

Talmud Tour

Berachot 4b



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Berachot 4b - Ashrei

אמר רבי אלעזר, אָמַר רבי אַבְיָא: כָּל הָאֹמֵר "תְּהִלָּה לְדָוִד" בְּכֹל יוֹם שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים — מוֹבָטַח לוֹ שֶׁהוּא בֶּן הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא.

Tangential to Rabbi Yoḥanan's statement that one who juxtaposes redemption and prayer is assured of a place in the World-to-Come, a similar statement is cited. **Rabbi Elazar said that Rabbi Avina said: Anyone who recites: "A Psalm of David" (Psalms 145) three times every day is assured of a place in the World-to-Come.**

This refers to 'Ashrei' (Ps.84:5, 144:15, followed by the whole of Ps.145, and concluding with Ps.115:18). The Rambam¹ and Shulchan Aruch² state that one says Ashrei twice in Shacharit, the Morning Prayer, and again at Mincha, thus following this guidance.

The idea that one should say Ashrei three times daily is mentioned in the Zohar (Zohar III 226a), and commented on by the Rebe's father. This is discussed by the Rebbe (Likkutei Sichot vol.18 p.351 ff). The Zohar says one has the duty to say Ashrei twice in order to gain tangible blessings from G-d – sustenance, parnasa – and the third time is simply praise of Hashem. The Rebbe's father links this with Rashi's comment in the Talmud here, that the three times 'corresponds to the three prayer service' ie Shacharit, Mincha, Maariv. The Rebbe discusses this. We do not say Ashrei at Maariv. (One reason, suggested by the Maharsha, is we do not say Kedusha at Maariv, and the saying of Ashrei links with saying Kedusha). Further there is the idea that saying Maariv is 'reshut', optional. The concept of saying Ashrei in an 'optional' way reaches a higher level of spirituality. The Ashrei that we say in the Pesukei deZimra is this third Ashrei, the 'praise' described by the Zohar. This makes it even more precious. Further, the Tzemach Tzedek in Yahel Or, mentions a spiritual unification, a Yichud, achieved by saying Ashrei.

Note that the Mittlerer Rebbe, in Ki Atah Neri in Shaarei Orah, explains the opening verse of Ashrei ארוממך אלוקי המלך, 'I will exalt you, my G-d', the King' as meaning: the Jew looks at the world and sees it is filled with Divine radiance, the or memeale kol almin, the immanent radiance of the Divine. That is 'Elokay', my G-d. The

¹ Laws of Prayer, 7:12.

² OH, sec.51:7.

individual then elevates, exalts this lower aspect and connects it above to the higher aspect of the Divine, 'the King'. Thus this prayer describes how the individual is joining the immanent Divine radiance in existence with its exalted source. This too could be termed a Yichud...

Now considering the two verses added at the beginning of Psalm 145. They include the word *ashrei* three times, like the three times one is enjoined to say this Psalm daily.

אַשְׁרֵי יוֹשְׁבֵי בֵיתְךָ עוֹד יְהַלְלוּךָ סֵלָה: אֲשֶׁר־יֵעָמְדוּ לְפָנֶיךָ לְעוֹלָם וְעַד אֱלֹהֵינוּ

Happy are those that dwell in Your house, they will yet praise You forever. Happy is the people for whom this is so, happy is the people that the L·rd is their G·d.

Further on in Masechta Berachot 32b the first of these extra verses is mentioned with regard to pausing and meditating before prayer:

חֲסִידִים הָרְאוּשׁוּנִים הָיוּ שׁוֹהֵינן שָׁעָה אַחַת

We learned in the mishna that **the early** generations of **pious** men **would wait one hour** in order to achieve the solemn frame of mind appropriate for prayer.

מָנָא הָנִי מִלִּי? אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי, אָמַר קָרָא: "אַשְׁרֵי יוֹשְׁבֵי בֵיתְךָ"

The Gemara asks: **From where are these matters** derived? **Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said:** This is alluded to when **the verse states:** **"Happy are those who dwell in Your House"** (Psalms 84:5), immediately after which it is said: "They will yet praise You, Selah."

Now, returning to the main text of the prayer Ashrei, Psalm 145, the Gemara asks why is it so important that it should be said three times daily:

מֵאֵי טַעְמָא?

What is the reason that such significance is ascribed to this particular chapter of Psalms?

אֵילִימָא מִשּׁוּם דְּאִתְיָא בְּאֶלְפֵי בֵית, נִימָא "אַשְׁרֵי תַמִּימֵי דְרַךְ" דְּאִתְיָא בְּתַמְנֵי אֶפְרַיִם.

If you say that it is because it is arranged alphabetically, then let us say: “Happy are they who are upright in the way” (Psalms 119) where the alphabetical arrangement appears eight times.

אֶלֶּא מְשׁוּם דְּאִית בֵּיה “פּוֹתַח אֶת יַדְךָ”, נִימָא “הַלֵּל הַגְּדוֹל” דְּכָתִיב בֵּיה “נִתְּן לֶחֶם לְכָל בְּשָׂר”.

Rather, if you suggest that this particular chapter is recited because it contains praise for G-d’s provision of sustenance to all of creation: “You open Your hand and satisfy every living thing with favour” (Psalms 145:16), then let him recite the great *hallel* (Psalms 136), in which numerous praises are written, including: “Who provides food to all flesh, Whose kindness endures forever” (Psalms 136:25).

אֶלֶּא מְשׁוּם דְּאִית בֵּיה תְּרַתֵּי.

Rather, the reason why *tehilla leDavid* is accorded preference is because it contains both an alphabetic acrostic as well as mention of G-d’s provision of sustenance to all creation.

Shulhan Aruch Orach Chaim 51:7

צָרִיךְ לְכוּיֵן בְּפ' פּוֹתַח אֶת יַדְךָ וְאִם לֹא כּוּוֹן צָרִיךְ לְחַזֹּר וּלְאֹמְרוּ פַעַם אַחֲרַת: הַגָּה [וְאֹמְרִים פְּסוּק וְאִנְחָנוּ נְבָרַךְ יְה אַחַר תְּהִלָּה לְדוֹד [טוֹר וְכֹל בּו

One should focus one's heart during the verse "You open Your hand..." and if he does not focus then he must return and say the verse again. Rem"a: And we say the verse "And we shall praise the Lord" (Psalms 115:18) after the verse "A praise, of David..." (Psalms 145:1) (ie. at the end of Ashrei) [Tur and the Kol Bo]³.

The Previous Rebbe taught in a discourse: The fact that (in Ashrei) there is the Alef Beit, which means the sense of the holiness of the letters of the Torah, even if one does not understand them, and also the awareness of Divine Providence, that G-d prepares food

³ One reason for adding this verse is so that Ashrei ends with 'Haleluka', fitting in with the Psalms which follow it in the Morning Service. But Rabbi Isaac Luria would add this verse whenever he said Ashrei (eg before Mincha) even though no other Psalms follow it. See Dayan L.Y. Raskin, *Siddur Rabbenu Hazaken* vol.1 p.223 n.308.

for every living thing – by virtue of these two aspects one inherits the World to Come⁴.

Regarding the holiness of the Hebrew letters, the Baal Shem Tov wrote: know that in every word you say in prayer or Torah study, have the intention to feel unity [with G-d]. For in every letter there are [spiritual] worlds, and souls, and G-dliness, and the letters rise up and connect with each other, and become a word, and they are unified with the Divine. You should include your own soul with them at every step. And all the worlds are unified together and rise up, and there is limitless joy and delight, as you might imagine in our limited physical world, the joy of a bride and groom; how much more so on that spiritual level!⁵

אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: מִפְּנֵי מָה לֹא נֶאֱמַר נוּן בְּ"אַשְׁרֵי" — מִפְּנֵי שֶׁיֵּשׁ בָּהּ מִפְּלִתָּן שֶׁל שׁוֹנְאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, דְּכִתְיִב: "נִפְּלָה לֹא תוֹסִיף קוּם בְּתוּלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל"

Additionally, with regard to this psalm, **Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Why is there no verse beginning with the letter *nun* in *ashrei*? Because it contains an allusion to the downfall of the enemies of Israel, a euphemism for Israel itself. As it is written: "The virgin of Israel has fallen and she will rise no more; abandoned in her land, none will raise her up" (Amos 5:2), which begins with the letter *nun*. Due to this verse, *ashrei* does not include a verse beginning with the letter *nun*.**

בְּמַעֲרָבָא מִתְרַצִּי לֵהּ הָכִי: "נִפְּלָה וְלֹא תוֹסִיף לְנַפּוֹל עוֹד, קוּם בְּתוּלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל". אָמַר רַב נַחֲמָן בַּר יִצְחָק: אֶפִּילוּ הָכִי, חֲזַר דָּוִד וּסְמַךְן בְּרוּיִם הַקִּדְּשׁ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "סוֹמְךָ ה' לְכֹל הַנִּפְּלִים".

In order to ease the harsh meaning of this verse, **in the West**, in Eretz Yisrael, **they interpreted it** with a slight adjustment: **"She has fallen but she shall fall no more; rise, virgin of Israel."** Rav Naḥman bar Yitzḥak adds: **Even so, David went and provided support, through divine inspiration.** Although King David did not include a verse beginning with the letter *nun* alluding to Israel's downfall, he foresaw the verse that would be written by Amos through divine

⁴ Nishmata D'Oraita, p.26, from Rabbi J. I. Schneersohn's Discourses, 5688, p.156.

⁵ The Sacred Epistle of the Baal Shem Tov, printed in Keter Shem Tov 2a-b.

inspiration; and the very next verse, which begins with the letter *samekh*, reads: **“The Lord upholds the fallen and raises up those who are bowed down”** (Psalms 145:14). Therefore, through divine inspiration, David offered hope and encouragement; although the virgin of Israel may have fallen, the Lord upholds the fallen.

The Rebbe discusses this feature of Ashrei in his comments on his father Rabbi Levi Yitzhak’s points on the Zohar Miketz (Zohar 1, 201b). Rabbi Levi Yitzhak says, discussing the concept of a miracle, נס, Ness, citing our passage in the Talmud, that the Nun represents the fall, Nofel/naflah, and then the Samech – Somech, support - expresses the miracle.

The Rebbe asks: If the letter Nun represents falling, and for this reason it is absent as an initial letter in Ashrei, and Samech represents being supported, *somech*, why does the word Nes, miracle, begin with Nun? Shouldn’t it rather begin with Samech? In Ashrei no verse begins with Nun and so similarly the word miracle shouldn’t begin with Nun.

The Rebbe answers that Ashrei is speaking of simple daily life. Then the Nun is negative and one wants to conceal it. But the miracle is something out of the ordinary. The Nun, the falling, is part of the miracle. The miracle transforms the darkness of the Nun, the falling, the problem, into the light of miracle. Hence it is right for the Nun to be the first letter⁶.

In the Zohar passage discussed by Rabbi Levi Yitzhak, it states that if someone forgives anyone who might have offended him, before he goes to sleep, he is worthy to have miracles performed on his behalf (Zohar I, 201b). Hence the Lubavitch Siddur begins the prayers before going to sleep with the statement that ‘Behold I forgive anyone who angered or upset me...’

The Talmud now speaks of Saying the Shema Before Going to Sleep

⁶ Sichot Kodesh, 5733, Miketz, sec.6 (pp.229-230, 233).

אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: אף על פי שקרא אדם קריאת שמע בבית הכנסת — מצוה לקרותו על מטתו. אמר רבי יוסי: מאי קרא — "רגזו ואל תחטאו אמרו בלבבכם על משכבכם ודמו סלה".

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Even though one recited *Shema* in the synagogue, it is a mitzva to recite it upon his bed in fulfillment of the verse: "When you lie down." **Rabbi Yosei said: What verse alludes to the fact that one must recite *Shema* in the evening, upon his bed, as well? "Tremble, and do not sin; say to your heart upon your bed and be still, Selah" (Psalms 4:5).** This is understood to mean: Recite *Shema*, about which it is written, "on your hearts," upon your bed, and afterward be still and sleep.

אמר רב נחמן:

With regard to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi's statement, **Rabbi Nahman said:**

5a

אם תלמיד חכם הוא — אין צריק. אמר אבוי: אף תלמיד חכם מיבעי ליה למימר חד פסוקא דרחמי, כגון: "בידך אפקיד רוחי, פדיתתה אותי ה' אל אמת".

If one is a Torah scholar, he need not recite *Shema* on his bed since he is always engaged in the study of Torah and will likely fall asleep engrossed in matters of Torah. **Abaye said: Even a Torah scholar must recite at least one verse of prayer, such as: "Into Your hand I trust my spirit; You have redeemed me, Lord, G-d of truth" (Psalms 31:6).**

The Chabad approach to saying the Shema before sleep, is to use that opportunity for Cheshbon Hanefesh, accounting of the soul, evaluating what one did or did not do during the day.

The Rebbe comments that when saying this verse 'Into Your hand..' one still is able to do the accounting⁷.

אמר רבי לוי בר חמא, אמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש: לעולם ירגיז אדם יצר טוב על יצר הרע, שנאמר: "רגזו ואל תחטאו" אם נצחו — מוטב, ואם לאו — יעסוק בתורה, שנאמר: "אמרו בלבבכם". אם נצחו — מוטב, ואם לאו — יקרא קריאת

⁷ Source?

שְׁמַע, שִׁנְאַמַּר: "עַל מִשְׁכַּבְּכֶם". אִם נִצַּח — מוֹטֵב, וְאִם לֹא — יִזְכּוֹר לּוֹ יוֹם הַמִּיתָה, שִׁנְאַמַּר: "וְדַמּוּ סֵלָה".

Incidental to the verse, "Tremble, and do not sin," the Gemara mentions that **Rabbi Levi bar Ḥama said that Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: One should always incite his good inclination against his evil inclination**, i.e., that one must constantly struggle so that his evil inclination does not lead him to transgression, **as it is stated: "Tremble, and do not sin."**

If one succeeds and subdues his evil inclination, excellent, but if he does not succeed in subduing it, he should study Torah, as alluded to in the verse: "Say to your heart."

If he subdues his evil inclination, excellent; if not, he should recite *Shema*, which contains the acceptance of the yoke of G-d, and the concept of reward and punishment, **as it is stated** in the verse: **"Upon your bed,"** which alludes to *Shema*, where it says: "When you lie down."

If he subdues his evil inclination, excellent; if not, he should remind himself of the day of death, whose silence is alluded to in the continuation of **the verse: "And be still, Selah."**

This relates closely to the Tanya theme of the Divine Soul battling against the Animal Soul, and also the concept of *Hitbonenut*, thinking/contemplating as a way of controlling one's Evil Inclination/Animal Soul.

Tanya ch.29 quotes the opening passage **לְעוֹלָם יִרְגִיז אָדָם יֵצֶר טוֹב עַל יֵצֶר הָרָע**, 'a person should incite his Good Desire against his Evil Desire'. There Rabbi Shneur Zalman explains that the Evil Desire has no true existence. Therefore it can easily be dissolved away by a strong rebuke from the Good Desire. Rabbi Shneur Zalman gives the example of the Spies. Their Evil Desire prompted them to say that the Israelites would not be able to conquer the Land of Israel, that G-d Himself was not strong enough to conquer the Land. The whole community believed them and began weeping. Then Hashem spoke harshly that on account of this, they would wander in the desert for 40 years. Immediately they said 'we will

go into the land after all'. They had not been shown any miracle indicating Divine power. Simply the harsh words of rebuke caused their fundamentally unreal Evil Desire to dissolve away.

However, it is not always so easy. The Rebbe comments on the same first part of this passage, 'a person should incite his Good Desire against his Evil Desire' : Sometimes the Divine Soul finds itself in 'exile' vis a vis the Animal Soul. The Animal Soul is powerful. Then we need to do what the Talmud says here: **יְרַגֵּז אָדָם יֵצֶר טוֹב עַל יֵצֶר הָרָע**. This means 'be angry' with the Animal Soul/evil inclination; as Tanya says the person 'should shout at the Evil Inclination with an angry voice, to cast it down, saying to it you are bad, loathsome...' (Tanya, ch.29, 37a).

What gives us the strength to do this and be successful? The Evil Inclination inside us is like Pharaoh king of Egypt. G-d says to Moses: I am making you Elokim over Pharaoh (Ex. 7:1-2), meaning that He is giving Moses power over the force of Kelipah, over the negative force inside us. Since we all have a bit of Moses inside us, this gives us the strength to conquer that negative desire⁸.

In another Sicha the Rebbe again quotes this Gemoro and says that we might need an extra 'push' to help us conquer the Yetzer hara. Clearly our Kabbalat Ol and Yirat Hashem should be enough. But sometimes they are not, we get pushed over by the Evil Inclination. So we should try to see that we are really on top. In Sedra Vayelech it speaks of the King on a platform in the Temple reading to the Jewish people, inspiring them. We ourselves are that King, but we have to see that we are on a Platform, which helps us deal with the negativity from a superior position. This is the force of the Talmud saying 'rigzu', be angry. At the same time, the Rebbe points out, the platform has to be of wood, ie temporary, and in the Temple courtyard. We can only use this sense of 'power' when we are trying to do something holy – in the Temple courtyard

⁸ Likkutei Sichot vol.16 p.77.

- like getting rid of the inappropriate desire. Otherwise we should be in a mood of bitul, selflessness (and kindness)⁹.

Let's consider the next few clauses of this passage. — **וְאִם לֹא — יַעֲסוּק בַּתּוֹרָה, שְׁנֵאמַר: "אָמְרוּ בְּלִבְכֶם"**

If the 'inciting' (yargiz) doesn't work – study Torah. By studying Torah (particularly Chassidic teachings) eg before prayer, the person's spiritual dimension is strengthened, the Divine Soul becomes more apparent.

וְאִם לֹא — יִקְרָא קְרִיאַת שְׁמַע, שְׁנֵאמַר: "עַל מְשַׁכְּבֵכֶם"

Then: if that doesn't work, say the Shema. This can be understood as the power of deep contemplative prayer. The person may have flaws, inappropriate desires – but by immersing oneself in contemplative prayer for a time can have a very positive spiritual effect.

אִם נִצְחוּ — מוֹטָב, וְאִם לֹא — יִזְכּוֹר לוֹ יוֹם הַמִּיתָה, שְׁנֵאמַר: "וְדַמּוּ סֵלָה"

The Talmud continues: if that doesn't work, think of the day of death. In other words, think about something which will help one overcome the Animal Soul and at least temporarily control it. For one person that thought might be the day of death and Judgement by Hashem. For another it might be the infinite greatness of Hashem. And so on. A person can find the 'hitbonenut', the thought pattern, which works for them.

There is a beautiful presentation of these four stages by Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the Alter Rebbe: In service of Hashem there are four approaches. There are Tzaddikim who are connected with Hashem, there are Benonim who are focused on Torah, there are those whose primary service is through an emotional relationship with Hashem, and whose focus is on love of Hashem, and finally there are those whose service is based on fear of Hashem because of Hashem's judgement.

⁹ Likkutei Sichot vol.19 p.328.

But the nature of people is to be mistaken about themselves. Therefore each type has to work hard on themselves. The Tzaddik has to attack the Evil Desire, because it might suddenly trip him up. The Benoni has to study Torah assiduously. The person who serves through emotion and love should work on contemplation Hashem's Oneness in the Shema; and the one who serves through Fear should think of the day of death and Divine Judgement.

This teaches that if one's attack on the Evil Desire is at once successful, then one is of the first type, the Tzaddik. If not, one should intensively study Torah, like the second type, the Benoni. And so on, level by level¹⁰.

Another comment by the Alter Rebbe:

'One should always attack the Evil Desire'.. every person has within him a power of anger. This anger should be used against one's own Evil Desire. Thus also when one is contemplating the Oneness of G-d and one feels bonded with G-d – one should be angry with one's Evil Desire which tries to stop one feeling such unity all the time¹¹.

Berachot 5a – the Nature of Torah

וְאָמַר רַבִּי לִוִּי בַר חֲמָא, אָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן לֵקִישׁ, מֵאֵי דְכָתִיב "וְאָתְנָה לְךָ אֶת לַחַת הָאֶבֶן וְהִתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוָה אֲשֶׁר כָּתַבְתִּי לְהוֹרֹתְכֶם". "לַחַת" — אֵלּוּ עֲשָׂרַת הַדְּבָרוֹת, "תּוֹרָה" — זֶה מִקְרָא, "וְהַמִּצְוָה" — זוּ מִשְׁנָה, "אֲשֶׁר כָּתַבְתִּי" — אֵלּוּ נְבִיאִים וְכַתּוּבִים, "לְהוֹרֹתְכֶם" — זֶה תִּלְמוּד, מְלִמֵּד שְׂכוּלָם נִתְּנוּ לְמִשָּׁה מִסִּינַי.

And Rabbi Levi bar Hama said that Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: G-d said to Moses, "Ascend to me on the mountain and be there, **and I will give you the stone tablets and the Torah and the mitzva that I have written that you may teach them**" (Exodus 24:12), meaning that G-d revealed to Moses not only the Written Torah, but all of Torah, as it would be transmitted through the generations. **The "tablets" are the ten commandments** that were written on the

¹⁰ From Nishmata D'Oraita, p.27, from a Maamar of R Shneur Zalman quoted in Sefer HaSichot, 5706-5710, p.417.

¹¹ Nishmata d'Oraita p.29, from Likkutei Torah Shelach 41a.

tablets of the Covenant,
the “Torah” is the five books of Moses.

The “mitzva” is the Mishna, which includes explanations for the mitzvot and how they are to be performed.

“That I have written” refers to the Prophets and Writings, written with divine inspiration.

“That you may teach them” refers to the Talmud, which explains the Mishna.

These explanations are the foundation for the rulings of practical *halakha*. This verse **teaches** that **all** aspects of Torah **were given to Moses from Sinai**.

Compare a similar statement from the Jerusalem Talmud, Peah ch.2 Halachah 4:

רבי יהושע בן לוי אמר עליהם ועליהם כל ככל דברים הדברים מקרא משנה תלמוד ואגדה. אפילו מה שתלמיד וותיק עתיד להורות לפני רבו כבר נאמר למשה בסניני. מה טעם יש דבר שיאמר ראה זה חדש הוא. משיבו חבירו ואומר לו כבר היה לעולמים.

Rebbi Joshua ben Levi said: On them, and on them; all, like all; words, the words; Bible, Mishnah, Talmud, and Aggadah. Even what a competent student will discover before his teacher was said to Moses on Sinai. What is the reason? (Ecclesiastes.1.10)

יש דבר שיאמר ראה זה חדש הוא כבר היה לעלמים אשר היה מלפננו:

“There is something about which one would say, look, this is new!” His colleague will answer, “it already has been forever.”

Explanation of the Biblical verse: The reference is to Deuteronomy.9.10”:

ויתן ה' אלי את שני לוחות האבנים כתבים באצבע אלהים ועליהם ככל הדברים אשר דבר ה' עמכם בהר מתוך האש ביום הקהל:

“The Eternal gave to me the two stone tablets, written by the Divine Finger, *and* on them *like all the* words that the Eternal spoke to you on the mountain at the day of assembly.” The three italicized expressions are all unnecessary for the understanding of the

sentence; these are interpreted as referring to the three divisions of oral law contained in the complete Torah.

This concept is stressed in Chassidic teaching. The Torah, in all its details, including the most recent commentaries, is all from Hashem. All was given by Hashem to Moshe (an idea which includes some subtle discussions, see the interpretations of Menachot 29b) and all was the supernal Torah, long before the creation of the universe, the delight of Hashem. See Likkutei Torah, Bemidbar, 17d ff, discussing the verse from Proverbs 8:4:

וְאֶהְיֶה אֶצְלוֹ אֱמוּנָה וְאֶהְיֶה שְׂשׂוּעִים יוֹם יוֹם מִשְׂחֻקַּת לִפְנֵי בְּכָל־עֵת:

I was with Him as a confidant, A source of delight every day,
Rejoicing before Him at all times..

Berachot 5a – the protective power of the Shema and of Torah

וְאָמַר רַבִּי יִצְחָק: כָּל הַקּוֹרָא קְרִיאַת שְׁמַע עַל מִטָּתוֹ — מְזִיקִין בְּדִילִין הֵימָנוּ.
שְׂנַאֲמַר: "וּבְנֵי רֶשֶׁף יִגְבְּיֵהוּ עוֹף", וְאִין "עוֹף" אֵלָא תוֹרָה, שְׂנַאֲמַר: "הֲתַעִיף עֵינֶיךָ
בּוֹ וְאִינְנוּ". וְאִין "רֶשֶׁף" אֵלָא מְזִיקִין, שְׂנַאֲמַר: "מְזִי רָעַב וּלְחָמֵי רֶשֶׁף וְקָטַב
מִרִירִי".

And Rabbi Yitzhak said: Anyone who recites *Shema* upon his bed, demons stay away from him. This is alluded to, **as it is stated:** “But man is born into trouble, **and the sparks [*reshet*] fly [*uf*] upward**” (Job 5:7). The verse is explained: The word **fly [*uf*]** means **nothing other than Torah**, as Torah is difficult to grasp and easy to lose, like something that floats away, **as it is stated: “Will you set your eyes upon it? It is gone;** for riches certainly make themselves wings, like an eagle that flies into the heavens” (Proverbs 23:5). The word **“sparks”** means **nothing other than demons, as it is stated: “Wasting of hunger, and the devouring of the sparks [*reshet*] and bitter destruction [*ketev meriri*],** and the teeth of beasts I will send upon them, with the venom of crawling things of the dust” (Deuteronomy 32:24). Here we see *reshet* listed along with *ketev meriri*, both of which are understood by the Sages to be names of demons.

אמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש: כל העוסק בתורה — יסורין בדילין הימנו, שנאמר: "ובני רשף יגביהו עוף". ואין "עוף" אלא תורה, שנאמר "התעוף עיניך בו ואיננו", ואין "רשף" אלא יסורין, שנאמר: "מזי רעב ולחמי רשף".

Regarding this unclear verse, **Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: If one engages in Torah study, suffering stays away from him, as it is stated: "And the sparks fly upward."** And fly means nothing other than Torah, as it is stated: "Will you set your eyes upon it? It is gone; and sparks means nothing other than suffering, as it is stated: "Wasting of hunger, and the devouring of the sparks," equating devouring sparks with wasting hunger, as both are types of suffering. From here, we derive that through Torah, fly, one is able to distance himself, upward, from suffering, sparks.

This begins a discussion of suffering... This issue is illuminated in a very profound way in Tanya ch.26.