written (Mishle 16:5): "The abomination of Hashem are all who are proud of heart." And the proud man is given into the hands of his evil inclination; he does not receive Divine assistance since he is the abomination of Hashem,

And though he does not elevate himself above any man in speech or in deed, but only in his heart, he is still called an "abomination," as it is written: "The abomination of Hashem are all who are proud of heart" - though his pride exists in his heart alone, he is still called an "abomination." Our Rabbis taught (Sotah 4b): "Everyone who is haughty of spirit is as one who serves idols, as it is written in one place (Mishle 16:5): 'The abomination of Hashem, are all who are proud of heart,' and in another (Devarim 7:26): 'And do not bring an abomination into your house.'" There are others who say: "It is as if he has relations with all those who are forbidden to him, as it is written (Vayikra 18:27): 'For all of these abominations they did.'" And there are others who say: "It is as if he erected an altar (bamah)." They say further (Sotah 5a) : "All who are haughty of spirit in the end are diminished, as it is written (Iyov 24:24): 'They are exalted a little.'" And he deserves to be uprooted as an asherah [a tree devoted to idol worship], as it is written in one place (Yeshayahu 10:33): "And the haughty of stature shall be uprooted," and in another (Devarim 7:5): "And their asherot shall you uproot." And his dust will not awaken [for the Resurrection]. And the Shechinah wails over him. And the Holy One Blessed be He says: "I and he cannot live together in the world," as it is written (Tehillim 101:5): "The haughty of eye and the broad of heart - him I cannot abide." Read it not "him" but "with him" I cannot abide (Sotah 5a). And they said (Baba Batra 98a): "The proud man is not even accepted by his own household, as it is written (Chavakkuk 2:5): 'The proud man shall not inhabit' - even in his own habitation."

Pride leads to the pursuit of honor for the purpose of lording it over people. You are well aware of what happened to Korach and his congregation as a result of his pride. He desired to aggrandize himself and to arrogate to himself greatness that had not been conferred upon him by Heaven. Because of this he entered into controversy which resulted in envy and hatred, and all of these are low traits, as will be explained with the help of G-d.

In sum, if one adorns his body in order to flaunt himself, he forgets Hashem, Blessed be He, he pays no heed to the Mitzvot, and he does not pursue good deeds for he is entirely intent upon himself - to adorn his ephemeral body, whose end is to be devoured by worms and maggots. And one who adorns his body borders on licentiousness, for he will cause women to look at and admire him as a result of which he will come close to them and fall prey to levity and lightheadedness. The woman, too, who adorns herself for men, inflames their hearts and stirs up lewd thoughts within them, and her punishment, therefore, is very great, for she becomes a stumbling block to many men. Our Sages (Avodah Zarah 20b) have forbidden gazing at the colored apparel of women that is spread out on a wall. If such is the case even when she is not actually clothed in this apparel, how much greater, then, must be the prohibition and the punishment for a woman who dresses up for men who gaze at her.

Further, pride leads to lust, for the proud man's heart is expansive and desires everything. And lust is the worst of all the traits, for one will lust through his pride to wear expensive garments and build stately mansions and eat gourmet foods. For the proud man always desires exotic things, and if he cannot afford these things, he may come to steal or rob. For the heart of the proud man is desirous and his pocket is spread wide to accumulate wealth; he will not be happy with his lot, for the great expenditure of his pride's lust will cause him to belittle what he has. Furthermore, pride causes one to lack patience in bearing the yoke of his fellowman. And it is not necessary to elaborate upon the defectiveness of impatience, as it is acknowledged by all.

There is a positive aspect of pride in one's body, lest he say: Since pride is such an evil trait I shall separate myself from it to the extreme - so that he will not eat meat, nor drink wine, nor take a wife, nor live in a comfortable home, nor wear becoming garments, but only sackcloth and stiff wool, and garments that are torn and besmirched, and he will use dirty, ugly utensils, and he will not wash his face, hands, and feet until he looks worse than other men - and all this to remove himself from pride and lust to the farthest possible extreme. One who follows this course is called a sinner, for it is written in relation to a Nazirite (Bamidbar 6:11): "And he shall make atonement for himself for sinning against his soul," concerning which our Sages have said (Taanis 11a): "Now if a Nazirite who abstains only from wine is called a sinner, how much more so one who abstains from everything!" Our Sages have stated further (Yerushalmi Nedarim 9:1): "Is it not enough for you what the Torah forbade, that you have to forbid yourself other things?" About such courses and similar ones Shlomo wrote (Kohelet 7:16): "Do not be overly righteous, and do not be overly wise - why should you destroy yourself?" The proper course for a man to follow is to be clean in all of his affairs, for cleanliness is the road to good deeds. What shall he do? Let him wear plain clothing - neither expensive, gaudy attire that everyone stares at nor paupers' clothes that shame the wearer - but plain, pleasant, clean garments, the poor man according to his state and the rich man according to his. And it is forbidden to wear stained or soiled garments. They should not be torn, and they should not be stylized in the manner of the haughty. His food, too, should be clean. He should not eat royal fare, but plain food and plain drink, as he can afford. He should not drink or eat from ugly vessels, lest he transgress (Vayikra 11:43): "Do not abominate yourselves" - but all should be done with cleanliness. His table and his bed, too, should be clean, and all of his affairs should be clean. His body, too, should be clean and not sweaty. He should take care to wash his face, hands, and feet, and also his entire body at regular intervals, as we find in the case of Hillel the Elder (Vayikra Rabba 34:3): "When he took leave of his disciples and walked along with them, they asked him: 'Where are you going?' He answered: 'To do a Mitzvah.' They asked: 'Which

Mitzvah are you going to do?' He answered: 'To bathe in the bathhouse.' They asked: 'Is that a Mitzvah?' He answered: 'Yes' Now if with respect to the statues of kings that are set up in theaters and circuses their caretaker polishes and washes them, for which he is not only fed but also brought up among the royal dignitaries, I, who have been created in the image of G-d and the likeness of G-d, as it is written (Bereshit 9:6): "For in the image of G-d did He make man," how much more so should this apply!" And it is written further (Mishle 16:4): "Hashem made all for His sake." All who are heedful of these things for the sake of the Mitzvah and are not intent upon adorning and aggrandizing themselves, though what they do may have the semblance of pride, since their intent is the glory of G-d, there is in this a great Mitzvah.

A man's pride in wisdom and in good deeds, takes two forms, one good and the other evil. The evil form is scorning men in heart and word, regarding them as small and inferior, praising and extolling oneself constantly as a paragon of wisdom, and because of this pride, not admitting the truth. In the proud man's eyes, his wisdom, counsel, words, and deeds will always seem superior to those of his friends, and he will always flaunt himself in his wisdom and deeds, desiring praise and honor for his cogent words. About such a one King Shlomo has written (Mishle 27:2): "Let a stranger praise you and not your own mouth."

The proud man will always take credit for himself, and because of this he will not exert himself adequately over Torah, not being solicitous of G-d's glory, but only desiring that all men acknowledge him as a good and wise man - such acknowledgment being sufficient for him. He always rejoices when his friends stumble and is happy in the paucity of their knowledge and takes honor in their dishonor. And this is one of the twenty-four deterrents to repentance. A man whose deeds are all for show and who boasts of them to gain honor is like a fine dish prepared with all manner of seasonings and the best of spices, but which stands by the fire so long that it overcooks and spoils, becoming inedible because of its bitter, burnt taste. Similarly, the man who boasts of his deeds befouls his good deeds through such boasting. And there is no trait worse than or comparable to glorifying oneself for wisdom and good deeds that one does not possess. As our Sages have stated (Yerushalmi Sheviit 10:3): "If people, honor someone on the assumption that he knows two tractates and he knows only one, he must inform them that he knows only one." How much more so must he not mislead people into crediting him with greatness that he does not possess.

Know that it is incumbent upon us to perform all of our deeds exclusively for the sake of the Exalted Creator, both in public and in private; and all of our acts of Divine service must be motivated only by a desire to do His will and not the will of mankind to garner praise for his deeds and to receive honor. One must do all for the sake of the Almighty, Who looks into one's heart, as it is written (Yirmeyahu 17:10): "I am Hashem, who searches the heart and examines the innards," and (Devarim 29:28): "The hidden things are [known] to Hashem our G-d." Therefore, let the proud man know that if he does not take care with wisdom and zeal to rescue himself from pride, though he may possess Torah and good deeds, he inherits Gehinnom.

For the evil inclination lies in ambush for him and brings arguments and rationalizations to lead him to pride in order to drive him from the world. Therefore, one must not be slack in conquering the evil inclination every day. And this is called a "great war," as we find in the case of one of the saintly men, who, encountering men returning from the war with great spoil, said to them: "You have returned from the small war; the great war yet awaits you." Upon being questioned by them: "And what is the great war?" he answered: "That against the evil inclination and its battalions." For with every other foe, after you defeat it once or twice or three times it will leave you alone; but the evil inclination does not let go of you though you

may defeat it a hundred times, as our Sages have said (Avot 2:4): "And do not trust yourself until the day of your death." For it will lie in ambush for you all of your days, hoping to catch you off guard. And if it defeats you in the slightest of the slight, in the end it will defeat you in, the severest of the severe. And since pride is the root of many lowly traits, and the evil inclination, too, is an active partner in a man's heart, and since the sole intent of the evil inclination is to falsify the truth and place the stamp of truth on falsity - teaching man to be proud and presenting him with rationalizations to this end - therefore, you must strive to outsmart it.

The first of the evil inclination's stratagems is to harden and lift a man's heart, making pride and other evil traits attractive to him. And this man, though certainly knowing that there is offense and transgression in his pride, will nevertheless transgress knowingly, the evil inclination so inflaming his heart with a desire for honor that he will not pay heed to the transgression. But if the man is pure in his deeds and is not wittingly proud nor does he praise himself when he knows that it is a sin to do so, the evil inclination comes and contrives subtleties and wages a war to the death to overthrow him and ensnare him in its net. It will offer him rationalizations and theories to the effect that there is Mitzvah and reward in his praising and glorifying himself. Thus will the evil inclination say: "You have already attained a high level of wisdom and saintliness, and you should ingratiate yourself with men and exert yourself to find favor in their eyes and flatter them and reveal your wisdom and righteousness to them in order to gain their love. And it will substantiate its argument with the words of the Rabbis (Avot 3:10): "All who find favor in the eyes of their fellowmen find favor in the eyes of G-d." All these are false proofs, the theory itself being founded in pride. The truth is as the Scripture states (Mishle 16:7): "When Hashem desires a man's ways, his foes, too, make peace with him." This is how the matter is to be understood: If a man does not praise himself before others and does not attempt to find favor in their eyes when he does his good deeds, and, in spite of this, is beloved by them, this is strong proof that the Holy One Blessed be He loves him, and has sowed love for him in the hearts of men and given him a good name on their tongues. And the truth is that many men are beloved by their fellowmen and despised by the Holy One Blessed be He, when they do not fulfill the Mitzvot. For the Holy One Blessed be He loves only those who study Torah and abide by it.

Next, the evil inclination will tempt you to reveal your saintliness and good deeds before the populace with the rationalization that in doing so you may cause them to emulate your deeds. This, too, proceeds from pride. Though we do find instances of great men praising themselves (Megillah 28a), they did so only before their students and colleagues, so that they would follow in their ways and emulate their deeds. This is certainly a Mitzvah - to cause good deeds to be beloved by them. But even in the presence of these, one must not rejoice in his heart, saying "This I know," or "this I do." But in public it is indeed forbidden to make such revelations. Even if you conduct yourself with humility and stand long in prayer and study Torah regularly, the evil inclination will tempt you to pride, saying: "Now those who see you will esteem and honor you for your goodly ways, and great benefit will result from this. Since they respect you, they will respect your reproof and chastisement!" All this is vanity! For when you do a good deed, do it for the sake of the Blessed Creator alone and your reproof will be accepted by others even if you do not think so, for the acceptance of reproof is not dependent upon your thoughts!

And if you have freed yourself of all this, the evil inclination will tempt you by saying: "Your Divine service cannot be perfect until you have completely removed yourself from pride, as by consulting your good deeds and showing the opposite of what you really feel: Pray briefly, and when you wish to study something, do it privately, so that no one knows except the Blessed Creator. And let no good trait be seen in you, but perform your Divine service in a casual manner, so that you will not make a name for yourself and you will lose your reward. And do not dictate the doing of good nor exhort against the doing of evil. And do not reveal your wisdom nor teach it to anyone besides you. And do not give any indication of your fearing Hashem, nor display any sign, such as tefillin, mezuzah, or Tzitzit. But follow the customs of men and walk in their ways and mingle with them in eating, drinking, entertaining, luxuriating, and jesting." All this is the working of the evil inclination to ensnare people in its net, and if one follows this course for the sake of a Mitzvah, his loss is thousands of times greater than his reward. He is like one escaping from a small fire into a big one. But the right course is to pray at length with concentration, to exhort to the doing of good and against the doing of evil, and to do all of the good things, both in public and in private. And if one is honored and praised because of this, this praise will not detract from his reward, in that he was not motivated to act by it. Therefore, when you do a good deed, look into yourself to see from whom you expect reward. If from the Almighty, the deed is perfect; if from others, it is not. When you do something in public, determine whether you would do it closeted in private in the same manner that you are doing it in public. If the answer is yes, then your deed is perfect.

All that we have said on the subject of the evil inclination is but a drop in the ocean in comparison to the care that one must exercise in dealing with it, for in every thing, in every act, in every trait, the evil inclination comes to destroy and to ruin. We have merely opened the door to reveal the activities of the evil inclination for the benefit of he who is unacquainted with the beginning of its ways. And the wise man will understand and hasten to root it out of himself, and (Iyov 17:9): "The clean-handed man will multiply strength."

Pride in the quality of one's wisdom is praiseworthy, as it is written (Yirmeyahu 9:23): "But let him who praises himself praise himself for this - being wise and knowing me." And let him multiply praise to the Creator for having granted him knowledge and wisdom and goodly traits through the prayer for wisdom (Berachot 28b): "I give thanks to You for having cast my lot among those who sit in the house of study and not among the 'corner-dwellers,'" and as in: "How fortunate we are; how goodly is our portion, and how pleasant is our lot." About this it is written (II Divrei Hayamim 17:6): "And his heart was uplifted in the ways of Hashem." For a man should be lofty-spirited and high-hearted in matters of the World-to-Come. He should not be content with what comes his way and not say "enough" in respect to what he acquires of them. But all of his deeds in this area should constantly aspire upwards, and he should take himself to task for falling short in the service of the Blessed Creator. Such pride is no impediment to humility, but abets it and causes one to rejoice in the virtuous qualities and in the honor of one's friends and to be solicitous of their honor.

Pride against the wicked is extremely praiseworthy: rebuking them, shaming them, not humbling oneself before them, exhorting them to the good and against evil as much as one can. Though this may seem autocratic and haughty in the eyes of the world, since it is being done for the sake of Heaven it is praiseworthy. One must not humble himself before the wicked, as Mordechai did not humble himself to Haman. And whenever he has a Mitzvah to do,

he must not humble himself at all before them, to forsake the good because of his subservience to them. And it requires wisdom to know when to do a Mitzvah in front of wicked people, for sometimes it is better to avoid a confrontation. If someone is arrogant to them in respect to one Mitzvah, he may lose a hundred as a result. Regarding this King Shlomo wrote (Mishle 26:4-5): "Do not answer a fool according to his foolishness," and "Answer a fool according to his foolishness" - they are both wicked and foolish. Therefore, the wise man must take into consideration the time and the circumstances and arrange his deeds accordingly. For there are things which he must abandon because of the wicked and things which he must under no circumstances abandon because of them and for whose sake he must stand up against them with his person and with his possessions, and not humble himself before them. All this applies to the realm of Mitzvot, but in the realm of business dealings he should humble himself before them and conduct himself with them beyond the letter of the law in all things - and this is a great Mitzvah.

And one who has the trait of pride must exert himself and rid himself of it, for it is a bad defect. Its potential harm is great and ever-present, and its potential benefit very slight. Therefore, one must remove himself very far from it. For pride brings one to destruction, as it is written (Mishle 16:18): "Pride goes before destruction," and it also brings him to lowliness, as it is written (ibid. 29:23) : "A man's pride will lower him." We are all well aware of what happened to Pharaoh because he said (Shemot 5:2): "Who is Hashem that I should listen to His voice?" And to Goliath the Philistine, who said (I Shemuel 17:10): "I have reviled the armies of Israel," to Sancheriv, who said (Yeshayahu 36:20): "Who, among the G-ds of all these lands, rescued their lands from my hand?" And to Nebuchadnezzar, who said (Daniel 3:15): "And who is the G-d that shall deliver you out of my hands?" - and all of the others who spoke the same way and whose end was shame and disgrace. One who possesses this trait is not rescued from sin and transgression, as Shlomo wrote (Mishle 21:24): "The proud scorner is called a mocker; he acts in the fury of malice." Since we have come this far in speaking of pride, listen to the words of the wise. One Sage said: "Who is he from whom worry will never depart? One who seeks a state that is above him." And: "One who holds himself a knower," that is, one who regards himself as a sage, "is considered a fool by others." And: "Next to pride are evil deeds." And one who is given to evil deeds is constantly beset by men's hatred and people turn away from him. And one Sage said: "Just as pleasantness of countenance is the light of the body, so pleasantness of character traits is the light of the soul." And he said further: "It does not bespeak stateliness of soul for the king to lord himself over other men, so how much more so for one man over another!" And: "A certain king was sitting on his throne and before him were placed three chairs, one higher than the other, for seating by rank. Three nobles came before him and seated themselves one higher than the other, whereupon the king said to them: 'How did you dare seat yourselves thus without my permission?' The highest one answered: 'My family's great pedigree sat me above my fellows.' The second answered: 'I went above the one below me because of my great wisdom.' The third answered: 'The lowliness of my soul and the constriction of my heart sat me beneath them' - whereupon the king raised him up and exalted him above the others." In this respect it is written (Mishle 25:7): "For it is better that it be said to you: 'Come up here,' than that you be lowered before the Gracious One."

When a man sees that the trait of pride is gaining ascendancy over him, he must think of things that frighten his heart: that he comes from a putrefying drop, that he will return to dust and his end will be worms and maggots, and that he will have to give an accounting to the

**King of kings, the Holy One Blessed be He (Avot 3:1). Let him think about how many proud men have vanished from the world and have been forgotten as if they never existed - and to what avail was their vanity!**

**Make a fence to keep far from pride and other evil traits. He who wishes to completely root pride out of his heart cannot do this by thought alone, but in the beginning he must remove himself from haughtiness to the outermost limit. How? If a man was accustomed to wearing ostentatious, stylized garments, like those who are haughty of spirit, and he wishes to depart from this, if he simply starts wearing good clothing and styles it moderately, he will not thereby root out haughtiness from his heart. Or if he was wont to seek honor and to lord it over others in word or deed, there is no correction for him until he humbles himself, sitting lower than all others, putting on worn-out garments that shame those who wear them, and the like, until he roots out his haughtiness of heart. Similarly, if one is hot-tempered and often vents his anger, he must first come to react with complete passivity to being hit or cursed; and he must persist in this a long time, until the root of wrath has been torn out of his heart. Then he can turn back and adopt the middle course and remain with it for the rest of his days. And this regimen should be pursued with every evil trait. First one must remove himself from it until he can remove himself no further, and remain in this position for a long time; then he must turn back and adopt the middle course. This regimen guarantees a complete cure for all evil traits. One who is inclined to serve the Blessed Creator with each trait in its most select manifestation will set this path before himself and his fellow Jew. In this regard it is written (Tehillim 50:23): "And to him who sets his path I will reveal the salvation of G-d."**

#### **The Gate of Humility**

**Humility is a noble trait and a good quality, the opposite of pride. One who possesses this trait has already spared his soul many kinds of evils, and one who has attained this honored state is performing a Mitzvah and receives reward to the extent of his humility. For humility is the root of Divine service, and a small deed of the humble man is a thousand times more acceptable to the Blessed One than a great deed of the proud man. And so did our Rabbis teach (Berachot 5b): "Both he who does much and he who does little, so long as his heart is intent on the glory of G-d." But the deed of the proud man is not acceptable to the Blessed One, for he is an abomination to Him, as it is written (Mishle 16:5): "The abomination of Hashem are all who are proud of heart." And because of this, one shouts to Hashem and is not answered, as it is written (Yeshayahu 1:15): "Though you multiply prayer, I shall not accept." And he does Mitzvot and they are flung in his face, as it is written (ibid. 1:12): "Who asked this of your hands, you trampers of My courts?" And he brings a sacrifice but it is not accepted, as it is written (Malachi 1:10): "Would there were one of you who would slam the doors [of the Temple] ...and an offering I will not accept from your hand." And it says (Yirmeyahu 7:21): "Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices and eat flesh [i.e., I don't want them]." But through the trait of humility and lowliness one attains all good, for (Mishle 3:34): "To the humble He gives favor."**

**And since he has favor in the eyes of the Holy One Blessed be He, he shouts and is forthwith answered, as it is written (Yeshayahu 65:24): "Before they call, I will have answered." He does Mitzvot and they are accepted with pleasure and joy, as it is written (Kohelet 9:7): "For Hashem has already accepted your deeds." And, what is more, He desires them, as it is written (Malachi 3:4): "And the offering of Judah and Jerusalem shall be pleasing to Hashem."**

**And what is humility? It is self-effacement and lowliness of spirit and regarding oneself as naught. A man is obliged at all times and on every occasion to be unworthy in his eyes, and lowly of spirit, and soft of heart, and broken spirited. The root of humility is one's thinking of himself when he is yet calm and tranquil and healthy and rich, that the Blessed One has given him good of which he is not worthy. He must reflect upon the greatness of the Almighty and the exaltations of His glory and think: "What am I? Am I not an extremely lowly creature in a lowly, ephemeral world?" And: "All of the good things I can do are nothing but a drop in the ocean relative to what I ought to do." And he must do all for the sake of Heaven, not for the sake of honor, and not to flatter any man or for any personal pleasure - but all for the sake of His great Name. This is the root of humility. But if one humbles himself before the Blessed Creator when he or one of his organs is ailing, or when his children or loved ones die, or when he falls from his wealth or his greatness, or when he grows old - the truth is that humility and lowliness are always acceptable to the Blessed One, but he has not arrived at true humility this way.**

**One must conduct himself with humility in dealing with people and in monetary matters, to deal with all men beyond the letter of the law (Baba Kama 100a, Baba Metzia 30b, 83a). And his entire deportment with people must be with lowliness and pleasantness. True humility consists of humbling oneself to those beneath him, such as his servants, the members of his household, and those poor people who are fed and helped by him and whom he does not need or fear. And if one humbles himself before orphans, widows, and converts and bears their trials and burdens, and hears himself degraded but does not answer because of his great humility, he is manifesting a very high order of that trait.**

**There is another extremely high level of humility - humbling oneself before one's teachers, before the wise, and before the righteous who walk in just paths - thinking to oneself: These are the servants of the Blessed One, His bondmen and His lovers, and, because of this, lowering himself before them and honoring them. It is also a good variety of humility if he thinks: I shall humble myself before them so that they will draw me near and teach me and chastise me and lead me in the ways of the Blessed One. Another extremely good form of humility is humbling oneself before one's students, explaining everything that is difficult for them - to the older one on his level and to the younger one on his. And he should explain again and again with a pleasant expression and demeanor until they understand, and not say: "How can I answer so that he understands; his heart is as hard as stone!" But he must review the matter patiently numerous times. We are familiar with the reward of Rabbi Preida (Eruvin 54b), who reviewed a lesson four hundred times for the benefit of one student. Another great form of humility is to study before the young and to ask them what one does not know, and not to say: "How can I study before him and how can I inquire of him? Is he not younger than I?" Concerning this it is written (Tehillim 119:99): "From all my teachers did I become wise." And our Rabbis have stated further (Avot 4:4) : "Be exceedingly humble of spirit" before all persons - one must be humble of spirit not only before the great, but even before the small. One who follows this course brings merit to society, for he finds favor in the eyes of all who see him, all of his deeds and practices are accepted by them, and he is always praised by them. Because of this they desire to emulate him, they all bless their children to be humble and forbearing like him, and in this way he sanctifies the name of the Blessed One.**

**But the proud man desecrates the Blessed One's name and causes many to sin. He is like a carcass flung out into the street, which causes each passerby to hold his nose until he has passed it (Avot d'Rabbi Natan 11:2). So with the proud man. He debases Torah and those who**

study it and drives people away from it, causing them to say: "Of what use is Torah if those who study it are so bad?" The result is that they separate themselves from Torah and by this they have disgraced the Holy One Blessed be He.

Humility may manifest itself in six ways:

(1) In the intensity of a man's anger. If one is greatly shamed by word or deed and he is in a position to take revenge, but he controls himself and forgives the other for the sake of the Blessed Creator - this is a sign of humility. At times, however, it is forbidden to forgive, as in the case of a Torah scholar who has been shamed in public, in which case he must be conciliated before forgiveness can be granted.

(2) If one suffers a great loss or his children or close relatives die and he vindicates G-d's justice, accepting all with love, as it is written (Vayikra 10:3): "And Aharon was silent." This is a strong sign of humility and submissiveness.

(3) If one hears people praising him for his wisdom and good deeds he should not rejoice in his heart, but rather reflect that his good deeds are very insignificant relative to what he ought to do, being like a drop in the great ocean. It goes without saying that if they attribute to him good deeds that he has not done, he should not rejoice, but be distressed that he is acclaimed for what he does not possess. And if one has related evil of him, if it is true, he should not seek to twist the truth to exonerate himself, but should rather emulate the conduct of Yehudah, who said (Bereshit 38:26): "She speaks the truth; [she is pregnant] by me." And he should not attempt to contradict the man who spoke against him nor hate him for revealing the thing, but he should humble himself before the Blessed Creator, Who revealed but a small part to afflict and chastise him to return to Him. And if what was said about him is false, here too, he should not shame the speaker or be angry with him. It once happened that evil was spoken of one of the pious men, and when this became known to him, he sent a gift to the speaker, writing him: "You sent me a gift of your merits, and I am reciprocating with this gift that I am sending you." For on the Day of judgment Mitzvot are produced on behalf of many people who did not do them, and when they say: "But we did not do these," they are told: "Those who spoke evil against you had performed these Mitzvot, and they were taken from them and given to you." The wicked, likewise, are shown transgressions that they did not commit, and when they protest: "But we did not do these," they are told: "These are the transgressions of those you slandered; they have been taken from them and added to yours." This is the intent of (Tehillim 79:12): "And return to our neighbors seven-fold into their bosoms their insult with which they have insulted you, O Hashem." For all who insult a righteous man it is as if they have insulted the Holy One Blessed be He, as the foes of Israel are referred to as the foes of Hashem in many places. It is in this regard that we are exhorted in the Torah (Devarim 24:9): "Remember what Hashem your G-d did to Miriam on the way [for speaking against Moshe]." Therefore, if one bears his shame in silence, it is evident that he is humble, as we find in the case of Hillel the Prince (Shabbat 31a) whom one shamed: "May there not be many like you in Israel," and who did not take umbrage. It is stated in the Midrash: "The only humble one is he who hears himself shamed and does not reply, as it is written (Bamidbar 12:1): 'And Miriam and Aharon spoke against Moshe,' after which it is written (ibid. :3): 'And the man, Moshe, was extremely humble.'" About such men it is written (Shoftim 5:31): "And those who love Him are as the going forth of the sun in its might" (Shabbat 88b).

(4) If the Blessed One graces a man with wealth and children and He gives him wisdom in abundance, understanding and honor, he should be even more humble and lowly before the

Blessed Creator and honor men and pursue their good to an even greater extent than before. Witness the case of Abraham. When the Holy One Blessed be He said to him (Bereshit 18:17): "Now will I conceal from Abraham?" he humbled himself and responded (ibid. :27): "But I am dust and ashes."

A superabundance of wisdom and wealth in this world falls into one of three categories: (1) good from the Holy One Blessed be He, (2) as a trial, and (3) as revenge. The sign of good: If the wealthy man injures no man through his wealth and the wise man does not utilize his wisdom to harm another, but instead the first through his wealth and the second through his wisdom add to the service of the Holy One Blessed be He, then that wealth and that wisdom are truly a gift from the Holy One Blessed be He. The sign of trial: If the wealthy man is always preoccupied with guarding his money, is always afraid of some mischance whereby he might lose it, and never derives enjoyment commensurate with his wealth through its proper utilization - but he does not injure anyone through his wealth nor boast about his riches, but is constantly preoccupied with the acquisition of wealth and concerned over its safe-keeping, and does not do good to any man nor take pity on the poor to feed or clothe them. Similarly, the wise man, if he devotes most of his wisdom to the demands of this world, to correct his own affairs, being wise neither for evil nor for good - his superabundance, too, is certainly in the category of trial. The sign of revenge: If the wealthy man injures others through his wealth, and boasts about it, and does not perform charity with it, and is constantly preoccupied with it for his own pleasure as in Yeshayahu 22:13: "Joy and gladness, the killing of oxen and the slaughtering of sheep," and (ibid. 5:12): "And the lyre and the lute, the tambourine and the pipe, and the wine of their feasts but they do not regard the deeds of Hashem" - and he does not fulfill thereby Hashem's charge, about this it is written (Kohelet 5:12): "Wealth guarded by its owner to his detriment." And it is the same with the wise man, if he is clever in the doing of evil and does not do good, as it is written (Yirmeyahu 4:22) : "They are wise to do evil and do not know how to do good," then his wisdom is a stumbling block to him. Therefore, the wise man will act with his wealth and his good judgment in accordance with the abundance of his wealth and his wisdom. He will increase humility and lowliness, he will not grow haughty, and he will always worry that his wealth might be his [sole] reward and that he is one of those about whom it is written (Devarim 7:10) : "And he pays His enemies to their faces [in this world] in order to destroy them [in the next]." And the wise man must also worry that he might be one of those about whom it is written (Yirmeyahu 4:22): "They are wise to do evil and do not know how to do good." For every man must employ wisdom and thought to attain good deeds to the ultimate extent of his wisdom.

(5) If one reproves himself for having harmed another in word or deed, not needing the other in any way and not anticipating any favor from him, and he goes of his own volition, without another's intercession, and asks for forgiveness, humbling himself before him, undoing the wrong, and speaking ingratiatingly - this, too, is a sign of humility.

(6) One should be given to soft words, as it is written (Mishle 15:1): "A soft answer turns away wrath," and a low voice, this being an aspect of lowliness, as it is written (Yeshayahu 29:4): "And you will be low. You will speak from the earth, and your speech will be low from out of the dust." And one should not preoccupy himself with beautiful garments and adornments, as it is written (Shemot 33:5) "Remove your ornaments." And his eyes must be constantly lowered, as it is written (Iyov 22:29): "And him of lowered eyes will He help." And he must not be given to luxuries, as it is written (Mishle 13:25): "The righteous man eats to satisfy his soul." All these are signs of humility.

Humility is the ladder by which one ascends to the ways of the Holy One Blessed be He, as it is written (Tehillim 25:9): "He guides the humble in justice and teaches the humble His way." And by means of humility one acquires fear of the Blessed One, as it is written (Mishle 22:4): "Upon the heels of humility comes fear of Hashem" (Shekalim 9b). The Shechinah reposes on the humble, as it is written (Yeshayahu 57:15): "High and holy do I dwell, and with the oppressed and the humble of spirit." For the Holy One Blessed be He forsook all the mountains and hills and inclined His Shechinah upon Mount Sinai and descended. And it is written (ibid. 26:19): "Awake and sing, you dwellers [Shochnei] in the dust, for the dew of light is your dew" - he who makes himself a neighbor [Shachen] of the dust in this world will live in the World-to-Come. And it is written (Tehillim 138:6): "For Hashem is high and He sees the lowly" (Sotah 5a). If one makes his heart soft as flesh, his prayer is heard, as it is written (Yeshayahu 66:23) : "Let all flesh come to bow down to me, says Hashem" (Sotah 5a), and (Tehillim 65:3): "You who hear prayer - to You shall all flesh come." "Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi said: Come and see how great are the lowly of spirit before the Holy One Blessed be He. For in the time of the Temple, if one brought a burnt offering, he would gain the reward for a burnt offering; if one brought a meal offering, he would gain the reward for a meal offering. But if one is possessed of a lowly spirit, the Torah considers it as if he had brought all of the sacrifices, as it is written (Tehillim 51:19): 'The sacrifices of Hashem are a broken spirit.' And, what is more, his prayers are not despised, as it is written (ibid.): 'A heart that is broken and contrite Hashem shall not despise'" (Sotah 5b).

Many good things sprout from the root of humility. The humble man is patient, and patience leads to peace. For by means of humility one stills the wrath of the one who is angry with him, as it is written (Mishle 15:1): "A soft answer turns away wrath." And peace is an extremely good trait. The humble man possesses favor, as it is written (ibid. 3:34): "And to the humble He gives favor." The prayer of the humble man is acceptable to the Holy One Blessed be He because he relinquishes his prerogatives. Because of this the prayer of Rabbi Akiva was accepted when he said, "Our Father, our King, etc." (Taanit 25b). The humble man merits wisdom, for he humbles himself before the wise and sits in the dust of their feet, as it is written (Mishle 13:20): "He who walks with the wise shall become wise." The humble man is pitied by Heaven, as it is written (ibid. 28:13): "And he who confesses and forsakes [evil] will be pitied." The humble man flees position and honor, and modesty hinges upon this, as it is written (Michah 6:8) "And walk modestly with your G-d." The humble man rejoices in the portion that the Holy One Blessed be He has given him, whether large or small, as it is written (Tehillim 37:16) : "Better the little of the righteous than the great wealth of the wicked." He thereby frees his heart from the preoccupations of this world and gives it more leisure to occupy itself with wisdom and Divine service. The humble man judges all men on the scales of merit. One of the Tzaddikim was once asked: "How did you merit becoming master of the men of your generation?" He answered: "By regarding every man I saw as better than I. If he was wiser than I, I said: 'He also fears Hashem more than I do because of his great wisdom.' If he was not so wise as I, I said: 'His sins are unintentional and mine are willful.' If he was older than I, I said: 'His merits are more than mine.' If I was older than he, I said: 'His sins are fewer than mine.' If he was my equal in wisdom and years, I said: 'His heart is better to G-d than mine, for I know the sins that I have committed, but I do not know his.' If he was richer than I, I said: 'He gives more charity than I do.' If he was poorer, I said: 'He is of a more contrite and lowly spirit than I, and he is better than I.' So saying, I honored all men and humbled myself before them."

The defects of the humble man are forgotten because men are solicitous of his honor, and he has many assistants thereto. They tell of a certain king who one night, when many men were sitting before him, got up and tended to the lamp himself so that it would not go out. When he was asked why he did not order another to take care of it, he replied: "I arose a king and returned a king." The Sages say: "Men envy all qualities, except that of humility," and "He who is despised in his own eyes is great in the eyes of others."

What one must remove himself from, however, in this trait is humility and self-effacement before the wicked. About this the Scripture states (Mishle 25:26): "As a muddied fountain and a polluted spring is a righteous man lowering himself before a wicked man." If he has the power, he must take revenge on the wicked for the sake of Hashem (Berachot 7b) and adamantly oppose them and stand up against them as a roaring lion to rescue the robbed from the robber. And he must teach men Divine service and reprove them with all his power according to his wisdom; in the beginning, gently, and if this does not avail, he must shame them. He must exhort to good and against evil with mouth and tongue according to his ability. He must be quick to exact the dues of Hashem from those owing them, and he must not humble or lower himself in doing so.

There is another kind of humility which is worse than pride - that which corresponds to the acts of the false prophets who attired themselves in the manner of the true prophets so that their deceptions and falsehoods would be accepted. In this respect it is written (Zechariah 13:4): "And they shall not wear a hairy mantle in order to deceive." Therefore, those who deport themselves with humility in the matter of dress and speak gently and conduct themselves as saints and righteous men in order to be believed and trusted, and flatter those whom it is forbidden to flatter, and are deceptive in secret, and take care to perform Mitzvot only in public but not in private, and mislead people - such as these desecrate Hashem's Name more than all of the proud, causing others not to believe those who are truly good and to be suspicious of all men, saying: "Perhaps these are like those." One who recognizes such men is duty-bound to expose them, as our Rabbis have stated (Yoma 86b): "The flatterers are to be exposed to prevent desecration of Hashem's name."

Therefore, awake and do not be remiss in curing yourself of pride and deception. Do not be held back by seeing many of your peers not abandoning their pride and deception and telling their reprovers: "Who does not have pride, and who can exercise enough care to be completely honest in business dealings and not deceive anyone and do everything properly? Are there not many people better and greater than I who do such and such? I will do the same and what they will have in the World-to-Come I will also have." Those who reason in this manner are guilty of folly without parallel. Is it wisdom for one whose eyes ail him and who has a sure eye remedy whose efficacy is universally acknowledged to say: "I shall not take any remedy. So what if I become blind? There are plenty of blind people in the world. What is good enough for them is good enough for me." Is this not the height of folly!

Therefore, give heed to your soul and do all that is in your power to do. Do not focus your attention upon he who is inferior to you in wisdom and in Divine service, for in doing so, you will fall short in service and in wisdom. Set your eyes and your heart on he who is superior to you and exert yourself to pursue him and to come as close as you can to him in wisdom and Divine service. In this regard it is written (Hoshea 6:3): "And let us know, let us pursue, to know

Hashem, and His coming forth will be as sure as the morning. He will come as the rain to us, as the strong rain that waters the earth."

### The Gate of Anger

Anger is an evil trait. Just as bleeding is a disease of the body, so anger is a disease of the soul. Our Sages have said (Nedarim 22a): "if one gets angry, all the varieties of Gehinnom rule over him, as it is written (Kohelet 11:10): 'Remove anger from your heart, and remove evil from your flesh,' and evil is nothing other than Gehinnom, as it is written (Mishle 16:4): 'Hashem made everything for His own sake, and even the wicked man for the day of evil.' What is more, he is afflicted by piles, as it is written (Devarim 28:65): 'And Hashem will give you there an angry heart and failing eyes and despondency of soul.' What is it that causes the eyes to fail and the soul to despond — piles.

Our Sages have said further (Nedarim 22b): "If one gets angry, even the Shechinah is of no account to him, as it is written (Tehillim 10:4): 'The wicked man, when his anger grows, [says that] He will not inquire [after My deeds]. All his thoughts are that there is no G-d.' And he also forgets his learning and grows in folly, as it is written (Kohelet 7:9): 'For anger resides in the breast of fools,' and (Mishle 13:16): 'And the fool will spread out folly.' And it is known that his sins are more than his merits, as it is written (ibid. 29:22): 'And the man of anger is abundant in sin.'" And his punishment is very great, as it is written (ibid. 19:19): "He who waxes in anger bears his punishment."

Observe that most men, when they become angry and persist in their anger, do not pay attention to what they do in the great anger, and they do many things in their anger which they would not do otherwise. For anger deprives man of his reasoning, so that he becomes even angrier and enters into dispute and recrimination. Therefore, it is impossible for the angry man to escape great sins. And thus did Eliyahu Hanavi say to Rabbi Yehudah (Berachot 29b): "Do not become angry and do not sin." And our Sages have said (Eruvin 65b): 'A man is recognized in three things.'" One of them is his anger, a man being recognized in the time of his anger. If his anger overpowers his wisdom and he does things in his anger without the guidance of wisdom, in this his anger is recognized. And if his wisdom overpowers his anger, and he holds his tongue and he does not do anything in his anger that he would not do were he not angry, in this his wisdom is recognized. And the Sages said (Pesachim 113b): "There are three that the Holy One Blessed be He loves and one of them is he who does not become angry. And our Rabbis have said (Avot 2:5): 'The stern, punctilious person cannot teach,'" for his students, fearing an angry response, will be afraid to ask him their questions. And even if they ask him, he does not have the tolerance to give them a complete answer, and his answer, too, will be a vexed one, and, as a result, they will not understand. As for the students, however, even if their teacher does become angry with them, let them ask and go into detail, and discount the anger and not quarrel with their teacher. About students such as these our Rabbis have expounded (Mishle 30:33): "And the absorption of wraths will bring forth disputation" — if one's teacher becomes angry with him once and twice and he remains silent, he merits the ability to discriminate between monetary and capital legalistic disputations" — and the master has said that there is nothing more difficult than monetary and capital adjudication (Berachot 63b).

The angry man does not find favor in the eyes of men and he is hated by them. As a result, his deeds are not acceptable to others; and even if he possesses Torah and good deeds, people do not learn from him. Rabbi Safra expounded (Kiddushin 41a): "The angry man reaps only his anger and the good man is given to taste of the fruits of his deeds in this world." The man of

anger is burdensome to the members of his household, who must always suffer his anger and his complaints, and he is always prone to some mishap because of his imposition of inordinate fear in the midst of his household, as in the case of Rabbi Chanina Ben Gamliel, the members of whose household contrived to feed him a limb torn from a living animal (Gittin 7a)

The man of anger does not overlook things and does not forgive his insult, but he is always vengeful and grudging. Anger brings one to contention. When he is angry with his friends, they will argue with him and he with them. And where there is contention, there is envy and hatred. And you well know the evils of contention, as will be made clear in “The Gate of Contention”.

Anger prevents a man’s heart from all that is good, for when a man is angry he does not have the heart to pity the poor. In relation to the Blessed One, it is written (Chavakkuk 3:2): “In anger, You remember mercy,” and this is extremely far from the ways of flesh and blood. Anger blots out one’s concentration in prayer, and the Shechinah does not repose itself in the midst of anger.

The angry man will not be very wise, for anger drives wisdom from one’s heart, so that he will not be able to answer correctly or to reprove correctly, and none of his words will be reasonable. The angry man hardens himself to reproof and chastisement, for no one is allowed to reveal to him his mistakes and his ugly ways. Everyone is afraid to speak to him of his affairs lest he arouse his anger. And even if someone does offer him reproof, he will reject it in anger. In sum, the angry man will not accept any good trait if he does not remove anger from his heart. And just as the angry man cannot accept chastisement from others, so he cannot administer it to them, for the Torah has written (Vayikra 19:17): “Reprove, reprove your friend and do not bear sin because of him.” In the beginning, reprove him gently and in private, telling him softly and ingratiatingly that you are speaking to him for his benefit. If you do so, you will not bear sin because of him. But if you rebuke him in the beginning in a loud, angry voice, and you shame him, then you will bear sin because of him, and that friend will not accept reproof from you. For this is the way of men. When one man bears down strongly on another, the latter stiffens and stands up against him and does not submit. About this Shlomo has said (Kohelet 9:17): ‘The words of the wise, uttered gently, are accepted.’ We are familiar with the instance of Hillel and Shammai, about whom the three converts said (Shabbat 31a): “The unyieldingness of Shammai was likely to drive us out of the world, and the humility of Hillel brought us under the wings of the Shechinah.” Hillel, because of his great humility; could not be brought to anger, for one who keeps himself from anger acquires the trait of humility and of mercy. For cruelty proceeds from anger, as it is written (Shemot 22:23): “And I will be angry, and I will kill you with the sword,” and accordingly, anger is always found in conjunction with revenge, as in (Devarim 11:17): “And the anger of Hashem will burn against you, and He will close up the heavens.”

Anger breeds arrogance in a man, and because of it he will not submit and will not acknowledge the truth. The Sage has said, “When you wish to choose a man as your friend, make him angry. If he admits the truth to you in his anger, make him your friend, and if not, leave him.” Anger produces error. Who was greater than Moshe our teacher, may peace be upon him, who became angry three times and erred because of his anger? As it is written (Vayikra 10:16): “And he became angry with Elazar and Itamar,” followed by (ibid. 10:17): ‘Why did you not eat the Sin offering in the sacred area? [A question indicating a misapprehension on Moshe’s part], and (Bamidbar 20:10): Listen, you rebellious ones,” followed by (ibid. 20:11): ‘And he smote the rock’ [instead of speaking to it], and (Bamidbar 31:14): “And Moshe was angry with the commanders of the army,” followed by (ibid. 31:21): “And Elazar the priest said to the men of the army who had gone to war: ‘This is the law of the Torah,’” indicating that Moshe had forgotten the law (Sifri,

**Mattot 31:21). And now, understand, if this happened to Moshe our teacher, may peace be upon him, the father of the Sages, what happens to fools who become angry? it is for this reason that King Shlomo wrote (Kohelet 7:9): “Do not be hasty in your spirit to become angry.”**

**And take great heed that you do nothing destructive in the midst of your anger, for our Rabbis have said (Shabbat 105b): “If one tears his garments, or scatters his money, or breaks his vessels in his anger, he should be in your eyes as one who serves idols. For such is the craft of the evil inclination. Today he tells a man, ‘Do this,’ and tomorrow he tells him, ‘Go and serve idols,’ and he goes! In this connection it is written (Tehillim 81:10): ‘Let there not be in you a strange G-d.’ Which is the ‘strange G-d’ in a man’s body? The evil inclination.” Observe how one’s evil inclination intensifies in the time of his anger.**

**Rabbi said (Avot 5:11): ‘There are four types of temperaments: Easy to anger and easy to appease — the loss is canceled by the reward; hard to anger and hard to appease — the reward is canceled by the loss; easy to anger and hard to appease — a wicked man; hard to anger and easy to appease — a saint. Now these four temperaments are stated in relation to a righteous man venting anger upon good people, or in the affairs of the world. But if one is with difficulty aroused to anger against transgressors, and is easily reconciled to them, this is an evil trait, for he allows himself to be reconciled with the wicked. How much more so if he is with ease aroused to anger against the righteous and with difficulty against the wicked, or if he is with ease reconciled with the wicked, and with difficulty with the righteous — such a person is absolutely wicked.**

**Although anger is an extremely evil trait, one must sometimes conduct himself in accordance with this trait, like when it is necessary to chastise the wicked, or to instill fear in the members of his household, or to cast his fear upon his students. And when one is angry with transgressors, he must weigh the extent of his anger. Because Moshe our teacher, may peace be upon him, said to the children of Reuven and Gad (Bamidbar 32:14): “You are a brood of sinful men,” his descendant became a priest of idols — even though he was angry for the sake of Heaven. All of man’s actions require the proper measure. He must deliberate how to perform the Mitzvot, both when angry and when in good spirits.**

**If a man has the trait of anger and he suppresses his trait and his habit as if he were not one of the angry ones, about him it is written (Mishle 16:32): ‘Better is he who withholds his wrath than the hero, and he who rules his spirit than the conqueror of a city’; and withholding of wrath is one of the thirteen attributes stated in relation to the Blessed Creator.**

**The Sage has said, “He whose anger comes upon him with thought, upon him you will see composure and grace, and he whose anger comes upon him with thoughtlessness, upon him you will see folly.” The Sage has said further: “He whose anger is strong and his wrath intense is not far from the demented.” And he who is given to anger, his life is no life (Pesachim 113b), and he is never happy. And since he is never happy, he does not accept what transpires with love and joy, he does not acknowledge the rightness of G-d’s justice with him, and he cannot serve the Blessed One with joy.**

**When a man is fasting or when he is beset by some affliction, he is more susceptible to anger. Therefore, he must be especially careful at such times not to become angry. Silence neutralizes anger, as does a soft voice. Therefore, if a man finds his anger growing upon him, he should be silent or speak softly and not raise his voice in his anger, for doing so will intensify his anger, whereas a soft voice and silence allay it. He should also not look at the face of the person he is angry with, but speak to him without looking at him, and then he will expel the anger from his heart.**

Know that the ripeness of a man's intellect is the governing of his anger, as it is written (Mishle 19:11): A man's intellect is the withholding of his anger." Anger inclines greatly towards pride, and the angry man does not escape pride — whose evils you already know. It is fitting that a man keep himself far from anger, and even if something merits an angry response, he should restrain himself and not become, angry. And this is what the angry man must do in the beginning. When he contemplates being angry, he must not feel the offense at all. Even if he was struck or cursed, he must not respond and not grow angry and not feel it, And this is a certainty. If one is very prone to take offense, it is far easier for him not to feel anything and be silent and restrain himself entirely than to allow himself to vent only a little anger. For this is an impossibility for the angry man. If he draws upon a little anger, in the end he will be extremely angry. But if one wishes to withhold his spirit from anger, and yet, at the same time, to instill fear into his children and the members of his household, or if he is a community leader and he wishes to display anger against the community to return them to the right path, what shall he do? In order to chastise them, let him give them the impression that he is angry with them, but let him be calm within himself, as one who pretends to be angry when he really is not. But when he displays this anger to the members of his household, let him take great care not to do so in the presence of poor guests, for they will feel that he is angry with them. Therefore, he should give the impression that he is happy in their presence.

The Sages have commanded to remove oneself from anger until one can control himself so that he won't even feel anger-provoking things, until he roots out the anger from his heart. This is the good way and the way of the righteous (Shabbat 88b): They are shamed, but do not shame in return; they hear their disgrace, but do not answer; they serve out of love and rejoice in afflictions. About them it is written (Shoftim 5:31): 'And those who love Him will be as the going forth of the sun in its strength.'

### Gate of Envy

Envy is a branch of anger, and no one escapes it. For we see all men being pulled one after the other. When one man sees his neighbor acquiring one of the worldly acquisitions, whether it be a type of food or clothing, or building a house, or accumulating money, he exerts himself to do likewise, thinking: My friend has this; I will have it, too- This was intimated by King Shlomo (Kohelet 4:4); "And I saw that all labor and all excellence of workmanship was one man's envy of another"

One who is overpowered by this trait is extremely despicable. For envy brings one to lust, for when a man does not take to heart what others have, he does not lust; but when his heart is drawn on and he envies what others have, he covets and desires, and the Torah has said (Shemot 20:14): "Do not covet your neighbor's wife...and all that belongs to your neighbor." And when he covets, he steals, as it is written (Michah 2:2); 'And they coveted fields and they stole them.' And one in whom lust mounts is close to transgressing the Ten Commandments. By way of illustration: There was once a man who had a wicked neighbor whose property was separated from his own by a wall- This wicked man lusted after his neighbor's wife and some of his possessions. One Friday, he heard his neighbor telling his wife: "I want to go away for the day on business," and he did so. What did this wicked man do? On Shabbat eve, he went and broke down the wall between them, thus transgressing "Remember and observe" (the Shabbat). He then forced the woman whom he lusted to possess, transgressing "Do not covet," and lay with

her, transgressing “Do not commit adultery’ Afterwards, when he began to steal the money, the woman cried out and he rose up against her and killed her, thus transgressing “Do not kill,” and when he robbed and stole what he lusted after, he transgressed “Do not steal” and “Do not covet.’ The next day his father and mother rose up and reproved him, and he rose up against them and struck them, thus transgressing “Honor your father and your mother,” Afterwards he was brought before the court and testified falsely with his friends that these things that he took were pledges which had been given him by his neighbor and which he had, in turn, entrusted to him and had not been able to reclaim until now that the robbers had broken the wall and killed his wife, hearing of which, he, too, had gone in and taken his pledge — thus transgressing “Do not testify falsely.” And wherever he came he swore that he had committed no offense, thus transgressing “Do not swear falsely.” In the end, his evil was revealed and his offense publicized. His shame was so great that he gave himself up to corruption and denied the Living G-d, thus transgressing “I am Hashem your G-d.” Finally, he became addicted to idol worship and bowed down to and served idols, thus transgressing “Do not have any other G-ds beside me” and “Do not bow down to them and do not serve them.” And all this was caused by lust. We see, then, that he who is lustful is close to transgressing the entire Torah.

But there is another, closer, way of knowing and understanding how extremely ruinous envy and lust are. And that is as stated by King Shlomo (Mishle 23:17): “Let your heart not envy sinners, but be in fear of Hashem all the day.” When a man envies sinners and sees their wealth and success and he sees righteous men in poverty and steeped in afflictions, his soul despises fear of Hashem, His judgments, and His statutes, and he despises those who study and observe Torah, as it is written (Malachi 3:13-15): “Your words have been strong against Me,’ says Hashem. Yet you say: What have we spoken against you?’ You have said: ‘It is vain to serve G-d, and what does it profit us that we have kept His charge and have walked mournfully before Hashem of Hosts? And now we call the proud happy. They who work wickedness are built up. Even they who tempt G-d escape!’ This attitude brings folly into men’s minds and turns their hearts backwards when they see the wicked prospering and the righteous being afflicted. Because of this they walk in the willfulness of their hearts, saying: “Such and such do this and they are rich. We will do the same thing and what will happen to them will also happen to us.” All this because of their envying the wicked and desiring their wealth and tranquility. They, therefore, cast off from themselves the yoke of the Mitzvot. But the righteous do not envy the wicked and they desire neither their wealth nor their tranquility, because they consider that their wealth is stored up for them for their evil, and their tranquility, to deprive them of the great good that is stored up for the righteous, and considering, likewise, that the poverty and hardships of the righteous serve the purpose of purifying and cleansing them in order to magnify their stature for the World-to-Come. Without doubt one who thinks in this manner will not desire and not envy, but, to the contrary, will rejoice in seeing the tranquility of the wicked and will say: “If this is the lot of those who anger Him, how much more so will He give and give again to those who do His will” (Bereshit Rabba 65:22).

Envy stems from deficiency of soul. If one envies a man’s comeliness or strength or wealth, then he does not desire what the Blessed Creator decreed. This is comparable to the situation of a servant who has complaints about his master’s deeds and is not satisfied with his master’s affairs. This is not a loyal servant. It goes without saying that one must not rail against the blessed Creator, all of whose deeds are just and right, and whose justice must not be questioned.

Envy leads to strife, as you see from the instance of Korach, who envied the honor of Elitzafan Ben Uziel (Bamidbar Rabba 18:2) and, as a result, was lost along with all of his assembly, even the suckling infants (ibid. 18:4). Envy is as a physical illness to men that consumes them. The Sage said to his son: “Guard yourself against envy because it can be detected in the change in your appearance from bitterness of heart, and that man whom you envy rejoices in your heart’s woe, and why should you cause your foe to rejoice and avenge himself of you?”

The envier robs himself for he is always downcast, his intellect is depleted because of the great envy buried within him, and his heart is not free to study and pray with concentration and to do good deeds. All men find a pleasant taste in their food except the envier, who finds it only when good departs from his neighbor.

For all hatred there is hope of remediation For if one hates his neighbor for having robbed him, the hatred will depart with the return of the stolen object. The same applies to all hatred stemming from a particular grievance. When the grievance is removed, the hatred ends — as opposed to hatred arising from envy. The Sage said to his son: “Do not envy your brother for what he has, for his life will be pleasant and you will be sated with worry and grief.” And the Sage said further: “The envier and desirer was created only for anger.

The early Sages would pray “that we not envy others, nor they envy us” (Yerushalmi, Berachot 4:2). Why did they pray for others with respect to this trait more than with respect to other traits? The idea is that many men cause others to envy them. When they don beautiful clothing and do not avail others of what is theirs, they arouse envy and covetousness They would, therefore, pray for others, lest they cause them envy, and the Torah has said (Vayikra 19:14): “And do not place a stumbling block before the blind.” Therefore, it is a virtuous trait in a man not to wear unusually beautiful or costly garment neither he, his wife, nor his children. The same applies to food and other matters — so that others not envy him. But if one has been graciously favored by the Blessed Creator with wealth and properly let him benefit others thereby, both rich and poor, and comport himself gently with them and accord them loving kindness We have already expounded upon the great desirability of being beloved by others. And when he is beloved by all men, they will not envy him and will not desire what is his. It is proper, however, for one to ascend to the higher virtues which are a glory to him and have others emulate him. If one guards himself against envy, his body does not disintegrate and worms have no power over him, as it is written (Mishle 14:30): ‘And the rottenness of the bones is envy’ — “all who have envy in their heart, their bones rot; but all those who do not have envy in their heart, their bones do not rot” (Shabbat 152b). Therefore, one should keep himself far from envy and desire and not desire anything possessed by others. He should not say: “I can desire what my friend has and give him money for it”; for if the latter does not desire to sell what he owns, it is forbidden to plead with him to do so. For in the event that the latter is ashamed to refuse him, it is as if he is forcing him. And it is especially forbidden for a distinguished person whose request will certainly not be refused to solicit a purchase or a gift from his neighbor if he is not certain that it will be given wholeheartedly.

A parable: A king once met a desirer and an envier walking together on the road and said to them, “Let one of you ask for something and it will be given him, and the other will get twice as much.” The envier did not want to ask first, envying his friend a double portion, and the desirer desired the double portion. Finally, the desirer pressed the envier to ask first — whereupon he asked that they gouge out one of his eyes and both of his friend’s eyes!

How many evils proceed from envy! The primal serpent envied Adam and brought death to the world; and it was decreed upon him (Bereshit 5:14): “You shall walk upon your stomach and you shall eat dust.” See also what happened to Cain, Korach, Bilam, Do’eg, Achitofel, Gechazi, Adoniah, Avshalom, and Uzziahu — who desired what was not theirs. Not only did they not gain what they desired, but they lost what they possessed (Sotah 9b). All of this should teach one to separate oneself from envy and desire. Let him reflect: If even what he has is not his, for on the morrow it may be gone then what avails him, that is not his! Concerning this it is written (Mishle 27:1): “For you do not know what the day will bring.”

Great reward awaits the man who guards himself against envy and desire. For with most of the transgressions a man stands to suffer shame if he transgresses, and he restrains himself because of this. For example, he restrains himself from robbery and theft out of fear that he will be revealed, exposed, and publicized and that he will be put to shame and suffer a great loss. But envy and desire are in the heart and not subject to public scrutiny, but only to one’s conscience. About such matters it is written (Vayikra 25:17): “And you should fear your G-d.”

Even though envy is an extremely evil trait, there is an area in which it is extremely good and noble — the area of fear of Hashem, as it is written (Mishle 23:17): “Let your heart not envy sinners, but be in the fear of Hashem all the day.” It is in this regard that our Rabbis of blessed memory said (Baba Batra 21a): “The envy of the scribes increases wisdom.” If one sees another learning, he should generate envy in his heart and say: “He learns a whole day; I will do likewise.” The same applies to all Mitzvot and good traits everyone should envy his neighbor and seize upon his good deeds. If one sees an evildoer with a single good trait, let him envy him for that trait and emulate it. But if one envies his neighbor for occupying himself with Torah and good deeds not by way of thinking: If he does this, I will also do it, but rather thinking enviously in his heart: Because he has better qualities than I do he is therefore more honored by others than I am, and, as a result, contrives schemes to impede and obstruct him in his Torah and good deeds, such envy is a grievous ill, and he is a sinner and a causer of sin, a companion of Yeravam Ben Nevat, and he has no share in the World-to-Come.

One should always honor those who fear Hashem, those who study Torah, and those who occupy themselves with Mitzvot, and he should lend them a hand and support them with his person and his wealth. This will cause others to envy him and to say: “If we do likewise, they will honor and assist us, too.” And Mitzvot done not for the sake of Heaven will come to be done for the sake of Heaven (Pesachim 50b). The Holy One Blessed be He said: “Be envious on my behalf, for if not for envy, the world would not endure, a man would not plant a vineyard or marry a woman or build a house” (Midrash Tehillim 37:1). For all of these things proceed from man’s envy of his neighbor. If one man builds a house, another will set his mind to doing so. The same applies to taking a wife; everyone is envious of the other. And since the existence of the world depends upon envy, let one utilize all of his envy for the sake of Heaven. If he builds a house, let him build in it a room for Torah study, and let his home be a meeting place for sages, a hospice for guests (Avot 1:45), and a place for engaging in loving-kindness to others. And thus have our Sages said: “If Abraham had not been envious, he would not have acquired heaven and earth. And when was he envious? When he asked Malkitzedek (Shem): ‘How did you get out of the ark?’ The other responded: ‘In the merit of the charity that we performed there.’ Abraham questioned: ‘What charity did you have to perform in the ark? Were there any paupers there? Were not Noach and his Sons the only ones there? With whom did you do charity?’ Malkitzedek answered: ‘With the beasts, the animals, and the birds. We did not sleep, but distributed food to each of them the entire night.’ Hearing this, Abraham said: ‘Now if these had not done charity with beasts, animals,

and birds, they could not have left the ark, and they left only because they did such charity. If I, then, do charity with men, who are created in the image of the Holy One Blessed be He, how great will that act be!' (Midrash Tehillim *ibid.*). About him it is written (Bereshit 21:33): 'And he planted an eshel in Beersheva' — Achilah [food], Shetiya [drink], and Levayah [escort].” In such a way should a man increase envy.

Likewise, one should be zealous on G-d's behalf against sinners and evildoers — to war with them and chastise them — as our Rabbis of blessed memory have said (Sanhedrin 81b): “If one cohabits with an Aramean woman, zealots may strike him down.” Moshe was zealous on G-d's behalf against the Egyptian, as it is written (Shemot 2:12): “And he smote the Egyptian.” And so we find with Eliyahu, who said (I Melachim 19:10): “I have been zealous on behalf of Hashem, the G-d of Hosts, for the Children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant” And so it is written of Pinchas (Bamidbar 25:11): “Because he was zealous for My sake in their midst” And the Blessed One rewarded him for this, as it is written (*ibid.* :12): ‘Behold, I give to him my covenant of peace.’ And it is written (Devarim 1:17): Do not be afraid of any man.” One who fears the Blessed One will give his life for the sanctification of His name, as it is written (Shemot 32:26): ‘Whoever is for Hashem, let him come to me; and all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him.’ And it is written (Bamidbar 25:7): “And Pinchas, the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon the priest saw, and he arose from the midst of the congregation and took a spear in his hand.” All who fear Hashem and who are pure of heart are duty bound to stir up zealousness on behalf of Hashem when they see “the hands of the princes and rulers in crime.” Our Rabbis of blessed memory have said (Bereshit Rabba 26:5): “Any breach which is not made by the great is not called a breach, as it is written (Ezra 9:2): ‘And the hands of the princes and the rulers were in this crime first.’”

### The Gate of Arrogance

Arrogance is a base trait in most of its workings. It is the opposite of the trait of shame. The man of shame overlooks offenses, pities, pardons, and forgives, but he who is arrogant and stubborn does not forgive and is not ashamed before any man, but stands up with arrogance and rebellion against all men and commits all evil deeds without shame, strengthening himself in evil and hardening himself in transgression. Concerning such men it is written (Yirmeyahu 5:3): "They made their faces harder than rock; they refused to repent," and (Yechezkel 2:4) : "And the children are hard of face and hard of heart." All of the good qualities stated in respect to shame have their opposite in arrogance. When one confirms himself in this trait, he is very much despised by others, though he may be wise. Many evils are pulled along in the tow of arrogance, for when one is arrogant to others, he will not escape argument, hatred, and envy. The arrogant man denies his lineage, is not respectful of the great or gracious to the aged, and in his arrogance finds it easy to commit all of the transgressions in the Torah. About such a one it is said (Avot 5:20): "The brazen-faced - to Gehinnom!"

The arrogant one is called wicked, as it is written (Mishle 21:29): "The wicked man has made his face brazen," and the wicked are ugly and despicable in the eyes of Hashem, and their very name is despised, as it is written (*ibid.* 10:7): "May the name of the wicked rot!" About shame it is written (Tehillim 25:9): "And He shall teach the humble His way"; and about the wicked, arrogant one (*ibid.* 146:9): "And He shall twist the way of the wicked."

One who is arrogant piles up mounds of transgressions and still considers himself righteous. This is the intent of the formula of confession: "We are not so hard-faced and

stiff-necked as to tell you, O Hashem our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that we are righteous and have not sinned, but we have, indeed, sinned." It is an evil, sickly trait for one to be wicked and to say, "I have not sinned." The Holy One Blessed be He judges him without pity for this, as it is written (Yirmeyahu 2:35): "Behold, I will enter into judgment with you for saying, 'I have not sinned.'" And it is written (Mishle 28:13): "He who conceals his sins will not succeed, but he who confesses and forsakes them will be treated mercifully." This path of obduracy is very far from the paths of repentance and the way of good, as it is written about the harlot (ibid. 7:13): "She hardened her face and spoke to him." This trait is extremely evil for it leads one to shame his friend and the poor, as it is written (ibid. 18:23): "The poor man will speak with supplications and the rich man will answer with arrogance." And how much worse when one shames his teachers and hardens his face against them and stiffens his neck and his face against his reprovers in the greatness of his arrogance. Then this trait removes him from the world. He should remove it from his soul.

But this trait is very commendable when employed in Divine service, hardening one's face against the wicked, stiffening his neck against them not to accept their counsel, not tolerating their lies and abominations, and not flattering them. One must harden one's face in the performance of Mitzvot even if people ridicule him for performing them. And one must harden his face against his teachers, to ask what he does not know and not to be ashamed in doing so (see Berachot 63b). And one must be stubborn in reproofing others and revealing their sins to them.

One must control this trait - to suppress it where it is undesirable and resist it with all his strength (for it is extremely difficult to escape this evil trait unless one exercises all of his power and strength to conquer it and remove it from himself wherever it is uncalled for) - and to stamp it within him and upon his face wherever being stiffnecked would result in his being rewarded.

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## SEFER SHAARE TESHUVAH LE RABBENU YONAH The Seventh Principle

23. Humbling oneself with all one's heart and lowering oneself: One who recognizes his Creator knows how abased, lowly, and fallen in worth is one who transgresses His words, as it is said, "One who is vile, despised in his own eyes. .." (Tehillim 15 :4), and, "How much less one that is abominable and impure, who drinks iniquity like water" (Job 15 : 16). "Despised silver shall men call them" (Jeremiah 6 :30). He should, therefore, humble himself and be lowly in his eyes. David, may Peace be upon him, when he confessed his sin upon Nathan the Prophet's having come to him, concluded, "The sacrifices of G-d are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O G-d, You wilt not despise" (Tehillim 51 :19). "A broken spirit" connotes a humble spirit. We learn from this that humility is one of the principles of repentance, for this particular psalm is a foundation for the principles of repentance. Through humility one finds favor with G-d, as it is said, "But on this one will I look, even on him, that is poor and of a contrite spirit" (Isaiah 66 : 2); and it is said in relation to repentance, "And He will say: Cast you up, cast you up, clear the way; Take up the stumbling-block out of the way of My people. For thus says the High and Lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also

that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (ibid. 57 : 14-15). From this we learn that humility is one of the principles of repentance. The remainder of the passage, likewise, deals with penitents: "For I will not contend forever ... For with the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth ... I have seen his ways and will heal him; I will lead him also" (ibid. 16-18). "I have seen his ways" - of humility, as stated, "with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (ibid. 15); bitterness of heart-as stated, "For the spirit that enwraps itself is from Me" (ibid. 16). "And I will heal him" (ibid. 18) -"I will forgive his transgression," as in "I will heal their backsliding" (Hoshea 14:5), "Return and be healed" (Isaiah 6: 10). "I will lead him also" (ibid. 57: 16) "I will assist him in forsaking the sin and I will strengthen him over his evil inclination."

24. There are many degrees of humility, as will be explained, with G-d's help, in the Gates of humility. The highest level of humility, which is dictated by the process of repentance, is magnifying and glorifying the service of G-d; taking no credit for oneself, but minimizing everything in one's eyes in consideration of one's obligations in the service of G-d. One should, therefore, humble himself and serve G-d humbly, desiring no honor for his honorable deeds, nor praise for his praiseworthy deeds, concealing them from the knowledge of others as far as possible.

25. The above idea is stated as a principle of repentance in the words of the Prophet, may Peace be upon him: "Wherewith shall I come before Hashem and bow myself before G-d on high?" (Micah 6 :6). Wherewith shall I come before Hashem for His many loving-kindnesses? (G-d's loving-kindnesses having been alluded to earlier in the passage) "And wherewith shall I bow myself before G-d on high" for my many sins? "G-d on high" is stated to teach and make known the fittingness of lowering and humbling of oneself on the part of one who has rebelled against the Highest. The explanation follows: "Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will Hashem be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil" (ibid. 6-7) with which I shall approach Him for His many loving-kindnesses? "Shall I give my first-born for my offense" (ibid. 7) refers to "and bow myself before G-d on high" (ibid. 6): that is, "Shall I give my first-born for my offense to show my humility and abasement over my many sins, recognizing my offense to be of such gravity as to warrant the giving of my firstborn as a sacrifice for it, its being so great and grave? "The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (ibid.): In relation to "offense" (*pasha*) we have "my first-born," and in relation to "sin" (*chet*), "the fruit of my body:" *pasha*, as we are told by our Sages of blessed memory. constituting rebellion, and being worse than *chet* (Yoma 36b).

The answer: "It has been told you, O man, what is good, and what Hashem does require of you: only to do justly and to love mercy" (ibid. 8), (these being more select than burnt-offerings or gifts for presentation to G-d for His loving-kindnesses). "and to walk humbly with your G-d" (ibid.). The essential factor in your humility and abasement is serving G-d humbly. It is this which defines your humility indicating that you desire no honor for your honorable deeds, especially for those attainments which the Creator does not desire from His creations and which one should therefore, take no pride in, such as wealth, strength, and the various wisdoms: this, as opposed to the knowing and understanding of the Blessed One, as it is said, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom..." (Jeremiah 9 : 22).

26. The penitent is further obliged to be humble in that he is duty-bound to rid himself of the attributes that bring about sin and produce offenses.

27. Pride results in many transgressions and brings one's evil inclination to bear more strongly upon him, as it is said. "Then your heart be lifted up and you forget Hashem your G-d" (Devarim 8 :14), and, "A haughty look, and a proud heart the tillage of the wicked is sin" (Proverbs 21 : 4). Pride is "the tillage of the wicked" in that sins sprout from it, as it is said, "Then your heart be lifted up, and you forget..." and, "Through the pride of the wicked, the poor is hotly pursued" (Tehillim 10: 2), and, .. "which speaks arrogantly against the righteous, with pride" (ibid. 31: 19), and, ".. because they caused their terror in the land of the living" (Ezekiel 32 : 26). As men till their fields so that the seeds will sprout and yield them a rich harvest, so do the wicked till pride in their heart and sow evil thoughts therein to engender and bring forth transgressions, the fruits of their thoughts. The idea is stated in the form of a simile, as in, "Thus judgment springs up as hemlock..." (Hoshea 10: 4). "Sin" in the aforementioned verse (Proverbs 21:4) may be construed in terms of "The tillage of the wicked is the tillage of sin," wherein many sins are included, as in "The sin of Judah" (Jeremiah 17: 1). It may also be rendered "and sin," as in "The sun and the moon.. (Habakkuk 3: 11), the idea being that pride not only leads to sins, but is a sin in itself, as it said, "Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to Hashem" (Proverbs 16: 5). The haughty man is in the hands of his evil inclination, for being "an abomination to Hashem," he receives no assistance from Him.

28. The penitent is further obliged to humble himself and to undertake to conduct himself in the manner prescribed by our Sages of blessed memory: "And be lowly of spirit before all men" (Avot 4: 10). So doing, he will not be angered by his neighbors nor take offense at them; nor will he take to heart all the things that he hears, overlooking injustices against himself in order to atone for his transgressions, as our Sages of blessed memory have said, "If one overlooks injustices against himself, all of his sins will be forgiven" (Rosh Hashanah 17a), G-d's relationship with him corresponding to his relationship with others. This concept constitutes a highly significant opening for hope, as it is said, "Let him put his mouth in the dust; perhaps there may be hope. Let him give his cheek to him that smites him; let him be satiated with shame" (Lamentations 3: 29).

#### The Eighth Principle

29. Humility in deed: He must be given to soft answers, as it is said, "A soft answer turns away wrath" (Proverbs 15: 1). He must speak in a low voice, this being the way of lowliness, as it is said, "And brought down you shall speak out of the ground, and your speech shall be low out of the dust" (Isaiah 29: 4); this, as opposed to what is stated in relation to the haughty man of wealth, "... but the rich answers impudently" (Proverbs 18: 23). He must not occupy himself with beautiful clothes and ornaments, as it is said, "Therefore now put off your ornaments from you" (Exodus 33: 5), and, in relation to Ahab, "... and he fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went softly" (I Kings 21: 27). Concerning this the Blessed One said, "Do you see how Achav humbles himself ..?" (ibid. 29). "...and went softly"-in contrast to the manner of kings, who go about highly attended and with much tumult.

His eyes must constantly be lowered, as it is said, "And He saves him whose eyes are

lowered" (Job 22: 29). The signs of humility, such as a soft answer, a low voice, and lowered eyes, will remind him to humble his heart.

#### **FOURTH GATE**

**13** A man must reflect and come to the realization that the hardships he encounters and the afflictions which come upon him are not commensurate with the greatness of his transgression and the multitude of his sins, but that the Blessed One, in His pity for him, chastises him as a father does his son, as it is said, "And you shall consider in your heart, that as a man chastens his son, so Hashem your G-d chastens you" (Devarim 8: 5). And our Sages of blessed memory have interpreted: "Your heart knows the deeds that you have done and the afflictions that I have brought upon you, and that I have not afflicted you in proportion to your deeds" (Yalkut Shemot, Yitro 303). And it is said, "Know therefore that G-d exacts of you less than your iniquity deserves" (Job 11 :6), and, "... that You our G-d has punished us less than our transgressions deserve" (Ezra 9 :13).

#### **SEFER CHOVOT HA LEVAVOT THE GATE OF HUMILITY**

##### **II An Explanation of the Obligations To Have Humility before G-d, May He Be Exalted**

Having discussed in the preceding gate [the obligation] to devote all our acts to G-d alone, and since pride in action devoted to G-d affects the masters of such conduct more swiftly than all other injurious influences and greatly damages these acts, I think that the most important thing, now, is to follow with the antidote to such pride, and that is humility.

Moreover, it is clear to us that humility is the very essence of service. It is what keeps a servant from attributes of lordship, and [constitutes] an acknowledgment to G-d that these are uniquely His, to the exclusion of all created things, as David, peace be upon him, said: "Yours, G-d, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and on earth [is Yours]" (Divrei HaYamim I, 29:11); "For who in the skies can be compared to G-d? Who is like G-d among the heavenly beings?" (Tehillim 89:7). It also keeps a person from haughtiness, arrogance, pride, vainglory, domination, the urge to control everything, the desire for what is above him, and similar outgrowths of pride.

It is now fitting to explain [the following] ten points on humility:

- 1. What is humility?**
- 2. Into how many classes is it divided?**
- 3. What induces humility?**
- 4. In which situations should one practice it?**
- 5. What are the methods of acquiring it?**
- 6. The code of conduct a humble person should follow.**
- 7. When can humility on the part of someone be taken as genuine, and when not?**
- 8. Is humility dependent upon the other virtues, or are the other virtues dependent on humility?**
- 9. Can pride and humility coexist within the human heart?**

## 10. The benefits of humility to one's worldly interests and in the life hereafter.

1

Humility is the soul's sense of lowliness, its acquiescence, and its lack of self-importance. It is one of the qualities of the soul and, when internalized, comes to expression externally in the form of gentle speech, a soft voice, meekness when angered, and restraint in taking revenge when one has the power to exact it.

The story is told of a king before whom a man was sentenced, and a whip was brought for punishment. The king said to the man, "As G-d lives, were it not for my great anger with you, I would have taken strict revenge against you." And then he pardoned him. [That is, precisely because the King grew angry did he decide not to discipline the man; for he did not think it proper to satisfy anger.] It is related further of him that he used to say, "I know of no offense heavy enough to outweigh my meekness."

2

How many kinds of humility are there? Humility can be divided into three classes. One of these includes human beings and many species of nonrational animals. It consists in poverty of spirit and passive endurance of injuries that might have been avoided, [but were endured] because one is ignorant of the ways to avoid them. It is found among foolish and ignorant people, due to their slight knowledge and weak understanding of their own selves and self-worth. It is called humility by convention only; but, in truth, it is spiritual poverty and blindness, brought on by ignorance that has overcome the soul and prevents it from seeing what is for its own good, as it says: "You have hidden understanding from their hearts; therefore, You will not lift them up" (Iyov 17:4).

Humility in the true sense is that quality which comes as a result of the uplifting of the soul, when it has raised itself above any participation in the low qualities of brute creatures, and when, on account of its superior wisdom, nobility of spirit, and clear grasp of good and ignoble qualities, it is beyond imitating the traits of the lower classes. When this is followed by humility of the soul and lowliness, humility is a praiseworthy quality. Otherwise, however, it is not counted among the admirable traits and virtues of the soul but among the reprehensible traits; for a [lowly] disposition such as this is like that of the beasts.

The second kind of humility is that exhibited by an individual toward other human beings who dominate him, as that of the prisoner in the hands of the enemy or of a slave in his master's power. Another example [of the second kind] is the humility of an individual who is dependent on others and is in great need of what they possess. Such is the humility of an employee toward his employer, of a poor person toward his wealthy supporter, and of a student toward his teacher; and of the debtor unable to pay a just debt, who must therefore humble and abase himself before his creditor, as it is written: "The borrower is servant to the lender" (Mishle 22:7).

A person may recognize that he is inadequate in the moral disciplines relevant to this world and the next, and that he is ignorant of the right course. If he then meets the prophet of his generation, or a moral teacher, or one who calls him to the right path, he will be humble and lowly before him, as our Masters, of blessed memory, said: Attending

to the Torah is even greater than studying it, for It says, "Elisha Ben Shafat, who poured water on the hands of Eliyahu" (Melachim 11, 3:11). It does not say "who studied," but "who poured." This indicates that attending to the Torah is even greater than studying it [Berachot 7b].

It also says, "But his attendant, Yehoshua Ben Nun, a young man, would not leave the tent" (Shemot 33:11). Thus said the Wise One [King Shlomo] of the illiterate multitude: "The borrower is servant to the lender" (Mishle 22:7); "A base fool becomes a slave to the wise" (ibid. 11:29).

This kind of humility, though necessary by nature, is not a constant, as it is not relevant to all people and is not necessary at all times and in every place. For the prisoner, after release from captivity; the slave, after he redeems himself; the borrower, when he pays his debt; the student, when he is not with his teacher; and the poor person, when not in the presence of his benefactor, are under no obligation to show humility and lowly submission to their respective former superiors.

The third kind of humility is humility toward the Creator, may He be exalted. It is an obligation that applies to all people, at all times and in every place. The consideration of this duty is the purpose of this gate. One who has humility [of this kind] is called in Scriptures humble, self-deprecating, modest, broken, lowly in spirit, broken in spirit, crushed, tenderhearted, shattered in spirit, brokenhearted, and bowed in soul. When we will speak of humility without specifying [which kind], we will have in mind only this third kind, which is the highest degree of humility. To one who attains this humility, the way of closeness to G-d and [worthiness] to stand before Him is not far off. He will be accepted by the Creator and be pleasing to Him, as it is written: "True sacrifice, to G-d, is a broken spirit; a heart broken and crushed, O G-d, You will not scorn" (Tehillim 51:19).

### 3

Ten circumstances induce humility and lowliness in an arrogant individual. 1. When he suffers loss of vitality in natural functions, due to illness, natural imbalance, or frail constitution, he is humbled as a result, and supplicates G-d and human beings, as it says: "He humbled their heart through hardship" (Tehillim 107:12).

2. When one meets with misfortune or suffers poverty, and becomes dependent on others after not having been previously dependent on them, he is humbled before them and his spirit is too broken to behave proudly in his sad condition, as it says: "And everyone who is left in your house will come to bow low to him for a bit of money and a loaf of bread, and will say, 'Please assign me to one of the priestly duties, that I may eat a bit of bread'" (Shemuel 1, 2:36).

3. When another person showers him with favor and shows him much kindness, he humbles himself before him, as It says: "Many court the favor of a generous man, and everyone is the friend of a man who gives" (Mishle 19:6).

4. One who is in debt to his fellow and is unable to pay it will humble himself before him, as it says: "If you do not have with what to pay, why should he take your bed from under you?" (ibid. 22:27).

5. One who is held in captivity by his enemy will be humble before him and bowed in spirit, as it says: "They pressed his feet with fetters, iron was damped on his soul" (Tehillim 105:18); "And if they are bound in chains, they will be caught in the cords of affliction".

(Iyov 36:8).

6. A slave who cannot redeem himself from bondage to his master will humble himself before him, as it says: "Behold, as the eyes of slaves unto the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a maid unto the hand of her mistress" (Tehillim 123:2).

7. When a person is beset with troubles and tragedy, his spirit is broken and his heart humbled, as it is written: "If then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they accept their punishment" (Vayikra 26:41).

8. When one makes a personal accounting of how he has rebelled against G-d in return for His kindness, and defied Him through it instead of offering praise, he will humble himself and feel embarrassed and ashamed before G-d, as it says: "My G-d, I am embarrassed and ashamed" (Ezra 9:6).

9. When the Creator rebukes a person and puts him to shame for rebelling against Him, he humbles himself and is frightened, as He said of Achav: "Have you observed how Achav has humbled himself before Me?" (Melachim I, 21:29 ).

10. When a man feels that death is approaching and his day is coming, and he thinks of the terror of death and of the final judgment and reckoning, he will feel humbled and bowed and will think little of himself, and he will regret that his days have passed and that his life is coming to an end without his providing himself with good deeds to precede him when he sets out on his journey, as it says: "Sinners in Tziyon are frightened" (Yeshayahu 33:14).

**In which situations is it a duty to practice humility and lowliness?**

**I say that a person is obligated to conduct himself with humility in seven situations:**

1. [One should be humble] in his business dealings with peers and in dealing kindly with his fellows, as I will explain later on, when discussing this topic. It was of this that Scripture said, "He is self-deprecating and contemptible in his own eyes" (Tehillim 15:4).

2. [One should be humble] when meeting sages who are distinguished by their knowledge of G-d and His Torah, or pious people who are close to G-d, as it says: "Let the righteous man strike me in kindness and rebuke me" (ibid. 141:5); "The evil bow low before the good" (Mishle 14:19).

3. When a person is praised for his good qualities, it is his duty to humble himself and recall his previous transgressions and sins, of which the Creator is aware though He covers over them and shows forbearance, so that the person may repent for them. He should not rejoice that people are mistaken in [their judgment of] him but, rather, should grieve, since the Creator, May He be exalted, knows truly the wickedness of his deeds and his neglect in meeting his obligations to G-d and in making a return for His favor; and so, in his heart, he will be humbled, as it says: "For I admit my transgression; I am worried, because of my sin" (Tehillim 38:19).

4. When one is spoken of contemptuously, he should humble himself before the Creator and thank Him for revealing only a small part of what is much larger, to afflict and reprove him, so that he return unto Him, as it says: "He opens their ear to discipline" (Iyov 36:10).

**5. When the Creator bestows upon an individual various kinds of benefits in this world, he should be humble before G-d, because of the heavy debt of gratitude he owes for these benefits. He should also humble himself before Him in fear that these benefits have been sent as retribution. For great wealth in this world serves one of three purposes: either as a blessing granted by the Creator, may He be exalted; or as a trial and test; or as a punishment and stumbling block.**

The sign that it is a blessing is that its possessor is too preoccupied with the fulfillment of his duties toward the Creator to concern himself with his wealth; it leads to an increase in action for the sake of G-d; and he neither becomes enamored with his wealth nor relies on it, but spends it on his duties toward the Creator, as Iyov described his handling of his wealth and how he spent it on his duties toward the Creator, and commented on the little trust he had in it: "Have I made gold my trust, or called fine gold my confidence?" (ibid. 31:24).

The sign that wealth is sent as a trial and test is that its owner is so preoccupied in his concern to retain his money and increase it, so anxious to save it from mishap, that he is unable to fulfill his obligation of gratitude to the Creator for it. He is [given wealth only to be] tested by it; he gets nothing out of it but continual worry, the headache of protecting it, and his subjection to a strict accounting for it. Of such a person Scripture says, "All his life, his concerns are suffering and pain" (Kohelet 2:23).

The sign that wealth is a punishment is that its possessor is too busy enjoying it and taking pleasure in it to fulfill his obligations to the Creator and to other people. He forgets the Benefactor and fails to realize that he owes a debt of service for his good fortune. As Scripture says, "And behold, gladness and joy, killing of cattle and slaughter of sheep, the eating of meat and the drinking of wine: 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die!'" (Yeshayahu 22:13); "They have lyre and harp, timbrel and flute and wine at their feasts, and they do not notice G-d's works" (ibid. 5:12). This is a punishment in the form of a blessing.

The intelligent individual, who attains good fortune and whose secular affairs proceed according to his wish, will be humble, because of his apprehension, lest it be a punishment from the Creator, as It says: "Wealth reserved for its owner, for his misfortune" (Kohelet 5:12).

**6. When one studies the Torah and the books of the prophets and reads of the reward and the punishment, and he knows that he has been deficient in his duties toward G-d, he is obligated to humble himself and be lowly before the Creator, may He be exalted, out of fear of His punishment, as it says of Yoshiyahu: "When the king heard the words of the Book of the Torah, he rent his clothes" (Melachim 11, 22:11). And the Creator's response to him was, "Because your heart was soft, and you humbled yourself before G-d ... I, too, have heard" (ibid. 22:19).**

**7. When one is engaged in any act of service, such as giving charity, offering prayer, performing an obligatory or voluntary act, or voicing rebuke, he should not engage in it with any pride or arrogance in his heart. Rather, he should be humble and lowly before the Creator, both outwardly and inwardly. [His act] should be as nothing to him, when**

compared with how much he owes G-d - so much more than this one act! As it says, "With what shall I come before Hashem, bow low before G-d on high? Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with yearling calves? Would G-d be pleased with thousands of rams? ... He has told you, o man, what is good, and what G-d requires of you: only to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk modestly with your G-d" (Michah 6:6-8).

5

The methods of acquiring humility, and the way this is made easier for a person, consist in the following: that one's thought and imagination are kept focused on seven points.

1. The root and origin of a human being is a drop of semen and blood, after these have become putrid and malodorous. He is nourished by impure blood, as long as he remains in his mother's womb, after which he emerges, weak and frail in body and limbs. He develops from one stage to the next, until reaching full maturity. Then old age sets in, until his days are done. A sage once said in this regard, "I wonder how a creature that has passed twice through passageways for urine and blood can become proud and arrogant." Reflection on this and other aspects of the human condition surely leads to humility, as David, peace be upon him, said: "O G-d, what is man, that You should care about him?" (Tehillim 144:3), and as it says: "Man born of woman" (Iyov 14:1); "But I am like a worm, not a man" (Tehillim 22:7); "How much less man, a maggot, the son of man, a worm" (Iyov 25:6).

2. When a person considers the severity of the various trials that he is subject to in this world - hunger and thirst, cold and heat, disease, misfortune, and anxiety - from which he has no release except in death, when a perceptive individual takes all this to heart and understands his own weakness and that he has neither the intelligence nor the power to protect himself from these afflictions, he will grasp [the true nature of] his condition: that in this world he is not merely like a prisoner but is actually a prisoner. He will then assume the humility of a prisoner in a dark cell, who has no device or power to free himself without his master's will, as it says: "May the cry of the prisoner come before You" (Tehillim 79:11); "Take me out of prison..." (ibid. 142:8).

3. When a person considers the transient character of his existence, how swiftly death comes; how, at that time, his aspirations and hopes are cut off and he must leave behind all his possessions, with no chance of taking any of them with him as provision or for support; [if he imagines] his position in the grave, his face without its radiance and his complexion darkened, how he will become wormy, decayed, and putrid, the marks of his physical beauty gone, his corpse emitting an increasingly foul odor, as if he had never been washed or cleansed or had a pleasant fragrance - when these and similar thoughts enter his mind, he will feel humbled and bowed. He will not become proud or arrogant, haughty or self-important. As it says, "Forget about man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for of what account is he?" (Yeshayahu 2:22); "Human beings are mere breath, mortal men but an illusion; put them all on a scale, together they weigh less than a breath" (Tehillim 62:10).

4. When a person reflects on the service he owes G-d for the abundant kindness and great goodness He has bestowed upon him; [when he recalls] his neglect and inadequate ful-

fillment of the commandments, those called for by the intellect and those whose origin is in revelation alone; [when he considers] that he will have no arguments or excuses when the day of reckoning comes, and will be full of remorse at the time of retribution - he will be humbled and his spirit will be broken, as it says: "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all the evildoers will be straw" (Malachi 3:19); "But who can endure the day of his coming?" (ibid. 3:2).

5. [One acquires humility] by contemplating the grandeur and mighty power of the Creator, may He be exalted, Who observes one's outer appearances and inner experiences. One can attain an appreciation of this awesome force by [considering the following]: Our Masters, of blessed memory, have spoken of the awe inspiring and imposing presence of many of the pious ones who lived in past generations. They said of one, for instance: "He [Rabbi Sheshet] fixed his gaze upon the person, who then became a heap of bones" (Berachot 58a); of Yonatan Ben Uziel they said: "When he was expounding the Torah, any bird that flew above him was instantly burnt" (Sukkah 28a).

Now the prophets were undoubtedly on a higher level than the pious. Yet you will find that, when they encountered angels, the prophets' power melted, and they bent their knees and prostrated themselves, as it says of Daniel, Yehoshua, and many others like them. You will find, however, in the books of the prophets, that the angels bend their knees and prostrate themselves before the Creator, may He be exalted, as it says: "The hosts of heaven prostrate themselves before You" (Nechemyah 9:6); "He does not trust His servants, or attribute glory to His angels" (Iyov 4:18); "In His [heavenly] palace, all say, 'Glory!'" (Tehillim 29:9); "One would call out to the other and say, 'Holy, holy, holy, is G-d of Hosts! [The whole earth is full of His glory!]" (Yeshayahu 6:3).

Actually, what is manifest to our minds from His creations - such as the sun and the moon, the stars and the celestial sphere, the earth and all that is on it: inanimate objects, plants, and animals - is sufficient, for one endowed with understanding and intelligence [to attain an appreciation of G-d's majesty], as it says: "How great are Your works, G-d! How exceedingly deep Your designs! An ignorant man will not know, a fool will not understand this" (Tehillim 92:67); "All the nations are as nothing before Him" (Yeshayahu 40:17); "All the inhabitants of the earth are as nothing" (Daniel 4:32). And when the wise and discerning individual thinks of himself, in comparison with all of mankind; and of all mankind, in comparison with the earth's sphere; and of this sphere, as compared to the lunar sphere; and of that sphere, in comparison with the all-encompassing sphere, and [realizes] that the whole universe, in comparison with the greatness of the Creator, may He be exalted, is as nothing - he will be humbled in his very soul and lowly before his Creator, as it says: "What is man that You should be mindful of him, or the son of man that You should notice him?" (Tehillim 8:5).

6. [One acquires humility] by reading the books of the prophets, noting the severe punishment inflicted on the proud and haughty, and [conversely] G-d's great providence over the humble and lowly.

As it says of pride and haughtiness: The prideful eyes of man will be lowered, and the haughtiness of men will be brought low, and G-d alone will be exalted on that day. For G-d of Hosts has a day against all who are arrogant and high, against all who are lifted up; and they will be brought low 13 And upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and

upon all the oaks of Bashan; 14 And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up; 15 And upon every lofty tower, and upon every fortified wall; 16 And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all delightful imagery. 17 And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; and Hashem alone shall be exalted in that day. 18 And the idols shall utterly pass away. 19 And men shall go into the caves of the rocks, and into the holes of the earth, from before the terror of Hashem, and from the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake mightily the earth. 20 In that day a man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship, to the moles and to the bats; 21 To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the crevices of the crags, from before the terror of Hashem, and from the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake mightily the earth. (Yeshayahu 2, 12-21).

Of both groups it says: G-d strengthens the humble; He brings the wicked down to the ground (Tehillim 147:6); For G-d is exalted, yet sees the lowly, and from afar He afflicts the haughty (ibid. 138:6).

And of the lowly it says: But the humble will inherit the land (ibid. 37:11); Because G-d has anointed me to bring good tidings to the humble (Yeshayahu 61:1); For thus said the high and exalted One, Who lives forever and Whose Name is holy: "I dwell on high and in holiness, and also with the broken and lowly in spirit" (ibid. 57:15). And it says, "Before disaster, there is arrogance" (Mishle 16:18); "Before disaster, a man's heart is haughty" (ibid. 18:12).

7. When one observes the upheavals in the condition of people in this world, how swiftly kingdoms and governments disappear, how people are moved from one predicament to another, one nation is destroyed for the benefit of another, and the end of all is death, as it says: "Like sheep they are herded to the grave" (Tehillim 49:15) - he is humbled, and will not pride himself on any worldly wealth, or trust in his heart in any worldly thing, as it is written: "Blessed is the man who made G-d his trust, and did not turn to the arrogant or those that stray after falsehood" (ibid. 40:5).

When a person's thoughts are never free of one of these seven points we have mentioned, he will be humble and lowly at all times, until humility becomes second nature to him and inseparable from him. While he adheres to humility, it keeps him far from all the pitfalls of arrogance, haughtiness, and pride, as we have noted previously, and he will be saved by it from sin and stumbling, as it says: "So that His fear be on your faces, and you not sin" (Shemot 20:17).

Our Sages, of blessed memory, have said: "Reflect on three things, and you will not come to sin: Know from where you came, where you are going, and before whom you will give an accounting and a reckoning. From where do you come? From a putrid drop. Where are you going? To a place of dust, maggots, and worms. Before whom will you give an accounting and a reckoning? Before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He" (Avot 3:1).

There are ten rules of conduct that a master of humility should observe.

1. One should obtain knowledge of G-d and His goodly attributes, and of the superiority that He bestowed on man over all other living creatures, as it says: "You have made him master over the works of Your hands" (Tehillim 8:7). When he recognizes the awesome grandeur of the Creator, the majesty of His power and His exalted wisdom, he will be humble and lowly before Him, learning from the Wise One's charge, "Do not glorify yourself in the king's presence" (Mishle 25:6) - certainly not before the King of kings and Master of masters, Who is exalted beyond all likeness or comparison, as Channah said: "There is no one holy like G-d; there is no one except You" (Shemuel 1, 2:2).

2. One should know the duties prescribed by the Torah and those called for by the intellect; study G-d's Torah; and master the wisdom to be gained from reason, Scripture, and tradition, in order to learn from it the requirements of humility and where it should be practiced.

3. One should, for the sake of the Creator, may He be exalted, tolerate and bear patiently with hateful words and deeds, as it says: "Have I paid in kind one who paid me evil? On the contrary, I rescued him that, without cause, is my enemy" (Tehillim 7:5); "Do not say, 'As he did to me, so will I do to him'" (Mishle 24:29). Our Masters, of blessed memory, have said: "Those who are offended and do not offend, who hear themselves insulted and do not answer back, who act out of love and rejoice in chastisement, of them Scripture says (Shoftim 5:31), 'But those who love G-d will be like the sun going forth in its strength'" (Gittin 36b). They refer to such an individual as "one who is forbearing."

4. One should act kindly toward other people and speak well of them, judge them favorably, not malign them, and forgive them for speaking ill of him and disparaging him - even if they do not deserve it, as it says: "Do not curse the king, even in your thoughts" (Kohelet 10:20); "Your mouth you release for evil, and your tongue you cleave to deceit. You sit and slander your brother; you malign the son of your mother" (Tehillim 50:19-20). An example of forgiving slander and disparagement is found in Scripture. It says, "Miriam and Aharon spoke against Moshe" (Bamidbar 12:1); then it says, "Now Moshe was an exceedingly humble man" (ibid. 12:3) - because he forgave them! Furthermore, the Wise One said, "Pay no attention to the words they speak.... For you know in your heart that, many a time, you too have ridiculed others" (Kohelet 7:21-22).

Our Sages, of blessed memory, said, "It once happened that Rabbi Eliezer stepped down before the ark and offered twenty-four supplications, and was not answered. Rabbi Akiva then went down and said, 'Our Father, our King...,' and was answered. A Heavenly voice proclaimed, 'It is not that this one is greater than the other, but only that this one is forbearing, while the other is not'" (see Taanit 25b).

One of the pious, it is told, passed by the carcass of a dog, which gave forth a dreadful odor. His disciples said to him, "How dreadfully does this carcass smell!" He said to them, "How white are its teeth!" They then regretted the disparaging remark they had made about it. Now, if it is blameworthy to speak ill of a dead dog, how much more so is it blameworthy to speak ill of a living human being. And if it is proper to praise a dog's carcass for the whiteness of its teeth, it is certainly a duty, then, to praise an intelligent and insightful human being.

The pious one's intention was to chastise his students, that they not accustom themselves to speaking evil, lest it become part of their nature. So too, if they trained themselves to speak favorably of others, this would become second nature to them. As it says: "He did not accustom his tongue to slander" (Tehillim 15:3), and conversely, "Your tongue thinks of injuring, like a sharpened razor that works deceit... You love all injurious words" (ibid. 52:4,6); and it says further: "A treacherous tongue -what will it give you, what will it add to you? [A warrior's sharpened arrows with hot coals of broom]" (ibid. 120:3); "The words of a wise man's mouth are pleasant, but the lips of a fool devour him" (Kohelet 10:12).

5. One should be humble in all matters of this world - public and private, in speech and in deed, when active or at rest. In all this, his inside should not be the opposite of his outside; his inner life should not be inconsistent with his outer appearances. His actions should be weighed, correct, balanced, and consistent, performed in the spirit of humility and lowliness before G-d, may He be exalted, and also toward human beings, in accordance with their respective stations and the good he has received from them in his religious and secular affairs. As it says, "Good is the man who is generous and lends, who conducts his affairs with judgment" (Tehillim 112:5). Our Masters, of blessed memory, have said: "Be lowly in spirit before everyone" (Avot 4:10); "Be compliant with a superior, pleasant with the young" (ibid. 3:12).

6. One should be determined and aspiring in matters of the next world. One should not be content with [doing] whatever comes to hand, and his attainments should never be enough for him. On the contrary, his deeds service, abilities, and effort should appear negligible to him, and he should always aspire to something higher, as Scripture says of Yehoshafat, "His heart was lifted up in the ways of G-d" (Divrei Ha-Yamim II, 17:6). He should express displeasure with himself - before G-d and before people - for his deficiencies in religious matters, and ask G-d for help and the courage to increase his service and good deeds, as it says: "Would that my course be steady, in keeping Your statutes" (Tehillim 119:5).

7. For the honor of the Creator, one should display humility before others and put aside one's pride. When performing an act for the sake of G-d, may He be exalted, one should forget his own importance, honor, and dignity, whether he is alone or in the midst of assemblies. As Scripture says of Aharon, in spite of the high dignity of his office: "He shall remove the ashes" (Vayikra 6:3) - the Creator obligated him to remove the ashes daily, to induce lowliness and remove arrogance from his heart. Similarly, it says of David, "And she saw King David leaping and dancing before G-d" (Shemuel II 6:16; see the rest of the narrative as well); and it says, "I will speak of Your testimonies in the presence of kings, and I will not be ashamed" (Tehillim 119:46).

8. One should be content with whatever means of livelihood present themselves and are attained, because he disdains and has little regard for his [bodily] self. He should train his soul to forgo its physical desires, and free himself to fulfill his obligations to the Creator for the great favors and many graces He has bestowed upon him, as David said: "I will run in the way of Your commandments, for it frees my heart" (ibid. 119:32).

9. For the honor of the Creator, one should take revenge against the wicked. One's

[practice of] forgiving others in personal matters should not lead him to be forgiving when it comes to G-d's matters or toward anyone who speaks against His prophets, pious ones, or treasured people. When one person takes advantage of another, he should not be forgiving, as he is when he himself is wronged; rather, he should come to the rescue of the oppressed and help free him from the hand of the oppressor, as it is written: "Execute justice in the mornings, and deliver the robbed from the hand of the oppressor" (Yirmeyahu 21:12); "I broke the teeth of the wrongdoer" (Iyov 29:17). He should instruct others in the service of G-d, rebuke them, and make them feel ashamed. He should urge them to right conduct and warn them against evil, with his hand and with his tongue, according to his ability. He should hasten to exact G-d's judgments from one who has incurred them, and he should not be humble or meek in doing so. As it says of Pinchas, "Then Pinchas stood up and did justice, and the plague was arrested. This was counted to him as a merit, from generation to generation, forever" (Tehillim 106:30-31).

10. One should speak little and in a soft voice, jest little, and seldom swear in G-d's Name, even in regard to the truth. He should not utter any falsehood, or keep company with merrymakers, or delight in the worldly pleasures in which the vulgar delight. This [should be] out of humility and lowliness, not out of self-importance and haughtiness. As the prophet said, "I did not sit in the company of revelers, nor did I make merry [with them]; I sat alone, because of Your hand [upon me], for You have filled me with indignation" (Yirmeyahu 15:17).

## 7

There are five signs which, when manifest in a humble individual, verify his humility.

1. When a person is at the height of his anger at someone who has disgraced him, whether in word or deed, and yet, out of humility and lowliness, overcomes his anger and forgives him, though he is able to take vengeance - this is indicative of true humility.

2. After he has sustained a severe financial loss or a tragedy involving one of his loved ones, if his patience overcomes the shock, and he accepts the decree of the Creator and declares His judgment just, this is indicative of real humility and lowliness before G-d. As Scripture says of Aharon, when he suffered the loss of [his sons] Nadav and Avihu, "And Aharon remained silent" (Vayikra 10:3). David likewise said, "Be silent before G-d, and wait patiently for Him" (Tehillim 37:7); and it says, "Therefore, at such a time the wise person will keep silent" (Amos 5:13).

3. When a person establishes a reputation, good or bad, if he is praised for some good that he did, he should not take seriously the one who praises him. To himself [his deed] should be as nothing and appear too insignificant to be accepted by the Creator with favor, because it is so little in comparison with what he owes - so much more than this one good deed! He should say to the one who praises him, "Enough, my brother! My good deed is nothing when compared with my failings; it is like a spark of fire amidst the waters of the ocean. And even were it of any account, how do I know that it was so free of the harmful defects that tend to beset such deeds that the Creator will accept it from me and not reject it and throw it back in my face?" As it is written: "When you come to appear

before Me, who asked this of you, to trample My courts? Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to Me" (Yeshayahu 1:12-13).

All the more should he reject praise that is baseless and say to the speaker, "My brother, it is bad enough that I am deficient in the fulfillment of my obligations to the Creator. Do not add to the sin of my inadequacy the sin of being praised for what I have not done; for I know more than you of my sins and transgressions," as David, peace be upon him, said: "For I am aware of my transgressions" (Tehillim 51:5).

And if he is mentioned in connection with evil that he has committed, he should admit his failing - and not search for excuses in order to be cleared of it and to justify himself - as Yehudah said: "She is more in the right than I am" (Bereshit 38:26).

He should not try to shame the speaker or deny what he says, nor should he condemn him for exposing the offense, but he should say to him, "My brother, what is the extent of those misdeeds of mine you have observed when compared with those you are unaware of, which the Creator has for so long kept hidden for me! If my misdeeds and sins were revealed to you, you would run away from me, fearing G-d's punishment for them." As one of the poets said, "If my neighbors could smell my sins, they would flee and keep far from me." As Iyov said, "Have I, as men do, covered my transgressions?" (Iyov 31:33).

If what is said of him is false, he should say to the one who reported it, "My brother, it is not surprising that the Creator has saved me from doing what you attribute to me, given the many graces He has bestowed upon me. What is surprising is that He has kept hidden misdeeds of mine that are more shameful and much more serious than what you have ascribed to me. Desist, my brother, and have consideration for your own merits, that you not lose them without being aware of it."

For it is told of one of the pious that, when he was slandered and word of this reached him, he sent a basket filled with the choicest produce of his land to the slanderer and wrote to him: "I heard that you sent me a gift of your merits, and I send you this gift in return."

Another one of the pious has said: "Many people, when they come to the Day of Reckoning and their deeds are shown to them, will find in the book of their merits good deeds that they did not perform, and they will say, 'We did not do them!' And they will be told, 'They were performed by one who slandered you and spoke disparagingly of you.' So too, when the slanderers discover that the number of their merits has diminished, they will begin to search for them, and they will be told, 'You lost them when you slandered this or that individual: "There are also people who will find, in the book of their demerits, offenses they had not committed. When they protest, 'We did not commit them!' they will be told, 'These were added to your account because you slandered this or that Individual,'" as it says, "Requite our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom their revilement, with which they have reviled You, O G-d" (Tehillim 79:12). This is what Scripture warned us of, saying: "Remember what Hashem your G-d did to Miriam, on the way" (Devarim 24:9).

4. When G-d bestows on an individual a special benefit, such as exceptional wisdom and profound understanding, or great wealth, or notability with the sovereign, or anything similar in which people tend to glory and take pride, and yet he remains humble as before, growing only in modesty and lowliness before G-d and [increasing] honor and kindness toward people, then his inner state is verified and his humility is found to be genuine. This

is like Abraham, who, when the Creator complimented him, saying, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?" (Bereshit 18:17), then said, "I am but dust and ashes" (ibid. 18:27); like Moshe and Aharon, who said, "What are we?" (Shemot 16:7); and like David, peace be upon him, who said, "But I am like a worm, not a man" (Tehillim 22:7). In this regard the Wise One said, "If the spirit of the ruler rests upon you, do not leave your place" (Kohelet 10:4).

5. When a person disciplines himself and, on his own initiative, pronounces the Creator's justice upon himself, even though it could not have been enforced by any human authority, his humility before G-d is demonstrated, as well as his lowliness and acquiescence, as it says: "We have trespassed against our G-d by living with foreign women from the peoples of the land" (Ezra 10:2); "And they gave their hand that they would expel their wives" (Ibid. 10:19).

Through these and similar circumstances, signs of humility before G-d and lowliness are demonstrated by the humble, making manifest the genuine feeling in their heart.

8

Is humility-dependent upon the other virtues, or are the other virtues dependent on humility? My answer is as follows.

It is well known to us that the first prerequisite for a man to serve G-d is that he divest himself of the attributes of mastership, consigning them to G-d alone, and accept upon himself all the attributes of service to the Creator. For service and mastership are correlated: the existence of one implies the existence of the other. A man cannot be termed a servant unless he has a master; and a master cannot be so termed unless he has a servant. They are like owner and owned, in that neither one precedes the other, in title or relationship.

Consequently, it is not possible for a man to serve G-d unless he assumes all the attributes of service - namely, humility and lowliness before Him - and divests himself of all the attributes of mastership - namely, grandeur, honor, majesty, glory, pride, and the like. A wise man said, "Grandeur is the Creator's robe; whoever dares to put on His robe is as though he likens himself to Him"; and David said, "G-d reigns; He is clothed in grandeur" (Tehillim 93:1).

No virtue can be predicated of the believer until he has fulfilled his duty, as Scripture says: "To obey is better than a choice sacrifice" (Shemuel I, 15:22). He cannot fulfill his duty until he assumes the service of the Creator. Service of the Creator is impossible for him unless he consigns all attributes of mastership to G-d alone and divests himself of them for His sake. This he cannot do unless he undertakes all the attributes of service to Him. It is impossible for him to undertake such [attributes of] service except through genuine humility before G-d, lowliness, and acquiescence before Him, as we have already stated.

It therefore follows that all virtues and duties are dependent on humility, which is fundamental to them and a prerequisite to their attainment. For this reason, it also follows that no virtue can be predicated of someone whose heart is devoid of humility before G-d and contains even the slightest trace of pride or haughtiness.

Consequently, the beginning of repentance is lowliness, acquiescence, and humility, as

Scripture states: "My people, with whom My Name is associated, shall humble themselves, pray, and seek My compassion, and turn from their evil ways" (Divrei Ha-Yamim II, 7:14); "Because they have humbled themselves, I will not destroy them" (ibid. 12:7).

9

Can humility and pride coexist within the heart of the believer? My answer is as follows: There are two kinds of pride: (1) man's pride in his body, in his physical skills, and material possessions; (2) pride in his spiritual virtues - wisdom, and good acts performed for the sake of serving the Creator.

Any pride that derives from something physical drives humility out of the heart. It is impossible for both [traits] to reside together within the same heart, since one precludes the other.

When a person becomes proud of some worldly good, what brings him to this is disrespect toward his Benefactor, a lack of appreciation, and obliviousness to how swiftly [this good] may be taken from him, how quickly it may leave him. He imagines that he is his own benefactor, that he acquires this good through his own power and wisdom, as Sancheriv said, "Through the power of my hand I have done it" (Yeshayahu 10:13); as Nebuchadnezzar said, "Is not this the great Bavel, which I have built as a royal residence by my mighty power...!" (Daniel 4:27); and as Pharaoh said, "I have my Nile, and I have made it myself" (Yechezkel 29:3). You know what happened, as soon as they finished speaking: their kingdoms were destroyed and their rule was eliminated.

Pride in spiritual virtues is of two kinds - one blameworthy, the other praiseworthy.

The pride of an individual in his wisdom, or of a righteous person in his deeds, is blameworthy when, as a result of this pride, [his wisdom or deeds] become magnified in his own eyes, he is content with what he has achieved of them, and he thinks that it is enough to have established a good reputation and won the praise of human beings.

[This pride is blameworthy when it incites him] to belittle people, scorn them, and speak disparagingly of them; look down upon the sages and great ones of his generation; and glory in the shortcomings and inferior knowledge of his friends. This is the type of person who is called by our Masters, of blessed memory, "One who exalts himself through the dishonor of his fellow" (Yerushalmi, Chagigah 2:1). A prideful Individual such as this can be neither humble nor modest.

The pride of a wise man in his wisdom, or of a righteous man in his deeds, is praiseworthy when it springs from appreciation for G-d's great favor toward him [in gracing him] with this virtue and from pure joy in the virtue, and when it induces him to add to his wisdom and good deeds, and to work at them; to be humble before His close ones; to rejoice with his colleagues; be sensitive to their honor and not expose their inferior knowledge, speak in praise of them, love them, defend them, and show them respect. [Pride is praiseworthy when its effect is that] all his good deeds appear to him to be few, he works constantly to increase them, and he is humbled by his inability to accomplish what he would like of them; he humbles himself before one through whose agency he hopes to improve [spiritually], is grateful to G-d for favoring him with virtues, and praises Him for enabling him to attain precious qualities.

This kind of pride is not antithetical to humility, and does not preclude it. Scripture

attributes such pride to Yehoshafat [as It says]: "His heart was lifted up in the ways of G-d" (Divrei Ha-Yamim II, 17:6). On the contrary, [such pride] complements humility and adds to it, as it says: "The consequence of humility is reverence for G-d; [wealth, honor, and life]" (Mishle 22:4).

## 10

The benefits of humility, for this world and the next, are six: three benefits for worldly interests, and three for matters of the next world. The benefits in this world are as follows.

1. The humble person is happy with his portion. Once pride and self-importance enter a man's heart, however, the whole world and everything in it are insufficient to meet his needs, due to his inflated ambition and his contempt for his lot.

If a person is humble, he attaches no special importance to himself, so whatever he attains of the world suffices him for his sustenance and other needs. This gives him peace of mind and diminishes anxiety. He eats what is available, wears what he finds, sleeps where he can, and is content with very few worldly goods, because of his humility.

As for a proud person, the whole world cannot fill his needs, due to his inflated ambition and egocentrism. As the Wise One said, "A righteous man eats only until he is satisfied, but the belly of the wicked has not enough" (Mishle 13:25).

2. The humble person, because of his lowliness and modest spirit, is patient when misfortune strikes him and [when] he suffers reverses in his affairs.

The proud person, on the other hand, because of his arrogance, inflated ambition, and discontent with his situation, is frightened and shows little patience when misfortune strikes him. As it says of one who was in such a predicament: "How you are fallen from heaven, bright morning star! You are cut down to the ground, O subduer of nations!" (Yeshayahu 14:12).

3. The humble person finds more favor in people's sight, is beloved to them, and can [more] easily relate to them and conform to accepted patterns of behavior. The story is told of a king who used to hurry when he walked. When asked the reason for this, he replied, "Because it is far from the arrogant manner, and speeds up the completion of the task." A wise man was asked, "How did you come to be accepted as master by all your contemporaries?" He answered, "I never met one of them in whom I did not see some quality in which he was superior to me. If he was wiser than I was, I would say, 'Because of his superior wisdom, he must revere G-d more than I do.' And if he was inferior to me in wisdom, I would say, 'On the Day of Judgment, he will be held less accountable than I will, because my transgressions were committed with knowledge and intent, while his were committed unwittingly.' "If he was older than I was, I would say, 'His merits must exceed mine, since he came into the world before me.' If he was younger, I would say, 'His demerits are fewer than mine.' And if he was equal to me in age and wisdom, I would say, 'Perhaps his heart is more devoted to G-d than mine; for I know of my own failings, but I do not know of his.' "If he was wealthier than I was, I would say, 'On account of his wealth, he is able to serve the Creator, perform acts of charity, and give to the poor in a greater measure than I can.' And if he was less advantaged than I was, I would say, 'On account of his poverty, he is more contrite and lowly in spirit than I am, and a better person than I am.' "In this way, I always respected them all and was humble toward them."

So our Masters, of blessed memory, say: "Judge every man favorably" (Avot 1:6);

**"Receive all men with a cheerful countenance" (ibid. 1:15); "Be very, very lowly in spirit" (ibid. 4:4); "A person should always be soft like a reed, and not hard like a cedar. For this reason, the reed is privileged to be carved into a pen, used for writing Torah scrolls, Tefillin, and Mezuzot" (Ta'anit 20b).**

**The benefits of humility in matters relating to the next world [are as follows].**

**4. The humble person can [more] easily acquire wisdom, because he follows the sages, humbles himself before them, and seeks them out, as it says: "He who seeks out the wise will become wise" (Mishle 13:20). Our Masters, of blessed memory, said: "Let your house be a meeting place for the sages, dust yourself with the dust of their feet, and thirstily drink in their words" (Avot 1:4). As a result, G-d will help him attain wisdom, as it says: "He will guide the humble in justice, and He will teach the humble His way" (Tehillim 25:9). But he who is proud will not attain true wisdom and will not reach the goal of clear knowledge, because he is too arrogant to consult with the men of learning and Torah, as it says: "The wicked man in his haughtiness does not inquire; all his evil thoughts are, 'There is no G-d'" (ibid. 10:4).**

**5. The humble person hastens to perform his religious duties, with diligence and fervor; does not become arrogant about having fulfilled them; and takes none of them lightly, as our Masters, of blessed memory, said: "Be as careful with a minor precept as with a major one" (Avot 2:1). But one who is full of himself delays in the performance of religious duties, because of his proud heart and arrogant spirit. Before he knows it, he falls and is brought low, as it says: "Say to the king and to the queen mother, 'Sit down in a lowly place; for your rule is fallen, the crown of your glory'" (Yirmeyahu 13:18); "There are six things that G-d hates ... haughty eyes..." (Mishle 6:16-17).**

**6. The humble person's deed is acceptable to G-d, as it says: "True sacrifice, to G-d, is a broken spirit" (Tehillim 51:19), and his transgression is soon forgiven, if he repents of it, as it says: "But he who admits and forsakes [his sins] will be forgiven" (Mishle 28:13); "They are humbled, those you called proud; the man with lowered eyes, He will deliver" (Iyov 22:29).**

**These are the ten roots of humility. From these [roots], my brother, the remaining virtues of this noble, high, and lofty quality, which were not mentioned in this gate, will become clear to you. Remember these words of encouragement on the virtues of humility. Keep them in sight. Think of them constantly. Try to internalize [these virtues], integrating them into your soul and personality. Let G-d be your support in this. Ask Him for [these virtues], that you may draw nearer to Him and find favor before Him. Perhaps He will direct you and prepare the way for you toward them. Thus, after concluding the [Amidah] Prayer, devout people recite the following petition: "My G-d, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceit. May my soul remain silent to those who curse me; may my soul be as the dust, to all" (Berachot 17a).**

**Be wary of the imaginings of your heart and of the temptation of the evil inclination, which would lead you to haughtiness, pride, and arrogance, and the desire for power, prominence, authority, and fame. [The Wise One] taught us the ways of the balanced path that a person should follow in this world, saying: "Two things I ask of You; do not with-**

hold them from me until I die. Keep falsehood and deceit far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches ... lest I be full and deny [You] and say, 'Who is G-d?' or lest I be poor and steal..." (Mishle 30:7-9).

Wake up, my brother, and do not neglect to remove the disease of pride from your soul and personality, with the cures I have taught you.

Do not be restrained from doing so by the observation that the overwhelming majority of people neglect to heal themselves of this sickness. Do not say, "What happens to everyone else will happen to me." For if a blind person has access to helpful medication, through which he can cure himself, it would not be responsible on his part if he delayed the treatment and said, "What befalls my blind companions will befall me." Anyone who heard him make such a statement would ridicule it, dismiss his attitude, and regard him as utterly lacking in sense.

Accordingly, you should look out for your soul and endeavor on its behalf with all your strength. Do not be lazy in what will benefit you in [both] this world and the next, lest you die without having achieved your aspirations for the precious virtues that are within your reach. As the Wise One said, "The desire of a lazy person will kill him..." (ibid. 21:25); "I passed by the field of a lazy man, by the vineyard of a man with no sense; and lo! It was all overgrown with thorns, its surface covered up with thorn bushes, its stone fence broken down. I observed, and took it to heart; I saw - and learned a lesson" (ibid. 24:30-32)

May G-d, in His mercy and kindness, show us - and you, too - the way to serve Him. Amen.

The Sixth Gate is completed,

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## SEFER PELE YOETZ GAAVA PRIDE

The greatness of its evil is already explained in the writings of our Holy Rabbis ZTK”L, in the Talmud and the Midrashim and in all the holy books. And what more can be said than what’s written (Mishle 16: 5) “An abomination to Hashem are all the proud of heart”. And it also says: ”The arrogant person should be excommunicated” (Sotah 5). And he is considered as an idol worshipper, and as he had committed all possible illicit relations, and his dust will nor awaken for the resurrection of the dead, and many other evils as well. And everybody knows how evil is the trait of arrogance.

But there are those who think that the main aspect of arrogance is in the way a person walks, whether he walks with his head on high or not, and whether he swings his arms to the sides, etc. And we really do not know what pride and arrogance really are. But there’s a way to know the father from the appearance of the son. This means, when someone is exacting and fastidious and easy to anger, then he displays traits that are born out of pride and arrogance, and if this person had no arrogance where would his anger and fastidiousness come from?, as I will further explain in the section dealing with results and consequences.

And the Yetzer ha Ra is so very smart that it makes people think that being meticulous and

fastidious and getting angry are aspects of good conduct, for some will even say: "Whoever does not feel, is not considered a man".

And the person who has a soft heart and who is fearful of Hashem, will tremble to his core, when he sees the gravity and the great evil of arrogance. And his heart will flare up when he sees the greatness of humility. And he will try with all his strength to think pure thoughts that will show him his low level and worth, how despicable he really is, and he will try to be among the ones who are humiliated by others, even by the members of his own household.

And he shall not get angry nor upset and he will not be demanding, but he should be very humble, very downcast, and he should study frequently the works of Mussar in order to fulfill what is written: (Tehillim 51: 5) "And my sin is before me constantly"

And even if someone has obtained wisdom and knowledge, learning is not the main aspect, and everything goes according to the majority of a person's actions, and the only true judge is Hashem. And this person should think that in comparison to his wisdom and understanding and to all the kindness that Hashem has done to him, he has not fulfilled his obligations, not even a thousandth part of his obligation to Hashem. And whoever has more knowledge should suffer more when he realizes he has not done what he should have done, he should know that according to his level he has not accomplished much and Hashem is the true judge.

And he should judge every person favorably. And if he sees with his eyes and his heart will fully understand that his friend or his wife even his son and student or his servant, has done some evil against him, it is proper that he will not get angry and he will not be grieved nor should he be irritated. For a person should worry only in regard to his sins, for everything comes from Hashem and it is Hashem that decided that you should be done evil. And also when a person has slighted your honor, or on the contrary has given you honor, what will this do to you? Will this give or take anything from you? Everything is vanity and a vexation of the spirit. And given the great benefit that being humiliated produces, you will see that in truth your friend has done a great favor to you when he humiliates you. And it is proper to rejoice more regarding the humiliations than regarding the times they honor you. One should only suffer because of the damage the sin which his friend has done causes in the heavens.

Therefore a person should make a fence so that no person should humiliate him. And if someone did humiliate him, then he must reprove his friend with words that will be heard. And he will be available to be appeased at any time so that the damage can be fixed, and no sins will be further committed. And everything must be done in an amicable way, so that no resentment remains and so that there will be no Lashon ha ra and Chillul HaShem. And everyone should behave according to the particular situation.

And if the need arises to display anger or irritation, he will show it but his heart should be appeased inside and all his actions will be done Leshem Shamaim, and Hashem will not withhold kindness to those that behave rightfully. And another fence he will build around himself not to grow haughty and that is to run away from honors, and all the more not to seek greatness.

#### SEFER PELE YOETZ KAVOD - HONOR

Envy, lust and honor drive a person out of this world (Avot 4: 24) ...

He who desires honor wishes that everyone will honor him, and he fixes his mind on becoming wealthy and he increases expenditures that will bring him honor and if he will not receive the honor he expects or if someone will do something that will diminish his honor, his flesh will hurt to its core, and he will take revenge if he has the power to do so, and he will create strife and conflict that will flare up to the heavens.

And all the arguments in the world only come because of pride, for the person wants to ascend to the heavens through his pride, and he thinks that he deserves honor and that it is fitting and appropriate for him and that his wishes will not return unfulfilled, and whoever does not heed his commands or whoever does not give him the proper honor he deserves, then like the serpent he will take vengeance on such a person and will do all the damage he can to him, and if he can not harm him, then anyway he will hate him in his heart and his hate for him endures forever and will burn of anger for he can not harm him yet, and in this fashion he will descend with bitterness to Gehinomm, and this itself is his punishment in this world. And in the World to come how much greater his punishment will be. And honor is an impure outgrowth of arrogance and it creates other impure outgrowths for out of the impure comes more impurity.

And it is proper for a person to run away from honor as if he were running away from fire, for it is indeed a fire that burns down to the lowest levels of Gehinomm, and it is the same regarding every evil trait that a person's Yetzer ha Ra desires and lusts for, the person has to strengthen himself with pure thoughts to distance himself from these evil traits, for the punishment for evil traits is very grave, and in particular those traits that drive a person out from this world; and the person should think in this fashion: What am I, what is my life? A putrid drop dust and ashes, a worm and maggot, a container full of impurity, shame and disgrace.

And what are we? What benefit will we have from people and the honor they give to us? And what if they humiliate us? Me and them are vanity of vanities, and if I am honorable in front of the King of Kings what do I care about the supposed honor that men may give me? And if I am denigrated and low in front of the King of honor what is life to me? And what is honor that people give to me? .....

And it is proper for a person not to run after honor, for its evil is great and it leads to destruction for that is the way of he who runs after honor, honor in turn runs away from him. And not only that, but even if people give him honor he should still run away from honor as if he had a sword in front of him, because it is very likely that he will become an abomination in the eyes of Hashem, as all the proud of heart are considered, unless he will arm himself against his Yetzer ha Ra so that he will not become arrogant through the honor they give him, therefore it is actually better for him to run away from honor if he can, and to think that he is fit to receive that honor but he runs away from it out of false humility is the worst kind of arrogance.

But the obligation is to be truly humble, and he will think with perfect faith that he is not adequate to receive any honor at all, because of his very low level and his very insignificant worth and his lack of understanding and his many sins. And if the world errs in honoring him then he should worry all the more, for he will pay for this undeserved honor in the World to Come, and his heart will tremble inside of him when he thinks that if his sins had odor, his neighbors would flee from him, and even if he sees others that are more evil and lowly than him, he should not seek greatness for him, and he will not covet honor from those people for the scales and the judgments come from Hashem...

Sefer Pele Yoetz, Kavod

**SEFER PELE YOETZ  
MONEY - KESEF**

...Most of the sins are generated from the desire of man for money, like: Theft, robbery, lying, deceiving, cheating, swearing in vain, swearing falsely, fighting, divisions, envy, jealousy, forbidden foods, transgressing Shabbat and Yom Tov. And most of the sins that a person does is because of his desire for money, and the worst is Chillul Hashem. Then we see that the person who loves money disregards most of the Mitzvot and the tefillot and Berachot and Torah studying which is equivalent to all of them. And even when he does fulfill the Mitzvot, they are considered null and void, because of the speed and because his heart and intentions were not with him when he was performing the Mitzvot, and he hides from giving Tzedakah....

And in truth Our Sages have declared: (Eruvin 65) “A man is known by his pocket” Because in reality the enemy, which is the desire for money, has strengthened, because in this generation, a generation of *mamon*, everyone is pulled after money more so than after all other sins and all other pleasures, and the money of a person is more beloved to him than his body, and to some it is more beloved than his own soul.

But this is the Torah for a person in this world, he should conquer his Yetzer ha Ra, and he should open his eyes and see that money robs the souls of people. And he should understand as a supreme truth, that it is preferable for a person to die of hunger, and not be an evildoer in front of the Holy One Blessed be He and that he should not anger His Creator, G-d forbid. And who would be so fortunate as to be able to conquer his impulse. And money will be considered as nothing in his eyes when compared to performing the will of Hashem. And he will use his money to the will of Hashem. And he should believe with perfect faith that his sustenance is decreed from heaven. If he climbs to heaven or if he goes down to the nethermost depths he will not increase or diminish one cent from what is coming to him, except what he spends for Mitzvot and good deeds that have no fixed amount for he who increases an increase is given to him from heaven. And also there are those who acquire their life in the world to Come through their money, for they increase in Tzedakah and Mitzvot and good deeds, and they acquire a good name for themselves, they acquire words of Torah and acquire the World to Come...  
Sefer Pele Yoetz, Kesef

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Anyone who gets angry is as if he kindled the fire of Gehinomm (Tikune Zohar 48)

Zohar Shemot, Section 2, Page 182a

Anger

’It is written: You shall not make to you molten G-ds”, and immediately after, “the feast of unleavened bread shall you keep” (Shemot 34, 17, 18). What connection is there between the two precepts? We have been taught concerning this matter as follows: If one eats leaven during the Passover, it is as though he worshipped idols. For when Israel went out from Egypt they emerged from the dominion of the Egyptians, from that dominion which is called “leaven”; for the “evil inclination” operates in man and grows in him like leaven in the dough: it enters into him, and,

little by little, extends its influence until his whole self is permeated by it. This is idolatry, concerning which it is written, "Let there be no strange G-d in you" (Tehillim 81, 10) '

Rabbi Judah discoursed in connection with this theme on the words: "Cease you from man, whose breath (neshamah) is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?" (Isa. II, 22). 'This verse,' said he, 'has already been explained; but what is the particular significance of the expression, "cease you from man"? Must one, then, avoid any contact with men? If that were so, there would be no social life whatsoever, and assuredly it was not thus ordained! It has, however, been expounded as applying to the man who rises up early to pay court to his neighbor (instead of going to prayers), which thought I have connected with another verse, namely: "He that blesses his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him" (Prov. XXVII, 14). But although this explanation is satisfactory as far as it goes, the question still remains, What is the meaning of the expression, "Whose breath (neshamah) is in his nostrils"? It is this: the Holy One commands man to guard himself against those men who have turned from the good to the evil way, and have polluted their souls by the impurity of the "other side". For, when the Holy One created man, He made him on the supernal pattern and breathed into him a holy breath consisting of a triad, as has already been established, whose several names are nephesh, ruah, and neshamah, the highest being the neshamah, for it is the superior energy by means of which man can apprehend and keep the commandments of the Holy One. But when he lets his soul participate in the "strange worship", he defiles that soul and departs from the worship and the ways of his Lord. For these three aspects of the soul, nephesh, ruah, and neshamah, are all one, being merged one in the other on the pattern of the supernal mystery. And when we see a man who possesses all these three grades untarnished and firmly established therein, we may know that he is a complete man, a faithful servant of his Master; and with such a one we may safely associate in order to learn from him his way of life. And how is one to discern whether a person is one whose acquaintance is to be cultivated or shunned? By his temper; for by his demeanor when roused to anger can his character be discerned. If he guards the holy soul when he is wroth, in order that it may not be uprooted from its place, and supplanted by the "other side", then he is indeed a man, a servant of his Lord, complete and holy. But one who in his ire cares nothing for the welfare of his soul, uprooting it and letting it be replaced by the impure domination, such a man is a rebel against his Lord, one with whom we should shun contact of any kind, for he is one who, as it is written, "tears his soul in his anger" (Job XVIII, 4)- he tears and uproots his soul in his heedless rage, and allows a "strange G-d" to usurp its place within him and to take possession of him in its stead. Thus the words, "Cease you from a man whose soul is torn in his anger" (aph=anger as well as nostril), are obviously an injunction to refrain from contact with him who tears the holy soul and defiles it in his anger. "For wherein (bameh) is he to be accounted for?"-such a one is "accounted" an "idol" (bamah, lit. "high place"), and to associate oneself with such a person is like associating with idolatry. And not only that: such a person has also uprooted holiness from its place and raised in its stead a "strange G-d" there; and as in regard to a "strange G-d" it is written: "Do not turn to idols" (Lev. XIX, 4), so it is prohibited to look on the face of such a person in his anger. As to the question, What about the anger of students of the Torah? that anger is good in all its aspects, since, as we have been taught, the Torah is fire, and it is she who kindles that holy anger in her devotees, as it is written, "Is not my word like as a fire? says Hashem" (Jer. XXIII, 29). The anger of scholars is for offences against the Torah, it is in her honor, it is for the sake of the Holy One's glory and majesty. Therefore it says: "For Hashem thy G-d is a consuming fire, he is a zealous G-d" (Deut. IV, 24).

But if a person becomes angry over purely secular matters, this is no service of G-d, and no sin that man commits is so literally idolatry as this, since it actually sets up an idol in the very heart of him who is angered: unto such a man one is forbidden to speak or draw near. Should one say, But, after all, this anger is only a momentary impulse from which he may soon repent, why, then, such severity as this? the answer would be, that in reality it is not thus, because he has uprooted the holiness of his soul from its place and the “other G-d” has entrenched himself therein, and will never leave him until by a great effort the person so afflicted completely purifies himself and roots out from his inner self that evil, and thereafter endeavors to sanctify himself afresh, and to draw down holiness from above upon himself; then only can there be a possibility of renewal and sanctification for him.’ Said Rabbi Jose to him: ‘Why only a possibility of renewal and sanctification?’ Rabbi Judah replied: ‘Consider this: when a man uproots the holiness of his soul and is given admission to that “strange G-d” in its place-the “strange G-d” which is called “impure”-that man has become polluted and he pollutes everyone with whom he comes into contact, and holiness flees from him; and, holiness having once fled, whatever the person may do afterwards, it will not return to its place again.’ Said Rabbi Jose: ‘And yet, how many who had defiled themselves are purified!’ Rabbi Judah replied: ‘But anger, in contradistinction to sins which pollute only the body, pollutes also the soul and, in fact, the whole being. Therefore one must beware of such a man and must “keep the feast of unleavened bread”, that is, the side of holiness within, and not exchange it for the “other side” to pollute oneself and others.

#### Talmud Shabbat 105b

“There shall not be upon you a strange g-d (Tehillim 81:10)

Surely it was taught, Rabbi Shimon Ben Eleazar said in the name of Halfa Ben Agra in Rabbi Johanan Ben Nuri's name: He who rends his garments in his anger, he who breaks his vessels in his anger, and he who scatters his money in his anger, regard him as an idolater, because such are the wiles of the Tempter: Today he says to him, ‘Do this’; tomorrow he tells him, ‘Do that,’ until he bids him, ‘Go and serve idols,’ and he goes and serves [them].<sup>16</sup> Rabbi Abin observed: What verse [intimates this]? There shall be no strange G-d in you; neither shall you worship any strange G-d; (Tehillim 81:10) who is the strange G-d that resides in man himself? Say, that is the Tempter [Yetzer ha Ra]! -This holds good only where he does it in order to instill fear in his household, even as Rab Judah pulled the thrums [of his garment;]<sup>19</sup> Rabbi Aha Ben Yaakov broke broken vessels; Rabbi Sheshet threw brine on his maidservant's head; Rabbi Abba broke a lid.

Three the Holy One, blessed be He, loves: he who does not display anger, he who does not become intoxicated, and he who does not insist on his [full] rights.

Talmud Pesachim 113b

Rabbi Abba was one day sitting at the gate of Lydda when he saw a man come and seat himself on a ledge overhanging the ground. Being weary from traveling, he fell asleep. Rabbi Abba saw a serpent glide up towards the man, but, before it reached him, a branch fell from a tree and killed it. The man then woke up, and catching sight of the serpent in front of him stood up; and no sooner had he done so than the ledge gave way, and crashed into the hollow beneath it. Rabbi Abba then approached him and said:

**‘Tell me, what have you done that G-d should perform two miracles for you ?’ The man replied: ‘Never did anyone do an injury to me but that I made peace with him and forgave him. Moreover, if I could not make peace with him, I did not retire to rest before I forgave him together with all those who vexed me; nor was I at any time concerned about the evil the man did me; nay more, from that day onward I exerted myself to show kindness to such a man.’ Rabbi Abba then wept and said: ‘This man’s deeds excel even those of Joseph; for Joseph showed forbearance towards his own brethren, upon whom it was natural for him to have compassion; but this man did more, and it was thus befitting that the Holy One should work for him one miracle upon another.’**

**Zohar ha Kaddosh I 201b**

**Raba said: He who forgoes his right [to exact punishment] is forgiven all his iniquities, as it says, Forgiving iniquity and passing by transgression. Who is forgiven iniquity? One who passes by transgression [against himself]. Rabbi Huna the son of Rabbi Joshua was once ill. Rabbi Papa went to inquire about him. He saw that he was very ill and said to those present, Make ready provisions for his [everlasting] journey. Eventually, however, he [Rabbi Huna] recovered, and Rabbi Papa felt ashamed to see him. He said to him, What did you see [in your illness]? He replied, It was indeed as you thought, but the Holy One, blessed be He, said to them [the angels]: Because he does not insist upon his rights, do not be particular with him, as it says, Forgiving iniquity and passing by transgression. Who is forgiven iniquity? He who passes by transgression. [The verse continues], to the remnant of his heritage’. Rabbi Aha son of Rabbi Hanina said: We have here a fat tail with a thorn in it: for the remnant of his inheritance’, but not for all his inheritance. [What it means is], for him who makes himself a mere remnant [Humble]**  
**Talmud Rosh ha Shana 17a**

**Our Rabbis learnt: Be humble to every person and much more so to the members of your household**

**Tanna debe Eliyahu Zutha Perek 4**

**A person must always be humble in Torah and in the fear of heaven, before his father and his mother, before his wife and his son and his daughters and with his neighbors and his relatives and with those who are not related to him, and even towards the gentile in the street, so that he will be loved in the heavens, and so that he will be well liked by everyone, so that he will fulfill his days and years in goodness, and in this fashion his wife and the members of his household will fear him as it is written (Devarim 28: 10): “And all the people will see the name of Hashem upon you, and they will fear you”**

**Tanna debe Eliyahu Zutha Perek 15**

**Do not think that by worshipping with deveikut’ [Clinging to Hashem] you are greater than another. You are like any other creature, created for the sake of His worship, blessed be He. G-d gave a mind to the other just as He gave a mind to you. What makes you superior to a worm? The worm serves the Creator with all its mind and strength!. Man, too, is a worm and maggot, as it is written “I am a worm and no man.” (Tehillim 22:7) If G-d had not given you intelligence you would not be able to worship Him but like a worm. Thus you are no better than a worm, and certainly [no better] than [other] people.**

**Bear in mind that you, the worm and all other small creatures are considered as equals in the world. For all were created and have but the ability given to them by the blessed Creator. Always keep this matter in mind.**

**Tzavaat ha Rivash, The Baal Shem Tov 12**

**Another important principle: When people ridicule you about your worship, whether it be with regard to prayer or other matters, do not respond.' Do not reply even in a positive way, so that you will not be drawn into quarrels or into haughtiness which causes one to forget the Creator, blessed be He. Our sages said that "man's silence leads him to humility." (See R Chaim Vital, Sha'arei Kedushah II:5).**

**Tzavaat ha Rivash, The Baal Shem Tov 49**

**"The practice of the righteous is to suffer insult and not to insult, to hear themselves reviled without answering." (Rambam, Hilchot Deot 2:3, based on Shabbat 88b.)**

**"Better is he who is lightly esteemed and a servant [to himself] than one who is honored but lacks bread." (Proverbs 12:9)**

**The sole sign for the [true] service of the Creator is when you know of yourself that you are lightly esteemed in your own eyes. For then you are on a [spiritual] level, thus "a servant unto Him," blessed be He. [That is better than] "the one who is honored" in his own eyes, [for the latter] "lacks bread," i.e., [the Divine] effulgence.**

**Tzavaat ha Rivash, The Baal Shem Tov 114**

**Rabbi Rafael of Barshad (19th century Europe) said: "When I get to heaven, they'll ask me, why didn't you learn more Torah? And I'll tell them that I'm slow-witted. Then they'll ask me, why didn't you do more kindness for others? And I'll tell them that I'm physically weak. Then they'll ask me, why didn't you give more Tzedakah? And I'll tell them that I didn't have enough money. But then they'll ask me: If you were so stupid, weak and poor, why were you so arrogant? And for that I won't have an answer."**

**A rich man once boasted to the Hafetz Hayyim [20th century rabbinic figure] that G-d had granted him great wealth and there was nothing he lacked. The Hafetz Hayyim said to him, "You should therefore devote a few hours daily to Torah study." The man replied, "I don't have the time for it." "If that is so," said the Hafetz Hayyim, "you are the poorest of the poor because if your time is not your own, what do you have? " (Y. Yefet in Torah Gems, volume III, p. 213)**

**"The rich and poor meet: Hashem is the Maker of them all" (Proverbs 22:2). The rich man usually thinks that he attained his wealth because of his brilliance, while the poor are generally looked down upon as never-do-wells who cannot succeed because of a lack of ability. However, when "the rich and poor meet," when they happen to be in the same place at the same time, one can in most cases see that the poor man is no less intelligent than the rich one. (Tzvi Hirsh Berliner in Torah Gems, volume III, p. 213)**

**When you turn proud, remember that a flea preceded you in the order of Divine Creation. (Tosefta, Sanhedrin)**

**“If you believe that you can damage, believe you can fix ” Reb Nachman mi Breslov**

**PRAYERS TO HAASHEM TO BEHAVE WITH HUMILITY  
LIKUTE TEFILLOT BY REB NATAN**

**TEFILLA 11**

**Excerpts Prayer 11**

**HaShem: majestic and awesome King of Glory!**

**You created the entire universe for Your glory, as it is written: "All who are called in My Name, I created, formed and made them for My glory."**

**Loving G-d: Let Your majesty be increased, enhanced and heightened through me. Help me to be able to nullify myself completely, and not seek the least honor for myself. Let me think nothing of my own importance, and pay no attention whatever to receiving honor for myself. Let all my efforts be only to magnify the glory of G-d. Let all my involvements and everything I do, think and want, be only for the sake of Your great glory, blessed G-d.**

**Help me break and remove all arrogance from myself. Let not the slightest hint of arrogance ever enter my heart. Bring me to genuine humility. Grant me true G-dly wisdom and understanding, so that I will be able to cultivate the ways of humility.**

**Save me from false humility - affected humility aimed at winning people's esteem. This kind of humility is the ultimate in arrogance. Let me never pretend to be humble with the intention of winning admiration and esteem. Loving and merciful G-d: just help me to come to complete humility in perfect sincerity.**

**Please, HaShem, loving G-d: Your love is true love. Let Your love and mercy be awakened for someone as lowly and miserable as me. Let me feel my true lowliness, and don't allow my sins to throw me off track by confusing my mind with any foolish motives of trying to impress people, or illusions about my own importance. Have pity on me for Your sake, and save me from the least hint of arrogance and pride.**

**I know I am not really fit to come close to You, because I have shown such a lack of respect for Your honor, as You know, HaShem my G-d. But I will rely on Your overflowing love and kindness, and ask You to help me and do everything to save me from pride.**

**HaShem, help me to keep my mind clear of all false motives and arrogance. Have mercy on me and don't let me stray into those treacherous pathways. Loving G-d, bring me to follow Your commandments and observe Your laws sincerely, with true and complete humility. Even at times when You grant me the opportunity to do good, help me be totally unselfconscious about it.**

**Master of the Universe: You have informed us how serious a sin arrogance is - it is like worshipping an idol, G-d forbid - and that the main reason for the exile of the Jewish People was because of the sin of pride. That is what the Rabbis meant when they said the land was ruined because of seven idolatrous temples. Similarly, pride is the main reason why the exile has gone on for so long. It is now more than eighteen hundred years that we have been away from our land, and we still cannot return - only because of the sin of pride and the race for honor.**

**You have also let us know that a person who is arrogant is like an idol. Since an idolatrous object must be burned, Torah law views it as if it has already been ground down to nothing. This is why people who are arrogant are unable to open their mouths to say a single holy word. It is as if they have already been ground down to nothing, and so they lack the necessary vocal apparatus.**

When a person speaks words of Torah, they ought to shine, as the Rabbis said: "Open your mouth and your words will shine." But when the Torah comes in the mouth of someone who talks and acts arrogantly, not only does it not shine to him: the very light of the Torah is darkened by a thick veil of materialism.

Have pity on me, and at least from now on, save me from the sin of pride. Help me to stop running after my own glory, G-d forbid. Let me think nothing of our own importance, and strive only to maximize the glory of G-d. Let Your glory be enhanced, magnified and revealed through me, and let me sanctify my mouth and speak words that radiate, until 'the earth shines with His glory.'

Help me study much Torah every day, and say the words out loud. "For they are life to those who find them" - "...to those who say them out loud." Let my words of Torah throw light on all the areas of my life in which I need to repent, until I reach a level of Teshuvah where I make amends for all the wrong I have ever done.

My present level is so low that I am down at the "feet" - I am no better than the dust. Help me rise up from level to level until I emerge from this degraded state. Through speaking radiant words of Torah, let me come to complete Teshuvah and emerge from my low level, and attain an understanding of the profoundest depths of the Torah.

#### TEFILLAH 6 Excerpts Prayer 6

HaShem our G-d and G-d of our fathers, G-d of love and kindness:

Have pity on me and on my poor soul, which is thirsty, hungry and yearning to return to You. Help me repent completely for all my sins and transgressions. Those who come to be cleansed and purified are helped from Heaven. Let me be one of them, and You Yourself assist me in purifying myself of my sins, so that I will be able to come to perfect Teshuvah for all of them.

Loving G-d: Have compassion on me and see my wretchedness and degradation. Was it for this futile life of mine that You created me? I feel I'm hardly worthy of being called a person at all. It is as if I have no real existence in this world. It would have been better for me not to have been created in the first place, considering all the wrong I have done.

I have come before You now, HaShem, to plead with You to help me through the power of Your great Name EHYEH - "I will be" - with which You revealed Yourself when You began to redeem Your children from Egypt. You wanted to make them Your people and remove them from the pollution of Egypt. You said to Moshe at the burning bush: "Tell this to the Children of Israel: EHYEH sent me to you."

Through the power of this holy Name, help me make a whole new start and prepare myself to be in this world - to exist and live as the person You intended me to be, through returning to You in sincere, genuine Teshuvah. Help me feel the pain of my many sins and transgressions and to come to perfect Teshuvah.

Help me bear shame and embarrassment without throwing insults back in return. Even if I hear myself abused, let me not reply. "To those that curse me, let my soul be silent." No matter how other people may abuse and insult me, let me hold my peace and say nothing. Let me silently wait for HaShem and hope in Him", and "let me be like a man who does not hear and has no complaints on his lips...." "I will be like a deaf person - I will not hear; I will be like a dumb person who will not open his mouth."

HaShem, I know the truth: all the insults in the world would not be enough to cleanse me, considering the weight of all my sins. It is impossible to express in words how degraded I have become through my own choices and actions. My sins have cast a stain on Your great glory. I have dishonored Your holy Name, and I have mightily abused my own soul through my sins. I have given power to the blood in the left side of the heart, which has strengthened my evil inclination.

To make up for all this I must simply bear even the worst insults and persecution. So HaShem, when people abuse and insult me, help me bear it in silence, in order that this should be my atonement for all my sins.

HaShem, my G-d: In my heart of hearts I know that I am very far from genuine Teshuvah. My sins have gone over my head. They have left me in such a state of mental confusion that I really have no idea how to come back to You. My good sense and intelligence have left me, and I feel as if I have no heart. I go around like a vagrant, devoid of mind and heart.

HaShem, You know my foolishness. I cannot conceal my guilt from You. Father, loving Father, what should I do? Where should I run for help? What possible remedy or strategy can I find to save my soul from destruction? "I lift up my eyes to the mountains: from where will my help come?" Help me! Help me! Please! Please be kind to me! Show me Your love and mercy! Save me!

Shine upon me from Your holy habitation, and cause a spirit of wisdom and understanding, holiness and purity to rest upon me, so that I will be able to genuinely sanctify and purify myself and come back to You in perfect Teshuvah. Let me hold my peace and say nothing to those who abuse and insult my soul. Let me 'silently wait for HaShem and hope in Him', bearing all degradation and persecution with love, as an atonement for my sins.

Master of the Universe: Through Your holy sages, of blessed memory, You have given us a distant hint of the exalted holiness of the Jewish People. Every single Jew is a "crown" to the Holy One blessed be He. I therefore want to ask You to help me to always try to search for all the good points that are to be found in each Jew, and to judge everyone favorably.

Even when people are against me and abuse and insult me, let me hold my peace and say nothing. Even in my heart, let me feel no hatred or anger. Instead, let me judge them favorably

Help me follow the path of Teshuvah all my days. "Who can say, "I have cleansed my heart and purified myself of sin"?" You know our hearts, and how we often have mixed and impure motives for even the good that we do. Even when I am confessing my sins, I have improper thoughts and motives. I find it impossible to say even a single word sincerely and honestly. My sins are real enough, but I have a block against owning up to them.

So please help me to keep going forward on the path of Teshuvah, and to repent over my repentance - to make amends for the inadequacy of my earlier Teshuvah. This way, with Your help, I will eventually be able to attain the highest level of Teshuvah: You will open my heart and mind to know Your Name, and I will then attain such a level of spiritual perception that I will understand that I have not even begun to repent as yet in a way that is commensurate with Your awesome greatness and exaltedness.

You will then help me repent genuinely over my earlier repentance. With each new and higher perception of Your exaltedness, I will repent over the limitations of my earlier perceptions, and for having allowed material images to influence the way I conceive of You, detracting from the supreme exaltedness of Your divinity. I will keep going forward on the path of Teshuvah every day of my life, until the day when You will finally take my soul and bring me to the World to Come, the "day that is all Shabbat, all Teshuvah."

Help me slaughter my Evil Urge, and thereby give You honor in two worlds, This World and the World to Come, as it is written, "The one who slaughters [the evil urge, and offers] the thanksgiving offering will give Me honor."

Help me run away from honor. Let me minimize my own importance, while doing everything I can to enhance the glory of G-d. Grant me a share in Your great glory, and lovingly bring me to experience the glory of G-d and attain holy glory for Your sake alone. Let me never make use of Your glory for my own personal advantage, but only for the sake of Your Name and in Your service, and let no one feel the need to raise questions about my reputation and honor.

#### Excerpts Prayer 10

Loving G-d: Help me break my arrogance, and empty my heart of all pride. Please HaShem, You know how low I have become. My sins and transgressions have pushed me far away from You. I cannot base my request on any merit of mine. I am undeserving, and I can only ask Your help as a free gift of mercy. Your way is to be good to all Your creatures and Your love and mercy spread over all Your works.

Loving G-d: Don't let the least improper thought so much as enter my mind. Don't let the slightest hint of pride or self-importance, or motives of trying to impress others, ever enter my heart or affect my behavior, so that my hope should not be completely lost, G-d forbid.

The little good I have in me is all from You, because everything is from You. Anything I have given You was Yours in the first place. Even this tiny modicum of good is mixed up with a great deal of waste. Much work will be needed to refine it before it will be pure enough to rise up before You.

How can someone as distant and grossly material as myself rely on my own merits, when the good in me is less than a drop in the ocean? I have nothing to depend upon except Your boundless love and kindness. If I go astray and let the slightest hint of pride and arrogance enter my heart, I'd be lost in my wretchedness. How can a simple person like me, who is devoid of all good, claim to deserve anything?

HaShem: I am incapable of explaining myself and expressing all my feelings to You. Just have pity on me, and save me from pride and arrogance. Someone as lowly as myself should really not have to pray about pride at all. It is absurd to think that it could even occur to someone so covered in blemishes from the soles of his feet to the top of his head to entertain the least trace of pride.

Even if I had never failed You all my days except in the most minor way, how could I lift up my head and look down on even the merest creature in the world, considering Your overwhelming greatness and exaltedness, and the countless favors and blessings You shower upon me every single moment.

Such is the radiance of Your majesty and greatness that even if our only failure was to have fallen a little short of absolute perfection in a matter of minor importance, it would be impossible for us to lift up our heads before You. After all the wrong I have done, I should certainly not have had to ask You at all about getting rid of arrogance.

But HaShem, You know that I am only flesh and blood. My mind is a turmoil of thoughts that sometimes border on madness. I am prone to the most ridiculous motives of wanting to impress people, and I get all kinds of ideas about my own importance, as You know. I am constantly having thoughts like these. They crowd in on me from every conceivable side, to the point that I cannot open my mouth and say a single word with true sincerity.

**I don't know what to do. Where should I run to? Where should I turn? Where will I get help from? It is very painful: "Even when I cry and scream, my prayer is closed up" because of all the improper thoughts and false motives which attack and confuse me when I'm praying.**

**What can I say? How can I justify myself? G-d has found out my sin. Do with me what You want. Here I am in Your hand like clay in the hand of the potter. Have pity! Save me! I am like a captive on the way to be killed. Save me! Free me! Loving G-d, help me, and bring me from death to life, from sorrow to joy, from darkness to brilliant light.**

**Loving G-d: Have pity on me. Let the merit and power of the true Tzaddikim protect me. With their help let me break my pride and free myself of arrogance completely. Let me genuinely feel my own lowliness in every limb of my body. Don't let a single tinge of pride or arrogance enter my heart or mind in any way. Bring me to true humility and perfect faith.**

**Help me rid myself of all religious doubts and questions, and remove all confusion and dishonesty from my heart. Let them never enter my heart again, or the hearts of Your people Israel.**

#### **Excerpts Prayer 14**

**HaShem our G-d and G-d of our fathers:**

**May it be Your will to completely remove all pride from me. Don't let even the slightest hint of pride or arrogance enter my heart. Bring me to genuinely understand my own lowliness, and let me nullify myself to the point where I will look on myself as being even less significant than I really am.**

**Please, HaShem, loving G-d: Help me not to be pushed off course by foolish and deceptive thoughts of pride and arrogance. My situation is bad enough as it is. I'm under so much pressure. I feel so remote from You. My inner pain has grown unbearable. I've been suffering for so long. I look around, but I have no-one to help or support me. I feel desolate. My only hope is to call out to You constantly and wait for You to have pity on me and help me. If I allow myself to be swayed by foolish thoughts of pride or arrogance, there won't be any hope for me at all, G-d forbid. What personal merit do I have to rely on? I've been so foolish in my life. I'm so devoid of good. I have sinned and transgressed in my thoughts, words and deeds, intentionally and unintentionally, ever since my earliest days.**

**Please, HaShem, have pity on my poor soul. Help me! Help me! Save me! Save me! I don't know what to ask for first. I have so many needs, but I don't have the patience to set them all out in detail. I find it impossible to specify all the countless things I need to ask of You. I've fallen very low. I cannot begin to estimate how much damage I have done to my soul, and how I have degraded my own holiness. I have no rest from the forces hounding me. Evil thoughts and feelings are waiting to trap me all the time. They chase me every moment of every day. My sins have sapped my strength, and I have no idea what to do to resist them.**

**Please, HaShem: Show me how to cry out to You. Teach me how to plead to You with all my heart, so as to succeed in my request and persuade You to bring me back to You in perfect Teshuvah and achieve everything You want for me. Let me never turn aside from Your will and Your mitzvot. Help me break all pride and arrogance completely and totally remove them from my life. Let me never succumb to the least hint of arrogance about any of the things people tend to be proud about - wisdom and good deeds, wealth or power. Let me be genuinely humble and modest about whatever I may possess, and void myself of all arrogance.**

**In any case, don't I know that I am empty and lacking in all these areas, "for I am a brute, not a man and I do not have human understanding in me." I have no strength or power, physical,**

mental or spiritual. My house is bare of riches. I possess neither wisdom nor strength, nor physical wealth, nor the spiritual wealth of good deeds.

Considering my pitifully low level and my extreme distance from You, I really shouldn't need to pray about ridding myself of arrogance at all. But You know the evil of our hearts and the strange ideas we let into our minds. Despite my distance from You, I still indulge in ridiculous ideas about my own importance. So much so that it has become a war on every front. Pride and arrogance attack me on every side, preventing me from turning to You, as You know, HaShem, my G-d and G-d of my fathers.

Even so, I live in constant hope that You will help me. I know that Your love is unending. You examine the innermost depths of the heart, and You know our most hidden secrets. You know that deep within my heart I yearn to come truly close to You and genuinely carry out Your will without any false motives. For Your sake, take pity on me, heavenly Father, Master of All. Grant that I should be able to remove all my pride and come to true humility.

Let me act humbly in all my dealings with people - with the great, with ordinary people, and even with the small and the smallest of the small. The fact is that my many sins have made me smaller than even the smallest of the small. Let me know and feel my lowliness in every single limb of my body, until I come to see myself as being even smaller and humbler than I really am, and I will attain the ultimate level of true meekness.

Please, HaShem, I know that my words are halting and confused. I have no idea how to order my prayer before You. Still, I base myself on the fact that You listen to all prayers. Kind and loving G-d, take pity on me and help me to live the way You want me to live from now on and for ever, and bring me to attain true humility.

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#### Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbat* 30b-31a

Our Rabbis taught: A man should always be humble like Hillel, and not impatient like Shammai. It once happened that two men made a wager with each other, saying, He who goes and makes Hillel angry shall receive four hundred zuz. Said one, I will go and incense him. That day was the Shabbat eve, and Hillel was washing his head. He went and passed by the door of his house, and called out, Is Hillel here, is Hillel here? Thereupon he robed and went out to him, saying, My son, what do you require? I have a question to ask, said he. Ask, my son, he prompted. Thereupon he asked: Why are the heads of the Babylonians round? My son, you have asked a great question, replied he: because they have no skillful midwives. He departed, tarried a while, returned, and called out, Is Hillel here; is Hillel here? He robed and went out to him, saying, My son, what do you require? I have a question to ask, said he. Ask, my son, he prompted. Thereupon he asked: Why are the eyes of the Palmyreans bleared? My son, you have asked a great question, replied he: because they live in sandy places. He departed, tarried a while, returned, and called out, Is Hillel here; is Hillel here? He robed and went out to him, saying, My son, what do you require? I have a question to ask, said he. Ask, my son, he prompted. He asked, Why are the feet of the Africans wide? My son, you have asked a great question, said he; because they live in watery marshes. I have many questions to ask, said he, but fear that you may become angry. Thereupon he robed, sat before him and said, Ask all the questions you have to ask. Are you the Hillel who is called the leader of Israel? Yes, he replied. If that is you, he retorted, may there not be many like you in Israel. Why, my son? queried he. Because I have lost four hundred zuz through you, complained he. Be careful of your moods, Hillel answered. Hillel is worth it that you should lose

four hundred zuz and yet another four hundred zuz through him, yet Hillel shall not lose his temper.

### **Bamidbar Chapter 12**

1. And Miriam and Aharon spoke against Moshe because of the Kushite woman whom he had married; for he had married a Kushite woman.
2. And they said, Has Hashem indeed spoken only by Moshe? has he not spoken also by us? And Hashem heard it.
3. *And the man Moshe was very ANaV (humble), more than any other men, which were upon the face of the earth.*
4. And Hashem spoke suddenly to Moshe, and to Aharon, and to Miriam, Come out you three to the Tent of Meeting. And the three came out.
5. And Hashem came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the Tent, and called Aharon and Miriam; and they both came forth.
6. And he said, Hear now my words; If there is a prophet among you, I Hashem will make myself known to him in a vision, and will speak to him in a dream.
7. Not so with my servant Moshe, for he is the trusted one in all my house.
8. With him I speak mouth to mouth, manifestly, and not in dark speech; and he behold the form of Hashem. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moshe?
9. And the anger of Hashem was kindled against them; and he departed.

### *Likute Etzot*

#### *Pride and Humility:*

Based on the writings of Rebbe Nachman of Bresslov

1. The humility of the Tzaddik brings him to the level of Nothing. This is what gives him the power to atone for sins (4:7).
2. A person who is truly humble becomes stripped of all his material aspects and merged with the Infinite. He then attains the awareness of how everything that happens to him is only for his benefit. To know this is to taste the life of the World to Come (Ibid. 9).
3. Pride brings poverty (Ibid. 8).
4. Humility is the foundation of true repentance. The essence of repentance is to feel your own lowliness and insignificance, to be aware of the wrong you have done, and to understand that even the suffering and murderous opposition you may have to encounter in your quest for the truth are perfectly just (6:2).
5. A person may have fasted a great deal and undergone harsh personal discipline and self-mortification. Even so, he should not arrogantly assume that he has attained the level of a Tzaddik, with the power to bring about redemptions or to accomplish great feats through prayer. If he examines himself carefully he will see that in spite of all his fasting and asceticism, his physical desires are still firmly lodged in his body -- not only his own desires, but even the lust his father had at the time he was conceived. As soon as he recognizes this he will be overcome with trepidation and he will no longer delude himself with the thought that he is a Tzaddik. Instead he will turn to the true Tzaddik to ask him to intercede on his behalf; he will bind his own prayers to the Tzaddik, and in this way he will restore prayer to its rightful place, which is with the true Tzaddikim. They alone

- understand the secret of prayer and the way to elevate prayer. G-d yearns for the prayers of the Tzaddikim and sends an eloquent flow of words to their lips (10:4).
6. There are certain arrogant people who not only refuse personally to go to the Tzaddikim to ask them to pray on their behalf, but who also try to prevent others from going as well. Such people deprive G-d of the prayers of the Tzaddikim for which he yearns so strongly (Ibid.).
  7. Pride is a form of idol-worship. The way to crush it is by drawing closer to the Tzaddikim (Ibid. 5).
  8. To break one's pride is the foundation for attaining wisdom, long life and vitality. The severe face which G-d shows is sweetened, and one attains faith, joy, the understanding of Torah in its revealed and hidden aspects, and ruach hakodesh, the spirit of holiness (Ibid. 11).
  9. A person who is arrogant cannot even open his mouth. He lacks the faculty of speech and is unable to speak words which radiate with light. When words of Torah pass across his lips, not only do the words themselves fail to radiate within him and draw him to improve, worse still, the Torah itself becomes coarsened and dimmed on his lips (11:2).
  10. Arrogance and sexual immorality are connected. A person who succeeds in resisting temptation and extricating himself from pride will attain the light that will illumine his path to repentance. In the end he will reach an understanding of the depths of Torah (Ibid. 3).
  11. There is a form of humility which is the ultimate in arrogance. This is when a person acts humbly because he knows that people look down upon those who flaunt themselves. All he wants is to gain their respect and approval. His humility is for show: he really wants honor. It takes a good deal of intelligence and self-examination to rid yourself of pride: you must cleanse yourself of it completely. As our Sages said: 'Be very, very lowly in spirit' (Avot 4:4). The exile of the Jews from our land was caused by 'seven idolatrous temples' (Gittin 88). This is a reference to pride. Even today people are still chasing after honor and prestige, and this is why the exile has still not ended (Ibid. 7).
  12. Torah can only be acquired with meekness. There are four distinct areas where you must break your pride: you must be humble before those who are greater than you, before those who are on your own level, and before those who are less than you. And at times -- if you are the smallest of the small -- you must make yourself humble even in front of yourself: you must look upon yourself as if you were on a lower level than you actually are (14:5).
  13. There are many different things which make people arrogant. You should be very careful about all of them. Intelligence, power and material possessions are the three main things which give people a sense of superiority. You must rid yourself of any trace of arrogance you may have in these three areas. Whatever intelligence, power or wealth you have been blessed with should give you a sense of meekness and humility (Ibid.).
  14. The more you succeed in breaking your pride the greater your attainments in Torah will be. You will have the power to draw those who are far from G-d closer, and then the glory of G-d will be exalted and magnified. When glory is taken from the hands of those who have abrogated it to themselves and restored to G-d alone, the awe of G-d spreads. Through awe you can attain harmony within yourself, and this is the way to discover true prayer and to achieve universal peace, peace in all the worlds (Ibid.).
  15. Arrogance can actually cause a person to be imprisoned (Ibid. 22).
  16. There are times when people generally fail to guard their tongues. The danger then is that even those who are righteous and G-d-fearing will succumb to feelings of pride. It is

essential for every individual to keep a careful watch on himself and ask if the honor and prestige he enjoys are really justified. Otherwise he runs the risk of falling into arrogance. Pride is the cause of the 'Exile of the Shechinah' (58:10).

17. The less importance a person attaches to himself, the more drawing power he has: he is able to draw down the Shechinah to the lowest worlds to dwell with us. This was G-d's desire from the day He created His universe. Such a person has the power to draw men closer to the service of G-d, and he can channel blessing and goodness to the Jewish people. And he himself is able to draw closer to the Tzaddik (70).
18. Experiencing the sanctity of Shabbat is one of the ways of attaining true humility, which means to seeing one's own lowliness and understanding the greatness of the Jewish people and being willing to sacrifice oneself for them, like Moshe did (79).
19. A person should look upon himself as if he were less than he really is. That is true humility. And at the very least he should not look upon himself as if he is more than he really is (Ibid.).
20. When a person is meek and lowly, no one will ever be able to shake him or push him from his place. No one can take away his livelihood, G-d forbid (Ibid.).
21. Humility protects against sexual temptation. Pride arouses it (130).
22. One of the ways of ridding yourself of pride is to celebrate the festivals with open-heartedness and joy, and to honor them in the most lavish manner you can afford (135).
23. If someone is humble, it is a sign that he is bound to the Tzaddik, because being close to the Tzaddik breaks one's pride (Ibid.)
24. When a person is so humble that he is literally nothing, he can attain Torah and greatness at the same time. Otherwise it is hard for the two of them to dwell together (162).
25. When a person is arrogant, it is a sign that he will end up in trouble. The opposite is also true: a person who is humble and lowly will come to great honor (168).
26. Whatever glory and greatness any kingdom or leader or ruler may possess, their true basis lies in humility. The greater the humility of the ruler or leader, the more his power and dominion will spread (Likutey Moharan II, 16).
27. Most people have very mistaken ideas about what it is to be humble. You must be very careful not to fall into the trap of false modesty. Pray to G-d about this and ask to be worthy of true humility in accordance with His desire (38).
28. In the resurrection which is destined for the future, the part of each person that will be restored to life is the modest, humble part and that alone. The indescribable bliss of the eternal life of the World to Come cannot be experienced by anyone except inasmuch as true humility and meekness are found within him (72).
29. At the root of every single Jew there exists an aspect of the humility and lowliness of Moshe. Every limb of the body is suffused with them. However they are hidden and concealed to the point that they are 'dead' as it were, and for this reason the average person does not consciously experience them at all, and he is far from being humble and lowly in the way Moshe was. But as a person draws closer to the Tzaddik -- when he sees the Tzaddik, and especially when he hears Torah from his lips -- he is able to develop a sense of genuine shame and to achieve repentance. The humility and lowliness concealed in him will then come to life, and he will attain the true humility which is the gateway to enduring life in the World to Come.
30. We must pray and plead with G-d to make us worthy of true humility and lowliness. We really have no conception of what humility is. The aim is certainly not to be slovenly and

act as if we consider ourselves worthless. Humility is the source of the life which is in every single limb. Humility is the life of the world to come and the essence of its joy (Ibid.).

31. If things are not going well for a person, he should understand it as a sign that there is still some residue of pride within him. He must repent and lower himself and bring himself to the level of Mah? -- 'What?' Then things will begin to go well for him (82).

## Honor

1) People should minimize their own dignity and give as much honor as they can to the Creator. One should avoid honor and make no attempt to win people's admiration. Then he will be worthy of receiving honor from G-d, and no one will raise questions about whether he is really entitled to the respect he enjoys. But someone who chases after the respect and admiration of his fellow men will never be worthy of G-d's honor. Even if he does attain a position of respect, people will constantly look at him askance and want to know who he is that he should be accorded such respect (Likutey Moharan I, 6:1).

2) The test of true repentance is when a person can allow himself to be abused and ridiculed in silence, patiently accepting all the insults which are thrown at him. Through this he reduces the flood in the left ventricle of the heart--this is the seat of the animal soul -- and slaughters his evil inclination. Then he is worthy of the honor of G-d (Ibid. 2).

3) A person should guard G-d's honor in all ways. He should be 'vile and despised in his own eyes' (cf. Tehillim 15:4), accounting himself and his dignity as of no importance before the honor due to the Creator. Then he will be able to speak words of Torah that will radiate with light, illuminating for him all the aspects of himself that he needs to work on in order to achieve perfect repentance. Through this he will attain profound understanding of the depths of Torah (11:2).

4) The greatest revelation of G-d's glow comes when those who were farthest of all from Him draw closer: then His Name is exalted and honored above and below, and His glory is magnified. It is a duty for everyone to make efforts to draw people closer to G-d. And no one should say, 'How can I come closer to G-d seeing that I am so removed from Him because of my wrongdoing.' On the contrary, the further away a person, the more G-d's glory is exalted through him when he makes an effort to return and draw closer (14:2).

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10) There are leaders who go by the name of rabbi but whose learning has been picked up from the 'superficialities' and 'waste' of Torah. They are unable to control even themselves, let alone other people. But they still have pretensions to greatness and seek to lead and guide the whole world. You should be very careful to accord them no recognition whatsoever so as not to add in any way to their power or authority. They themselves can be forgiven for what they do: they are no more than the victims of a strong lust for power. It is the people who give them credibility and power and who are prepared to accord them the title of rabbi who will have a heavy penalty to pay (6 1:2).

11) When rabbis lacking in integrity are ordained and given authority, it weakens the influence of the Holy Writings of the Jews, and the writings of the nations of the world become invested with power. Decrees are passed according honor and authority to these writings alone, and not to

our writings, and forcing Jews to learn their literature. In the end, decrees of expulsion are passed against the Jewish people, and they are forced to move from places where they have dwelled by long tradition to places they have never been. This is a form of 'exile from the Land of Israel' . As a result, it becomes impossible for great souls to be born and brought into the world, and because of this the secret of astronomical calculation is taken from us and put into their hands instead, G-d forbid (ibid.).

12) But when a Sage of true integrity is ordained and accorded the title of rabbi, our Scriptures are again invested with radiance and strength, and even the nations of the world submit to the authority of the writings of the Jews in governing their own affairs. Then the air is sanctified with the holiness of the air of the Land of Israel, and relief comes from the troubles which were brought about through the ordination of unworthy rabbis (ibid.).

13) When some new honor comes to a person, it is something to be quite apprehensive about. At times honor is sent to a person as a prelude to his soul being taken. Therefore a person should always be careful to receive any honor in great holiness and only for the sake of G-d, not for his own benefit or enjoyment. Otherwise the honor could turn to be very harmful, and his soul could be taken, G-d forbid. The soul is very precious. One must guard it with the utmost care. One should pray to G-d that this new honor should not harm him in any way and that his soul should not be taken from him. The root and source of all the souls is in glory, and when a soul is taken, it is taken up into glory, which is its root (67:1).

15) A greedy appetite is a blot upon the honor of G-d. G-d hides His face, and the world comes under the shadow of His harsh severity. Glory falls to the arrogant, who abrogate all the dignity to themselves, Power, kingship, authority and honor fall into the hands of the heathens, the wicked and the insolent, and when a situation arises where the Jewish people needs to take some firm action to ensure the survival of our holy faith, it is necessary to have recourse to their strength. But when we break the lust for food, the honor of G-d is vindicated and the insolent are left without power, authority or dignity. The countenance of G-d radiates to the world and the harsh judgments are broken (ibid. 3).

I 6) Charity cleanses the stains upon G-d's honor. Glory and power are taken from the Other Side and restored to the wise, who are the world's true leaders (ibid. 5).

17) In the morning prayers, when we reach the words 'and You rule over all,' it is customary to give charity in order to take glory and power from the hands of the Other Side and restore them to the forces of Holiness (ibid. 7).

18) When honor is restored to the wise, who are the true leaders, at the beginning of their ascendancy there is likely to be factionalism and strife (ibid. 6).

19) When some new honor comes to a person, he should do his utmost to cultivate the fear and love of G-d within himself in order to give birth to the new soul which comes to him clothed in this honor, to raise it and bring it to maturity (ibid. 7).

21) For a Tzaddik it is very hard to be widely known. A Tzaddik who is revealed and famous has to bear much suffering on behalf of the people. However there are cases where it is the will of Heaven that a certain Tzaddik should be revealed and widely known (71).

22) When the leaders become arrogant, G-d sends people to make trouble for them and speak out against them in order to break their pride (95).

23) A person who wants honor is a fool (Likute Moharan 194).

24) The more a person lacks understanding, the more punctilious he is about any affronts to his dignity (202).

27) There are people who impose themselves as leaders and rulers over our poor, bereft nation not because they have been appointed by Heaven but purely through their own arrogance and assertiveness. The sword of pride which they wield draws strength from the proselytes, who bring arrogance into the Jewish people. They can attain so much power that they can even exact penalties from those who do not wish to bow to their rule. But the correct phrase for this is not 'exacting penalties' but 'causing damage,' because ultimately they are a destructive force in the world. The arrogance of these leaders brings rampant immorality to the world. The only escape is by turning to the Guardians of the Earth (5:5).

29) It is very dangerous for a Tzaddik to be revealed and widely known and to occupy a position of leadership. The danger is obvious in the case of one who is not fitted to the task and who wears a tallit which is not his own. But it is present even in the case of men of true stature who genuinely serve G-d. When they accept positions of leadership and teach Torah publicly, they are running the risk of falling into immorality, theft and murder with every step they take (18).

30) The only purpose of the entire creation is the revelation of G-d's glory. This is why everything was created for the sake of man. Because the revelation, of G-d's glory depends entirely on man. Therefore when some new honor comes to a person, he must be scrupulous about not taking any of it for himself. He must make sure that he gives all the glory to G-d. In this way he is building and sustaining the world, because the whole world and all that is in it was created only for His glory (71).

31) A person who insults G-d's honor falls from the mentality of the 'Land of Israel,' which is the source of true understanding and wisdom, to the mentality of 'outside the Land.' This is the root of strife and factionalism (Ibid.).

32) A person who is jealous of a friend who rises to greatness can lose his faith and turn into an atheist. One must be extremely careful about this (80).

33) In our times there is no one whose motive for seeking power is purely for the sake of Heaven. In previous generations there were such people. But today no one should seek out positions of power. All honor and authority should be avoided (Ibid.).

34) Anyone with a clear mind can see that all the affairs of this world are utterly futile and foolish. This is especially true of earthly prestige and power and fame. The truth is that they give no pleasure or satisfaction even in this world. They are always attended by suffering and abuse from other people (Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom 47).

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### Rebbe Nachman

#### The Importance of Feeling Ashamed of Oneself in this World

Rebbe Nachman said, "Everyone must search his ways, to see how closely he is attached to Hashem. The main sign is the *Tefillin*, and *Tefillin* is the aspect of shame." Can it be that the more one is ashamed, the greater is his attachment to Hashem? For what must one be ashamed? The answer is that he must feel shame that he is angering Hashem, that he isn't performing His will. And by achieving this feeling of shame, this of itself increases his attachment to Hashem. A person who goes through life treating it as joke is demonstrating the opposite of this feeling of shame. One must at all times feel shame, but this has nothing to do with depression. Exactly the opposite, this shame is the root of life. This itself is life. The Torah says of Moshe Rabbeinu that his face was shining. And Rebbe Nachman explains (*Likutei Morahan* I:38) that this was his feeling of shame. The Rabbis teach that anyone who commits a sin and is embarrassed about it, all his sins are forgiven. Because he is embarrassed, he is forgiven. Similarly, all our *hisbodedus* must also have this aspect of embarrassment. "Ribono Shel Olam, how can it be that I could behave in such a way that would make you angry with me!" And the embarrassment that he feels is in itself his repentance.

"To be humble, one needs a lot of intelligence." (Rebbe Nachman, *Likutei Moharan* II:72),

"Thus says Hashem. 'Let not the wise person praise himself for his wisdom. Let not the strong one praise himself for his strength. Let not the wealthy person praise himself for his wealth. If one will praise himself about anything, let him praise himself about this: he knows and understands Me, that I am Hashem, who does lovingkindness, righteousness and justice on earth; for it is in these things that I delight,' says Hashem." (Yermiah 9:22, 23).

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### THE HOLINESS OF SHAVUOT NIGHT

On the night of Shavuot, Jews stay up all night learning the Torah. One of the reasons we stay up all night is because on the night prior to the revelation on Mount Sinai all the Jews went to sleep and had to be awakened by Moshe Rabbeinu. In remembrance of this event, we remain awake all Shavuot night. The Alexandrer Rebbe asks a very interesting question. "How is it possible," he wonders, "that the Jewish people went to sleep on the night before revelation? After all, we learn from other sources that for forty nine days they prepared themselves spiritually in the deepest possible ways, counting the Omer every night so that they would be ready to receive the Torah. After working so hard to prepare themselves, why should they suddenly falter?"

"They slept that night," the Alexandrer Rebbe answered, "because of their great humility. They had learned humility from Moshe who was the most humble man on Earth. On the night before the revelation each family member thought to himself, "G-d will reveal Himself to all the Jews but not to me and my family because we really don't deserve it" All the parents told their children on the night of Shavuot, "let's not go tomorrow morning to the revelation, we will be the only ones who will be sent home by Moshe, telling us that we are not ready yet."

The Alexandrer Rebbe then asks a second question. "Why do we behave as if their decision to sleep that night requires correction? After all, we have just said that their decision to sleep was based on humility, which would seem praiseworthy. Yet we commemorate their action by staying awake as if we were correcting an old mistake. Why should we stay awake if their sleep had such holy meaning?"

The Alexandrer Rebbe explains that what our forefathers did not understand is that no one can prepare himself well enough to actually deserve the Torah. It is solely a gift from heaven. We stay awake all Shavuot night in order to tell ourselves and our children, "It's true we have not prepared ourselves properly and it's true that we don't deserve to receive the Torah but G-d wants to give me a gift and I'd better be there on time."

Some of our sages explain their decision to sleep in a slightly different way. They say that we can compare our ancestors to a bride and groom. When do a bride and groom most feel like calling off a wedding? A few minutes before the wedding is when a bride and groom suddenly realize how awesome a marriage is and become frightened. In the same way our ancestors became frightened that the Torah would be too much for them. When we stay up all Shavuot night and learn Torah we give ourselves the strength to be fearless and to face everything that G-d puts in front of us. Let this Shavuot mark a new beginning to give us strength to begin our Yiddishkeit all over again. Let us not flinch from the responsibilities which this gift carries with it. Let us remember that the precious gift of the Torah is given to us not because we deserve it, but because it is indicative of G-d's great love for us.

by Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach

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#### ONE OF THE FUNDAMENTAL MITZVOT [NOT TO BECOME HAUGHTY]

"He [The King] shall write for himself a copy of this Torah in a book from that which is before the priests the Levites; And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear Hashem his G-d, to keep all the words of this Torah and these statutes, to do them; So that his heart does not become haughty over his brethren and not turn from the commandment right or left so that he will prolong years over his kingdom, he and his sons amid Israel (*Devarim* 17: 18 - 20)

The Torah alludes here to the prohibition of haughtiness because Scripture enjoins the king from haughtiness and conceit, and *a fortiori* others who have no case [for haughtiness] ... because haughtiness is repugnant and loathsome to G-d ... because greatness and exaltedness belong exclusively to Hashem (Ramban, *ad loc.*) Rabbi Moshe of Covey authored the SeMaG, which enumerates and explains the six hundred and thirteen *Mitzvot*. In a most stunning, remarkable

passage he writes that upon completion of his work, he beheld a vision in a dream. He was told that "Behold, you have forgotten the foundational *Mitzvah*: "not to forget Hashem and become haughty." Accordingly, he revised his work and featured the prohibition of haughtiness as *Mitzvah* lo ta'aseh #64.

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**'My children, if you possess no sin, then I fear your ga'avah from being free from sin more than if you had actually committed it.**

(Shemot 34, verse 6), "Hashem Hashem, Omnipotent, Merciful and Kind..." According to the enumeration of the Arizal, the first of the thirteen attributes is "E-I." (Omnipotent) The question then is, what is the significance of repeating G-d's name twice before the first of the attributes? The "Otsar HaChayim" of The Komarno Rebbe, Rav Yitschak Eisak Yehuda Yechiel, ZTs"L, at the end of *Mitzvah* 253, records the following homiletic. "I heard this from the mouth of my uncle and master, Rabeynu 'Tsvi L'aTsadik' ZTs"L (Tsvi Hirsch of Ziditchov), who would reveal to me secrets. 'Hashem, Hashem.'" This is referring to two states of being, one before the sin, and the other after the sin has been performed. Before one commits a sin, you need to appeal to G-d's mercy to save you from ga'avah (pride). This is as the saying goes, 'My children, if you possess no sin, then I fear your ga'avah from being free from sin more than if you had actually committed it.' Then after one sins, you need mercy for the sinner."

Once upon a time Reb Yisroel Ben Eliezar, The Baal Shem Tov, rolled into a certain village in a fine and flashy carriage. One of the villagers took him to task for having the ga'avah to ride in such an ostentatious fashion. The Holy Baal Shem answered him with the following parable. There was a king who asked his advisors to find a healing treatment that would make him live forever. His advisers, to say the least, were disturbed by such a request, claiming that certain good habits could add years to one's life, but there is no treatment that will cause him to live forever. A certain beggar came to the king and said, "I can heal you in a way that you will truly live forever." The beggar prescribed that the king live a life of anavah (humbleness). In response to the beggar's advice, the king decided to no longer ride in his royal carriage when appearing in public, but rather to walk after it on foot, and in simple clothes. So he did, much to the astonishment of his subjects. As he passed the beggar, he said to the king, "you did not understand me. By advising you to lead a life of anavah I did not mean for you to abandon your royal attire. You must ride in your carriage dressed in your kingly clothing, and at the same time, be as meek as the dust in your heart."

**How can one get away from ga'avah?**

In his work, "Notsar Chesed," on Pirkei Avot (Ch. 4:4), the Komarno Rebbe writes, "Pride is really idolatry. There is no advice one can give to save oneself from it, save that G-d will help. The Original talmudic tractate of Avodah Zarah (Idolatry) of the Patriarch Abraham (see Avodah Zarah, 14b) had four hundred chapters on the subject of pride. One who is filled with himself is truly serving a strange G-d. He himself is idolatry, boiling dung. With the Holy of Holiest, light of the seven days, the Baal Shem Tov, if I could only merit to be the dust under his shoes, it is told that his neshama left the world in a state of purity, and at that moment he said, my G-d, Master of

all the Worlds, do not let the foot of pride come against me (Tehillim, 36:12)." So too did the Holy Rav Yitschak Luria leave the world. It is told that his last words were in Ladino ("lashon spania") 'save me from the hands of pride.' One can not even begin any true service of G-d while one is still sunk in ga'avah. Furthermore, when the cursed and impure cult separated from the faith, it was only through anger and pride."

He continues, "When the Holy Baal Shem Tov knew that he was leaving the world, he instructed them to find a Rebbe to lead them and teach them. They were to travel around to various tsadikim and ask them, 'what is the best advice to save us from ga'avah?' Whoever gave any kind of original advice, it was a sign that he was a phony. They would know their true Rebbe when they heard, 'G-d can help. Only G-d can save you from ga'avah.' " (Sefer Baal Shem Tov, Parshat Metsorah, footnote 13.)

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"Lord of all worlds, we can not plead the merit of our deeds before You. What are we? What is our virtue? what is our righteousness? our power? our strength? Truly, our mighty men are as nothing before You, and the men of fame as though they had never been: the learned appear void of knowledge, and the wise like men without understanding."

Daily morning prayer:

Talmud - Mas. Sukkah 29b

The sin of arrogance is equivalent to all [the others] whereas of the humble it is written, "And the humble shall inherit the land, and delight themselves in the abundance of peace". (Tehillim 37)

#### Zohar I 166a – b

##### The Yetzer ha Ra encourages man to arrogance and conceit

Rabbi Shimon opened a discourse on the verse: Better is he that is lightly esteemed, and has a servant, than he that plays the man of rank, and lacks bread (Prov. XII, 9). 'This verse', he said, 'speaks of the evil prompter (Yetzer hara), who lays plots and unceasingly brings up accusations against a man. He puffs up a man's heart, encouraging him to arrogance and conceit, and induces him to twirl his hair and carry his head high, until he obtains an ascendancy over him and drags him down to Gehinnom. Better, therefore, is one who is "lightly esteemed" and who does not follow the evil prompter (Yetzer hara), but remains humble in heart and spirit and submits himself to the will of the Holy One, blessed be He. The evil prompter (Yetzer hara) is bowed down before such a one, and so far is he from obtaining the mastery over the man that it is the man who obtains the mastery over him, as it says, "but you may rule over him" (Gen. IV, 7). Such a man is better than he who "plays the man of rank", who has a high opinion of himself, twirls his hair and is full of conceit, as already mentioned above, but "lacks bread", to wit, the true faith, which is referred to as "the bread of his G-d" (Lev. XXI, 22) (Ibid. 6). Again, "he who is lightly esteemed" is exemplified in Yaakov, who humbled himself before Esav so that the latter should in time become his servant, in fulfillment of the blessing: "Let people serve you, and nations bow down to you, etc." (Gen. XXVII, 29). For Yaakov's time had not yet arrived, as he deferred it to the future, and in the immediate present he "esteemed himself lightly". But in the proper time "he that plays the man of rank" will become the servant to him "that lacks bread", to the man who was allotted "plenty of corn and wine" (Ibid. 28). Yaakov knew that it was for the

time being necessary for him to humble himself before Esav, and so made himself as one who “esteemed himself lightly”. And, moreover, he displayed therein more craft and subtlety than in all his other dealings with Esav; and had Esav realized this, he would rather have taken his own life than come to such a pass. Yaakov thus acted throughout with wisdom, and to him can be applied the words of Hannah: “They that strive with Hashem shall be broken in pieces... and he will give strength unto his king, etc.” (I Sam. II. 10).’

#### **Midrash Rabba - Bamidbar IV:20**

Thus it is written: Glorify not thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men (Prov. XXV, 6). If it is proper for a man to comport himself with humility in the presence of a mortal king, how much more so before the Omnipresent. We have learned: Be strong as a leopard, swift as an eagle, fleet as a hart, and valiant as a lion, to do the will of thy Father who is in heaven. This is to teach you that pride has no place with the Omnipresent. Eliyahu says: When a man thinks much of the glory of heaven and little of his own glory, both the glory of heaven and his own glory are magnified. If one, however, thinks little of the glory of heaven and much of his own glory, the glory of heaven remains unimpaired while his own glory wanes.

#### **Bamidbar Rabba 18:21**

Of all qualities none is greater than fear and humility; as is proved by the text, And now, Israel, what doth Hashem thy G-d require of you, but to fear Hashem thy G-d, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve Hashem thy G-d with all thy heart and with all thy soul (Deut. X, 12). ‘Yir’ath’ (the fear of) has the numerical value of six hundred and eleven, and Torah has the numerical value of six hundred and eleven. Add the words yir’ah and Torah and you get a total of six hundred and thirteen.

#### **Midrash Rabba - Devarim VI:9**

9. This bears out what Scripture says, You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son (Tehillim 50, 20). Rabbi Johanan said: If you have accustomed your tongue to speak against your brother who is not of your own nation, in the end you will slander the son of your own nation. Rabbi Judah Ben Levi said: If you have accustomed your tongue to speak against your step-brother, who is of your father but not of your mother, in the end you will slander your own mother's son. For anyone who is so arrogant as to speak against one greater than himself causes the plagues to attack him. And if you do not believe this, lo, the pious Miriam is a warning to all slanderers. Hence the force of REMEMBER WHAT HASHEM THY G-D DID UNTO MIRIAM.

#### **Zohar 2 Shemot 108a**

When David says: “A broken and contrite heart, O G-d, You will not despise”, he indicates that the Holy One, blessed be He, does despise a proud and arrogant heart. “Do good in your good pleasure unto Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem”.

#### **Zohar II 218b**

Our sages have said that the arrogant and shameless have no portion in this world nor in the world to come. All the arrogant of Israel, when they gazed on the Plate, became contrite of heart

and looked inwardly into their own deeds. For the Plate possessed miraculous powers, and thus was the means of making all who looked on it feel ashamed of their misdeeds. In this way the Plate secured atonement for the arrogant and the insolent. The letters of the Divine Name engraved on it stood out shining and flashing, and whoever looked at that flashing had to cast down his eyes in fear, and become contrite of heart, and thus the Plate effected their atonement. Of a similar potency was the Incense. For whoever smelled the smoke of the pillar that ascended from the “smoke-raiser” [Tr. note: One of the ingredients of the incense.] became cleansed of heart and intent on worshipping his Master: the taint of the evil spirit disappeared from him, leaving him to serve with single heart his Father in heaven. The Incense thus possessed the potency of breaking completely the evil spirit in man.

Rabbi Johanan expounded: ‘It [The Torah] is not in heaven’, [Meaning] it is not to be found among the arrogant;

Talmud - Mas. Eiruvim 55a

Megillah 13b

Rabbi Eleazar further said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, assigns greatness to a man, he assigns it to his sons and his sons’ sons for all generations, as it says, [With kings on the throne;] He sets them for ever and they are exalted. If, however, he becomes arrogant, G-d humiliates him, as it says. And if they be bound in fetters etc.

Talmud sotah 47b

An arrogant person is not acceptable even to the members of his household, as it is said: A haughty man does not abide not at home — i.e., even in his own house! — At first they jump round him, but in the end he becomes repugnant to them.

Talmud Baba batra 78b

Whosoever is arrogant falls into Gehinomm

Zohar, Bereshit, Section 1, Page 201b -202a

The Yetzer hara dwells only in a place where pride and intoxication are rampant, but where he finds a broken spirit he leaves the man alone

Rabbi Jose said: Woe to men who know not nor reflect on the ways of the Torah. Woe to them when G-d will call them to account for their actions and will raise the body and the soul to pay the penalty for all their deeds committed before the soul was separated from the body. That will be the Day of Judgment, on which the books are open and the prosecutors standing by. At that time the serpent will be on the alert to bite the man, quivering in all his limbs to leap upon him. The soul will then become separated from the body and will depart and be carried off to it knows not where. Alas for that day, a day of wrath and indignation! Hence it behoves man to contend daily with his evil prompter [Yetzer haRa] and to picture to himself the day when he will stand before the King to be judged, when they will lower him into the ground to rot there, whilst the soul will become separated from him. We have been taught that it behoves man always to rouse the good prompter against the evil prompter [Yetzer haRa]; if the latter departs, well and good, but if not, the man should study the Torah, as there is nothing so well calculated to crush the evil prompter (Yetzer hara) as the Torah; if he departs, well and good, but if not, let the man remind him of the

day of death so as thereby to subdue him. This statement requires consideration. We know that the evil prompter (Yetzer hara) and the angel of death are one and the same. How is it possible, then, that the angel of death should be cowed by the thought of the day of death, seeing that he himself is the slayer of the sons of men, and this is his joy, and in fact his whole purpose in leading men astray is to bring them to this? The truth, however, is that the purpose of bringing to mind the day of death is primarily to humble a man's heart, for the evil prompter (Yetzer hara) dwells only in a place where pride and intoxication are rampant, but where he finds a broken spirit he leaves the man alone. Observe that the good prompter requires the joy of the Torah and the evil prompter (Yetzer hara) the joy of wine and lewdness and arrogance. Hence a man should constantly be in fear of that great day, the Day of Judgment, the day of reckoning, when there will be none to defend him save his own good deeds which he performed in this world. If Joseph's brothers, who were all valiant men, were afraid when led by one youth into Joseph's house, how much greater will be man's fear when the Holy One, blessed be He, will cite him to judgment? Hence it behoves a man to strive his utmost in this world to fortify himself in the Almighty, and put his trust in Him; for then, although he may have sinned, if he repents with all sincerity, since his stronghold is in the Holy One, it will be as though he had not sinned. The brothers were afraid on account of their sin in having stolen Joseph, for had they not sinned they would not have had any cause to fear; for it is only a man's sins that break his courage and deprive him of strength, the reason being that the good prompter is at the same time unnerved, and left powerless to contend with the evil prompter (Yetzer hara). This is implied in the words: "What man is there that is fearful and faint-hearted?" (Deut. xx, 8), on account, that is, of sins which he may have committed, these being the ruin of a stout heart.

#### Zohar III 23b

The Holy One, blessed be He, bids the Community of Israel [Knesset Israel – The Shechinah] to make known to a man the sin which he has committed. And how does she make it known to him? By chastisement. So, too, we have learnt: When a man sins before G-d and heeds not his sin to repent before his Master and throws it behind his back, then his soul goes up and testifies before the Holy One, blessed be He. Then the King bids the Community of Israel to "make known to him his sin", and to chastise him. And when chastisement comes upon him, then his spirit moves him to repent and he humbles himself and brings an offering; for it is through pride that he sins and forgets his sin.

#### Zohar, Bamidbar, Section 3, Page 240a

COMMAND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL AND SAY UNTO THEM, MY OBLATION, MY FOOD FOR MY OFFERINGS, ETC. It is written: "Has Hashem as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of Hashem?" (I Sam. xv, 22). It is not G-d's desire that a man should sin and bring an offering to atone for his sin; the offering brought without sin is the perfect offering.' Rabbi Abba cited here the verse: "The sacrifices of G-d are a broken spirit", etc. (Tehillim LI, 18). 'This verse', he said, 'has been explained as showing that G-d does not desire a sacrifice from man for his sin, but a contrite spirit. I have heard from the Sacred Lamp [Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai] that when a man is inclined to defile himself with sin, he draws down upon himself a spirit from the side of uncleanness which has complete sway over him, but if a man makes an effort to purify himself he is helped to do so. When the Temple existed and he brought his offering, his atonement was held in suspense until he had repented and broken the pride of that

spirit and humbled it, and then his offering was favorably accepted, but if not, it was given to the dogs.'

#### **Rambam Hilchot Deot 1:4**

4) The way of the upright is [to adopt] the intermediate characteristic of each and every temperament that people have. This is the characteristic that is equidistant from the two extremes of the temperament of which it is a characteristic, and is not closer to either of the extremes. Therefore, the first Sages commanded that one's temperaments should always be such, and that one should postulate on them and direct them along the middle way, in order that one will have a perfect body. How is this done? One should not be of an angry disposition and be easily angered, nor should one be like a dead person who does not feel, but one should be in the middle - one should not get angry except over a big matter about which it is fitting to get angry, so that one will not act similarly again. Likewise, one should not have lust except for those things which the body needs and without which cannot survive, as it is written, "The righteous eat to satisfy his soul". Similarly, one should not labor at one's business, but one should obtain what one needs on an hourly basis, as it is written, "A little that a righteous man has is better, et cetera". Nor should one be miserly or wasteful with one's money, but one should give charity according to what one can spare, and lend as fitting to whoever needs. One should not be [excessively] praised or merry, and nor should one be sorrowful or miserable, but one should be happy for all one's days in satisfaction and with a pleasant expression on one's face. One should apply a similar principle to the other temperaments - this is the way of the wise.

#### **Rambam Hilchot Deot 2:3**

There are some intermediate temperaments which one is forbidden to have, but one should adopt one of the extremities of such temperaments. One of these is the temperament of haughtiness. It is not good [enough] for one to be just modest, but one should be meek, and one's spirits should be low. Therefore, concerning Moshe our Teacher it is written, "...very meek", and not just, "meek". Therefore, the Sages commanded that one should be very meek. They said further that anyone who raises his spirits is denying the essence, as it is written, "...then your heart be lifted up and you forget Hashem your G-d". They also said that all those with haughty airs should be excommunicated, even if they are only slightly haughty. It is the same with anger, which is an extremely bad temperament and from which it is fitting for one to distance oneself as far as its opposite extreme. One should teach oneself not to get angry, even over something about which it would be normal to get angry. If one wanted to instill fear in one's sons or members of one's household, or in the community if one was their leader, and one wants to be angry at them in order that they will return to the good [ways], then one should show them that one is being angry at them just to correct them, and, when displaying such anger, one should bear in mind that one is like a man who is similar to being angry, and that one is not really angry. The first Sages said that if one is angry, it is as if one has worshipped idols. They also said that when a man gets angry, then if he was wise his wisdom leaves him, and if he was a prophet his prophecy leaves him, and that the life of angry people is not [really] a life. Therefore, they commanded us to distance ourselves from anger until one is accustomed to not getting any angry feelings at even annoying things. This is the good way. The way of the righteous is to be humble without being humbled, not to answer back when disgraced, to do things out of love and to be joyous in suffering. Scripture says about them, "...but let them who love Him be as the sun when it comes out in its might".

#### Talmud Sotah 4 - 5

And what means, And the adulteress hunts for the precious life? (Mishle 6: 26) Rabbi Hiyya Ben Abba said in the name of Rabbi Johanan: Every man in whom is haughtiness of spirit will in the end stumble through an [unfaithful] married woman; as it is said: 'And the adulteress hunts for the precious life'. Raba said: [On that interpretation] the word 'precious' should have been 'haughty'! Furthermore the verse should have read, [The haughty soul] hunts [the adulteress]! But, said Raba, [the meaning is:] Whoever has intercourse with a married woman, even though he had studied Torah, of which it is written: It is more precious than rubies, (Mishle 3:15) i.e., above a High Priest who enters into the innermost part of the Sanctuary, she will hunt him to the judgment of Gehinnom.

Rabbi Johanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon Ben Yohai: Every man in whom is haughtiness of spirit is as though he worships idols; it is written here, Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to Hashem, (Mishle 16: 5) and it is written elsewhere, You shall not bring an abomination into your house.(Devarim 7: 26) Rabbi Johanan himself said: He is as though he had denied the fundamental principle;[The existence of Hashem] as it is said: Lest your heart be lifted up and thou forget Hashem thy G-d, etc.(Devarim 8:14) Rabbi Hama Ben Hanina said: He is as though he had broken all the laws of sexual morality; (Found in Vayikra 18) it is written here, Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to Hashem, and it is written elsewhere, For all these abominations, etc. (Vayikra 18: 27) 'Ulla said: He is as though he had erected an idolatrous altar; as it is said: Cease you from man whose breath is in his nostrils;[Who is proud] for wherein [bammeh] is he to be accounted of? (Yeshayahu 2: 22)— read not bammeh but bamah [an idolatrous altar].....

Whence is there a prohibition for the haughty of spirit? — Raba said in the name of Ze'iri: Hear you, and give ear; be not proud. (Jer. XIII, 15) Rabbi Nahman Ben Ytzchak said: [It is derived] from this passage, Your heart be lifted up, and thou forget Hashem thy G-d, (Deut. VIII, 14) and it is written: Beware lest thou forget Hashem thy G-d. (Deut. VIII, 11) This is in accord with what Rabbi Abin said in the name of Rabbi Elai; for Rabbi Abin said in the name of Rabbi Elai: Wherever it is stated 'Beware' 'lest' and 'Do not' the reference is to a prohibition.

Rabbi 'Avira expounded, sometimes he said it in the name of Rabbi Assi and at other times in the name of Rabbi Ammi: Every man in whom is haughtiness of spirit will in the end be reduced in rank; as it is said: They are exalted, there will be reduction of status; (Job XXIV, 24) and lest you think that they remain in existence, the text continues, 'And they are gone'. If, however, he changes [and becomes humble], he will be gathered [to his fathers] in his due time like our father Abraham; as it is said: But when they are lowly, they are gathered in like all (Job XXIV, 24) — i.e., like Abraham, Ytzchak and Yaakov in connection with whom the word 'all' is used. If not, They are cut off as the tops of the ears of corn. What means 'as the tops of the ears of corn'? Rabbi Huna and Rabbi Hisda [explain it]. One says that it means like the awn of the grain, and the other that it means like the ears themselves . This is quite right according to him who says that it means like the awn of the grain, since it is written 'as the tops of the ears of corn'; but according to him who says that it means like the ears themselves, what signifies 'as the tops of the ears of corn'? — Rabbi Assi said, and it was similarly taught in the School of

**Rabbi Ishmael: It is like a man who enters his field; he gleans the tallest ears.**

**With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit. (Isa. LVII, 15) Rabbi Huna and Rabbi Hisda [explain it]. One says that it means the contrite is with Me, and the other that I [G-d] am with the contrite. The more probable view is in accord with him who holds the meaning to be I am with the contrite; for behold, the Holy One, blessed be He, ignored all the mountains and heights and caused His Shechinah to abide upon Mount Sinai, but did not elevate Mount Sinai [up to Himself].**

**Rabbi Joseph said: Man should always learn from the mind of his Creator; for behold, the Holy One, blessed be He, ignored all the mountains and heights and caused His Shechinah to abide upon Mount Sinai, and ignored all the beautiful trees and caused His Shechinah to abide in a bush. (Shemot III, 2)**

**Rabbi Eleazar also said: Every man in whom is haughtiness of spirit is fit to be hewn down like an Asherah. (An object of idolatrous worship) It is written here, The high ones of stature shall be hewn down, (Isa. X, 33) and elsewhere it is written: And you shall hew down their Asherim. (Deut. VII, 5) Further said Rabbi Eleazar, Every man in whom is haughtiness of spirit, his dust will not be disturbed [for the Resurrection]; as it is said: Awake and sing, you that dwell in the dust (Isa. XXVI, 19) — it is not said ‘you that lie in the dust’, but, ‘you that dwell [shochne] in the dust’, i.e., each one who during his lifetime made himself a neighbor [shachen] to the dust [by his humility]. Further said Rabbi Eleazar: Over every man in whom is haughtiness of spirit the Shechinah laments; as it is said: But the haughty he knows from afar. (Tehillim 138, 6)**

**Rabbi Avira expounded, and according to another version it was Rabbi Eleazar: Come and see that the manner of the Holy One, blessed be He, is not like the manner of human beings. The manner of human beings is for the lofty to take notice of the lofty and not of the lowly; but the manner of the Holy One, blessed be He, is not so. He is lofty and He takes notice of the lowly, as it is said: For though Hashem be high, yet has he regard unto the lowly. (Tehillim 138, 6)**

**Rabbi Hisda said, and according to another version it was Mar ‘Ukba: Every man in whom is haughtiness of spirit, the Holy One, blessed be He, declares, I and he cannot both dwell in the world; as it is said: Whoso privily slanders his neighbor, him will I destroy; him that hath an high look and a proud heart will I not suffer (Tehillim CL. 5)— read not ‘him’ [I cannot suffer], but ‘with him’ I cannot [dwell]. There are some who apply this teaching to those who speak slander; as it is said, "whoso privily slanders his neighbor, him will I destroy..**

**Rabbi Alexandri said: Every man in whom there is haughtiness of spirit, even the slightest wind will disturb; [The smallest disappointment is liable to discomfit him.] as it is said: But the wicked are like the troubled sea. (Isa. LVII, 20) If the sea, which contains so many quarters of a log, is ruffled by the slightest wind, how much more so a human being who contains but one quarter of a log.**

**Sotah 5b**

**Rabbi Joshua Ben Levi said: Come and see how great are the lowly of spirit in the esteem of the Holy One, blessed be He, since when the Temple stood, a man brought a burnt-offering and**

received the reward of a burnt-offering, a meal-offering and he received the reward of a meal-offering; but as for him whose mind is lowly, Scripture ascribes it to him as though he had offered every one of the sacrifices; as it is said: The sacrifices of G-d are a broken spirit.(Tehillim 51:19) More than that, his prayer is not despised; as it continues: A broken and a contrite heart, O G-d, thou wilt not despise.

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## **IGGERET (THE LETTER OF THE) HA RAMBAN**

### **SPEAK CALMLY IN ORDER TO AVOID ANGER**

Hear, my son, the instruction of your father and don't forsake the Torah of your mother (Mishlei 1:8). Get into the habit of always speaking calmly to everyone. This will prevent you from anger, a serious character flaw which causes people to sin. As our Rabbis said (Nedarim 22a): Whoever flares up in anger is subject to the discipline of Gehinnom as it says in (Koheles 12:10), "Cast out anger from your heart, and [by doing this] remove evil from your flesh." "Evil" here means Gehinnom, as we read (Mishlei 16:4): "...and the wicked are destined for the day of evil."

### **THROUGH HUMILITY COMES THE FEAR OF G-D**

Once you have distanced yourself from anger, the quality of humility will enter your heart. This quality is the finest of all admirable traits (see Avodah Zarah 20b), because (Mishlei 22:4), "Following humility comes the fear of G-d." Through humility you will also come to fear G-d. It will cause you to always think about (see Avos 3:1) where you came from and where you are going, and that while alive you are only like a maggot and a worm, and the same after death. It will also remind you before Whom you will be judged, the King of Glory, as it is stated (I Melachim 8:27; Mishlei 15:11), "Even the heaven and the heavens of heaven can't contain You" -- "How much less the hearts of people!" It is also written (Yirmeyahu 23:24), "Do I not fill heaven and earth? says G-d."

### **WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT ALL THIS YOU WILL COME TO THE FEAR OF G-D**

When you think about all these things, you will come to fear G-d who created you, and you will protect yourself from sinning and therefore be happy with whatever happens to you. Also, when you act humbly and modestly before everyone, and are afraid of G-d and of sin, the radiance of His glory and the spirit of the Shechina will rest upon you, and you will live the life of the World-to-Come!

### **WHOEVER IS PROUD REBELS AGAINST G-D**

And now, my son, understand and observe that whoever feels that he is greater than others is rebelling against the Kingship of G-d, because he is adorning himself with His garments, as it is written (Tehillim 93:1), "The Lord reigns, He wears clothes of pride." Why should one feel proud?

Is it because of wealth? G-d makes one poor or rich (I Shmuel 2:7). Is it because of honor? It belongs to G-d, as we read (I Divrei Hayamim 29:12), "Wealth and honor come from You." So how could one adorn himself with G-d's honor? And one who is proud of his wisdom surely knows that G-d "takes away the speech of assured men and reasoning from the sages" (Iyov 12:20)! So we see that everyone is the same before G-d, since with His anger He lowers the proud and when He wishes He raises the low. So lower yourself and G-d will lift you up!

#### **SPEAK GENTLY AND CONSIDER ALL MEN SUPERIOR TO YOU**

Therefore, I will now explain to you how to always behave humbly. Speak gently at all times, with your head bowed, your eyes looking down to the ground and your heart focusing on G-d. Don't look at the face of the person to whom you are speaking. Consider everyone as greater than yourself. If he is wise or rich, you should give him respect. If he is poor and you are richer -- or wiser -- than he, consider yourself to be more guilty than he, and that he is more worthy than you, since when he sins it is through error, while yours is deliberate and you should know better!

#### **REGARD YOURSELF AS ALWAYS STANDING BEFORE G-D**

In all your actions, words and thoughts, always regard yourself as standing before G-d, with His Shechinah above you, for His glory fills the whole world. Speak with fear and awe, as a slave standing before his master. Act with restraint in front of everyone. When someone calls you, don't answer loudly, but gently and softly, as one who stands before his master.

#### **BE CAREFUL TO ALWAYS STUDY TORAH**

Be careful to always study Torah diligently, so you will be able to fulfill its commands. When you arise from your learning reflect carefully on what you have studied, in order to see what in it that you can be put into practice. Examine your actions every morning and evening, and in this way every one of your days will be spent in teshuvah (repentance).

#### **CONCENTRATE ON YOUR PRAYERS**

Concentrate on your prayers by removing all worldly concerns from your heart. Prepare your heart before G-d, purify your thoughts and think about what you are going to say. If you follow this in all your daily actions, you will not come to sin. This way everything you do will be proper, and your prayer will be pure, clear, clean, devout and acceptable to G-d, as it is written (Tehillim 10:17), "When their heart is directed to You, listen to them."

#### **READ THIS LETTER ONCE A WEEK AND G-D WILL**

#### **ANSWER YOU IN ALL YOU ASK**

Read this letter at least once a week and neglect none of it. Fulfill it, and in so doing, walk with it forever in the ways of G-d, may He be blessed, so that you will succeed in all your ways. Thus you will succeed and merit the World to Come which lies hidden away for the righteous. Every day that you shall read this letter, heaven shall answer your heart's desires. Amen, Sela!

# IGGERET HAGRA - THE VILNA GAON'S LETTER

(Sent by the Gaon, Rabbi Eliyahu, of blessed memory while traveling to Israel, to instruct his family in the ways of G-d).

*And it is known that all this world, it is all emptiness, that every amusement is worthless, and woe to those who pursue vanity, which is worthless. And don't envy wealth, for "riches are kept by their owner to his misfortune" (Kohelet 5:12)*

## REFRAIN FROM BECOMING SAD

I came to ask you to refrain from becoming sad, as you promised me truthfully, and not to worry. Men leave their wives in order to travel and wander destitute for years to make money. But I, thank G-d, am traveling to the Holy Land - which everyone longs to see - Israel's Most Beloved (or: Hashem's Most Beloved, all heavenly and earthly beings desire it). And I am traveling in peace, thank G-d. You are also aware that I have left behind my children, for whom my heart yearns, and all my precious books, and I am as a stranger in a foreign land. I have left everything behind.

## ALL IN THE WORLD IS VANITY

And it is known that all this world, it is all emptiness, that every amusement is worthless, and woe to those who pursue vanity, which is worthless. And don't envy wealth, for "riches are kept by their owner to his misfortune" (Kohelet 5:12); "As he came out from his mother's womb, naked will he return...exactly as he came he must depart, and what did he gain by toiling for the wind?" (Kohelet. 5: 14, 15); "Even if he should live a thousand years twice over, but find no contentment - do not all go to the same place?" (ibid 6:6); "Even if man lives many years, let him rejoice in all of them, but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is futility" (ibid 11:8); "And of joy, what does it accomplish?" (ibid 2:2). Tomorrow you will cry for having laughed today.

## DO NOT LUST AFTER IMAGINARY HONOR

Do not lust after imaginary honor, which is similar to vanity, and time is a traitor and like scales, lifts the light and lowers the heavy. The world is like one who drinks salty water: he thinks it quenches his thirst, but it only makes him thirstier (Bechar ha Pnanim). No one leaves the world with even half his cravings fulfilled (Kohelet Rabbah 1). "What profit does one have from all his labor under the sun" (Kohelet 1:3)? Remember our predecessors, all of whose love, desire and joy

have disappeared (see Kohelet 9:6), but who are being judged severely for them. And of what benefit is gratification to man - whose end is dust, maggots and worms, as he is bound to die - when all his enjoyments turn to bitterness in the grave? And what is this world, whose days are full of anger and pain, and its nights where sleeping brings no rest? Neither is death a mikveh.

### **MAN IS JUDGED FOR EVERYTHING HE SAYS**

Man will be judged for everything he says; even the slightest expression is not overlooked. Therefore I warn you to train yourself to sit alone as much as possible, because the sin of the tongue is the most severe, as our Sages said (Tosefta Pe'ah 1): "These are the things...and lashon hara is equivalent to them all." And what need is there for me to elaborate on this most serious sin, the worst of all. "All man's labor is for his mouth" (Koheles 6:7). Our Sages said that all man's mitzvot and all his Torah are not enough to counterbalance what comes out of his mouth.

### **A MAN SHOULD STRIVE TO BECOME AS A MUTE**

"What should be a man's occupation in this world? He should become as a mute person" (Chullin 89a). One must seal his lips as tight as two millstones. And all the punishment of Kaf ha Kela (the hollow of the sling, a punishment for the soul after death) comes from the breath of idle words and for every idle word one must be thrown from one end of the world to the other. Now this is true concerning mere permitted speech.

### **ONE CAN'T IMAGINE THE SUFFERING AND THE PUNISHMENT FOR EACH PIECE OF LASHON HA RA**

Where forbidden speech is concerned - e.g. lashon hara, mocking, swearing, vowing, fighting and cursing - especially in the synagogue, and on Shabbat and Yom Tov - for every utterance of this type one descends to the sheol, very very low, and it is impossible to imagine the pain and suffering one will receive for one utterance (Zohar)! No word is lost; everything is recorded. Winged beings attach themselves to everyone, recording all they say. "For a bird of the skies may carry the sound, and some winged creature may tell the matter" (Kohelet 10:20). "Let not your mouth cause your flesh to sin, and do not tell the messenger that it was an error. Why should G-d be angered by your speech and destroy the work of your hands?" (ibid 5:5).

### **AVOID GOING OUT TO THE MARKET PLACES**

Purchase all your needs through a messenger, even if this costs two or three times as much. "Is there a limit to what G-d can provide?" (Bamidbar 11:23). G-d feeds all creatures, from the greatest to the smallest (Avodah Zara 3), and provides to each one all his needs.

### **HONOR THE SHABBAT**

And on Shabbat and Yom Tov do not speak at all about things that are not urgent, and be brief even with what is important, for the Shabbat is very holy and our Sages barely permitted the exchange of greetings (Yerushalmi Shabbat, and Tosfot Shabbat 113). See how strict they were concerning even a single expression! Keep giving great honor to the Shabbat as when I was there. Do not cut back [on your Shabbat] expenses, since “Man's entire sustenance [for the year is fixed for him from Rosh Hashana to Yom Kippur,] except [the expenditure for Sabbaths and Festivals,] etc.” (Beitzah 16a). I also implore and plead with you to guide your daughters very carefully to refrain from cursing, swearing, lying and fighting. Rather, everything should be done peacefully, with love, affection and gentleness.

### **TEACH GOOD CONDUCT TO YOUR CHILDREN THROUGH THE STUDY OF MUSSAR**

I have left behind several books on Mussar (proper conduct). See that [the children] read them constantly, especially on the Holy Shabbat, when Mussar is the only thing they should occupy themselves with. Always instruct them according to Mussar books.

### **HIT THEM IF IT IS NECESSARY**

Don't hold back from hitting them when they curse, swear or lie. Don't have mercy for them, because parents will be punished severely for the corruption of their children, G-d forbid. And even if one constantly teaches them Mussar, but they do not follow it, Woe to the sorrow and shame in the World to Come. As it is written (Vayikra 21:9), “She defiles her father”- [in such a case] the wicked son of a righteous man is called “the wicked son of a wicked man” (Sanhedrin 52a).

### **TEACH THE CHILDREN TO BE CAREFUL WITH THE BLESSINGS AND THE PRAYERS**

Similarly in other matters, lashon hara, gossip, their eating and drinking as well should always be preceded and followed by the appropriate blessings. They must be careful to say the blessings, Birkat Hamazon and Kriat Shema with proper kavanah (intent). Most importantly, they must not wander outside the home and must obey and respect you and my mother and all their elders. They also need to observe all that is written in the Mussar books.

### **PROCURE GOOD TUTORS FOR THE CHILDREN**

Raise your own children as well correctly and sensitively, and pay their tutor well, for “Man's entire sustenance for the year is fixed for him from Rosh Hashanah...except TiShReY (Talmud, Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh and Yom Tov - Beitzah 16a). I have also left books for them. For Hashem's

sake, guide them well and gently. Take care of their health and make sure that they always have enough to eat.

### **GENTLY TEACH THEM THE TORAH**

First have them learn the entire Chumash, seeing to it that they know it almost by heart. The learning must be done without undue pressure, rather gently, because the studies are only fixed in man when there is tranquility. Give them coins, etc., as a reward.

### **CONCENTRATE ON THE SERVICE OF G-D FOR ALL ELSE IS TRIVIAL**

Always focus your attention on these matters and not on others, because all else is trivial. For man can salvage nothing from his labor to take with him, except two white garments (shrouds). Also (Tehillim 49), “A man will not redeem his brother...Fear not when a man grows rich...For when he dies, he shall carry nothing away...” Don't say, “I will leave a portion for my children” - who will tell you in the grave? The children of man are like grasses of the field, some blossom and some fade (Eruvin 54a). Each one is born under his constellation and is guided by the Highest G-d Blessed be He, they are glad when he dies and he goes into the sheol. [At his passing] Resh Lakish left his children a kav of saffron, and he applied to himself the verse (Tehillim 49:11), “...and they leave their wealth to others” (Gittin 47a).

### **WOE TO THOSE WHO PLAN ON LEAVING THEIR WEALTH TO THEIR CHILDREN**

Woe to all who plan on leaving [wealth] to their children! The only reward from sons and daughters is through their Torah and good deeds. Their sustenance is fixed for them. It is also known that women earn merit by making their children learn Torah, etc. (Berachos 17a). And our Sages said (Tanna D'Vei Eliyahu Rabba 9): “The only proper wife is one that does her husband's will.” I am indeed writing you words of the Living G-d. Therefore, I am certain that you will follow all that I have written. Nevertheless, I wish to strongly warn you not to deviate from anything that I have written.

### **AVOID IDLE TALK ON SHABBAT**

Read this letter every week, especially on Shabbat before and during the meal, in order to prevent idle talk and, even worse, lashon hara and the like, G-d forbid. I reiterate my request that you guide your sons and daughters with words of kindness and Mussar that will find a fixed place in their heart. This is true especially if we merit to arrive in Eretz Yisrael, because there one must very much follow Hashem's ways. Therefore, train them often, since one must work hard on one's speech and character traits, and only through perseverance can we control ourselves (Shaare Teshuvah).

All beginnings are hard (Mechilta Yitro). But afterwards, one is worthy of praise (Proverbs 20:14). For the wicked person knows that he is taking the wrong path, but it is hard for him to change.

### **CONTROL OF THE MOUTH, THE MAIN TASK**

But this is man's main task, not to go after his desires, but (Psalms 32:9) “To restrain himself with a bit and bridle when he is being groomed.” Man must deprive himself until he dies, not by fasting or asceticism, but by controlling his mouth and desires. This is teshuvah. And this is the whole reward of the World-to-Come, as it is written (Proverbs 6:23): “For the commandment is a lamp and the Torah is a light” - but “the way to life is the rebuke that disciplines.” And that is worth more than any amount of fasting and self-affliction! For every second that man controls his tongue, he merits some of the “hidden [by G-d for the righteous] light,” something which no angel or [other] creature can imagine (Midrash). And it is stated (Psalms 34:13,14): “Who is the man who desires life, and loves days that he may see good? Guard your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceitfully.”

### **CONTROLLING ONE’S MOUTH ATONES FOR SINS**

This will atone for any sin and save one from the lower Sheol, as we find (Proverbs 21:23): “He who guards his mouth [from permitted eating and drinking] and tongue [from idle words] guards himself from trouble.” Also (Proverbs 18:21): “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” Woe to one who gives away his life for one word! Then what advantage is there to one who has a tongue (see Kohelet 10:11)? And, “Everything has a cure except, etc.”

### **DON’T PRAISE ANYONE**

It is most important to refrain from speaking words of praise about anyone. How much more so does this apply to speaking ill of anyone! Why must one speak about others? “The mouth that speaks strangely is a deep pit; he angers G-d and falls into it” (Proverbs 22:14).

### **AVOID JEALOUSY AND LASHON HARA AT ALL COSTS EVEN IF IT MEANS NOT GOING TO SYNAGOGUE**

Concerning solitude, the main thing is not to go outside of home. Even your visit to the synagogue should be very short. In fact, it is better to pray at home, for it is impossible to be spared from jealousy or from hearing idle talk or lashon hara in the synagogue. And one receives punishment for this, as we find (Shabbat 33a), “Also one who hears and is silent...” This is even the more so on Shabbat and Yom Tov when they gather to talk - It is then better that you don't pray at all. Refrain also from going to the cemetery (especially women), as all impurities stick to women there and all sorrow and sin comes from this. It is also advisable that your daughter not go to the synagogue, because she'll see beautiful clothes there, become jealous and talk about it at home. This will lead to

lashon hara, etc. She should rather cling to Mussar and not become jealous of anything in this world, where everything is vanity and illusions, appearing and disappearing overnight (Yonah 4:10). “Though he grows as high as the sky, his head reaching the clouds, he perishes forever...” (Iyov 20:6,7). “For property does not last forever, or a crown for all generations” (Mishlei 27:24). And even while it exists it is worthless, loathsome and disdained by any sensible person. Woe to him who is impressed by it.

### **ENVY ONLY THOSE WHO FEAR HASHEM**

Envy only the fear of Hashem (ibid 23:17). She should not say, "How can I earn a share in the World-to-Come? - I can't do it!" For we have learned (Berachos 17a): “One may do much or one may do little, provided he directs his heart to heaven.”

### **A FIFTH TO CHARITY**

For the sake of Hashem, give a fifth of all earnings to charity. Do not give less, as I have already warned you, because that causes the transgression of several positive and negative mitzvot every minute! It also implies a rejection of the Holy Torah, G-d forbid.

### **TO MERIT THE WORLD TO COME**

But the main way to merit Olam Haba is by guarding one's tongue. That is worth more than all the Torah and good deeds. This is the meaning of (Isaiah 32:9) “tranquil women” (Berachos 17a), because the mouth is the holiest of the holy.

### **READ MUSSAR THAT WILL LEAD TO PRACTICE**

Among my books is a copy of the book of Proverbs with Yiddish translation. For the sake of Hashem, have them read it daily. It is better than any Mussar book. They should also read Kohelet a lot, because it points out the vanity of this world, and other books as well. But G-d forbid that reading should be the objective! Reading Mussar alone does not necessarily move one to act differently. Going out into the world without a good understanding of it defeats the whole purpose. It is like one who sows without having plowed; the wind and birds will carry the seeds away, because they aren't closed off and protected. So is he who merely reads Mussar like him who plants without a fence; pigs will eat and trample on everything. Some plant on stone. This is comparable to a heart of stone which cannot be penetrated unless it is struck until it breaks open. That's why I wrote you to hit our children if they don't obey you. “Train a lad in the way he ought to go” (Proverbs 22:6). This is an important principle of education.

## **TEACH CHILDREN MUSSAR WHILE THEY ARE YOUNG**

I also wish to appeal to my son-in-law to adhere to all the above. Read to the children as I have stated and learn for the sake of Heaven. Become well versed in it for Hashem's sake. Don't pay attention to those who say that it is unnecessary for the child, G-d forbid. To the contrary, "Train a lad, etc." It is easier to remove the skin of a nut before it hardens into a shell.

## **THROUGH THE STUDY OF TORAH FOR ITS OWN SAKE ONE MERITS EVERYTHING**

Most importantly, it is through such study that one merits everything, as our Sages stated (Pirkei Avot 6:1): "Rabbi Meir said: Whoever studies Torah for its own sake merits many things; furthermore, the whole world is worthwhile for his sake alone". You should study Tractate Avot, especially Avot D'Rabbi Natan, and Tractate Derech Eretz, since Derech Eretz (good manners) are more important than Torah study. Honor both your mother-in-law and your children's great grandmother. Also always treat everyone with politeness and respect.

## **IT IS A GRAVE SIN TO CAUSE PAIN TO WIDOWS**

My Dear Mother, I know that you don't need my advice, because you are very modest. Nevertheless, I wish someone would read this letter to you, for it consists of words of the Living G-d. I beg of you not to grieve over me, as you promised me, and G-d willing, if I merit to arrive at the gate of heaven in the holy city of Jerusalem, I will pray for you as I promised. And if we deserve it, we shall all be reunited, please G-d. I also ask my wife to honor my mother, as the Torah dictates, especially since she is a widow to whom it is a grave sin to cause even the slightest pain.

## **THE MAIN THING IS TO BRING JOY TO MAN**

I also ask you, Mother, to please cause peace to reign between you, and that you should strive to bring happiness to one another. This is a great mitzvah incumbent upon everyone, as we find (Reishis Chochmah): "When man is judged, he will be asked, "Did you make your fellow a king over you?" We see that one must gladly enhance his friend's honor. In fact, the main goal of the Torah is to bring joy to man.

## **MAKE PEACE FOR HASHEM'S SAKE**

Even if one of you should happen to act improperly, excuse each other and live in peace for Hashem's name. I also ask of you, Mother, to supervise and guide my children with gentle words, so that they will accept them. I instruct my sons and daughters to honor her, and not to fight among themselves at all, but to settle everything peacefully. May the Master of Peace grant you, my sons, daughters, sons-in-law, brother and all Israel life and peace. Your loving Eliyahu the son of Rabbi Shlomo Zalman tzv'l

***There are six things Hashem hates, seven which are an abomination unto Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked thoughts, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies and he who sows discord among brethren.***

***(Prov. 6:16-19)***

***"The fear of Hashem is to hate evil: pride and arrogance and the evil way" (Prov. 8:13).***

***"Know where you came... from a malodorous drop; where you are going - to a place of dust, worms and moths; and before whom you are destined to give a strict account - before the Supreme King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He."***

***(Pirke Avot 3:1)***

**BARUCH HASHEM LEOLAM AMEN VE AMEN**