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Sefer `Ets Hayyim Hayyim Vital, 1572

Separate translations by Menahem Kallus and Brian Ogren

Introduction to R Hayim Vital [ca 1572] and his Treatise *Etz Hayim - The Tree of Life* [and to] the *Sha'ar haHaqdamot - Gate of Principles*

Translated and annotated by: Menahem Kallus [view]

Introduction to Sefer 'Ets Hayyim by R. Hayyim Vital [1572] Introductions of our teacher, R. Hayyim Vital, his merit will protect us, amen, to *The Gate of Introductions*

Translated and annotated by: Brian Ogren, Hebrew University of Jerusalem [view]

Treatise *Etz Hayim - The Tree of Life* [and to] the *Sha'ar haHaqdamot - Gate of Principles*

Translated and annotated by: Menahem Kallus

I, one among the youth of this city, poor among the princes [of Torah], Hayim Vital, the son of my teacher and father R. Yosef Vital of blessed eternal memory, having reached the age of thirty - the period of productive power - find my own potency weakened. I sit in astonishment and my thoughts are perplexed. For [Jer. 8:20]: 'the harvest-season has passed the summer has ended and we have not been redeemed'. No remedy has arisen for our maladies. There is no bandage for our wounded flesh, no cure was found for our afflictions - for the destruction of our Holy Temple - which lay in ruins these one thousand five hundred and four years! Woe unto us for the day has already turned - the Day of God being one thousand years. And so the evening shadows were already spread, i.e. we are already five hundred and four years into the second Day. All the expected dates of the eschaton have passed and the son of David has not yet arrived. As is known, the Rabbis have stated that [Jer. Talmud Yoma 1:1]: 'each generation that does not witness the rebuilding of the Temple must regard itself as if the Temple was destroyed in its own day'. Thus I took it upon myself to investigate, in order to ascertain the reason for all this. Why has the end-time of our exile been extended, why has the son of Jesse not arrived. ...

Now, let us consider what was said in Tiqunei haZohar [fol. 77b]: "... for even those who toil in the study of Torah enact this kindness only for their own sake...". The meaning of this is plain, particularly in our own time with its abundant iniquity, when the study of Torah became

merely a spade for securing livelihood among some of the 'masters of Torah' who study only for the sake of recompense and other annuities. [The shame of it is that] these are the heads of Academies, the heads of Rabbinical courts, who engage in their sacred activities so that their names and 'spiritual fragrance' be known throughout the land. They may be likened to the Generation of [the builders of] the Tower of Babel, who 'erected an edifice that reaches the heavens', but whose purpose therein was, as the verse exclaimed [Gen. 11:4]: "let us make a name for ourselves". This is as the Zohar explains [1:25a-b - insert from the author of Tiqunim] concerning the verse, [Gen. 2:4]: 'These are the generations of the heavens and the earth'; stating that there are five types of 'mixed multitude'. Regarding the third type, the 'powerful ones' it is said [ibid. on the verse Gen, 6:5]: " 'These are the mighty men of old, the men of renown' - for they are of the side of those regarding whom it was said 'let us build a city and a tower ... and make a name for ourselves' by building houses of worship and houses of study wherein they place the Torah-scrolls, which they endow with crowns - but not with pure motive - only for their own edification ...". The Talmud states regarding them [BT Berakhot fol. 17b]: "As for those who study Torah with ulterior motive, it would have been better had they been strangled by their placenta so that they not emerge to breathe the air of the world".

Doubtless, these people would exhibit astonishment [with regard to this charge] and humbly claim that all their study of Torah is really with pure motive. However, the words of the great sage of the Mishnah, Rabbi Meir of blessed memory testify against them, for he has stated [BT Avot 6:1]: "All who study Torah with pure motive merit many things ... and the secrets of the Torah are revealed to them. They become like roaring rivers that do not cease to flow, and like spontaneously rising wellsprings ..." - so that they would not need to exert effort in their contemplation of Torah - emerging merely with droplets of Torah-water extracted from stone. For this near-barren effort is an indication that they do not study Torah with properly pure intent. Who can withhold tears from welling in one's eyes upon reading this Mishnah and then observing one's own shortcomings and lowly stature! ...

It is known that our holy Torah encompasses and is to be found in all the four Worlds: Emanation, Creation, Formation, and Action. As its manifestation in the World of Emanation ... it is called Kabbalah. Therein it is divested of all 'garments' which are of the nature of literal meaning, as in [Cant. 5:3]: "I have removed my garments" [*peshat*=[*pashateti*] *et kutonti*] - referring to the external coverings adorning the flesh that at times one removes. This is the essential meaning of the literal [*peshat*]. But in the World of Emanation, where the blessed Holy One abides in His study of Torah, as our sages have stated, and as is indicated in the Targum on the verse [Prov. 8:30]: "And I was by Him as a tool for His Craft"; that this refers to the Divine process of creation, wherein the blessed Holy One gazed into the Torah and created worlds. No doubt, this Torah does not refer to the narrative of Adam's creation, to the story of the sons of Chori, or to the ass of Baalam, etc. in their plain meanings [but to the inner essences of the Torah], wherein He delighted for [a symbolic time-span of] two thousand years [referring to the activation of Wisdom and Understanding] prior to the creation - and through which He created the world.

Indeed, the Divine delight in the Torah through which He created His universe refers to His absorption within the inner-soul of the Torah, in the secrets of the Torah, also called the Works of the Divine Chariot, the Wisdom of Kabbalah; as those who know have apprehended. For the World of Emanation is exalted: comprising goodness without evil; and no obscuration can become admixed therein. Regarding this, it is said [Isa.42:8]: "I shall not bestow My Glory upon another", as explained in the Tiquim [# 18, fol. 66] and in the Zohar [1:28a]. Thus, the Torah as manifested in that realm is far removed from any material 'garment' [or direct-limited-connotation] - which is not as It is in the World of Formation, the World of Metatron, who is called 'the good servant' and is called the good aspect of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil; whereas Samael represents the obscuring shells and is called 'the evil servant'. The Torah as It is manifest there is called the 'Six Orders of the Mishnah', the 'handmaiden'; as explicated in the Zohar [1:27a]. This is why it is called *Mishnah* [with its etymological connotation of duality and change], for therein are manifested change and antonymic duality: goodness from the side of the good servant - permissible, proper, pure; and evil from the side of the evil servant - forbidden, impure, disqualified. It [i.e. 'Mishnah'] is etymologically related to the verse [Esther]: "And Mordehai the Jew, the 'second' [*Mishneh*] to the King Ahashverosh ..." - like a handmaiden, or the 'servant of the King who is like unto the King' [i.e. merely a representative of *his* sovereignty]. It also bears the connotation of 'the sleeping state' [*Shaynah*] as stated in the Zohar [Reiya Meheimna, 3:244b]. ...

The words of the Mishnah are like uninterpreted dreams. As for their inner secrets and mysteries which are called the soul of the Torah, these are the true interpretations of ... the dream, which is deciphered upon being awakened - as in [Cant. 5:2] "I am sleeping but my heart is awake". This is as our sages have intimated [BT Sanhedrin fol. 24a, on the verse, Lament. 3:6]: " 'He has set me in the dark places ...' - this refers to the Babylonian Talmud" - it remains unilluminated without the Book of Splendor [the Zohar] - which explicates the secrets of [this] Torah and Its arcana. Regarding this, it is stated [Prov. 6:23]: "And the Torah is light". For just as HYTA [chitah-wheat] is numerically equivalent to 22 [signifying the 22] letters that comprise the Torah, and its kernel is hidden within many shell-layers and garments, ... bran, coarse flour, stalk, and chaff; and all of these are called 'the harvest' [cf. first par.], so too the Mishnah is called 'the harvest' when likened to the Secrets of the Torah. This is indicated in the Zohar [RM Ki Tetze 3:275b]: "As for the Rabbis, woe unto them who eat only of the 'stalks' of the Torah [animal food] and do not know of the Secrets of the Torah - knowing It only in terms of the lesser or lenient and the significant or stringent aspects of the Torah - the lesser as the Torah's 'stalk' and the more significant, as Its 'wheat'. (This is as in) 'HT' [both-numerically equivalent of 'good' as well as [im hakolel] chet - 'sin'] and H [5 = 5 attributes of Grace and 5 of Judgement] - the Tree of knowledge of good and evil." If I were to fully expound on this [Zoharic] discourse, it would undoubtedly take - without exaggeration - over a hundred notebooks. But [Eccl. 2:14] 'the eyes of the wise are in his head', and it is words of truth that I am communicating.

One must not be stunned upon seeing in the Zohar the description of the Mishnah as 'handmaiden' or 'shells'; for the study of the Mishnah that is limited to its plain meaning, undoubtedly amounts to expositions in terms of the garments and shells of the Torah. These are in the epitome of outer coverings when compared with the hidden Secrets of the Torah, containing intimations of [the Torah's] inner-meaning. For all Its plain literal connotations refer to things of this world - to lowly material phenomena. To be sure, these are 'shells' that may be 'eaten' - like the outer parts of fragrant herbs. Thus, one who understands without error, the plain legal meaning of the Mishnah, is called 'the tree that knows good'. But when one errs in this - Heaven forefend - rendering the clean as unclean or regarding as fit that which is disqualified, or if one permits the forbidden, then one is transformed into a 'tree that knows evil', and it is bitter for such a one. ...

The Mishnah is called 'handmaiden' because [one who comports oneself merely in accord with its dictates without cultivating a relation to its inner-meaning, does so only] for the sake of recompense. For all of His blessed attributes function according to the principle of 'measure for measure'. Thus, with regard to those who toil so as to discern the valid plain meaning of the material dimension of the Torah, it is said [Prov.3:16]: "in Her left hand there is wealth and honor", referring to the reward received in this world; since they occupy themselves with the study of Torah as it applies in a 'this-worldly' manner. And [Tiqunim fol. 77b]: 'all the kindness that they enact is for the sake of their own benefaction' - like servants and handmaidens who work for their master for the sake of reward. In contrast, one who is occupied with the Secrets of the Torah, which are of the Form of the Torah as It obtains in the World to Come, regarding this it is said [Prov. Ibid.]: "length of days in Her right hand" - referring to the world wherein there is the ultimate of 'length of days' [i.e. the eternal World to Come]. Such a one is like a son who may enter into the inner sanctum of his Father, because he serves Him unconditionally, without thought of recompense.

It is known, that the attribute of Beauty [*Tiferet*] in the World of Emanation is called the 'Son', whereas Metatron in the World of Formation is called 'servant'. With reference to these two stations we pray on Rosh haShanah [[entreaty for *Shofar* service]: "whether [we be regarded as] sons or as servants". And we read in the Midrash on Ecclesiastes regarding the verse [see Midrash Eccl. 11:7]: "'For if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all...': [that] the Torah studied by the person [in this world] is naught compared to the Torah of the Messiah". If this is said with regard to the Messianic Torah, which is studied in the context of the soul as it abides in a physical body - as our sages have stated [BT Berachot fol. 34b]: "There is no difference between this world [in its natural function] and the Days of the Messiah except for the [absence of] subjugation by the nations" i.e. the end of the evil sovereignty of the 'outer shell' which is called the evil inclination [*yetser hara*]. This may be inferred from the words of the sages regarding the verse [Isa 11:6]: "and the wolf shall lie down with the lamb", which is juxtaposed [in the Midrash] with the verse [ibid. 11:9]: "and the land shall be filled with the knowledge of God", [both of which refer to the Messianic era - see Mekhilta of R. Shimeon bar

Yohai p. 134]]. Thus, the Torah of this world, engarmented in the obscuring shells ^{EMW 2004} on account of the evil inclination being found in this world - is as naught in comparison with the Messianic Torah; which, while removed from the 'shell' of the evil inclination is still within engarmenting shells. It is therefore certain without a doubt, that with regard to the Torah of the World to Come - of the world of the souls beyond engarmentation - that such occupation with the Torah is on the pure soul-level of The Torah: Its inner secrets.

However, one ought not say: 'let me then go and occupy myself [solely] with the wisdom of Kabbalah' before having studied the Torah of the Mishnah and Talmud, for our Rabbis have stated that one should not enter 'the Orchard' [*Pardes*] unless one is already filled with 'meat and wine' - and therefore, this [aspiration] may be likened to the soul prior to entering the body, which cannot [yet] receive the accounted-for reward based on its deeds while in the body, when it becomes perfected and rectified by fulfilling all six hundred and thirteen Divine edicts [*Mitzvot*]. So too the other way around: A person who in his involvement with Torah-study, pursues the wisdom of the Mishnah and the Babylonian Talmud without also allotting a portion of time to the study of the Secrets of the Torah and its mysteries, is like [one cultivating the] body which dwells in darkness, bereft of the inner illumination of the Candle of God, which is the Soul of Man; so that the body withers for want of drawing from the Source of Life. It is as stated elsewhere [the Tiqunei haZohar fol. 73b] regarding: "those who serve an arid and uninspired Torah and do not want to place their effort into the Wisdom of Kabbalah ...". Therefore one who studies the Torah for Her own sake - and not for *one's own* [sic] sake - to make a name for oneself - must first toil in the wisdom of Scripture, Mishnah and Talmud to the extent that one's mental application can endure and then endeavor to know one's Maker through the Wisdom of Truth [*Kabbalah*]; as King David bequeathed to his son Solomon [1Chron. 2:9]: "*Know* the God of your father and serve Him". But if the person be of languid mental capacity, for whom concentration on the intricacies of the Talmud is difficult, it is better to desist from over-concentration in it - upon discerning one's destined circumstance in this regard - and rather, apply oneself to the Wisdom of Truth. This is as the Talmud states [BT Hullin fol. 24a]: "A student who for five years, does not experience positive results from Talmud study should not expect to achieve them in the future". But anyone who has the facility for Talmudic concentration is obligated to set aside one or two hours a day for the study of *Halachah* [Law], so as to engage in the dialectical analysis of the literal meaning of the Law; bearing in mind that this query-rejoinder approach [that breaks through the 'shell' to proper understanding] does not amount to engaging the evil 'shell' of Samael the 'wicked servant', but to [a relation with] the 'beneficial shell' - the Mishnah-Metatron, who in the World of Formation is called the servant or handmaiden of the Matron [*Matronita=Shekhinah*] - but is not the Matron Herself, for She is the inner-mind, the Wisdom of Truth, and is called the Tree of Life. Regarding Her it is said [Isa. 42:8] "I am YHVH, this is My Name ...", for the entire Torah comprises the Names of the blessed Holy One, as stated in the Zohar [3:298b]; [Isa. Ibid.] "and I shall not bestow My Glory upon another" - for 'shells' ought not to be mixed with Her, i.e., the Torah of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, the Mishnah with its categories of pure- impure, permissible-forbidden, proper-disqualified [- ought not to be mixed with the

In concentrating [on the legal aspects of the Talmud], one should intend to remove the evil 'shell' which is the cause of questions and of not understanding the answers to questions. Remove this [shell] from hovering over the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil. This is [the function of] Mishnah, the maidservant of the Matron. Following this, one is to intend to adorn the Matron Herself with the Wisdom of the Kabbalah. Enough said here, for this is not the place to further expound on it.

The aforementioned [Tiqunim fol. 71b] discourse continues: "Therefore [we read in Cant. 2:7]: 'I have abjured you, oh daughters of Jerusalem ... [not to arouse the love before its time]' ..." It is because the Divine vow against arousing the Redemption before its time - before the love arises willingly with good aspiration - is such an awesome matter [for this is what distinguishes] the son who [willingly] serves his father and may thus enter into each of the Palatines of the King [having access to] all that is hidden in them - [from] the servant who serves [the King] through the Mishnah, and weds the maidservant - in order to receive reward. ...

It was explained elsewhere by the author of the aforementioned discourse [see Zohar Hadash fol. 18c] that the transgression of the first Adam in partaking of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil was that he did not chose to partake of [the fruit of] the Tree of Life ... which is the Wisdom of the Kabbalah. This was also the sin of the Mixed Multitude when they told Moses [Exod. 20:16]: "'You speak to us so that we may hear' - by means of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil - 'but may God not speak to us' - through the Hidden teachings of the Torah - 'lest we die'". This is similar to the error committed by some of the 'sons of Torah' in contemporary times who besmirch the name [reputation] of the Wisdom of Truth - of life-eternal, when they claim that anyone who devotes himself to it will die before his time, Heaven forefend! This [attitude] was also the cause of the destruction of the First Tablets [with which Moses descended from Sinai], that expressed the purview of the Tree of Life. Instead they received [the Tablets] expressing the purview of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil - the Mishnah, the maidservant of the Matron. It also caused the loss of both the first and second Temples through destruction, and brought about this long bitter exile in which we abide with the multitude of our sins, until Israel repents, seeking their God so as to recognize Him; to know Him by means of the Secrets of the Torah, so that they know Who it is that they are serving, and Who is their Sovereign. Thereby they will merit in the study of the Wisdom of Truth, as the verse states [Exod. 15:25]: "And God showed him [Moses] a Tree ... and the waters were sweetened ..." - by means of the Messianic teaching [i.e. Kabbalah - the Tree of Life]. It is now clear that this transgression began with the first Adam and continues until now. When we will return [to God] and engage [the Torah] through love ... in pursuit of this Wisdom, then Israel shall be redeemed, speedily in our day. Amen.

I have hearkened to the groans of Jeremiah the prophet, wandering aimlessly, speaking out of

the bitterness of his soul, saying [Jer.4:21-27]: "How long shall I bear the standard, ^{EMW 2004}hear the sound of the Shofar? For My people are foolish. They know Me not. ... I beheld the land and it was waste and void ... I beheld the Carmel mountain and lo, it became a desert ... For thus says the Lord: 'the entire land shall be desolate, but I will not utterly destroy it ...'. The wind in my bowels presses me to explain these verses, which in truth were spoken by Jeremiah in a prophecy concerning this, the last generation. In his bitterness over the duration of our exile that lingers for longer than its measure, Jeremiah declared: 'how long shall I bear the standard' - the Messianic flag - as indicated by the Zohar [RM, Zohar2:120a]: "And they shall come - to the right, the banner of the Messiah from the House of Judah, emblazoned with a lion, and to the left, the banner of the Messiah from the House of Joseph, emblazoned with an ox ...".

"[How long shall I] ... hear the sound of the Shofar" - refers to the in-gathering of the exiles, which will take place after the coming of the Messiah, speedily in our day, amen. This is as the Zohar [Midrash haNeelam, Zohar 1:139a, based on Psalm 147:2] states: "first, 'God rebuilds Jerusalem', and only then, 'He shall gather in the outcasts of Israel'" So too does the verse declare [Isa.]: 'And it will be on that day, He shall blow the great Shofar ...' [-and only then, as the verse continues, '... the lost ones from the land of Ashur shall arrive ...'].

Jeremiah, in answering his rhetorical question, provides us with the reason for the length of our exile: 'For my people are foolish. They know Me not'. The explanation of this is as follows: The Nation of Israel is comprised of three categories of people. The first category consists of the ignorant masses; the second refers to the scholars who study only the plain-meaning of the Torah; and the third, the masters of the Wisdom of Truth. Regarding the first group, the ignorant who are simply called 'people' the verse states [Jer. ibid.]: 'for My people are foolish, they do not know Me'. Regarding the third group, who occupy themselves with the secret arcana of the Torah, those who are called 'sons' as indicated in Tiqunei haZohar [fol. 1b regarding the verse, Deut. 22:6]: "[the term] 'young chicks' are a reference to masters of the Mishnah; 'sons' refers to masters of Kabbalah". Regarding these [sons], the verse continues [Jer. ibid.]: 'feeble-minded sons these are, who do not understand'. This, because they study the Wisdom of Truth in accord with occurs to their narrow minds; and due to their weak absorption [in It] they do not descend to the depths of these matters to understand their true intent, as will be explained, with the aid of God. As for the scholars who study only the plain-meaning of the Torah - the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil - who are contemptuous of the Wisdom of Truth which is called the Tree of Life - life- eternal; being occupied with only the simple narrative level of the Torah, claiming, Heaven forefend, that this is all there is: God extends no aid to them. They review the plain meaning of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, but they transform all things to evil. They declare as impure that which is pure, forbidding the permissible, disqualifying the fit. In the abundance of our sins, they are the source of many pitfalls [tr. n.b. Interesting, that he prefers the *qula* to the *humra*].

Having classified [the Nation] in brief, the prophet [Jeremiah] returns to explain their characteristics in accord with the plain meaning. Regarding the first group he declares: "I

beheld the land and it was waste and void". This refers to the ignorant peasants [the 'multitude of the land' *Am haAretz*], for their souls were hewn from the earth. This is as the verse states [Eccl. 3:21] '... the spirit of the animal [is that] which descends below ...' referring to the animal-spirit that they possess. And it is written [Gen 1:24]: 'and the land brought forth living animated being, each according to its kind': in addition to their bodies deriving from the dust of the earth, so too their animating souls [*Nefesh*] originate from there - according to their kind! They are called 'living animated being', which include both domesticated and wild animals. This is also how it is understood by the Zohar's 'Hidden Midrash' which is still in manuscript [Midrash haNeelaam of Zohar Hadash fol. 10c]. Having been hewn from the earth, their entire function is the habitation of the land: commerce, planting and sowing, and building: matters that have no purpose, save for the [cultivation of the] body - and they forsake the life of eternity, which is the Torah. And it is stated [Jer. 33:25]: "If not for My Covenant [i.e. the Torah], I would not have brought forth the day and the night and the ordinances of heaven and earth". They [who forsake the life of eternity] return the creation to the state of waste and void. For this reason, they are called 'fools' - 'My people are foolish' - for there is no greater foolishness than this: the [aspiration to] preserve the body while extinguishing the soul. All of the above is caused by [the fact that] [Jer. 4]: "they knew Me not ...". They did not toil in the Torah which is called the Tree of Life, so as to provide them life by means of the life of eternity.

With regard to the second group, the Torah-scholars who labor to understand the Divine Torah and whose souls are hewn from the heavens and not from the earth, Jeremiah declared [4:23]: "... and [I gazed unto] the heavens and they had no light". For although their souls were hewn from the heavens there is no light in their Torah-learning, as we have indicated above in the name of our sages [BT Sanhedrin fol. 24a, on Lament. 3:6]: "'He has set me in the dark places ...' - this refers to the Babylonian Talmud - which [ought to be] illuminated by the Book of Splendor [the Zohar], that explains the matters discussed in the Talmud where they appear engarmented so that they are regarded as merely physical. Concerning these [explications of the Zohar] it is said [Prov. 6:23] "and the Torah is light" - whereas [in the case of this second group] it is said [Jer. ibid.] 'and [I gazed unto] the heavens and they had no light'.

Isaiah the prophet prophesied in his consolations regarding them: [Isa. 42:16 - for earlier mid 13th century) Kabbalistic usage, see ms. RM of Burgos]: "And I will guide them along the pathways that they did not know ..." - for with regard to the pathways of plain-meaning; these are known even as to their number as we read from R. Ishmael, who enumerated the Thirteen Modes of Exegesis. The Thirty Two Pathways of Wisdom through which the world was created, as mentioned in the Book of Formation [Sefer Yetzirah 1:1] however, have not been made accessible to human knowledge. These Thirty Two pathways of the Wisdom of Truth are hidden within the thirteen modes of plain-meaning exegesis. All of them taken together constitute 'one heart' [*Lev A'* - lev=32 ehad=13], as indicated in the Zohar [RM Zohar 3:244b]: "The Rabbis of the Mishnah and the authors of the Talmud organized their entire Talmudic enterprise along the principles of the Secrets of the Torah". But without a doubt, those who study only the Babylonian Talmud are groping like [Isa. 59:10] 'the blind seeking a wall'. Their

grasp encompasses only the garments of the Torah and they do not possess the eyes to behold the Torah's secrets hidden within. For it is not for no reason, and not based on their own whims that the sages of the Talmud decided on matters of purity and impurity, forbidden and permitted, and proper and disqualified. Their decisions were based on the inner meaning of the Torah, as those who know the Hidden Wisdom are aware. It is for this reason that Isaiah declared [ibid]: "who is blind if not My servant" - the verse uses the exclusionary syntactic form ['who ... if not'] so as to exclude the Sages of Truth, who are called 'sons' - the masters of Kabbalah; whereas those who study only the Mishnah without gazing into Her secrets - for it is in accord with the Secrets that true legal decisions are rendered - whether to permit or to forbid - they are certainly blind. Thus, "who is blind if not My 'servant'": one who studies only the plain meaning and is called 'servant' as stated above. {Tr. The following sentence was not in the Hebrew abbreviated text, but is crucial in order to understand the reasoning behind the next paragraph.} [Regarding them, Isaiah prophesied that these 'servants' will in the Messianic future, merit to traverse [Isa. 42:16 'the pathways that they did not know' - the paths of the Wisdom of Truth, which, in the present world are guarded by the [Gen. 3:24] 'bright blade of the revolving sword' and by 'the Cherubim', who keep watch over the Path of the Tree of Life, so that only those who merit would understand the Secrets of the Torah. ...]

One must not say, however, that this being the case, 'I am exempt from studying this Wisdom until the 'future time' because in this world ... I haven't the capacity to know these [secrets]'. It is for this reason that Isaiah declared [ibid.]: "These are the things that I have done, and I did not forsake them". And our sages explained: "the verse did not say "... that I *will* do, and I *will* not forsake ...", but rather, I *have already* done them. This is a reference to R. Aqiva and his colleagues .." For R. Aqiva would sit and expound upon each and every coronet of the letters [of the Torah, and would derive from them] hills upon hills of Torah principles. Thus, [even these seemingly gratuitous graphic decorations are] not empty of meaning, and if you experience them as meaningless, this is only on account of your own shortcomings, and because you are not interested in knowing; whereas [attaining this capacity] is up to your own choice, for R. Aqiva was able to fathom these secrets even in this world. Now it is true, that the Mishnah declared that [BT Sotah 49a]: "With the demise of R. Aqiva, the dignity of the Torah came undone". And the commentators explained that since R. Aqiva was able to answer [all questions posed to him] and to expound upon each and every coronet of the letters [of the Torah, so as to derive from them] hills upon hills of Torah principles [n. in keeping with R. Meir's principle mentioned above, from BT Avot 6:1], this illustrated the dignity and comeliness and beauty of the Torah. This is also how I explained the Talmudic passage [BT Avot 6:2]: "Said R. Joshua son of Levi: Each and every day, a heavenly voice issues forth from Horeb and announces: 'Woe unto the creatures of the world, on account of the embarrassment of the Torah.'" For without a doubt, by their study of the Torah in a manner that is limited to its plain meaning and its narrative, [it is as if] She dons the garments of a widow placing sackcloth on Herself and all the nations of the world say unto Israel: 'how is your beloved any more distinguished than ours - how is your teaching superior to ours? Your Torah [like ours] comprises nothing more than narratives concerning the vanities of this world!' Is there greater

ridicule than this? Thus: 'Woe unto the creatures of the world, on account of the embarrassment of the Torah!' For they do not occupy themselves with the Wisdom of Kabbalah which displays the dignity of the Torah. Thereby they lengthen the period of exile and [open the door to] all the evils that are rearing to come to the world, as we have indicated at the beginning of this introduction. This is the message of the heavenly voice that announces its call daily, and it is implied in the verse [Isa 40:6]: "A voice declares: 'Cry out' ...".

Indeed, the sages of plain-meaning also comprise two groups: one that consists of God-fearers, who study [Torah] for the sake of heaven, but remain ... in darkness since the time of their youth. They haven't studied the Secrets of the Torah and are afraid to even touch them. They implore [Deut. 30:12]: "Who will ascend for us to the heavens and receive it for us"; and [Prov. 30:4] 'Who ascended to heaven and descended, may he tell us'. These verses refer to the intimated Secrets of the Torah [n. which they want to be made more accessible to them]. Thus, [Jer. 4:23]: "... and [I gazed unto] the heavens and they had no light". For although they be souls that were hewn from heaven, their [potential for] light is not with them. They dwell in darkness and do not emerge [from it].

Then there is another group, consisting of sages who are practiced in the art of keen dialectic. They uproot mountains and grind them together through their sharp analyses in the House of Study. Regarding them, Jeremiah declared [ibid. 4:24]: "I beheld the mountains and they are trembling" - for they [these sages] are afraid to come close to the Consuming Fire, i.e. to the Secrets of the Torah, whose words are like coals of fire, like burning flames. They are afraid lest they be consumed, as was the case with [BT Hagigah 13a] the youth who expounded upon the Electrum (*Hashmal*) [of the Divine Chariot Ezek. 1], and fire emerged from Her and consumed him. Oh! How good and pleasant would be their portion, had this happened to them - that they be consumed by the holiness of His Blessed Name - for [Deut. 9:3] 'He is a consuming fire'. Regarding these, it was said [Prov. 24:7] "Cunning is seen by fools as wisdom, therefore, such a one will not open his mouth at the gates" - of the Ten *Sefirot*. Without a doubt, those who think so are fools. Had they not already decided that the wisdom of plain-meaning - which they already possess - suffices for them, and that they are *already* wise, they would not have withheld themselves from entering into the 'inside'. Regarding such a one it is said [Prov. 26:12]: "Do you see a person who is wise in his own eyes - there is more hope for a fool than for him".

Jeremiah continues [ibid. 4:24]: "... and all the plateaus were in ruin" - this refers to the young Talmudic scholars who are likened to plateaus, when compared to the 'mountains' mentioned above. These 'plateaus' were completely ruined. For when the lesser disciples observe the 'great mountains' who strive day and night after the plain-meaning and do not study the Wisdom discussed above, they do not know that what prevents [their teachers] is their fear, as mentioned above. These 'plateaus' then become completely ruined, and their hearts become [Deut. 29:17]: "the root that bears gall and wormwood". They become mired in rusty loam, whereupon they deny the veracity of the Wisdom of Truth saying that there is nothing to the

Torah save Its plain meaning, Its garments. No doubt, such 'disciples' forfeit their portion in the World-to-Come! We have already explained the reason for this above: For the Torah of the World-to-Come refers not to Its plain meaning, but exclusively to the secret arcana of the Torah - which they denied - and in which they chose not to toil. Thus [BT Avodah Zara fol. 3a], 'one who did not toil on the day before the Shabbat, shall not eat on the Shabbat'. Regarding them it is said [Isa. 35:13]: "Behold. My servants shall eat but you will starve ...".

As for those who occupy themselves with the Secrets of the Torah and the Wisdom of the Zohar, they are the true Adam, as mentioned in the *Tiqunim*. And we may also venture an alternative explanation with regard to [Tiqunei haZohar fol. 1b]: "'chicks', these are the masters of Mishnah, 'sons', these are masters of Kabbalah", suggesting that this also applies to [the verse] [Jer, 4:25]: "I have searched, but 'the man' is not to be found". The verse does not state 'man', but *the* man'. In other words, although such a one studies this Wisdom and is therefore called 'man', he is nonetheless not the 'unique man' truly worthy of this occupation, for they [i.e. those who study Kabbalah but are not 'unique'] do not possess the roots and principles needed to understand its words. This is as we explained above with regard to Jeremiah's having said [Jer. ibid.]: 'feble-minded sons these are, who do not understand'. But 'the man' is not to be found in this world, and *we* - with regard to this Wisdom - are [Isa. 59:10]: 'like the blind groping for a wall', because the sages of the truth have journeyed on to their resting-places leaving us with our woes. And when such a man is not to be found so as to teach this wisdom then even the birds of the heavens - the disciples whose hearts have been touched by God - wishing to fly in the sky, but not possessing wings, say [per Psalm 55:7]: 'who will provide me a limb, so like a dove ... so that we may fly and dwell' - in the tents of this Wisdom

We have thus explicated all the strata of the Israelite nation. All as one, prevent themselves from grasping on to this Wisdom - each group in accord with its reason and tendency - so that in the abundance of our iniquity [Isa 51:18]: "from among all the sons She bore, there is none to guide Her"; i.e. although there are 'sons' who are men of Kabbalah, they too have abandoned hope in their pursuit of this Wisdom. Without a doubt, these words were uttered as a prophecy regarding our latter generations. They run contrary to the opinions of the sages of these generations who have entertained the thought that they have already achieved what is required of them and are content with their portion. But the verse proclaims [Isa. 59:16]: "And He looked about but there was *no* man; and He was astonished for there was *none* to meet Him" - in the *negative* - Woe to the ears that hear thus and woe to the eyes that see thus - the Divine testimony on our behalf - and yet we have no heart to be aware [of our shortcomings] so as to return to occupy ourselves with this Wisdom, that we may provide potency to His Blessedness. For the verse attests Isa. 63:5]: "And I gaze about and there is none to come to My aid, and I stagger astonished and there is none to support ...". All of the above refer to the fact that whereas we are occupied with this Wisdom - for by its means the redemption will arrive - so that, so-to-speak, Her Powerful Presence shall attain salvation - as it is written [ibid.]: "and My arm shall be My salvation" - *My* salvation indeed - so-to-speak! And as we have quoted at the beginning of this introduction, all of this depends on the effort placed into the study of this

Wisdom, and our desisting from being occupied with Her is what causes the delay in the building of our Holy Temple and [the restoration of] our beauty. EMW 2004

It has been clearly explained, even through the words of the *Tana'im*, the authors of the Mishnah, that one cannot completely fulfill one's obligation to study Torah even through the study of Scripture ... Mishnah, Midrash and Talmud [if it be these] alone, for one is also obliged to study the Secrets of Torah - the Works of the Divine Chariot [*Merkavah*] - to the best of one's ability. For the blessed Holy One derives no pleasure from the creation of His world, except when His sons below occupy themselves with the Secrets of Torah in order to recognize His greatness, beauty and stature. For by means of studying merely the plain meaning of the Torah - Its narratives, laws and edicts - one cannot arrive to the recognition and knowledge of the Creator. Quite the contrary. There are edicts and statutes that the mind cannot bear, and the nations of the world oppress Israel, taunting them, saying: 'What is this Torah that your God has commanded you? Its words appear as riddles and parables - to take the horn of a cow and blow sounds from it on *Rosh haShanah* - and then you claim that this confuses the spiritual Accuser, the supernal incriminator, so that he does not interfere [with the judgement, so that it be enacted by means of Divine Compassion], etc. Indeed, most of the edicts of the Torah and the minute details of their laws seem disagreeable to the mind! This being so, where is the comeliness of the Torah - Its beauty and greatness?

By dint of these protestations the verse proclaims [Job 35 7-6 (sic)]: "If you were righteous, what did you give to Him, and if you transgressed what would you cause in Him?" For reward and retribution with reference to [the performance of edicts-*Mitzvot*] applies to 'you' alone. But with regard to the Secrets of Torah and the performance of the *Mitzvot* with their contemplative intentions, it is the opposite. If these are properly effected, it is said [that one fulfills the verse] [Psalm 68:35 and see Zohar 2:32b]: "Deliver potency to God ...", whereas if one is amiss in this, it is said {Deut. 32:18 and see Midrash Lament. Rabati chapter 1}: "The rock that bore you is weakened ...". And it is written [Isa. 66:24]: "And they will go out and see the corpses of those who intentionally sinned against Me ..." - against *Me* - not 'to Me' [i.e. - merely against what I have commanded]: - against *Me* - so-to-speak. The gravity of these words is clear to anyone whose heart is touched by God. It is as we explained earlier, that one who reads [only] Mishnah and Talmud is called a 'servant' who renders service on condition of recompense. Whereas by means of the Wisdom of Truth one so-to-speak rectifies Him, adding strength and potency above, and is indubitably regarded as one who studies Torah for Her sake - with pure motive. Not only this: the human being as such, was created for the sole purpose of studying the Wisdom of Kabbalah. Only, one's body must be clean - [and this is achieved] by means of performing the Divine edicts on the physical plane - for their function is to prepare one for this [sacred] undertaking. And in any case, the actual performance of these edicts is obligatory and necessary. Afterwards, the soul which is the [Prov. 20:27] 'candle of God', will be able to illuminate the body like a lit candle placed in a glass holder, enlightening one and giving one strength to understand the mysteries of the Torah, so as to [Job 12:22] 'reveal the depths out of the darkness'. Anyone possessing intelligence would be bewildered by the

abovementioned words, which would not be understood except by the explanation of them provided above, as to the difference between the study of the Torah ... limited to Its plain meaning, which encompasses only the this-worldly Torah, and is as nothing when compared to the Torah of the Messiah and the Torah of the World-to-Come. This is the secret of [Isa. 49:4]: "For naught and in vain did I spend my strength".

Had I come to fully explain all of these sayings, time itself would expire but the [meaning of these] sayings would not [be exhausted]. We may however attain an abridged understanding of them by what was said above. The reward for the mere performance of Divine edicts and Torah study is in this world, and in [the soul's after-life participation in] the 'terrestrial-like Eden-Paradise'. But in order to enter into the higher supernal world this would not suffice unless one also toils with all of one's capacity to attain what one can, of the Wisdom of the Zohar. If not, they [the guardian angels] remove the person from all the gates of the supernal world, even if one be well adorned through the performance of Divine edicts and good deeds. As a result, the animating soul and spirit [*Nefesh v' Ru'ah*] remain in the 'terrestrial-like Paradise', but the 'consciousness-soul' [*Neshamah*], whose portion is the Secrets of Torah receives retribution instead. It becomes enflamed, outside the supernal palaces of the upper-Eden-Paradise [see Zohar 2:247b]. This is as it is said [paraphrase, Zohar ibid.]: 'This holy life-energy-being [*Hayuta Kadishta*] is present when the *Neshamah* [consciousness-soul] enters' - but [the Zohar] did not say the foregoing with reference to the *Nefesh* or the *Ru'ah*. Understand this and be not confused, when you come across various dicta of the sages of blessed memory that appear to contradict one another.

For all of the righteous ones and all the seed of Israel are rooted in and suspended from the body of the First Adam - one in his body, another in his head; one ... from his ear, another from his neck - etc. So too, all Animating Souls [*Nefesh*] (derive from) his *Nefesh*, and all Spirits from his *Ru'ah*, and all Consciousness-souls from his *Neshamah*. And just as the [physical] body of First Adam was comprised of two hundred and forty eight limb-bones and three hundred and sixty five sinews, so too, [the spiritual 'bodies' of] the *Nefesh*, *Ru'ah* and *Neshamah*. And all of these are dependent on the Torah, with Its of two hundred and forty eight edicts-of-action and three hundred and sixty five edicts-of-desisting. This is also the secret behind the Talmudic conversation [BT Shabbat fol. 118b]: "Rav inquired: 'your father, Mr. So-and-so, what [edict] was he most careful [in observing]?" And this is also the meaning of [Zohar Hadash Cant. fol. 70d]: "For what purpose did you arrive into this putrid body ...?"

So too, all the universes in their entirety form the body of One Man, comprising two hundred and forty eight limb-bones and three hundred and sixty five sinews. Thus we find [Scriptural expressions such as - Isa. 8:8]: 'the wings of the land' or [Exod. 10:5] 'the eye of the land' or [Deut. 4:11] 'the heart of the heavens', etc. and as the Zohar [1:134b] explained: "Every limb-bone in the human body corresponds to a creature in the world for just as a human being is composed of members upon members ... [and yet, these comprise one body] so too the world: all these creatures are members upon members, standing one upon another ... [and form one

body]". This is as indicated in [Zohar Hadash, Cant. Fol. 70d]: "to know Him as to His Body and to be informed as to Who He is ...", and so too [ibid.]: "One [world (was created) in order] that the person know and behold *this* world wherein *He* abides; and to know the basis upon which *this* world becomes rectified...". Thus, a person must attain through one's toil in this Wisdom, the knowledge of one's own root, and the manner in which one is suspended from the body of the Supernal [First] Adam; and so too with regard to one's *Ru'ah*, *Nefesh* and *Neshamah*, and so too with regard to one's individual relation to the Divine edicts; and [particularly] to discern where one's grasp [in these matters] is most powerfully significant.

Earlier, [Jeremiah [Jer, 4:25]] had declared: "I have searched, but 'the man' is not to be found", meaning to say that there is no one who truly knows this Wisdom. This being the case, [one may claim that] the person ought to be exempt ... and unbound from the obligation to pursue this Wisdom, for there is no one to teach It, so that one would be able to receive It. [One can claim] - if It is receivable, I would be ready to receive It, but if not, how then can I receive It! For [BT Avodah Zara fol. 3a]: "The blessed Holy One does not come to His creatures with the demands of an unreasonable tyrant"! [It is for this reason that Jeremiah] establishes the true context of the situation so as to tell us that these suppositions are incorrect. For although [Jer. 4:27]: 'The entire land shall be desolate' - bereft of anyone who is [truly] occupied with this Wisdom, [ibid.] 'I will not utterly destroy it'. The Lord of Hosts has provided us with a 'survivor' - a marked man as it were - in each generation [see Zohar 2:166b-167a] - whether [the generation or the man] be great or [apparently] inconsequential. Even in ours, the last generation [as per Lev. 26:44]: 'we have not despised nor spurned [Him], so as to repudiate His covenant with us', Heaven forefend. And indeed it is written in the *Tiqunim* [fol. 23b-24a]: "in the final generation at the End of Days, they will be sustained through this Book [i.e. the Zoharic Corpus] ... and thus, [Lev. 25:10] 'you shall call out liberation throughout the land'". So too, in the Zohar [1:118a] we read: "... and when it will be close to the days of the Messiah, even the children of the world will be prepared to receive the hidden secrets of Wisdom. ...". For it is clear that up until now the Zohar's words of wisdom have been shrouded enigmas, but in the latter generation this Wisdom will be revealed and made public, so that they will understand with intelligence, Secrets of Wisdom that earlier generations had not grasped. Thus, the objections of the fools are removed: those who protest, saying: "is this generation *really* worthy? - if previous generations did not understand [the Zohar], how could we know [what it means]?" - with this, their mouths will be shut.

And yet, although it is clear and has been explained, that these latter generations will be sustained by 'this book' [the Zohar], and this Wisdom shall be revealed to them; [BT Berahot fol. 16b] 'not all who desire to take the Name [upon themselves] may do so' for the hidden secrets of the Torah will not be revealed merely by means of one's mental concentration, without the Divine Effluence being drawn to them from the heights of His Holiness by means of His messengers and angels, or by means of revelation from Elijah the prophet of goodly remembrance, as will be explained in the concluding section of this introduction.

In this vein, do not be skeptical about what we will recount in this concluding section with regard to the holy sage who was revealed to us in our time ... in this, our generation; and I cannot fully explain [with respect to the nature of this sage, beyond what will be stated below]. If you will, you may understand this matter by considering what is written in the *Tiqunim* [fol. 138a] on the verse [Eccl. 1:4]: " 'a generation goes and a generation comes ...' - this refers to Moses, the faithful shepherd", and as is mentioned in *Tiqun* 69 [fol. 111b]: "R. Shimeon said: my colleagues, certainly the blessed Holy One is aligned with us in agreement - with both the supernal ones and the terrestrial ones, who would be in this gathering of consent. Meritorious is the generation in which this is revealed, for all of this [wisdom] will in the future be revealed anew by Moses, in the final generation. This will fulfill the verse [Eccl. 1: 9]: 'what was shall be again' and the verse [Psalm 33:14]: 'from His place of habitation He oversees ...' [both of which contain words whose first letters form acronyms of the name of Moses]. ... Indeed, his manifesting influence is found in every generation, within each righteous one and every sage who is occupied in the Torah, extending even to six hundred thousand". [The full implications of] these words are hidden and sealed.

Let us return now to an earlier matter: without a doubt these words will not be understood through contemplation by means of the material human intellect, but only by mouth-to-mouth reception or from the mouth of Elijah the prophet, or from the mouths of souls who reveal themselves to those who are worthy of them, in each generation. And Nahmanides [13th century] of blessed memory, who was the last of the [uninterrupted] line of Kabbalists before our own time wrote in the introduction to his commentary on the Bible: "I put this forward in keeping with the faithful covenant and provide the following proper advice to all who look at this book: do not attempt to explicate it by means of reason or to rationally ponder any of the allusions to the Secrets of the Torah written here. For I am conscientiously informing you that these [secrets] will not be grasped and will not be disclosed at all by means of applying intelligence and understanding, but only by receiving it mouth-to-ear - from a wise Kabbalist to an understanding recipient. And the use of the rational faculty directed at this, is folly. [Speculative] thought [in this regard] brings much damage and hinders [the attainment of proper] function. Do not place your faith in this vain supposition, for one's reasoning will only yield evil, as one would come to speak falsely of God and not receive atonement. Do not [Exod. 19:21] 'break through to gaze at God' ...". Now if Nahmanides of blessed memory, the last of the Kabbalists, was loquacious regarding this matter, saying that *his* words containing allusions to the Secrets of the Torah will not be properly understood at all, how could the human mind even entertain the notion that by means of exercising one's intellect one would understand the 'words of the Living God' - the words of R. Shimeon bar Yohai peace be upon him - whose declarations are like flames of consuming fire: hidden and sealed with a thousand seals! For it is true beyond doubt that had R. Shimeon bar Yohai not recognized by means of his holy spirit that R. Abba [the redactor of the words of R. Shimeon, according to Zoharic tradition] was a great wise sage and was capable of engarmenting ... and hiding these recondite matters through enigmatic allusion so that even the sages of his time would not understand them, he

would not have commanded [R. Abba] to write [the Zohar]. However, there is no generation in which we are entirely bereft of unique treasured-ones upon whom the Holy Spirit dwells, for Elijah ... the prophet of goody remembrance would reveal himself to them, teaching them the mystical secrets of this Wisdom.

Behold! Today I will express mysteries and the wondrous works of the [Job 37:16] 'One pure of all persuasions'; for in each and every generation He works His wondrous Grace with us [Psalm 118: 27]: 'the all-powerful God has illumined for us' by means of the surviving ones to whom God calls in each and every generation - and also in this, our generation - as we have stated, the Lord of the first and last ones did not leave Israel without a redeemer. He expressed zealotry on behalf of His land and had compassion on His People, by sending us [Dan. 4:10]: 'a Watcher and holy one, descended from heaven', the great divine Rabbi, the *Hasid*, my master and teacher - our honorable teacher, the Rabbi - R. Isaac Luria Ashkenazi, his memory for life in the World-to-Come; who was filled with Torah as a pomegranate is filled with seeds - with Scripture, Mishnah, Talmud, Midrashim, Legends, the Works of Creation, the Works of the Chariot; an expert in the 'conversations of the palms', and those of the birds, and in the concourse of Angels; able recognize [a person's spiritual state] by means of facial metoposcopy - as expounded by R. Shimeon bar Yohai in the Torah-portion [Exod. 18:21; and see Zohar 2:70b, ff and Zohar Hadash fol. 31 ff] 'and you shall seek out ...'; he knew all the deeds of people - what they did and what they will do - he knew the thoughts of the sons of man even prior to their being expressed from potential to actual; knew future events, and all that goes on in the entire land; and all that is decreed in heaven. He knew the wisdom of transmigration - who was a new soul and who was old - as well as the coordinated cosmic placement of each individual - in what place in the Supernal Adam and in the First [terrestrial] Adam each one is suspended. He recognized the messages in flickering candles and in flames of fire - wondrous matters - he looked and gazed with his own eyes, at the souls of the righteous - the earlier and later ones - and engaged with them in the study of the Wisdom of Truth. He recognized the nature of a man's deeds by his mere odor, as was the case with the child-prodigy of the Zohar Parshat Balaq [Zohar 3:186a]. All of the aforementioned gifts were available to him as if in his breast-pocket, whenever he would desire to be availed of them, without having to investigate them in seclusion beforehand.

This [testimony] is not gleaned from the reports of strangers - my own eyes saw these things - baffling matters that were not witnessed or reported since the days of R. Shimeon bar Yohai peace be upon him, up to now. He attained all this without the use of 'Practical Kabbalah', Heaven forefend, for the application of this knowledge is interdicted by powerful injunction. Indeed, all this arose from within him due to his piety and asceticism, after many days and years of poring over both new and old works [that expound] this Wisdom. Beyond these, he increased his service of *Hasidut* [graciousness towards God] and intensified his austerity, holiness and purity. This brought him to [revelation from] Elijah the prophet who was in constant pneumatic communion with him - speaking to him mouth-to-mouth - and teaching him this Wisdom. ...

[In the past] each one the sages knowledgeable in this Wisdom would undertake its pursuit with great circumspection and would never reveal it except to an exceptionally unique disciple - one in a generation - and this too, only by means of 'chapter-headings' mouth-to-mouth - revealing a hands-breadth and concealing a thousand hands-breadths. And this Wisdom was in continuous decline; decreasing with the coming of each generation until it reached Nahmanides, the last of the true Kabbalists [the initiated receivers of the esoteric tradition].

As for the treatises written by the Kabbalists who lived after Nahmanides of blessed memory, do not approach them. For as of the period of Nahmanides ... the path of this Wisdom became hidden from the eyes of all the sages, who remained with only a few principles bereft of their root-meanings; upon which the latter-day Kabbalists of blessed memory formed their words, by means of [their] human intellect. You may discern this for yourself: because any sharp-minded person who concentrates on acquiring their principles can master them within four or five days, and all their works are full of repetitions, saying the same things with different words. The entire extent of their principles revolves around there being Ten *Sefirot*. They composed heaps of treatises about this, but the upshot of what they have to say can be written up in two or three notebooks. This was not the case with the earlier Kabbalists.

People of heart, listen to me. Do not [Exod. 19:21] 'break-through to God' by looking at the latter-day books, which are derived from the human intellect. ... One who listens to me will rest assured, secure from evil fear. Therefore I, the young Hayim Vital am writing this. For I desire to bring the multitude to a meritorious state, by means utmost concealed; and the intelligent will understand. I provided this work with a title containing a reference to my name, calling it *Etz Hayim* the Tree of Life - and also with reference to the appellation appropriate for this powerful Wisdom, the wisdom of the Zohar, which is called the 'Tree of Life', and not the 'Tree of Knowledge'. And with regard to this, those who taste it merit the true life and will become deserving [so as to arrive at] the lands of life-everlasting. Eat from this Tree of Life and live forever! 'I will instruct you and illuminate this path, which you should follow' [per Psalm 32:8].

Know that since the day that my teacher, remembered for life eternal, began to reveal this Wisdom, my hand never left his grasp for even a moment. If ever you find notebooks quoting the teachings of my teacher of blessed memory that contradict the teachings found in this book, know that [those notebooks] are in error and [these errors] indicate that they did not understand his words. And even if you find some additional teachings that do not per-se disagree with our book, do not be entirely convinced so as to establish them as genuine; for none of those who heard [my teacher's] holy words have arrived to the depths of intent in his teachings, and none have understood them so as to have cleared away all uncertainties. And if you entertain the notion that you will be able to discern the good and forsake the deficient, [Prov. 3:5]: 'do not rely on your own understanding', for these words are not given to the heart of man in accord with human intellect, and independent reasoning with regard to them is exceedingly dangerous; for one may come to [BT Hagiga fol. 14b]: 'sever the saplings' [n. i.e. to dissociate implications causal from their roots or view reality as dualistic], Heaven forefend!

Therefore I caution you not to look at any of the notebooks that purport to contain teachings from my teacher, his memory a blessing for life-eternal, save what we have set down for you here, in this book. Let this warning suffice for you. ...

Introductions of our teacher, R. Hayyim Vital, his merit will protect us, amen, to *The Gate of Introductions*

Translated and annotated by: Brian Ogren

Said the youth, the insignificant by thousands, Hayyim Vital, son of his master, his father, the Rav Yosef Vital, may his memory be for the world-to-come, commenting: When I was thirty years old, I had no strength left, I sat in amazement. And my thoughts were puzzling. For the harvest has passed, the summer has ended, and we have not been saved. No remedy has arisen for our sickness. There is no cure for our flesh, and no treatment has been issued for our plague, for the destruction of our Temple. This (i.e., the Temple) has been in a state of destruction already for one thousand five hundred and four years. Woe to us, for the day has turned, one day of the Holy One, Blessed is He, which (one day of His) is one thousand years, and the shadows of evening have come, which are five hundred and four years, more than half of a second day. It is the end, and the son of David has not yet come.

And that which the Sages said is known (*Yerushalmi Yoma*, 81, 5:1): For each generation that does not build the Temple in its days, it is as if it were destroyed in its days. I will devote myself to researching and understanding this, and why our end and our exile have been lengthened. And why the son of Yishay has not come.

Now, what is written at the beginning of his words, "Even all those who toil in the Torah with all of the favor of a servant to his master, etc.," with its simple meaning explained, and specifically in our time in this world, in which the Torah is made into an axe for cutting in the hands of some of the masters of Torah, whose dealings in the Torah are in order to receive awards and other provisions, and also to be among the heads of *yeshivot* and on the religious courts, that their name and their scent may be smelled throughout the land; and they are similar in their actions to the people of the generation after the Flood, who built a "tower with its top in the heavens"(Genesis, 11:4). And the main reason for their actions, as it is written afterwards, was "that we may make a name for ourselves." As it is written in the Zohar on Genesis, p. 25b, commenting upon the verse, "These are the generations of the heaven and the earth": "There are five types among the multitude, and the third of these is called 'Mighty Ones' (*Gibborim*), and of them it is said, 'They are the Mighty Ones which are of the world of the men of name.' These come from the side of those who said, 'Let us build a city and a tower, etc.' About this group, it is said in the *gemara* (*Berachot*, 17): "Anyone who labors in Torah not for its own sake, it is suitable that his birth should be turned on its face and that he should not have come out into the atmosphere of the world."

And indeed, these people show innocence and humility in their saying that all of their

occupation in the Torah is for the sake of its name (i.e., for the sake of learning Torah itself).^{EMW 2004} Certainly, the great wise man, the *Tana* Rabbi Meir, peace be upon him, testified against them that he was not like that, in his saying with general happiness (Avot, ch. 6, *mishna* 1): "He who labors in the Torah for its own sake merits many things, etc. And the secrets of Torah are revealed to him, and he becomes like a river that does not stop from running, and like a spring whose power overcomes him." He does not have to bother and to look into it, and to take out drops of the water of Torah from the rock; indeed, this teaches that (one like this) is really not laboring in Torah for its own sake, as a rule. Who cannot shed tears upon seeing this *mishna* and its deficiency and its pettiness?

Now, it is explained that our holy Torah is included and exists in all of the four worlds, *ABY'A*. Its existence in the world of *Atzilut* is the called *Kabbalah*, for there it divests itself from all of the clothing called *peshat*, from the words "I took off (*pashateti*) my robe." This is the aspect of the outer clothing, which is on the skin of man and is sometimes spread over him; this is the essence of the word *peshat*.

And indeed, in the world of *Atzilut*, the Holy One, Blessed is He, sits and labors in Torah, as mentioned in the *midrash* of the Sages, and also in the words of the *Targum* on the verse, "My Beloved is pure and ruddy" (Song of Songs, 5:10). And as it is written, "And I was by Him, as a nursling" (Proverbs, 8:30), interpreted by the Sages concerning the creation of the world, that the Holy One, Blessed is He, would look at the Torah and create worlds. And there is no doubt that this is not like the act of the first man, and not like the act of *Bnei Hari*, or like the act of the donkey of Bilam and the like, as according to their simple meanings; the Holy One, Blessed is He, amused Himself with these [stories], two thousand years before He created the world, and created worlds with them.

Indeed, the amusements of the Holy One, Blessed is He, with the Torah, and His creating the worlds with it, was through His laboring with the Torah according to the inner soul that is in it. This is called "the secrets of Torah," [or alternately] called "the works of the *merkavah*," [and] is the wisdom of the *kabbalah*, as is known to those who know. And the meaning of this is its being the world of *Atzilut*, the very highest, good and not bad, which does not contain any admixture with the husk (*kelipah*). And about it is said: "And I will not give my Glory to another," as is mentioned in the Book of Tikkunim 4, 66, Tikkun 18, and in the Zohar on Genesis 28a, see there. As such, the Torah that is there is divested of all physical clothing. This is not the case below in the world of *Yetsirah*, the world of *Metatron*, called "the Good Servant," [also] called "the Tree of Knowledge of Good from the side (of good). From the left side are its husks (*kelipin deliah*), called "the Evil Servant." For the Torah that is there is closed up in silence [and] is called a "maidservant," as mentioned above. This is also mentioned in [the Zohar to] Genesis, p. 27a.

Therefore it is called *mishna*, because there [in that world] there are alterations (*shinuim* - from the same root as *mishna*) between opposites, good from the side of "the Good Servant,"

legitimate, appropriate, pure. Evil from the side of "the Evil Servant," taboo, impure, blemished. It [*mishna*] is also derived from the language, "and Mordecai the Jew was second in command (*mishne*) to the king" (Ester, 10:3). It is also called [*mishna*] from the word "sleep" (*sheina*), as mentioned in the Zohar on *Pinhas*, p. 244a.

Now, their words (i.e., the words of the *mishna*) are like a dream without an explanation, and its secrets and inner mysteries, called "the soul of the Torah," are the explanation of the dream, deciphered while awake, according to the secret: "I am asleep, and my heart is awake" (Song of Songs, 5:2). And as the Sages, blessed be their memories, have written (Sanhedrin 24): "'He has made me dwell in dark places, like those who are long dead' (Lamentations, 3:6). This is the Babylonian Talmud," which is elucidated only by the Zohar, these are the secrets of the Torah and its mysteries, about which it is said, "and the Torah is light" (Proverbs, 6:23).

And just as the wheat (*hitah*), which in its numerology is equal to the twenty two letters of the Torah, is hidden under many husks and layers, which are bran and fiber and straw and fodder and the grass called "hay," so too the *mishna* in its relation to the secrets of Torah is called "hay." This is hinted at in the Zohar, *parashat Ki Teze* in the *Ra'aya Mehemna*, p. 275b. And if I came to expand on this homily, 100 tracts would not suffice, without exaggeration, as the eyes of a wise man are indeed in his head. For I am saying words of truth, and a man who sees the Zohar should not be surprised that it calls the *mishna* the "maidservant" and the "husks," for the *mishna* works according to its plain meanings; there is no doubt that these are entirely the layers and the outer husks, as opposed to the secrets of the Torah that are hidden and hinted at within its inner core, for all of its plain meanings are in this world, lower physical arrangements.

Indeed, they (i.e., the plain meanings of the *mishna*) are husks that are good to eat, like the husks of the reeds of fragrance. Therefore, with the comprehension of those who understand the plain meaning of the *mishna* according to its principles, without making mistakes, it is called "the Tree of Knowledge of Good." However, when, heaven forbid, they change (make mistakes?) with it, and defile the pure, and make the blemished kosher, and allow the forbidden, then it changes into "the Tree of Knowledge of Evil," and it is bitter for them.

For the *mishna* is a maidservant, because it is (i.e., it exists in its plain meaning) in order to receive an award. The meaning: for indeed, all of His attributes, Blessed is He, exist attribute against attribute. Therefore, it is said of those who labor in its plain, good, bodily meanings that on the left is wealth and glory: this is the reward that is given to them in this world, for indeed their labor in Torah is in the nature of their being in this world, with judgements of forbiddance and permittance, impurity and purity, etc. And they are like the servant who serves his master clearly in order to receive an award, "and all of the benevolence of my servant, etc.," like slaves and maidservants who serve their master in order to receive an award. Indeed, about those who labor in the secrets of Torah, who do so in the nature of laboring in the Torah in the world-to-come, it is said that the length of their days is on the

right, in a world in which everything is lengthened. [This is] like a son who enters ^{EMW12004} deep inside and serves before his father, not in order to receive an award.

And it is known that *Tiferet* of *Atsilut* is called "son," and *Metatron* of *Yetsira* is called "servant." And we pray to them on Rosh Hashana, whether as "sons" or whether as "servants." Now, in *Midrash Kohelet*, the Sages commented on the verse, "But he will be happy for many years, etc" (Midrash Raba Kohelet, 11:7). This is their language: "But he will be happy for many years, etc." The Torah that a man has learned is futile as opposed to the Torah of the Messiah. If this is so, it is said about the Torah of the Messiah that it is in body and in soul, as it is written (Berachot 34): "There is no difference between this-world and the days of the Messiah, except for enslavement to foreign kingdoms alone." He (i.e., the Messiah) is the cancellation of the Evil Kingdom, the outer husk, called "the evil inclination," as the Sages interpreted the verse, "and the wolf will dwell with the lamb, etc." (Isaiah, 11:6), and conjoined to it the verse, "and the land will be filled with the knowledge of God." As such, the Torah of this world, which is dressed in husks due to the fact that the Evil Inclination is called a "husk" which is found in the world, it (i.e., the Torah of this world) is futile as compared to the Torah of the Messiah, which will disrobe itself a bit from its coverings and its husks, as men will also remove from themselves the husk of the Evil Inclination. This is the case all the more so in our being above in the world-to-come, the world of souls, divested of all sorts of vestment generally, for the labors of the Torah for them (i.e., in that world) are within the soul of the Torah, its inner secrets.

Indeed, a man should not say, "I will go and labor in the wisdom of the *kabbalah*," before he labors in Torah, *Mishna* and *Talmud*. For the Rabbis already said, "Do not bring a man into the *pardes* unless his belly is full of meat and wine." Surely, this is similar to a soul without a body, that has no reward or action or accounting until it enters into a body and is complete and corrected by the commandments of the Torah, the 613 commandments. The opposite is also the case for one who labors in the wisdom of the *Mishna* and the *Talmud Bavli* and does not give part of his time to the study of the secrets of the Torah and its mysteries. This is like a body that sits in darkness, without a human soul, the candle of God that enlightens from within; this body is dry and does not draw from the source of life. This is the intent of the citation mentioned above: "These are those that serve the dry Torah, and do not desire to toil in the wisdom of the *kabbalah*, etc." (Tikkunim, p. 73b). This is in such a manner that the scholar who labors in Torah for its own sake, and not for his own sake in order to make a name for himself, at first needs to labor in the wisdom of the Bible and the *Mishna* and the *Talmud* according to the limits of his intellect, and after this he can toil to know his Creator through the Wisdom of Truth (i.e., the *Kabbalah*), as King David, peace be upon him, decreed to his son Shlomo, "Know the God of your fathers and serve Him" (Chronicles 1, 28:9).

If the study of *Talmud* should be heavy and difficult for this person, it is beneficiary for him, after trying his luck with this wisdom, to set it aside and to labor in the Wisdom of Truth. As it is written (Hulin 24): "Every scholar that does not see a mark of beauty in the *Talmud* after five

Indeed, every person that finds it easy to learn is required to give part of an hour, or two hours a day to the study of *halacha*, to direct and to explain the difficult questions that fall upon the simple meaning of the *halacha*. He is to direct his attention not to the evil husk, which grasps on from the side of the serpent Samael, the "Evil Servant," but to the good husk, which is the *Mishna*, *Metatron*, the world of *Yetsira*, called "the Servant and the Maidservant of the Lady." But [he is not to direct his attention to] the Lady, who is the inner kernel, the Wisdom of Truth, called "the Tree of Life." About it (i.e., the Tree of Life) it is said, "I am the LORD, it is My name" (Isaiah, 42:8), the secret being that the entire Torah is the names of the Holy One, Blessed is He. (see the *Zohar*, *Ha'azinu*, 241, "All of it is the name of the Holy One, Blessed is He"). "And I will not give my Glory to another," that it does not contain an admixture with a husk, except for the Tree of knowledge of good and evil, *Mishna*, impure and pure, forbidden and allowed, kosher and blemished. He should intend in his study to remove the evil husk, which is the cause of difficult questions that make a man unable to understand its (i.e., *halacha's*) explanations. He should remove it from the Tree of Good and Evil, which is the *Mishna*, the "Maidservant of the Lady," and afterwards he should intend to adorn the Lady herself, who is the Wisdom of the *Kabbalah*. Enough of this, for this is not the place to expound upon this idea.

It is said in the passage mentioned above, "I swear an oath to you, oh daughters of Jerusalem, etc" (Song of Songs, 2:7, 3:5, 5:8, 8:4). The meaning of these words is that the great oath was to God, that they would not arouse the redemption until the same love would be for desire and good will, as it is written [further in the same verse], "until You desire." This is like a son that serves his father, and is allowed into all of his palaces all of his secret places. This is not like a servant, who toils in the *Mishna* and takes a maidservant in order to receive an award.

Now, it is explained in this *mishna* that the sin of the first man in relation to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was that he did not choose to toil in the Tree of Life, which is the Wisdom of the *Kabbalah*. This in itself is the sin of the masses who said to Moses, "You speak to us and we will hear the Tree of Good and Evil, and do not let God speak to us, lest we die because of the secrets of the Torah." This is like the mistaken claim of some of the Torah scholars of our times, who promulgate a bad name for the Wisdom of Truth, the Life of the world, and say that all who labor in it will die prematurely, heaven forbid. Therefore the first tables of the covenant from the side of the Tree of Life were broken, and they were given [new ones] from the side of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, *Mishna*, the Maidservant of the Lady. And this caused the destruction of the first and second Temples, and the last, long and bitter exile in which we are in this world. [Such will be the case] until the Children of Israel will repent and return and seek the Lord their God, in order to recognize Him and to know Him through the secrets of the Torah, to know who they are serving, who is their King. In judgement they will merit to toil in the Wisdom of Truth, as it is written, "God will show him the tree, and it will be sweetened by the Messiah" (from Exodus, 15:25).

Now, it is explained that this sin started from the first man and continues until now and when we turn in repentance to toil with love in this Wisdom, Israel will be redeemed, may it be quickly and in our days, amen.

I heard the groan of Jeremiah the Prophet, who oscillated and complained bitterly in the bitterness of his soul, saying, "How long shall I see a miracle and hear the sound of the shofar? For my people is foolish, they do not know me, etc." (Jeremiah, 4:21). "I beheld the earth, and indeed, it was waste and void, etc." (Jer. 4:23). "I beheld and indeed, the vineyard was barren, etc." (Jer. 4: 26). "For thus says the Lord, 'the whole land shall be desolate; yet I will not make a full end,' etc." (Jer. 4:27). I aroused the spirit of my stomach to explain these verses, which were said in truth by Jeremiah the Prophet, peace be upon him, through the medium of prophecy concerning this last generation. The embitterment of the length of our exile remains from his assessment, and this is according to what he said, "How long shall I see a miracle?" This is the miracle and the banner of the Messiah, as is mentioned in *parashat mishpatim*, p. 102a: "And He will give the miracle of the Messiah, son of David, the head of a lion upon his right. And the miracle of the Messiah, son of Joseph, the head of a bull upon its left, etc."

The sound of the shofar is heard, this is the ingathering of the exiles, which is to come after the coming of the Messiah, may he come quickly in our days, amen. As it is mentioned in the *Zohar*, *parashat Toledot*, p. 139a, as it says in the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* on the verse, "the Lord builds Jerusalem," and afterwards, "the remnants of Israel will enter," and this is what is written: "And on that day the great shofar will be sounded, etc." "And a reason will be given for the length of the end, for my people is foolish." This is in the same language of the saying, "How long shall I see a miracle?" The explanation of the idea is that the people of Israel is divided into three groups: One of these groups is the simple people, who are the masses. A second group consists of the scholars, who labor in the plain meaning of the Torah. The third group consists of the masters of the Wisdom of Truth. Now, about the first group it is said, "for my people is foolish, they did not know Me" (Jer. 4:22). These are the masses, simply called the "people ('am)." The third group, which consists of those who toil in the secrets of Torah and its mysteries, are called "sons." This is mentioned in *Tikkun* p. 1a. There it says, "Those who are masters of *Mishna* are chicks, those who are masters of *Kabbalah* are sons." And about them it is said, "They are foolish sons, and they are not intelligent, for they toil in the Wisdom of Truth, according to what arises in their short opinion, and in their weak study. And they do not plumb the depths of the matter, to understand it according to its truths." Concerning the group of scholars of the plain meaning: they loathe to toil in the Wisdom of Truth, called the Tree of Life and the Life of the world, and they labor in simple stories according to their plain meaning alone. And they say that there is nothing in the Torah except the plain meaning, heaven forbid, which is called the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, as mentioned above. About them it is said: "they are wise in making evil, in making good they do not know" (Jer. 4:22). For since they loathe the Tree of Life, the Holy One, Blessed is He does not help them, and they make alterations in the simple meanings of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and transform it into Evil. They impurify the pure, and forbid the allowed, and tarnish the accepted; many

After the Prophet involved them shortly (i.e., after he briefly explained the three groups), he returned to expound upon them by way of the plain meaning. Concerning the first group, he said, "I saw the land and it is in chaos." This refers to the common people (*am ha-aretz*), who are called by the name of the land (*ha-aretz*), for from there was chiseled their soul, as it is written, "The animal spirit that descends downward from the land (*ha-aretz*)" (from Ecclesiastes, 3:21). This is the animal spirit that is within them (i.e., within the common people), as it is written, "Let the earth bring forth living souls after their kind" (Genesis, 1:24). For aside from the body being chiseled from the dust of the earth, their soul is also chiseled from the earth, exactly "according to its kind" and called a "living soul," for animals are living. This interpretation is expanded upon in the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* in its manuscript form, see there. Because they are chiseled from the land, all of their toils have to do with settling the land -- buying and selling it, planting and seeding, building - things that have a benefit only for the body. They put aside the Life of the world, which is the Torah, as it is written, "If I do not make a covenant day and night, the ordinances of heaven and earth" (Jer. 33:25), then the world will return to formlessness and void. For this reason, they are called [as mentioned] above "fools," as it says, "for my people are foolish," for there is no foolishness greater than this: to sustain their bodies and to destroy their souls. All of this, "because they did not know me," and they did not labor in Torah, called the Tree of Life, caused them to live according to the ways of the world-to-come.

And concerning the second group, who are the scholars who labor in the Torah of God, whose soul is chiseled from the heavens and not from the earth, it is said, "to the heavens, and they have no light" (Jer. 4:23). This is because even though their souls are chiseled from the heavens, they do not have light in their Torah, as it is written above in the name of the Sages about the verse, "'He caused me to sit in darkness,' this is the Babylonian Talmud." And the wisdom of the Zohar enlightens them and enlightens the cloaked things that are said in the *Talmud*, as if they are accounted to be physical. That is why "light of Torah" is said about them, and why it is written, "and to the heavens, and they have no light."

And about this, Isaiah the Prophet prophesized with his consolations, saying, "And I will bring the blind by a way that they did not know" (Isaiah, 42:16). For the plain meaning of Torah was known among them. And as it is written, Rabbi Ishmael says, "With 13 attributes the Torah is interpreted, etc." However, the 32 paths of wisdom through which the world was created, as mentioned at the beginning of Sefer Yetsira, were not known to them. Now, these 32 paths of the Wisdom of Truth are concealed within the 13 attributes of the plain meaning [of Torah], which all contain the 32 [paths] each, as is stated above, according to the Zohar, *parashat Pinhas*, p. 244b: "The Rabbis taught: the *Amoraim* put the entire Talmud in order according to the secrets of the Torah."

And there is no doubt that those who toil in the *Talmud Bavli* alone feel their way around in

the garments of the Torah as blind men do to a wall. And they do not have eyes to see the secrets of the Torah and the mysteries that are within it. For it is not by their grace or according to their will that it is decided what is impure and pure, forbidden and permitted, kosher and blemished, but rather from the inner [meanings] of the Torah, as is known to those who know the wisdom of the secrets. And as the *midrash* that is explicated above calls them "those with closed eyes, etc.," as it is written, "who is blind although is my servant?" (Isaiah, 42:19). But the intent is for the scant and the few scholars of the Truth, who are called "sons;" these are the masters of *kabbalah*, as is mentioned above.

But those who toil in *mishna* alone, without looking at its secrets, and its secrets will decide the judgements concerning whether something is forbidden or allowed, as mentioned above, these (i.e., those who toil in *mishna* without the secrets) are certainly blind. And that is what is written, "who is blind although is my servant." For he who toils in the plain meaning is called a "servant," as mentioned above.

And a man should not say, "if that is the case, now I am exempt and it is allowed for me to toil in this wisdom until the future," for in this world there is no power for those who know. Therefore it is written: "But I did these things and I did not abandon them." And the Sages have said, "It is not written 'I will do them' and 'I will abandon them' (i.e., in the future tense), for he already did them." This is according to Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues, as it is written about Rabbi Akiva, "He would sit and expound upon each jot and tittle heaps and heaps of *halachot*." If this is the case, then it is not an empty endeavor. If it is an empty endeavor, then it is from your side [that it is empty], and you do not desire to know, although it is in your hands and according to your choice. Indeed, Rabbi Akiva replied to these secrets in this-world.

Now, this is correct, as it is written in the *mishna* (*Sotah*, 49): "If it were not for Rabbi Akiva, the Glory of Torah would be cancelled out." The interpreters interpreted that he would reply and expound upon each jot and tittle heaps and heaps of *halachot*, which are the "Glory of Torah," its splendor and its beauty. And this is my interpretation of the *mishna* (*Avot*, ch.6, *mishna* 2): "Rabbi Joshua son of Levi said: Every day a bat-kol goes forth from Mt. Horev, proclaiming these words, 'Woe to them, to the created beings, for insult to the Torah.'" For without a doubt, with their laboring in its (i.e., the Torah's) plain meaning and its stories alone, it puts on its widow's clothing, and sackcloth covers it. And all of the nations say to Israel, "What is more significant about your Love than ours? What is more significant about your Torah than ours? Is your Torah not also about the vanities of the world?" There is no greater insult to the Torah than this. Therefore, "Woe to them, to the created beings, for insult to the Torah." They do not labor in the wisdom of the *Kabbalah*, which gives glory to the Torah. For they lengthen the exile and all of the bad things that come upon the world, as mentioned above in the words with which we began this introduction. This itself is a *bat-kol* that declares every day, as is hinted at by the verse, "A voice says" (Isaiah, 40:6).

Now, those who are learned in the plain meaning are themselves divided into two. There is the

group which is the fearers of God, who toil in it (i.e., Torah) for the sake of heaven, ^{EMW 2004} but who remain in the dark from their youth. They have not learned the secrets of the Torah and are afraid to touch them, with their saying, "Who will go up to the heavens to get it for us?" And "who will go up to the heavens and come down and tell it to us?" "What are its secrets and its mysteries?" [They say] things such as these, and "to the heavens, and they have no light." For even though they are souls chiseled from the heavens, their light is not with them, and they sit in darkness and will not leave from there.

And there is another group, scholars who are a bit sharp and witty, uprooters of mountains who grind each other with their dialectics in the *bet midrash*. About them it is said, "I have seen the mountains, etc." (Jeremiah 4:24). They are in a tumult and are afraid to approach the place of the consuming fire, which is the secrets of the Torah whose words are like the coals of a fire, a blazing flame. They are afraid, lest they become scorched, like the affair of the child who talked about *hashmal*, and fire came out and burned him up (Hagiga, 13). And how good and how pleasant is their lot, if it would occur to them in such a manner, and they would burn in the holiness of His name, may He be blessed, for He is a consuming fire. About such things, it is said, "Wisdom is too high for a fool" (Proverbs, 24:7). Therefore, "he will not open his mouth to the gate" of the ten *sefirot*.

There is no doubt that those who think like that are fools, for were they to think with their eyes, the same simple wisdom, of which they have knowledge, would be enough for them, for they are already wise. They would not refrain from entering into its (i.e., the Torah's) inner core. About such things, it is said, "Have you seen one who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope of a fool than of him" (Proverbs, 26:12).

And he said further, "all of the hills have spoiled" (Jer. 4:24), for the hills are the scholars, the young men called "hills," as opposed to the mountains that have been mentioned. Indeed, these hills have spoiled completely, for the small students, upon seeing the great ones, the high mountains, who chase after the plain meanings day and night without toiling in this wisdom (i.e., *kabbalah*), do not realize that they (i.e., the great students) refrain from toiling in it (i.e., *kabbalah*) out of their fear of entering into it, as mentioned above. And if this is so, then these hills are spoiled, and their heart is a root that bears gall and wormwood, and the filth of mud and mire raise within them, to deny the Wisdom of Truth. And they say that there is nothing in the Torah except its plain meaning and its garments alone, in the way mentioned above according to *parashat Be'ha'alotecha*. There is no doubt that there will not be a portion for them in the world-to-come, as is mentioned there (i.e., *Be'ha'alotecha*) in the Zohar. The reason why the Torah of the world-to-come is not according to the plain meaning has already been explained above. Only those who labor in the secrets of Torah and its mysteries [will enter] there, and he who has not chosen it (i.e., the *kabbalah*) and has not taken pains for Shabbat evening in this world, will not eat on Shabbat. And about them, it is said, "Indeed my servants will eat, and you will go hungry, etc." (Isaiah, 65:13).

As for the group that busies itself with the secrets of Torah and the wisdoms of the ^{EMW 2004}Zohar, they are called "man," as is mentioned in Sefer ha-Tikkunim, p. 4: "Masters of the *mishna* are chicks. Masters of the *kabbalah* are sons." And about them it is said, "I saw and behold, the man." It does not say, "man," but rather, "the man," for even he who toils in this wisdom, and is therefore called "man," is not "the special man" who is fit to toil in it. For they do not have roots and beginnings from which to understand its words, as we explained above with the saying, "they are foolish sons and have no understanding" (Jer. 4:22). But "the special man" is not in this-world, and we feel our ways around like blind men to a wall within this wisdom. For the sages of truth (i.e., the kabbalists) have passed on, have left us to our sighs. And when "the man" mentioned is not around to teach the Wisdom, then also the birds of the sky, those students whose hearts were touched by God, who desire to fly to the sky without wings, say, "Who will give us limbs like a dove? We will fly and we will dwell in the tents of this wisdom."

Now, all of the groups that are among the people of Israel have been explained, and all of them as one are prevented from grasping this wisdom, each according to its own reason and approach. Until we are established in the world-to-come, "there is none to guide her among all the sons whom she has brought forth, etc." (Isaiah, 51:19). The meaning of this is that even though they are "sons," masters of *kabbalah*, they despair of laboring in this wisdom, and there is no doubt that these things were said in prophecy concerning these last generations. This is not like the opinion of the wise men of these, our generations, who think that they have already attained what is necessary for them and are happy with their lot. And indeed, the Scriptures bear witness to this, saying, "And he saw that there was no man, and was astonished that there was no intercessor" (Isaiah, 59:16); this is in negative language. Woe to ears that hear things thus, and woe to eyes that see things thus. His testimony, Blessed is He, is against us, and we do not have the heart to know, to return and to busy ourselves with this wisdom, to grasp the Blessed one. As it is written, "I looked and there was none to help, and I gazed astonished and there was none to offer support" (Isaiah, 63:5). And with our laboring in this wisdom, which through it redemption will come near, He will seemingly be the salvation of *Shechinat 'Ozo*, that is to say, they will be quick to cause her growth. As it is written, "Therefore has my own arm brought salvation to Me" (Isaiah, 63:5). "To Me" seemingly literally, and as was mentioned above in the words in which we started this introduction of ours, everything depends upon the business of this wisdom, and our prevention from busying ourselves with it causes the delay and tarrying of the building of our Temple and our splendor.

Indeed, it is explicitly explained, even in the words of the *tanaim*, that man does not completely fulfill his duties by dealing with the Torah, the *mishna*, the *agada* and the *Talmud* alone, but he is required to toil, with all his abilities, in the secrets of Torah and in the works of the *merkava*. For the Holy One, Blessed is He, does not take pleasure in all that He created in His world, except when his sons below labor in the secrets of the Torah, to become familiar with His greatness, His beauty and His merit. For because the plain meanings of Torah, its stories, judgements and commandments are according to their simple understandings, there is

not within them any familiarity and knowledge by which they can know their Creator, may He be blessed. For what is this Torah that your God commanded to you, things that seem like riddles and allegories? To take the horn of a bull and to sound it on *Rosh ha-Shana*, and you say that by this the spiritual satan, the prosecutor on high is involved. And things like these are involved in almost all of the commandments of the Torah, and according to the details of their judgements, the intellect cannot stand them. If this is the case, then where is the splendor of the Torah, and its beauty, and its greatness?

And about matters such as these, it is said, "If you have been righteous, what will you give Him?" (Job, 35:7); "and if you have sinned, what do you do against Him?" (Job, 35:6). For the reward and the punishment that are upon them are to you alone. Indeed, with the secrets of the Torah and with the intentions of the commandments is said the opposite; if the good, it is said, "Give strength to God," (Psalms, 68:35), and if the bad, it is said, "Of the Rock that begot you, you are unmindful" (Deuteronomy, 32:18). And it is said, "And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have rebelled in me" (Isaiah, 66:24). Precisely "in me," and not "against me," seemingly, literally "in me." And these things are explained to be an affliction in the heart of God. And this is the secret of what is written above: that he who reads the *mishna* and the *Talmud*, called a "servant," uses his Master in order to receive an award. This is not the case with the Wisdom of the Truth (i.e., *kabbalah*), for he (i.e., the kabbalist) seemingly makes reparations, and gives strength and power above. And this is called one who labors in Torah for its own sake, without a doubt.

What is more, the human was created in order to learn the wisdom of the *kabbalah*. But his body needs to be clean from the beginning, through the practical commandments whose only purpose is this (i.e., the cleansing of the body); and they are necessary in all cases. And afterwards, the soul, which is called the candle of the Lord, the soul of man, can shed light in this body, like a candle that is within a glass oil-lamp and illuminates it and gives it power. [At that point], he can understand the secrets of the Torah and reveal its depths from within the darkness.

And every person of intellect will wonder at these things. And except for what has been written above, the idea of the difference between the simple Torah, which is the Torah of this-world and which is futile in the face of the Torah of the Messiah, and the Torah of the world-to-come, will not be understood. And this is the secret of formlessness and vain, destructive powers.

And while I came to expand upon the explanation of all of these words, time will fade and they will not. And indeed, we can understand briefly according to what has been mentioned above, for the award of commandment and simple Torah is of this-world and of the terrestrial Garden of Eden. And indeed above, in the higher world, it is not possible until man toils according to his ability, according to what his hand may grasp from the wisdom of the Zohar, and it is not according to stern judgement, for [good things] to come out for him from all of the gates of the world on-high, even though he makes pleasant with commandments and good deeds.

And therefore, part of the *nefesh* and the *ruach* remain below in the terrestrial Garden of Eden. However the *neshamah*, which is part of the secrets of the Torah, is punished and is burned alone in the high palaces of the upper Garden of Eden, as mentioned above. As it is written, "This sacred life lives, when the *neshamah* ascends;" it is not written "*nefesh*" or "*ruach*." Understand this, and do not be in alarm when you see how many writings of the Sages are divided on this matter.

For all of the righteous and all of those who come into the world from the seed of Israel depend upon the body of the first man: this upon his body, this upon his head, this upon his ear, this upon his neck, etc. Likewise, all of the *nefashot* are dependent upon his *nefesh*. And all of the *ruchot* are dependent upon his *ruach*. And all of the *neshamot* are dependent upon his *neshamah*. And just as the body of the first man is made up of 248 limbs and 365 sinews, so are his *nefesh*, his *ruach*, and his *neshamah*. And all are dependent upon the Torah, which has 248 positive commandments and 365 negative commandments. And this is the secret of what the Sages wrote (Shabbat 118): "A certain rabbi said, 'of what is your father most observant?'" And this is hinted at by the sayings of the Song of Songs, where it is written, "And on what shall I make beautiful this decaying body, etc.?"

All of the worlds are also in the guise of a single man, made up of 613 limbs and sinews. As we have found "wings of the earth," "navel of the earth," "eye of the earth," "heart of the heavens," and the like. And as is mentioned in the *Zohar*, *parashat Toledot* p. 134a: "There is not a limb in the human body that does not have its counterpart in the world as a whole, for as man's body consists of limbs, etc., so does the world. All of these created things are all limbs that act and react upon each other, etc." This is hinted at by what is written above, "To know it as a body, and to be known from where he comes, etc."

And it is said further, "And one should know and should look at this world from which he comes, and on what he is established." This is in such a manner that man needs to understand by toiling in this wisdom (i.e., *kabbalah*), until he knows where are his root and his holding in the body of the supernal man. And this is also the case in terms of his *ruach*, his *nefesh* and his *neshamah*, as well as his holding in terms of specific commandments of the Torah, and where the essence of his holding is.

For indeed, above he said, "I saw and behold, there was no man" (Jer. 4:25). That is to say, there is nobody who knows through wisdom. And if that is the case, then from now on man is exempt and it is allowed for him to busy himself with this wisdom, since there is nobody that can teach it and that can receive it. And if this is received tradition, we will receive it, if it is not, how can we receive it? Therefore, he said in the manner of giving a reason, that the matter is not as you would think, for indeed, the Holy One, Blessed is He does not come to tyranny with his creatures (Avodah Zarah, 3). "For thus says the Lord, 'the whole land will be desolate' (Jer. 4:27). That is to say, even though in the future the land will be desolate, since there will be nobody who will labor in this wisdom, "I will not bring complete destruction" (Jer. 4:27). For

"the Lord of hosts has left us as a small remnant" (Isaiah, 1:9), a listed man in each generation, whether great or small. This is also the case in this, the last generation; we have not abominated and we have not loathed to break His covenant with us, heaven forbid. As it is written in the *Tikkunim*, as mentioned above, "In the last generation at the end of days, a certain assemblage will live by it, and because of it (i.e., the assemblage), liberty will be proclaimed throughout the land, etc.," as mentioned above.

Also in the *Zohar*, *parashat VaYera*, p. 118a, it is written: "When the days of the Messiah draw near, even the multitudes of the world (i.e., the simple masses) will discover the hidden secrets of wisdom, etc." Indeed, it is explained that until now, the words of wisdom of the *Zohar* were concealed, and in the last generation, this wisdom will be revealed and publicized. And [all] will understand and be enlightened by the secrets of the Torah, which those before us did not grasp. And with this the removal of the understanding of the simpletons are those who pose a difficulty and say that the generations have not improved; if the generations before us did not attain to this [wisdom], how can we know it? In this matter, He will close their mouths.

And indeed, this is simple and explained, for in these last generations there is a certain group that lives by these, and this wisdom will be revealed to them. But not all that want to take part in God will come and take part in Him. For the secrets of the Torah and its mysteries will not be revealed to humans through the power of material matters, but through the Godly flow (*shefa elohi*), which is influenced by His holiness on high through the medium of messengers and angels, or through Elijah the Prophet, remembered for his goodness. We will expand upon this at the end of this introduction.

And in this way, do not be surprised at what we will tell at the end of this introduction concerning the holy wise one who is revealed to us in our time and in this our generation. I cannot explicate, and if you want, you can understand from what is written in *Sefer ha-Tikkunim*: "A generation goes and a generation comes' this is Moses, exalted is his merit." And as mentioned in *Tikkunim* 69, p. 110a: "Rabbi Shimon said, 'Friends, certainly the Holy One, Blessed is He is numbered among us above and below, as is the case in this assemblage, the worthy of this generation that He will be revealed to it. And in the future all of this will be renewed by the Moses of the later generation, establishing the verse, 'What was is what will be.' And he will spread out into each generation, to each righteous and wise man that labors in the Torah, until they count him among their masters, etc." And these things are closed and concealed.

Let us return to the first topic, for there is no doubt that these things will not be understood through study by people of materials, but rather through oral transmission, or from the mouth of Elijah the Prophet, remembered for goodness, or from the *neshamot* that are revealed in each generation to those who see them. And the Ramban, may his memory be for a blessing, one of the later kabbalists, close to our generation, wrote at the end of the introduction to his book, his commentary on the Torah, in these words: And I bring [these things] through a

faithful covenant, which gives sound advice to all who look at this book, so that no reason can be reasoned. And do not think thoughts concerning any of the hints that I write concerning the secrets of the Torah, for I faithfully announce that my words cannot be grasped and cannot be known at all through any intellect or reason. Only from the mouth of a wise kabbalist to the ear of an understanding recipient (*mekkabel*) [can these things be understood]. And he who reasons them is foolish, and much thought causes damage and prevents any benefit. Do not vainly believe in those who go astray, for the harvest of his reasonings is only an opinion. For they will speak evil of God and will not be able to repent. Do not destroy the sight of God, etc." (Ramban on Genesis 1:1). And if the Ramban, may his memory be blessed, the last of all the Kabbalists, stressed this in his saying that his words concerning the hints and secrets of the Torah cannot be grasped by any means, then how can humanity think to understand through its study and through its intellect the words of the Living God, the words of the Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai, peace be upon him, whose words are like a blazing, consuming fire and are closed and concealed with a thousand seals?

And there is no doubt that if Rashbi did not understand and know through His Holy Spirit, he would not have commanded him (i.e., Rabbi Abba) to write. For Rabbi Abba was a great wise man who knew how to clothe and conceal things through riddles and hints, so that even the wise men of his generation would not understand.

And indeed, in each generation there are a selected few upon whom the Holy Spirit descends, and Elijah the Prophet, remembered for the good, is revealed to them and teaches them the secrets of this wisdom.

Now, today I will express riddles and wonders in complete agreement, for in each generation the grace of God amazes us and God enlightens us through the remnants that God calls in each generation, as mentioned. Also in this, our generation, the God of the first and the last generations has not ceased to redeem Israel; He is jealous for His land, and pardons His people, and He sends us "a watcher and a holy one who came down from heaven" (Daniel 4:10), the great, divine, pious Rabbi, my teacher and my Rabbi, our honorable teacher the Rav, Rabbi Isaac Ashkenazi, may his memory be for the world-to-come. He is full of Torah like a pomegranate, of the Bible, and of *mishna*, of *Talmud*, dialects, *midrashim*, *hagadot*, the works of creation and the works of the *merkavah*. He is an expert in the discussion of trees, the discussion of birds, the discussion of angels. He understands the wisdom of the face, which was mentioned by the Rashbi in *parashat Ve'Ata T'chazeh*. He knows all the deeds that men have done, and that they will do in the future. He knows the thoughts of men before they go from potentiality into actuality. He knows the future, and all of the things that exist in the whole world, and will always be decreed in the heavens. He knows about the wisdom of metempsychosis, who is new and who is old. He knows of the two sides of that man, on which place within the upper man he depends, and [on which place he depends] in the first man below. He knows amazing things about the flame of the candle, and the blaze of fire. He who looks and gazes into his eyes will see the souls of the early and the later righteous people. He

toils with them in the Wisdom of Truth. He knows a man's entire deeds by his smell, according to the way of the boy in *parashat Balak*. And all of the wisdoms mentioned were placed in his bosom. [And he can put them to use] any time that he wants, without having to separate himself and to study them. My eye saw and it did not turn away; such alarming things were not seen and were not heard throughout the land, from the days of Rashbi, peace be upon him, and until now.

And he did not attain all of this by way of practical kabbalahs (*kabbalot ma'asiyot*), heaven forbid, for their use is highly forbidden. Rather, all of this was from himself, by way of his righteousness and seclusion, after his toiling for many days and years in both old and new books on this wisdom. And he added [to the study of these books] righteousness and seclusion and purity and holiness through the coming of Elijah the Prophet, who would reveal [things] to him always, and would speak with him face to face and would teach him this wisdom.

And all of the wise men who knew this wisdom from then on, would labor in it in great secret and not in the open. And each would reveal it only to one student, the chosen of the generation. And even then, [he would reveal] only titles, by word of mouth, revealing a handbreadth and concealing a thousand handbreadths. And this wisdom would break down and would become smaller and would pass from generation to generation, until the Ramban, may his memory be for a blessing, the last of the true kabbalists.

Now, do not approach any of the books of the later kabbalists, for from [the time of] the Ramban and onward, the way of this wisdom was hidden from the eyes of all of the wise men. And only a few of the branches of the introductions remained for them, without roots. And on these [few branches] the later kabbalists, may their memories be for a blessing, constructed their words through the human intellect. And you yourself can know and can stand the test, for he who studies carefully can span and know most of their introductions and their general ideas in four or five days. And all of their ideas are repeated in different words, and the heart of their introductions is that there exist ten *sefirot*. And they wrote heaps and heaps of books on this idea, which could have been written in two or three tracts. And we have not found this to be the case with the first [kabbalists].

People of heart, listen to me, and do not dare to look at the books of the later [kabbalists] who build according to the human intellect. He who listens to me will live secure from evil fear and tranquil. Therefore I, the young writer, Hayyim Vital, wanted to grant these things with vigorous secrecy, and the enlightened will understand.

And I will enlighten you and I will illuminate this path on which you will walk. Know that from the day on which my teacher, may his memory be for the world-to-come, began to reveal this wisdom, my hand did not move from his for even one second. And all that you will find written in some tracts under his name, may he remembered for a blessing, should they be contrary to what I have written in this book, then they are a complete mistake, for those [who have written them] have not understood his words. And if there is something added to them that does not

accord with this our book, do not pay regular attention to it, for none of those who ^{EMW 2004}heard his holy words plumbed the depths of his words and his intentions, and they did not understand them, without a doubt. And if it occurs to you to think that you can clarify the good and put aside the bad, do not depend upon your wisdom, for these things are not transmitted to the mind of man according to human intellect. Reasoning these things is a great danger, and is considered to be cutting the shoots (*kizuz b'netiot*), heaven forbid. Therefore, be careful, and do not look at any of the tracts written in the name of my teacher, may his memory be for the world-to-come, except for that which we wrote for you in this book. And this warning should be enough for you.

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Sefer `Ets Hayyim Hayyim Vital, 1572

Prepared by Yosef Hacker, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

הקדמת ספר עץ החיים לר' חיים ויטאל [משנת 1572]

הקדמות מוה רח"ו זי ע"א על שער ההקדמות

אמר הצעיר מעיר, הדל באלפי, חיים ויטאל בן לא"א הרב יוסף ויטאל זלה"ה, בהיותי בן שלשים לכח, תשש כחי, ישבתי משתומם. ומחשבותי תמהים. כי עבר קציר, כלה קיץ, ואנחנו לא נושענו. רפואה לא עלתה למחלתינו. אין מזור לבשרנו, ולא עלתה ארוכה למכתנו, לחרבן בית מקדשינו. הנחרב זה היום אלף ות"ק וד' שנים. אוי לנו, כי פנה היום, יום אחד של הקב"ה, שהוא אלף שנים, וגם נטו צללי ערב, שהם ת"ק וד' שנים יותר מחצי היום הב'. וכלו כל הקצין, ועדיין בן דוד לא בא.

ונודע את אשר ארז"ל (ירושלמי יומא פ"א ה"א) כל דור שלא נבנה בה"מ בימיו, כאלו נרחב בימיו. ואתנה את פני לחקור ולדעת מה זה, ועל מה נתארך קיצינו וגלותינו. ומדוע לא בא בן ישי.

... והנה, מ"ש בתחילת דבריו, ואפי' כל אינון דמשתדלי באורייתא כל חסד דעבדי לגרמייהו וכו', עם היות שפשטו מבואר, ובפרט בזמנינו זה בעו"ה, אשר התורה נעשית קרדום לחתוך בה אצל קצת בעלי תורה, אשר עסקם בתורה ע"מ לק"פ, והספקות יתירות, וגם להיותם מכלל ראשי ישיבות, ודיני סנהדראות, להיות שמם וריחם נודף בכל הארץ, ודומים במעשיהם לאנשי דור הפלגה, הבונים מגדל וראשו בשמים, ועיקר סיבת מעשיהם היא, מ"ש אחר כך הכתוב ונעשה לנו שם. ככתוב בס' הזוהר בפרשת בראשית דף כ"ה ע"ב, וז"ל, על פסוק אלה תולדות השמים והארץ. שחמשה מינים יש בערב רב, ומן הג' מינים מהם, הוא הנקרא כת גבורים, דעלייהו אתמר המה הגבורים אשר מעולם אנשי השם. ואינון מסטרא דאילין דאיתמר בהון הבה נבנה לנו עיר ומגדל וגו', ונעשה לנו שם, בבנין בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות ושון בהון ס"ת, ועטרה על רישיה, ולא לשמה אלא למעבד לון וכו'. והנה על הכת הזאת, אמרו בגמרא (ברכות י"ז). כל העוסק בתורה שלא לשמה, נוח לו שנהפכה שלייתו על פניו, ולא יצא לאויר העולם.

ואמנם האנשים האלה, מראים תימה וענוה, באמרם כי כל עסקם בתורה הוא לשמה. והנה החכם הגדול, התנא ר"מ ע"ה, העיד עליהם שלא כך הוא, באומרו לששון כללות (אבות פ"ו מ"א) כל העוסק בתורה לשמה זוכה לדברים הרבה וכו', ומגלים לו רזי תורה, ונעשה כנהר שאינו פוסק והולך, וכמעין המתגבר מאליו, בלתי הצטרכו לטרוח ולעיין בה, ולהוציא טיפין של מימי התורה מן הסלע, הנה זה יורה שאינו עוסק בתורה לשמה כהלכתה, ומי זה האיש אשר לא יזלו עיניו דמעות, בראותו המשנה הזאת ורואה חסרונו ופחיתותו.

... הנה מבואר, כי תורתנו הק' כלולה, ונמצאת בכל ד' עולמות אבי"ע. ובהיותה בעולם האצילות, אז נקראה קבלה, כי שם היא מופשטת מכל הלבושים הנקרא פשט, מלשון פשטתי את כתנתי, שהוא בחי' המלבוש החיצוני, שהוא ע"ג עור אדם המתפשט מעליו לפעמים, וזהו עיקר מלת פשט.

ואמנם בעולם האצילות, אשר שם הקב"ה יושב ועוסק בתורה, כנזכר במדרז"ל, וגם בדברי המתרגם על פסוק דודי צה ואדום, וכמש"ה ואהיה אצלו אמון וגו', הנדרש לרז"ל על בריאת העולם, שהיה הקב"ה מביט בתורה, ובורא עולמות. ואין ספק, כי לא כמעשה אדה"ר, ולא כמעשה דבני חרי, וכמעשה אתונו דבלעם, וכיוצא בהם, בהיותם כפשוטם, היה משתעשע בהם הקב"ה, אלפים שנה קודם שנברא העולם, ובורא בהם עולמות.

אמנם שעשועות של הקב"ה בתורה, והיותו בורא בה את העולמו, היתה בהיותו עוסק בתורה בבחי' הנשמה הפנימית שבה, הנקרא רזי תורה, הנקרא מעשה מרכבה, היא חכמת הקבלה, כנודע אל היודעים. וטעם הדבר הוא, להיותו עולם האצילות, העליון מאד, טוב ולא רע, דלא יכיל לאתערבא עמיה קליפה. ועליה אתמר, וכבודי לאחר לא אתן, כנזכר בספר התיקונים ד' ס"ו תיקון י"ח, וכן בסה"ז בפ' בראשית דכ"ח ע"א ע"ש. ולכן גם התורה אשר שם, איננה רק מופשטת מכל לבושי הגופנים. משא"כ למטה בעולם היצירה, עולם דמטטרו"ן, הנק' עבד טוב, והוא הנקרא עץ הדעת טוב מסטרא (דטוב), ומסטרא דסמאל, שהוא קליפין דיליה, נקרא עבד רע, כי התורה אשר שם הם שית סד"מ, הנקראים שפחה כנ"ל. וכנזכר בפרשת בראשית שם דף כ"ז ע"א.

ולכן נקראת משנה, לפי ששם יש שינויים הפוכים, טוב, מסטרא דעבד טוב, היתר כשר טהור. רע, מסטרא דעבד רע, איסור טמא פסול. גם הוא מלשון כי מרדכי היהודי משנה למלך, שהיה שפחה, הנקרא עבד מלך מלך. גם נקרא מלשון שינה, כנזכר בפרשת פינחס דף רמ"ד ע"ב.

... והנה דבריהם כחלום בלי פתרון ורזיה וסתריה הפנימים, הנקרא נשמת התורה, הם הם פתרון החלום, הנפתר בהקיצ, בסוד אני ישנה ולבי ער. וכמ"ש חכמים ז"ל (סנהדרין כ"ד). במחשכים הושיבני כמתי עולם, זה תלמוד בבלי אשר איננו מאיר אלא ע"י ס"ה, הם הם רזי תורה וסתריה, אשר עליהם נאמר ותורה אור.

... כי כמו שהחטה שהיא בגימטריא כמנין כ"ב אותיות התורה, הגנוזה תוך כמה קליפין ולבושין, שהם הסובין והמורסן והתבן והקש, והעשב הנקרא חציר, כן המשנה אצל סודות התורה, נקרא חציר. וזה נרמז בס"ה פרשת כי תצא, בר"מ דרע"ה ע"ב, אבל רבנו, ווי לאינון דאכלין תבן דאורייתא, ולא ידעי בסתרי אורייתא, אלא קלין וחמורין דאורייתא, קלין אינון תבן דאורייתא. וחמורין אינון חטה דאורייתא. ח"ט ה'. אלנא דטוב רע וכו'. ואלו באתי להרחיב דרוש זה, לא יספיקו מאה קונטרסין בלי ספק בלי שום גוזמא, האמנם החכם עיניו בראשו, כי דברי אמת אני אומר, ואל יתמה האדם בראותו ס' הזוהר, איך קורא אל המשנה שפחה וקליפין, כי עסק המשנה כפי פשטיה, אין ספק שהם לבושין וקליפין חצונים בתכלית, אצל סודות התורה הנגזרים ונרמזים בפנימיותה, כי כל פשטיה הם בעה"ז, נדברים חומרים תחתונים.

אמנם הם קליפין טובים למאכל, כקליפת קנה הבושם, ולכן בהיותם מביני פשטי המשנה כהלכתא בלתי טעות, נקרא עץ הדעת טוב. אבל כאשר ח"ו שונים (שוגים?) בה, ומטמאים את הטהור, ומכשירין את הפסול, ומתירין את האיסור, אז נהפכת לעץ הדעת רע, ומר להם.

... כי המשנה היא שפחה, משום דאיהי ע"מ לקבל פרס. פל', כי הנה כל מדותיו יתברך, הם מדה כנגד מדה, ולכן העוסקים בפשטיה הגופניים הטובים, עליהם נאמר בשמאלה עושר וכבוד, הוא הפרס הנתון להם בעה"ז, כי כן עסקם בתורה הוא בבחי' היותם בעה"ז, בדיני איסור והיתר טומאה וטהרה וכו', והם כנגד העבד, העובד את רבו שבודאי ע"מ לקבל פרס, וכל חסד דעבדי וכו', כעבדים ושפחות המשמשים את רבם ע"מ לקבל פרס. אמנם העוסקים ברזי התורה, שהם בחי' בתורה כפי מה שעוסקים בה בעה"ב, עליהם נאמר אורך ימים בימינה, לעולם שכולו ארוך, כבן הנכנס לפני ולפנים, ומשמש לפני אביו שלא על מנת לקבל פרס.

ונודע, כי ת"ת דאצילות, נקרא בן, ומטטרו"ן דיצירה, נקרא עבד. ועליהם אנו מתפללים ביום ר"ה, אם כבנים אם כעבדים. והנה במדרש קהלת, אמרו רז"ל, על פסוק כי אם שנים הרבה ישמח וכו', וז"ל, כי אם שנים הרבה וכו', תורה שאדם למד, הבל היא לפני תורתו של משיח. ואם כך נאמר על תורתו של משיח, שהיא בהיותם בגוף ונפש, כמ"ש ז"ל (ברכות ל"ד): אין בין העה"ז

לימות המשיח, אלא שעבוד מלכיות בלבד. והוא בטול מלכות הרשעה, קליפה החיצונה, הנקרא יצה"ר, כמו שדרשו רז"ל על פסוק וגר זאב עם כבש וכו', וסמיך ליה ומלאה הארץ דעה את ה'. ולכן תורת העה"ז, המתלבשת בקליפין, לסבת היות היצה"ר הנקרא קליפה מצויה בעולם, היא הבל לפני תורתו של משיח, שנתפשט קצת מלבושיה וקליפותיה, מאחר שגם בני אדם נתפשטו מקליפת היצה"ר. וק"ו בן בנו של ק"ו, בהיותינו למעלה בעה"ב, עולם הנשמות, נפשטות מכל מיני לבוש כלל, כי עסק התורה אשר להם, איננו רק בנשמת התורה, סודותיה הפנימיים.

ואמנם אל יאמר אדם, אלכה לי ואעסוק בחכמת הקבלה, מקודם שיעסוק בתורה במשנה ובתלמוד כי כבר אמרו רבותינו ז"ל, אל יכנס אדם לפרדס, אא"כ מלא כריסו בבשר ויין. והרי זה דומה לנשמה בלתי גוף, שאין לה שכר ומעשה וחשבון, עד היותה מתקשרת בתוך הגוף, בהיותו שלם מתוקן במצות התורה, בתרי"ג מצות. וכן בהפך, בהיותו עוסק בחכמת המשנה והתלמוד בבלי, ולא יתן חלק גם אל סודות התורה וסתריה, כי הרי זה דומה לגוף, היושב בחושך, בלתי נשמת אדם, נר ה' המאירה בתוכה, באופן שהגוף יבש, בלתי שואף ממקור חיים, אשר זהו ענין אומרו במ"א שהוא הנ"ל, וז"ל, דאילין אינון דעבדי לאורייתא יבשה, ולא בעאן לאשתדלא בחכמת הקבלה וכו'. באופן, כי הת"ח העוסקים בתורה לשמה, ולא לשמו, לעשות לו שם, צריך שיעסוק בתחילה, בחכמת המקרא והמשנה והתלמוד, כפי מה שיוכל שכלו לסבול, ואח"כ יעסוק לדעת את קונו בחכמת האמת, וכמו שצויה דהע"ה את שלמה בנו, דע את אלהי אביך ועבדהו.

ואם האיש הזה, יהיה כבוד וקשה בענין העיון בתלמוד, מוטב לו שיניח את ידו ממנו, אחר שבחן מזלו בחכמה זאת, ויעסוק בחכמת האמת. וז"ש (חולין כ"ד.) כל ת"ח שאינו רואה סימן יפה בתלמוד בחמשה שנים, שוב אינו רואה.

ואמנם, כל האיש שהוא קל לעיון, מחויב לתת חלק שעה או ב' שעות ביום, בעיון ההלכה, ולכוין ולתרוץ הקושיא הנופלת בפשט ההלכה, ויכון כי אין הקליפה הרעה, מצד הנחש סמאל עבד רע נאחזת, אלא בקלי' הטובה, היא משנה, מטטרון, עולם היצירה, הנקרא עבד ושפחה דמטרוניתא. אבל לא במטרוניתא, שהיא המוח הפנימי, חכמת האמת, ונקרא עץ החיים. ועליו אתמר, אני ה' הוא שמי, בסוד כל התורה היא שמותיו של הקב"ה. (עי' בזהר האזינו אות רמ"א כלא שמא דקב"ה) וכבודי לאחר לא אתן, דלא יכיל לאתערבא עמה קליפה, אלא בעץ הדעת טוב ורע, משנה, טמא וטהור, אסור ומותר, כשר ופסול. ויכון בעיונו להסיר הקליפה הרעה, שהיא הגורמת קושיות, שלא יבין האדם תרוצים, ויסקנה מע"ג עץ הדעת טוב ורע, היא המשנה, שפחה דמטרוניתא, ואח"כ יכוין לקשט המטרוניתא עצמה, שהיא חכמת הקבלה, ודי בזה, כי אין מקום ביאורו של ענין זה.

אמר עוד במ' הנ"ל, ובג"ד השבעתי אתכם בנות ירושלים וכו'. פירוש הדברים, כי הנה היתה השבועה הגדולה לאלהי"ם, שלא יעוררו את הגאולה, עד שאותה האהבה תהיה בחפץ ורצון טוב, כמ"ש עד שתחפץ. כבן העובד את אביו, ועייל בכל פלטרין דיליה, ובכל גניזין דיליה. ולא כעבד, העובד במשנה, ולוקח השפחה ע"מ לקבל פרס.

... הנה נתבאר במ"א הזה, כי עון אדה"ר בעץ הדעת טוב ורע הוא, שלא בחר להתעסק בעץ החיים, שהיא חכמת הקבלה, וזהו עצמו עון הערב רב, האומרים למשה, דבר אתה עמנו ונשמעה בעץ הדעת טוב ורע, ואל ידבר עמנו אלהים פן נמות, בסתרי תורה, כסברת הטועים קצת בני תורה, אשר בזמנינו זה, המוציאים שם רע על חכמת האמת חיי עולם, ואומרים שכל מי שמתעסק בה, ימות בקצרות שנים ח"ו, ולכן נשברו הלוחות הראשונות, מסטרא דעץ החיים, ונתנו להם מסטרא דעץ הדעת טוב ורע. משנה, שפחה דמטרוניתא, וגרם איבודא דחורבן בית א' וב', וגלות האחרון המר והארוך, אשר אנו בעו"ה, עד דיתובון בני ישראל בתיובתא, ובקשו את ה' אלהיהם, להכיר, וליודעו ברזי תורה, וידעו את מי הם עובדים, ומי הוא מלכם, וכדין יזכו לעסוק בחכמת האמת, כמש"ה ויורהו ה' עץ וימתקו, ע"י המשיח.

... הרי מבואר, כי חטא זה היחל להיות מאדה"ר ועד עתה, וכאשר נשוב בתשובה לעסוק מאהבה בחכמה הזאת, יגאלו ישראל בב"א.

שמוע שמעתי נאקת ירמיהו הנביא, מתנווד ומתמרמר במר נפשו, באומרו עד מתי אראה נס, אשמעה קול שופר כי אויל עמי אותי לא ידעו וגו', ראיתי את הארץ והנה תוהו וגו', ראיתי והנה הכרמל וגו', כי כה אמר ה' שממה תהיה כל הארץ וכלה לא

אעשה וגו' הציקני רוח בטני לבאר פסוקים האלו, הנאמרים באמת, ע"י ירמיה הנביא ע"ה, בדרך נבואה על הדור האחרון הזה, בהיותו מתמר[מ]ר על אורך גלותינו נותר משעורו, וזהו מ"ש, עד מתי אראה נס, הוא הנס והדגל של המשיח, כנז' בפרשת משפטים דף ק"ב ע"א, וז"ל, ויתון נס דמשיח בן דוד, אריה רשים עליה לימינא. ונס דמשיח בן יוסף, שור רשים עליה לשמאלא וגו'.

נשמעה קול שופר, זה קבוץ גלויות, העתיד להיות אחר ביאת משיחינו בב"א. כנזכר בזהר פרשת תולדות דף קל"ט ע"א, וז"ל, במדרש הנעלם על פסוק בונה ירושלים ה', ואח"כ נדחה ישראל יכנס, וזש"ה והיה ביום ההוא יתקע בשופר גדול וגו', ונתן טעם אל אריכות הקץ, כי אויל עמי, בלשון נתינת טעם אל האמור עד מתי אראה נס. וביאור הענין הוא, כי הנה עם בני ישראל נחלקים לג' כתות: כת א' מהם, הם ע"ה המון העם. כת ב', הם הת"ח העוסקים בפשטי התורה. כת ג', והיא בעלי חכמת האמת. והנה כנגד כת א' אמר, כי אויל עמי, אותי לא ידעו. ירצה הם המון העם, הנקראים עם סתם. וכנגד כת הג', הם העוסקים ברזי התורה וסודותיה, הנקראים בנים. כנזכר בתיקון ד"א ע"ב. וז"ל, אפרוחים אילין מארי משנה, בנים אילין מרי קבלה. ועליהם אמר, בנים סכלים המה, ולא נבונים, כי הם עוסקים בחכמת האמת, כפי העולה בדעתם הקצרה, ובעיונם החלש. ואינם יורדים לעומק הענין, להבינו על אמיתותו, כמ"ש בע"ה. וכנגד כת חכמי הפשט, אותם אשר הם מואסים לעסוק בחכמת האמת, הנקרא עץ החיים וחי עולם, ועוסקים בסיפורים הפשטים בפשוטן בלבד, ואומרים שאין בתורה אלא הפשט בלבד ח"ו, אשר הוא נקרא עץ הדעת טוב ורע כנ"ל, עליהם אמרו, חכמים המה להרע ולהטיב לא ידעו, כי בסבת היותם מואסים בעץ החיים, אין הקב"ה עוזר אותם, והם שונים בפשטי עץ הדעת טוב ורע, ומהפכים אותו לרע, ומטמאים את הטהור, ואוסרים את המותר, ופוסלים את הכשר, ותקלות רבות יוצאות מתחת ידיהם בעו"ה.

ואחר שכלל אותם הנביא בדרך קצרה, חוזר לבארם דרך פשט, וכנגד הכת הא' אמר, ראיתי את הארץ והנה תהו, הם ע"ה, אשר נקראים ע"ש הארץ, כי משם נפשם חוצבה, כמש"ה ורוח הבהמה היורדת היא למטה, מן הארץ, היא רוח הבהמית אשר להם, כמש"ה ותוצא הארץ נפש חיה למינה. כי מלבד היות הגוף נחצב עפר מן האדמה, גם נפשם חוצבה מן הארץ, למינה ממש, ונקרא נפש חיה, כי בכלל חיה בהמה. וכן נדרש בפ' זה במדרש הנעלם בכת"י ע"ש. ולהיותם נחצבים מן הארץ, כל עסקם הוא בישוב הארץ, במשא ומתן, בנטיעה, ובזריעה, ובבנינים, דברים שאין בהם תועלת, רק אל הגוף, ומניחים חיי עולם, היא התורה, כמש"ה אם לא בריתי יומם ולילה חוקות שמים וארץ לא שמתי, ומחזירים העולם לתהו ובהו, אשר לסיבה זאת קראתם למעלה אוילים, באומרו כי אויל עמי, כי אין לך אולת גדולה מזו, לקיים את גופם, ולהחריב נשמתם. וכ"ז גרם להם, כי אותי לא ידעו, ולא נתעסקו בתורה הנקרא עץ החיים, לחיותם דרך חיי עוה"ב.

וכנגד הכת הב', הם הת"ח, העוסקים בתורת ד', אשר נפשם חצובה מן השמים ולא מן הארץ, אמר ואל השמים ואין אורם, כי גם שנפשם חצובה מן השמים, אין להם אור בתורתם, כמ"ש למעלה בשם רז"ל, על פסוק במחשכים הושיבני, זה תלמוד בבלי, וחכמת ס"ה היא המאירה אותם, ומבארת הדברים הנאמרים בתלמוד מלובשים, כאלו הם חשובים גשמיים, אשר עליהם נאמר ותורה אור, וז"ש ואל השמים ואין אורם.

וע"ז נתנבא ישעיה הנביא בנחמותיו, ואמר והולכתי עורים בדרך לא ידעו וגו', כי התורה הפשטיית נודעו במספרם. וכמ"ש ר' ישמעאל אומר בי"ג מדות התורה נדרשת וכו', אמנם ול"ב נתיבות החכמה, שבהם נברא העולם הנזכר בריש ס"י, לא נודעו, והנה אלו הל"ב נתיבות החכמת האמת, נעלמים תוך י"ג מדות של הפשט, וכללות כלם הם ל"ב א', וכמ"ש למעלה בשם הזהר, בפ' פנחס דף רמ"ד ע"ב, ורבנן דמתני' ואמוראים כל תלמודא דילהון על רזין דאורייתא סדרו ליה.

ובלי ספק כי העוסקים בתלמוד בבלי בלבד, מגששים כעורים קיר, בלבושי התורה, ואין להם עינים רואות ברזי התורה הנסתרים בו, כי לא על חנם, כפי רצונם, פסקו טמא טהור, אסור והיתר, כשר ופסול, אלא מתוך פנימיות התורה, כנודע ליודעי חן. וכמו שקראם במ"א הא' שביארים לעיל, סתימין עיינין וכו', וז"ש מי עור כי אם עבדי, אבל הכוונה היא למעוטי ולאפוקי חכמי האמת, הנקראים בנים, אינון מרי קבלה כנ"ל.

אבל העוסקים במשנה לבדה, בלתי הסתכלותם בסודותיה, וכפי סודותיה יפסקו הדינים אם אסור ואם מותר כנ"ל, הנה אלו עורים

... ואל יאמר אדם, א"כ מעתה אני פטור ומותר מלהתעסק בחכמה הזאת עד לע"ל, כי בעוה"ז אין כח ליודעם, ולכן אמר הכתוב, אלא הדברים עשיתים ולא עזבתים, וארז"ל, אעשם אעזבם לא כתיב, שכבר עשיתים, לר' עקיבא וחבריו, וכמ"ש ז"ל על ר"ע, שהיה יושב ודורש על כל קוץ וקוץ תלי תלים של הלכות. וא"כ לא דבר ריק הוא, ואם ריק הוא, מכם, ואינכם חפצים לידע, עם שהוא בידכם ובבחירתכם. והרי ר"ע השיב בעוה"ז לסודות אלו.

והנה זהו הנכון, כמ"ש במשנה, (סוטה מ"ט). משמת ר' עקיבא בטל כבוד התורה. ופי' המפרשים, שהיה יודע להשיב ולדרוש ע"כ קוץ וקוץ תלי תלים של הלכות, וזהו כבוד התורה, והדרה ויפיה. וזה אצלי פי' המשנה (אבות פ"ו מ"ב) אריב"ל, בכל יום ויום ב"ק יוצאת מהר חורב, ומכרזת ואומרת, אוי להם לבריות מעלבונה של תורה. כי בלי ספק בהיותם עוסקים בפשטיה ובספריה לבדם, היא לובשת בגדי אלמנותה, ושק הושת כסותה, וכל האומות יאמרו לישראל, מה דודך מדוד, מה תורתכם מתורתינו, הלא גם תורתכם ספורים בהבלי העולם, אין עלבון תורה גדול מזה. ולכן אוי להם לבריות מעלבונה של תורה. ואינם עוסקים בחכמת הקבלה, שהיא נותנת כבוד לתורה. כי הם מאריכים הגלות, וכל הרעות המתרגשות לבא בעולם, כנ"ל במאמר שהתחלנו בהקדמתנו זאת. וזה עצמו הוא ב"ק, המכריז בכל יום, ונרמז בפסוק קול אומר קרא.

... והנה בחכמי הפשט עצמם, ב' בחי', אם הכת שהם יראי ה', ועוסקים בה לש"ש, אלא שנשארו בתוך החשך מנעוריהם, ולא למדו סודות התורה, ומתייראים לגעת בהם, באמרם מי יעלה לנו השמימה ויקחה לנו, ומי עלה שמים וירד ויגידה לנו, מה הם רזיה וסודותיה, ועל כיוצא בזה ואל השמים ואין אורם. כי גם שהם נפשות חצובות מן השמים, אין אורם עמהם, ובמחשכים ישבו, ומשם לא יצאו.

ועוד יש כת אחרת, והם קצת ת"ח חריפים ומפולפלים, עוקרי הרים, וטוחנן זה בזה בפילפולם בבית המדרש, עליהם נאמר ראיתי את ההרים וגו', רועשים ומתייראים לגשת אל מקום אש אוכלה, הם רזי התורה, דבריהם כגחלי אש, להבת שלהבת, ומתייראים פן יצרבו במ צרבת, כענין ההוא ינוקא דהוא דריש בחשמל, ונפק אשא מיניה ואכלתיה (חגיגה יג). ומה טוב ומה נעים חלקם, אם עלתה להם כך, וישרפו בקדושת שמו יתברך, כי אש אוכלה הוא. ועל כיוצא באלו נאמר, ראמות לאויל חכמות, ולכן בשער ע"ס לא יפתח פיהו.

ובלי ספק כי החושבים כך, אוילים הם, כי לולי שהם חושבים בעיניהם, די להם אותה החכמה הפשוטה, שידעו בה, וכבר הם חכמים, לא היו נמנעים מליכנס מפנימיותה, ועל כיוצא בזה נאמר, ראיתי איש חכם בעיניו תקוה לכסיל... אמר עוד, וכל הגבעות התקלקלו, כי הגבעות הם הת"ח, הבחורים הנקראים גבעות, אצל בחי' ההרים הנזכר, הנה הגבעות אלו נתקלקלו לגמרי, כי בראות התלמידים הקטנים, את הגדולים, ההרים הרמים, רודפים יומם וליילה אחרי הפשטים, ואינם עוסקים בחכמה הזאת, ואינם יודעים כי מיראתם ליכנס בה הם נמנעים מלהתעסק בה כנזכר, וע"כ גבעות אלו נתקלקלו, ולבם שורש פורה ראש ולענה, ועלתה בהם חלודת טיט ורפש, לכפור בחכמת האמת, ואומרים שאין בתורה אלא פשטיה ולבושיה בלבד, ע"ד הנ"ל בפ' בהעלותך. ואין ספק כי לא יהיה להם חלק בעוה"ב, כנזכר שם בזוהר. וכבר נתבאר למעלה הסבה, כי תורת עוה"ב איננה כפשטה, רק עד שם, עוסקים ברזי התורה וסודותיה, וזה שלא בחר בה, ולא טרח בעוה"ז מע"ש, לא יאכל בשבת. ועליהם נאמר, הנה עבדי יאכלו ואתם תרעבו וגו'.

וכנגד כת המתעסקים ברזי התורה, ובחכמות הזוהר, אשר הם נקראים אדם, כנזכר בספר התקונין ד"א, אפרוחים אילין מארי משנה. בנים אילין מארי קבלה. עליהם נאמר ראיתי והנה האדם, ולא אמר אדם, אלא האדם, ירצה כי גם שהוא עוסק בחכמה הזאת, ולכן נקרא אדם, עם כ"ז איננו האדם המיוחד הראוי להתעסק בה, כי אין להם שרשים והקדמות להבין דבריו, וכמו שבארנו לעיל, באומרו בנים סכלים המה ולא נבונים, אבל האדם המיוחד איננו בעוה"ז, ואנחנו בזאת החכמה מגששים כעורים קיר, כי חכמי האמת סעו המה למנוחות, עזבו אותנו לאנחות, וכאשר אין האדם הנזכר נמצא ללמד החכמה, הנה אז גם עופות השמים, אלו התלמידים אשר נגע ה' בלבם, החפצים לעוף השמים בלי כנפיים, ואומרם מי יתן לנו אבר כיונה, נעופה ונשכונה באהלי החכמה הזאת.

והרי נתפארו עליהם תכונות אשר בעם בני ישראל, אשר כלם כאחד נמנעו מלהחזיק בחכמה הזאת, כל אחד כפי סבתו ופנייתו, עד שנתקיים בנו בעו"ה, אין מנהל לה מכל בני ילדה וכו', פי', כי עם היותם בני מרי קבלה, עכ"ז נתייאשו מלהתעסק בחכמה הזאת, ואין ספק כי דברים אלו בנבואה נאמרו, על דורות אלו האחרונים. שלא כסברת חכמי דורותינו אלה, החושבים בדעתם כי כבר השיגו מה שצריך להם, ושמחים בחלקם, והנה הכתוב מעיד, וירא כי אין איש, וישתומם כי אין מפגיע, בלשון שלילה, אוי לאזנים שכך שומעות, ואוי לעינים שכך רואות, עדותו יתברך עלינו ואין לנו לב לדעת, לחזור ולהתעסק בחכמה הזאת, להחזיק יתברך, כמ"ש ואביט ואין עוזר, ואשתומם ואין סומך. והוא בהיותנו עסוקים בחכמה הזאת, כי ע"י תקרב הגאולה, וכביכול ישועתה לשכינת עוזו, היינו ממהרים להצמיחה, כמ"ש ותושע לי זרועי, לי ממש כביכול, וכנ"ל במאמר שהתחלנו בהקדמתנו זאת, כי הכל תלוי בעסק החכמה הזאת, ומניעתנו מלהתעסק בה, היא גורמת איחור ועכוב בנין בית מקדשנו ותפארתנו.

... הרי מבואר בפירוש, אף בדברי התנאים, שאין האדם יוצא ידי חובתו לגמרי, בעסק המקרא והמשנה והאגדה והתלמוד בלבד, אלא הוא מחוייב לעסוק בכל יכלתו בסתרי תורה, ובמעשה מרכבה, כי אין הנאה להקב"ה מכל מה שברא בעולמו, רק בהיות בניו למטה עוסקים ברזי התורה, להכיר גדולתו ויפיו ומעלתו, כי בפשטי התורה, ובספוריה ובדיניה ובמצותיה, בהיותם כפשטם, אין בהם שום היכר וידיעה לידע את בוראם יתברך, אדרבה יש בהם מצות וחקים שאין הדעת סובלם, וכל אומות העולם מונין את ישראל, ואומרים להם, וכי מה התורה הזאת אשר צוה אלקיכם אתכם, דברים שנראין כחידות ומשלים ליקח קרן פרה ולתקוע בו ביום ר"ה, ואתם אומרים שע"כ שטן הרוחני המקטרג העליון מתערב, וכיוצא מדברים אלו כמעט רוב מצות התורה, ובפרט פרטי דיניהם, אין השכל סובלם, וא"כ היכן הוא הדר התורה, ויופיה, וגדולתה.

ועל כיוצא בזה נאמר, אם צדקת מה תתן לו, ואם חטאת מה תפעל בו, כי השכר והעונש אשר עליהם, הוא לך לבדך. אמנם בסודות התורה, ובעסק כוונת המצות, ע"ז נאמר בהפך, אם בטובה, נאמר תנו עוז לאלהים. ואם ברעה, נאמר צור ילדך תשי. ונאמר ויצאו וראו בפגרי האנשים הפושעים בי, בי דיקא, ולא לי, בי ממש כביכול, ודברי אלו מבוארים, לאשר נגע אלהים בלבו. וז"ס מ"ש לעיל, כי הקורא במשנה ובתלמוד, נקרא עבד, המשמש את רבו ע"מ לקבל פרס. משא"כ בחכמת האמת, כי הוא מתקן כביכול, ונותן עוז וכח למעלה, וזהו נקרא עוסק בתורה לשמה בלי ספק.

ולא עוד, אלא שלא נברא האדם, אלא כדי שילמוד חכמת הקבלה. אלא שצריך שיהיה גופו נקי בתחלה, ע"י המצות המעשיות, שכל תכליתן לדבר זה, והם מוכרחים עכ"פ. ואח"כ תוכל הנשמה, הנקראת נר ה' נשמת אדם, להאיר בגוף הזה, כנר הנתונה תוך עששית זכוכית, ומאירה, ונותנת לו כח, להבין סתרי התורה, ומגלה עמוקות מני חשך.

... וכל בעל שכל יתמה מדברים אלה, ולא יובנו, זולתי במ"ש למעלה, ענין הפרש עסק התורה בפשטיה, שהם תורת העוה"ז, אשר היא הבל לפני תורתו של משיח, ותורת העוה"ב, וז"ס לתהו והבל כחי כליתי.

ואלו באתי להאריך בביאור כל המאמרים האלו, יכלה הזמן, והמה לא יכלו, אכן נוכל להבין בדרך קצרה כפי הנז"ל, כי שכר מצוה ותורה הפשטיית היא בעוה"ז, ובג"ע הארץ, האמנם למיעל לעלמא עילאה, אי אפשר עד שיעסוק האדם כפי יכלתו, כפי אשר תשיג ידו בחכמת הזוהר, ואי לא כדין, מפקי ליה מכל תרעין דעלמא עילאה, אע"ג דאיהי יפה במצות ובמע"ט.

ולכן חלק הנפש והרוח נשארים למטה בג"ע הארצי. אמנם הנשמה שהיא חלקה בסודות התורה, נענשת, ואתוקדת לבר מהיכלין עילאין דג"ע העליון כנ"ל. וז"ש, האי חיותא קדישא קיימא, כד נשמתא סלקה, ולא אמר כד נפשה, או רוחא, והבן זה, ולא תתבהל, בראותך כמה מאמרי רז"ל חלוקים בענין זה.

... כי כל הצדיקים, וכל באי עולם מזרע ישראל, תלויים בגופו של אדה"ר, זה בגופו, וזה בראשו, וזה באזנו, וזה בצוארו וכו'. וכן עד"ז כל הנפשות, תלויות בנפשו. וכל הרוחות, ברוחו. וכל הנשמות, בנשמתו. וכמו שגופו של אדה"ר, כלול מרמ"ח אברים, ושס"ה גידים. כן נפשו רוחו ונשמתו. גם כלם תלויים בתורה, שיש בה רמ"ח מ"ע. ושס"ה מצות ל"ת, אשר ז"ס מ"ש רז"ל, (שבת קיח): א"ל ר' פלוני אבוך במאי הוה זהיר וכו'. ואל זה רמזו ז"ל המאמר הזה בשיר השירים, במ"ש ועל מה אתיא להאי גופה סרוחה וכו'.

גם כל העולמות כלם, הם בחי' אדם אחד, כלול מתרי"ג אברים וגידים. וכמו שמצינו כנפי הארץ, טבור הארץ, עין הארץ, לב השמים. וכיוצא באלו, וכנזכר בפרשת הזהר, בריש פרשת תולדות דף קל"ד ע"א, וז"ל, לית לך כל שייפא ושייפא דקיימא ביה בב"נ, דלא הוי לקבליה בריה בעלמא, דהא כמה דב"נ איהו מתפליג שייפין וכו', הכי נמי עלמא, כל אינון בריין, כלהו שייפין שייפין, קיימין אילין על אילין וכו'. ואל זה רמז מ"ש למעלה, למינדע ליה לגופא, ולאשתמודע מן איהו וכו'.

ואמר עוד, וחד למנדע ולאסתכלא בהאי עלמא דאיהו ביה, ועל מה אתתקן, באופן כי האדם צריך להשיג ע"י טרחו בחכמה הזאת, עד שידע שורשו ואחיזתו בגוף האדם העליון היכן, וכן ברוחו ונפשו ונשמתו, וכן אחיזתו במצות התורה בפרטות, היכן עיקר אחיזתו.

... כי הנה למעלה אמר, ראיתי והנה אין אדם, ר"ל אין מי שיודע בחכמה, וא"כ מעתה האדם פטור, ומותר מלהתעסק בחכמה הזאת, אחר שאין לו מי שילמדנה ויקבלנה, ואם קבלה נקבל, ואם לאו איך נוכל לקבלה, לכן אמר בלשון נתינת טעם, כי אין כך הוא הענין כמו שתחשוב, כי הרי אין הקב"ה בא בטרוניא עם בריותיו (ע"ז ג). כי כה אמר ה', שממה תהיה כל הארץ, ירצה, כי אע"פ אשר עתידה הארץ להיות שממה, באין מי שעוסק בחכמה הזאת, עכ"ז וכלה לא אעשה, כי ה' צבאות הותיר לנו שריד כמעט איש רשום בכל דור ודור, הן רב הן מעט, ואף גם זאת בדור הזה האחרון, לא מאסנו ולא געלנו להפר בריתו אתנו ח"ו. וכמ"ש בתקונים כנ"ל, דבדרא בתראה בסוף יומיא, יתפרנסון מהאי חבורא, ובגיניה וקראתם דרור בארץ וגו' כנ"ל.

גם בס"ה פרשת וירא דף קי"ח ע"א, וז"ל, וכד יהא קריב ליומי משיחא, אפי' הני רביי דעלמא, זמינין לאשכחא רזין טמירין דחכמתא וכו', הרי מבואר, כי עד עתה, היו דברי חכמת הזוהר נעלמת, ובדרא בתראה תתגלה ותתפרסם חכמה הזאת, ויבינו וישכילו ברזי התורה, שלא השיגו הקודמים אלינו. ובזה נסתלקה השגת הפתאים, המקשים ואומרים איכשור דרי, ואם דורות שלפנינו לא השיגוה, איך נדענה אנחנו, ובזה יסכר פיהם.

ואמנם עם היות זה פשוט ומבואר, כי באלו הדורות האחרונים, יתפרנסון מהאי חבורא, ותתגלה אליהם החכמה הזאת, הנה לא כל הרוצה ליטול את השם יבוא ויטול, כי רזי התורה וסתריה, לא יתגלו לבני אדם בכח עיונם החומריי, לולי ע"י שפע אלהי, המושפע ממרום קדשו, ע"י שלוחיו ומלאכיו, או ע"י אליהו הנביא ז"ל, כמו שנבאר בסוף הקדמה זו.

... ועד"ז, אל תתפלא ממה שנספר בסוף הקדמה זאת, מענין החכם הקדוש, הנגלה אלינו בזמננו ובדורינו זה, ולא אוכל לפרש, ואם תרצה, תבין מ"ש בספר התקונים, על דור הולך ודור בא, דא משה ר"מ, וכנזכר בתקונים ס"ט דק"י ע"א, אר"ש, חברייא, בודאי קב"ה אסתכם עמנא עילאין ותתאין, למהוי בהאי חבורא, זכאה דרא דהאי אתגלייא ביה, דעתיד כוליה האי לאתחדשא ע"י דמשה בדרא בתראה, לקיימא קרא מ"ה שהי"ה הוא שיהיה, ואתפשטותיה הוא בכל דרא ודרא, בכל צדיק וחכם דמתעסק באורייתא עד מניינא דס' רבוא וכו', והדברים סתומים וחתומין.

ונחזור לענין הראשון, כי אין ספק שדברים אלו לא יובנו בעיון אנושי חומריים, אלא בקבלה מפה אל פה, או מפי אליהו ז"ל, או מפי הנשמות המתגלים בכל דור ודור, אל הראוים להם. והרמב"ן ז"ל אחרון המקובלים, קרוב לדורינו, כתב בסוף הקדמת ספרו, על ביאור התורה, בלשון הזה, וז"ל, ואני הנני מביא בברית נאמנה, נותנת עצה הגונה לכל מסתכל בספר הזה, לכל יסבור סברא, ואל יחשוב מחשבה בדבר, מכל הרמזים אשר אני כותב בסתרי התורה, כי אני מודיע נאמנה, שלא יושגו דברי, ולא יודעו כלל בשום שכל ובינה, זולת מפי מקובל חכם, לאוזן מקבל מבין, והסברא בהם אולת, ומחשבה רבת הנזקין, ומונעת התועלת, אל יאמין בשוא נתעה, כי לא תבואהו בסברותיו רק דעה, כי ידברו אל ה' סרה, לא יכלו כפרה, אל יהרסו אל ה' לראות וכו'. ואם הרמב"ן ז"ל, אחרון כל המקובלים, הפליג לדבר בזה, באומרו שלא יושגו דבריו בענייני הרמזים ובסודות התורה כלל ועיקר. איך יעלה בדעת אנושי, להבין בעיונו ובשכלו, דברי אלהים חיים, דברי הרשב"י ע"ה אשר דברותיו כלהבי אש אוכלה, וחתומים וסתומים באלף חותמות.

... ואין ספק, כי לולי שרשב"י, הכיר וידע ברוח קדשו, כי ר' אבא היה חכם גדול ויודע להלביש ולהעלים הדברים, דרך חידה ורמז, שלא יבינו אפי' חכמי הדור ההוא, לא היה מצוהו שיכתוב.

... והנה אין בכל דור ודור, שלא נמצאו בו אנשים יחידי סגולה, ששרתה עליהם רוה"ק, והיה אליהו הנביא ז"ל נגלה עליהם, ומלמד אותם סתרי החכמה הזאת.

... והנה היום אביע חידות ונפלאות תמים דעים, כי בכל דור ודור הפליא חסדו אתנו אל ה' ויאר לנו, ע"י השרידים אשר ה' קורא בכל דור ודור כנזכר. וגם בדורינו זה, אלהי הראשונים והאחרונים לא השבית גואל מישראל, ויקנא לארצו, ויחמול על עמו, וישלח לנו עיר וקדיש מן שמיא נחית, הרב הגדול האלהי החסיד מורי ורבי כמהר"ר יצחק לוריא אשכנזי זלה"ה, מלא תורה כרמון, במקרא, במשנה, בתלמוד, בפלפול, במדרשים, והגדות, במעשה בראשית, במעשה מרכבה. בקי בשיחת אילנות. בשיחת עופות. בשיחת מלאכים. יכיר בחכמת הפרצוף, הנזכר ברשב"י בפרשה ואתה תחזה. יודע בכל מעשי בני אדם שעשו, ושעתידים לעשות, יודע במחשבות בני אדם, טרם יוציאו מן הכח אל הפועל, יודע עתידות. וכל הדברים ההווים בכל הארץ. ולמה שנגזר תמיד בשמים. יודע בחכמת הגלגול, מי חדש, ומי ישן. ואיפת האיש ההוא, באיזה מקום תלויה באדם העליון, ובאה"ר התחתון, יודע בשלהבת הנר, ולהבת אש, דברים נפלאים. מסתכל וצופה בעיניו, נשמות הצדיקים הראשונים והאחרונים. ומתעסק עמהם בחכמת האמת, מכיר בריח האדם כל מעשיו, ע"ד ההוא ינוקא בפרשת בלק, וכל החכמות הנזכרים, היו אצלו כמונחים בחיקו, בכל עת שירצה, בלתי יצטרך להתבודד ולחקור עליהם, ועיני ראו ולא זר, דברים מבהילים, לא נראו ולא נשמעו בכל הארץ, מימי רשב"י ע"ה ועד הנה.

וכל זה השיג, שלא ע"י שמוש קבלת מעשיות ח"ו, כי איסור גדול יש במושם. אמנם כ"ז היה מעצמו, ע"י חסידותו ופרישותו, אחרי התעסקו ימים ושנים רבים, בספרים חדשים גם ישנים, בחכמה הזאת. ועליהם הוסיף חסידות ופרישות וטהרה וקדושה, היא הביאתו לידי אליהו הנביא, שהיה נגלה אליו תמיד, ומדבר עמו פה אל פה, ולמדו זאת החכמה...

... וכל אחד מהחכמים היודעים בחכמה הזאת מאז ואילך, היו עוסקים בה בהסתר גדול, ולא באתגלייא. ולא היה מגלה אותה, אלא לתלמידו היחיד בדורו. ואף זה בראשי פרקים, מפה אל פה, מגלה טפח ומכסה אלף טפחים. והיתה החכמה הזאת מתמוטטת ומתמעטת והולכת מדור לדור, עד הרמב"ן ז"ל, אחרון המקובלים האמתיים.

... והנה כל ספרי המקובלים האחרונים, שהיו אחר הרמב"ן ז"ל, אל תקרב אליהם, כי מן הרמב"ן ואילך נסתרה דרך החכמה הזאת מעיני כל החכמים, ולא נשאר בהם כי אם קצת ענפי הקדמות, בלתי שרשיהם, ועליהם בנו המקובלים האחרונים ז"ל דבריהם בשכל אנושי, ומעצמך תוכל לדעת לעמוד על המבחן, כי המעיין החריף, יוכל לכלול ולידע רוב הקדמותיהם וכלליהם, בד' או ה' ימים, וכל דבריהם כפול הענין במילות שונות, וכל פרי הקדמתם היא, היות י' ספ' נמצאות, וחברו תלי תלים של ספרים בענין, אשר כללות דבריהם יכתבו בב' או בג' קונטרסים. ולא כן מצינו בראשונים.

... ואנשי לבב שמעו לי, אל יהרסו אל ה' לראות בספרי האחרונים, הבנוים על פי השכל האנושי, ושומע לי ישכון בטח ושאנן מפחד רעה. ולכן אני הכותב הצעיר חיים וויטאל, רציתי לזכות את הרבים בהעלם נמרץ, והמשכילים יבינו.

וקראתי שם החבור הזה על שמי, ספר עץ חיים, וגם ע"ש החכמה הזאת העצומה, חכמת הזוהר, הנקרא עץ חיים, ולא עץ הדעת כנ"ל, בעבור כי בחכמה הזאת, טועמיה חיים זכו, ויזכו לארצות החיים הנצחיים, ומעץ החיים הזה, ממנו תאכל, ואכל וחי לעולם.

ואשכילך ואורך דרך זו תלך, דע מן היום אשר מורי זלה"ה, החל לגלות זאת החכמה, לא זזה ידי מתוך ידו אפילו רגע אחד. וכל אשר תמצא כתוב איזה קונטרסים על שמו ז"ל, ויהיה מנגד מה שכתבתי בספר הזה, טעות גמור הוא, כי לא הבינו דבריו. ואם יש בהם איזה תוס', שאינו חולק עם ספרינו זה, אל תשית לבך בקבע אליו, כי שום א' מהשומעים את דברי קדשו, לא ירדו לעומק דבריו וכוונתו, ולא הבינום בלי שום ספק. ואם יעלה בדעתך לחשוב, שתוכל לברור הטוב, ולהניח הרע. אל בינתך אל תשען, כי אין הדברים האלו מסורים אל לב האדם, כפי שכל אנושי. והסברא בהם סכנה עצומה, ויחשב בכלל קוצץ בנטיעות חס ושלום. לכן הזהרתך, ואל תסתכל בשום קונטרסים הנכתבים בשם מורי זלה"ה, זולתי במה שכתבנו לך בספר הזה, ודי לך בהתראה זאת...

