

Talmud Tour

Berachot 8b-9a

Using the Sefaria text with translation of the elucidation by Rabbi Adin Even Yisrael (Steinsaltz) and also comments drawn from Chassidic teachings

Colour code: blue, Mishnah/Talmud text from this page of Berachot; Black, Chassidic comments; purple, quotations from other Talmudic or classical texts; dark red, general editorial comments; bright red, halachic statements.

Link to Standard Talmud edition Berachot 9b

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Berachot 9b

The Divine Name

“אֱהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה”, אָמַר לוֹ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְמֹשֶׁה, יְהוָה אָמַר לָהֶם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל:
אֲנִי הָיִיתִי עִמָּכֶם בְּשַׁעֲבֹד זֶה, וְאֲנִי אֶהְיֶה עִמָּכֶם בְּשַׁעֲבֹד מִלְכּוּת.

The Gemara proceeds to discuss the promise of redemption from Egypt that G-d made to Moses at the burning bush. When Moses asked G-d what to say when Israel asks him G-d's name, “and G-d said to Moses: ‘I

will be that I will be,' and He said: 'Thus you will say unto the children of Israel: I will be has sent me to you'" (Exodus 3:14). **The Holy One, Blessed be He, told Moses to go and tell Israel: I was with you in this enslavement, and in this redemption, and I will be with you in the enslavement of the kingdoms in the future.**

אָמַר לְפָנָיו: רַבּוֹנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, דִּי הָאֵל לְצַרָּה בְּשַׁעֲתָהּ. אָמַר לוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: לֵךְ אֲמֹר לְהֵם "אֵהְיֶה שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם".

Moses said before Him: Master of the Universe, it is enough for them to endure. Let **the future suffering** be endured **at its** appointed **time**. There is no need to mention their future enslavement. **The Holy One, Blessed be He,** agreed with Moses and **said to him: Go and tell** the children of Israel only that, **"I will be has sent me to you."**

The Divine Name is a key concept in the mystical tradition. Ramban, Nachmanides, states in his Introduction to his Commentary on the Torah that the entire Torah is a string of Divine Names and it is remarkable that we can read it as an intelligible account. Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla wrote Shaa'rei Orah, Gates of Light, explaining the various Divine Names and their relationship to the Sefirot.

In the Torah passage from Shemot which the Talmud has quoted, Rashbam comments on the name אֱהִיָּה – 'Hashem calls Himself by this Name, which is in the first person; but we speak of G-d in the third person, and the third person of this verb is the Tetragrammaton'. He writes this comment in the א"ת ב"ש code and states 'one should only reveal this to the discreet.

. ומה שכתב בי"ה אפרש בא"ת ב"ש צפ"ת דפג"ת זהו"ף תצמ"ץ פתט"ף
 דפגמ"י תפא"ף מצמ"ץ פמ"ף שידפ"י מפ"ק לי"ף ל"ם י"ץ צפ"ץ כתק"י. זהו
 עיקר עומק פשוטו של מקראות הללו ואין מגלין אותם אלא לצנועים

In fact the Tetragrammaton is in the Piel form, the causative. The Tetragrammaton literally means 'He causes to exist'.¹ This relates to the fact that G-d is the continuous source of all existence. Another explanation of the Tetragrammaton is that it is the verb 'to be' combining past, present and future forms²: since G-d יהיה, הוה, יהיה

Elijah's Prayer

"עֲנֵנִי ה' עֲנֵנִי". אָמַר רַבִּי אֲבָהוּ: לָמָּה אָמַר אֱלֹהֵינוּ עֲנֵנִי שְׁתֵּי פְעָמִים? מִלָּמַד
 שְׁאָמַר אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְפָנַי הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: רְבוּנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, "עֲנֵנִי" — שֶׁתִּרְדֵּ אִשׁ מִן
 הַשָּׁמַיִם וְתֹאכַל כָּל אֲשֶׁר עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ, וְ"עֲנֵנִי" — שֶׁתְּסִיחַ דַּעְתָּם, כִּדִּי שֶׁלֹּא יֵאמְרוּ
 מַעֲשֵׂה כְשָׁפִים הֵם. שְׁנֵאָמַר: "וְאַתָּה הִסַּבְתָּ אֶת לְבָבְךָ אַחֲרֵינוּ":

Having explained the use of the double language of "I will be that I will be," the Gemara proceeds to explain the double language employed by Elijah on Mount Carmel: **"Answer me, Lord, answer me, that this people will know that You are the Lord, G-d, and You have turned their hearts backward"** (I Kings 18:37). **Rabbi Abbahu said: Why did Elijah say answer me twice? This repetition teaches that Elijah said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, answer me that fire will descend from heaven and consume everything that is on the altar, and answer me that You will divert their mind from devising alternative**

¹ Tanya Part 2, ch.4.

² Source?

explanations for what they witnessed so **that they will not say that they were acts of sorcery. As it is stated that Elijah said: “And You have turned their hearts backward,”** G-d can restore them to the proper path as well.

Elijah is a key figure in Jewish tradition, and particularly in the Kabbalah. The Book of Kings tells us he was swept up to Heaven, and his body was never found. He attends every Brit (circumcision) and a chair is designated for him. Some people over the generations were described as having ‘a revelation of Elijah’ גלוי אליהו teaching them secrets of Torah. The Zohar is understood as having been communicated by Elijah to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. A passage from the Introduction to Tikkunei Zohar, said on the eve of Shabbat, states ‘Elijah began [speaking]’ and presents an overview of the Sefirot.

The Second Mishnah – Saying the Shema in the Morning

מתני' מאימתי קורין את שמע בשחרית? משפיר בין תכלת ללבן. רבי אליעזר אומר: בין תכלת לקרתי. וגומרה, עד הגז החמה, רבי יהושע אומר עד שלש שעות, שפן דרד מלכים לעמוד בשלש שעות.

MISHNA: From when does one recite *Shema* in the morning? From when a person can distinguish between sky-blue [*tekhelet*] and white.

Rabbi Eliezer says: From when one can distinguish between sky-blue and leek-green.

And one must finish reciting *Shema* until the end of the period when you rise, i.e., sunrise, when the sun begins to shine.

Rabbi Yehoshua says: One may recite the morning

Shema **until three hours** of the day, which this is still considered when you rise, **as that is the habit of kings to rise** from their sleep **at three hours** of the day.

הקורא מפאן ואילך — לא הפסיד, פאדם הקורא בתורה.

While there is a set time frame for the recitation of *Shema*, **one who recites *Shema* from that time onward loses nothing**. Although he does not fulfill the mitzva of reciting of *Shema* at its appointed time, **he is** nevertheless considered **like one who reads the Torah**, and is rewarded accordingly.

A constant endeavour in Chassidic life is to say the *Shema* before the end-time. This is because the ideal Chassidic practice is to study Chassidic teachings before the Morning prayers, so that they should be infused with more feeling. This might mean starting the service relatively late: for example, the Shabbat morning service in 770 Eastern Parkway begins at 10.00am. But the final time for the *Shema* may be well before this. In many Chassidic Shuls the final time is announced and/or there it is shown on a notice board.

At the same time, the saying of the *Shema* within the structure of the morning Prayer is a major climax of the prayers. The earlier part of the morning prayers called 'Verses of Praise' Pesukei deZimra, are a stage in approaching this climax. Then comes the 'blessing on the *Shema*', the first of which refers to the angels saying 'Holy, Holy Holy', and the second stresses G-d's love for the Jewish people. Then comes the *Shema* said in a mood of self-transcendence, which extends into the Amidah prayer.

This passage from the Talmud defines the ‘end time’ for saying the Shema by the practice of Kings. Elsewhere the Talmud says ‘all Jews are like children of Kings’³. Further the Zohar says ‘all Jews are Kings’⁴. In halachic terms this affects certain practical laws: a prince can put rose-oil on a wound on Shabbat, because he generally anoints himself with rose-oil, so it is not considered a special medicine. What about other people? Rabbi Shimon says every Jew is the child of a king, and can therefore put rose-oil on a wound⁵.

The Rebbe often refers to this idea. Since the Jewish people are like Kings, they get special blessing from Hashem, and should understand that they therefore have the responsibility to fulfil Hashem’s teachings in the Torah⁶.

גַּמְ' מַאי בֵּין תְּכִלַּת לְלֵבָן? אֵילִימָא בֵּין גַּבְבָּא דְעַמְרָא חִיּוּרָא לְגַבְבָּא דְעַמְרָא
 דְתְכִלְתָּא — הָא בְּלִילִיָא נָמִי מִידַע יְדַעֵי. אֶלָּא, בֵּין תְּכִלַּת שְׁפָה לְלֵבָן שְׁפָה.

GEMARA: The mishna stated that the time for the recitation of the morning *Shema* begins when one can distinguish between sky-blue and white. The Gemara asks: To **what is between sky-blue and white** referring? **If you say** that it means distinguishing between **a pile of white wool and a pile of sky-blue wool, wouldn't one know** the difference **at night, as well? Rather,** it must be a reference to ritual fringes made with sky-blue strings

³ Eg, in the name of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai: Mishnah Shabbat 14:4, 59b.

⁴ Introduction to Tikkunei Zohar 1b.

⁵ Bava Metzia 113b.

⁶ Likkutei Sichot vol.14 p.120.

(see Numbers 15:38) along with white strings, and one must be able to distinguish **between the sky-blue strings** in the ritual fringes **and the white strings** in the ritual fringes.

With regard to the beginning of the time for the recitation of the morning *Shema*, a *baraita* cites additional opinions not cited in the mishna.

תנא: רבי מאיר אומר: משִׁפִּיר בֵּין זָאב לְכֶלֶב. רבי עקיבא אומר: בֵּין חֲמֹר לְעֶרְוֹד. וְאַחֵרִים אֹמְרִים: מִשְׁיֵרָאָה אֶת חֲבֵרוֹ רְחוֹק אַרְבַּע אַמּוֹת, וְנִפְרָנוּ.

It was taught in a *baraita*:

Rabbi Meir says that the day begins when **one can distinguish between** two similar animals, e.g., **a wolf and a dog.**

Rabbi Akiva provides a different sign, and **says that the** day begins when there is sufficient light to distinguish **between a donkey and a wild donkey.**

And Aḥerim say: When one can see another person, who is merely an acquaintance (Jerusalem Talmud) **from a distance of four cubits and recognize him.**

אָמַר רַב הוּנָא: הֵלְכָה פְּאַחֵרִים. אָמַר אַבְיִי: לְתַפְּלִין פְּאַחֵרִים. לְקַרְיַת שְׁמַע בְּנֵי יוֹחָנָן וְתִיקוּן הָיוּ גּוֹמְרִין אוֹתָהּ עִם הַגִּזְזֵי הַחֲמָה.

Rav Huna said: The *halakha* is in accordance with Aḥerim. **Abaye said:** Regarding the time from which one may don **phylacteries**, a mitzva incumbent only by day, the *halakha* **is in accordance with Aḥerim.** But with regard to **the recitation of *Shema***, one should conduct himself **in accordance with** the custom of the *vatikin*, pious individuals who were scrupulous in their performance of mitzvot. As **Rabbi Yoḥanan said: The**

***vatikin* would conclude** the recitation of *Shema* with sunrise, and one should act accordingly.

תְּנַגֵּא נְמִי הָכִי: וְתִיקִין הָיוּ גּוֹמְרִין אוֹתָהּ עִם הַנֶּיץ הַחֲמָה, כְּדֵי שְׂיִסְמוּךְ גְּאוּלָּה לְתַפְלָה, וְנִמְצָא מִתְפַּלֵּל בַּיּוֹם.

It was also taught in a *baraita*: **The *vatikin* would conclude** the recitation of *Shema* with sunrise in order to juxtapose the blessing of redemption, which immediately follows the recitation of *Shema*, with prayer, and pray during the day.

אָמַר רַבִּי זֵירָא: מַאי קְרָאָה — “יִירָאוּךָ עִם שֶׁמֶשׁ וְלִפְנֵי גֶרֶח דּוֹר דּוֹרִים”.

Regarding this custom of the *vatikin*, **Rabbi Zeira said: What verse** is the source for this tradition? **“They shall fear You with the sun, and before the moon for all generations”** (Psalms 72:5). This verse indicates that one should express one’s awe of Heaven, they shall fear You, immediately before sunrise, with the sun.

הַעִיד רַבִּי יוֹסִי בֶּן אֱלִיקִים מִשּׁוּם קְהֵלָא קְדִישָׁא דְבִירוּשְׁלַיִם: כָּל הַסּוּמָךְ גְּאוּלָּה לְתַפְלָה אֵינוֹ נִזְוֵק כָּל הַיּוֹם כּוּלוֹ.

Rabbi Yosei ben Elyakim testified in the name of the holy community in Jerusalem, a title accorded a particular group of Sages who lived there, that **one who juxtaposes redemption and prayer at sunrise will incur no harm for the entire day.**

אָמַר רַבִּי זֵירָא: אֵינִי?! וְהָא אֲנָא סְמַכִּי וְאִיתְזַקִּי! אָמַר לֵיהּ: בְּמַאי אִיתְזַקַּת — דְּאִמְטִיית אָסָא לְבִי מִלְכָּא. הָתָם נְמִי מְבַעֵי לָךְ לְמִיָּהֵב אַגְרָא לְמַחְזִי אַפִּי מִלְכָּא, דְּאָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: לְעוֹלָם יִשְׁתַּדֵּל אָדָם לְרוּץ לְקִרְאָת מַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְלֹא לְקִרְאָת מַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּלִבָּד, אֲלֵא אֲפִילוּ לְקִרְאָת מַלְכֵי אוּמוֹת הָעוֹלָם, שְׂאֵם יִזְכָּה — יִבְחִין בֵּין מַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמַלְכֵי אוּמוֹת הָעוֹלָם!

Rabbi Zeira said: Is that so? Didn't I juxtapose redemption and prayer and nevertheless I was harmed? Rabbi Yosei ben Elyakim **asked** Rabbi Zeira: **How were you harmed? That you brought a myrtle branch to the king's palace?** The Gemara refers to Rabbi Zeira's responsibility as one of the respected members of the community to participate in a delegation that brought a crown of myrtle as a gift to the king, a dubious honor in which Rabbi Zeira had no interest. However, **there, too, you had to pay a price in order to see the face of the king, as Rabbi Yoḥanan said: One should always strive to run to greet the kings of Israel** to witness them in their glory. **And not only** must one run to greet the kings of Israel, but even to greet the kings of the nations of the world, so that if he will be privileged to witness the redemption of Israel, **he will distinguish between the kings of Israel and the kings of the nations of the world**, to see how much greater the Jewish king will be and how his rule will be manifest. Therefore, it was a privilege for Rabbi Zeira that he was allowed to see the face of the king.

אמר ליה רבי אלעא לעולא: כי עיילת להתם שאיל בשלמא דרב ברונא אחי במעמד כל החבורה, דאדם גדול הוא ושמח במצות. זימנא תדא סמך גאולה לתפלה ולא פסיק חוכא מפומיה כוליה יומא.

Rabbi El'a said to Ulla before Ulla left for Babylonia: **When you go to Babylonia, ask after my brother, Rav Beruna, in the presence of the entire group, as he is a great man who rejoices in mitzvot**, and it is only fitting that he should be accorded respect. The Gemara provides proof that he was indeed a great man who rejoiced in mitzvot: **Once, Rav Beruna juxtaposed redemption and**

prayer at sunrise, as per the custom of the *vatikin* (*Tosafot*), and laughter and joy did not cease from his mouth for the entire day.

היכי מצי סמיד? וְהָא אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: בְּתַחֲלָה הוּא אֹמֵר: "ה' שְׁפָתַי תִּפְתָּח",
וּלְבָסוּף הוּא אֹמֵר: "יְהִי לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי פִי וְגו'!"

In practice, the Gemara asks: **How is one able to juxtapose redemption and prayer? Didn't Rabbi Yoḥanan say: At the beginning of prayer, one says:**

"Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your glory" (Psalms 51:17), **and at the end of prayer one says: "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before You, Lord, my Rock, and my Redeemer" (Psalms 19:15).** If so, the first verse is an interruption between redemption and prayer.

אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר: תְּהֵא בְּתַחֲלָה שֶׁל עֶרְבִית.

Rabbi Elazar said: Let this verse, "Lord, open my lips," be recited only **in the evening prayer** but not in the morning prayer.

וְהָא אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: אֵינְהוּ בֶן הָעוֹלָם הַבֶּא — זֶהוּ הַסּוּמָךְ גְּאוּלָּה שֶׁל עֶרְבִית
לְתַחֲלָה שֶׁל עֶרְבִית!

The Gemara asks: **Didn't Rabbi Yoḥanan say: Who is worthy of a place in the World-to-Come? He who juxtaposes redemption of the evening prayer to the evening prayer.** Therefore, this verse from Psalms should not be recited before the evening prayer either.

אֵלָא אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר: תְּהֵא בְּתַחֲלָת הַמְּנַחָה.

Rather, Rabbi Elazar said: Let this verse: "Lord, open my lips," be recited only before **the afternoon prayer.**

רב אשי אָמַר: אָפּילו תּימָא אַכּוּלָּהּ, וְכִיּוֹן דְּקַבְּעוּהָ רַבְּנָן בְּתַפְּלָה — כְּתַפְּלָה אַרְיִכְתָּא דְּמַיָּא.

Rav Ashi said another explanation: **Even if you say** that Rabbi Yoḥanan holds that “Lord, open my lips” is recited before **all** prayers, including the morning and the evening prayers. **Since the Sages instituted** this verse, **it is considered as an extended prayer**; it is an inseparable part of the prayers, and if redemption is juxtaposed to this verse, it is no different than if redemption was juxtaposed to prayer directly.

דְּאִי לָא תּימָא הָכִי, עַרְבִית הֵיכִי מְצִי סְמִידָה, וְהָא בְּעֵי לְמִימַר "הַשְּׁכִיבֵנוּ"! אֵלָּא כִּיּוֹן דְּתַקִּינוּ רַבְּנָן הַשְּׁכִיבֵנוּ — כְּגַא וְלָהּ אַרְיִכְתָּא דְּמַיָּא. הָכִי נְמִי כִּיּוֹן דְּקַבְּעוּהָ רַבְּנָן בְּתַפְּלָה — כְּתַפְּלָה אַרְיִכְתָּא דְּמַיָּא.

Rabbi Ashi supports his claim: **As if you do not say so, how does one juxtapose** redemption of the evening prayer to the evening prayer? **Mustn't one recite: Help us lie down [hashkivenu] after redemption? Rather, since the Sages instituted** the recitation of: **Help us lie down, it is considered as an extended blessing of redemption. So, too, since the Sages instituted** this verse in prayer, **it is considered as an extended prayer.**

The Rebbe comments that in order to understand the nature of this verse ‘Hashem open my lips’, one needs to understand the difference between Torah study and Prayer. Torah study flows down from Hashem to the person. Although the individual studies and understands with his or her mind, the Torah itself flows from Hashem to the person without considering what spiritual level the person is on. Prayer, by contrast, is a movement reaching upwards towards G-d. In this people might be on very

different levels [or their prayer may vary depending the spiritual effort which the person invests in the prayer].

But the highest kind of prayer is an expression not of one's high spiritual level, but of total selflessness, bitul. This is what 'Hashem open my lips' expresses. The person transcends his or her own self. Now it is Hashem Who opens one's lips in prayer. Like the flow of Torah, the prayer now comes from above, without considering the spiritual level of the person. This is expressed in the words 'extended prayer' – it is, so to speak, prayer beyond prayer. And with that introduction one begins the Amidah⁷.

מְפָדֵי, הָאֵי "יְהִי לְרִצּוֹן אֱמֹרֵי פִי" מִשְׁמַע לְבָסוּף, וּמִשְׁמַע מְעִיקְרָא דְבְעִינָא לְמִימְרָא. מָאֵי טַעְמָא תְקַנּוּהוּ רַבְנָנּוּ לְאַחַר שְׁמוֹנֶה עֶשְׂרֵה בְרָכוֹת? לִימְרוּ מְעִיקְרָא!

With regard to the verse with which the prayer concludes, the Gemara deliberates: **Now, since this verse: “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before You,” can connote the end of prayer, petitioning G-d that He accept the prayer that was just recited, and it can connote the beginning of the prayer that he wants to recite:** May the words of my mouth which I am about to recite be acceptable before You. If so, the question arises: **Why did the Sages institute that it is to be recited after the eighteen blessings that constitute the Amida? Let it be recited at the beginning of the prayer.**

אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹנָדָה בְּרִיָּה דְרַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן פִּזְי: הוּאֵיל וְלֹא אָמְרוּ דָּוָד אֶלָּא לְאַחַר שְׁמוֹנֶה עֶשְׂרֵה פְּרָשִׁיּוֹת, לְפִיכֹד תְּקִינּוּ רַבְנָנּוּ לְאַחַר שְׁמוֹנֶה עֶשְׂרֵה בְרָכוֹת.

⁷ Nishmata d'Oraita, Berachot, p.54, from the Rebbe's Book of Discourses 5712 p.258 ff.

Rabbi Yehuda, son of Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi, said:

This verse is recited after the eighteen blessings comprising the *Amida* because **David only said** this verse **after eighteen chapters** of Psalms (end of ch. 19). **Therefore, the Sages instituted** to recite it **after the eighteen blessings** of the *Amida*.

הַיְי שְׁמוֹנֶה עָשָׂרָה?! תִּשַׁע עָשָׂרָה הַיְי!

The Gemara asks: **Are these eighteen psalms? They are nineteen** chapters that precede that verse.

”אֲשֶׁרִי הָאִישׁ” וְ”לָמָּה רָגִישׁוּ גוֹיִם” תְּדַא פְּרָשָׁה הִיא.

The Gemara answers: **“Happy is the man,”** the first chapter of Psalms, **and “Why are the nations in an uproar,”** the second chapter, **constitute a single chapter**, so the nineteen chapters are actually eighteen.

דְּאָמַר רַבִּי יְהוּדָה בְּרִיּוּת דְּרַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן פִּזִּי: מֵאַה וְשָׁלַשׁ פְּרָשִׁיּוֹת אָמַר דָּוִד, וְלֹא אָמַר ”הַלְלוּיָהּ” עַד שֶׁרָאָהּ בְּמַפְלֵתָן שֶׁל רְשָׁעִים, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: ”יִתְמוּ חַטָּאִים מִן הָאָרֶץ וְרְשָׁעִים עוֹד אֵינָם, בְּרַכִּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת ה' הַלְלוּיָהּ”.

The Gemara cites proof that the first two chapters are in fact a single chapter. **As Rabbi Yehuda, son of Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi, said: David said one hundred and three chapters, and he did not say *Halleluy-a* in any of them until he saw the downfall of the wicked.** Only then could David say *Halleluy-a* wholeheartedly. **As it is stated: “Let sins cease from the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless the Lord, my soul, *Halleluy-a*”** (Psalms 104:35).

We might think that David is saying *Halleluy-a* because of his joy at the destruction of the wicked. The Rebbe interprets this passage differently. David was rejoicing at

the transformation of the wicked, through Teshuvah. This means their deliberate sins became merits. In the phrase *יִתְמוּ חַטָּאִים מִן הָאָרֶץ* which was translated 'let sins cease from the earth', the word *yitamu* is explained by the Rebbe to mean 'be complete, whole, perfect'. The completeness and perfection of sin is when it has gone through the process of Teshuvah, and has been transformed. Then the repentant person reaches even higher than the Tzaddik who never sinned⁸. King David said Halleluy-ah because he was delighted at the greatness of 'the sweetening of judgement' and the transformation of bad to good⁹.

הֲנִי מֵאָה וְשָׁלֹשׁ? מֵאָה וְאַרְבַּע הַנְּיִין! אֵלָּא שָׁמַע מִיָּנָה "אֲשֶׁרִי הָאִישׁ" וְ"לָמָּה רָגַשׁוּ גוֹיִם" חֲדָא פְּרִשָׁה הִיא.

Here too, the Gemara notes that the calculation appears inaccurate: **Are these one hundred and three psalms? They are one hundred and four. Rather, conclude from this that "Happy is the man" and "Why are the nations in uproar" constitute a single portion.**

דְּאָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר נַחֲמָנִי אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן:

Additional proof that these two chapters comprise a single portion is cited from what **Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani said that Rabbi Yohanan said:**

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כָּל פְּרִשָׁה שֶׁהִזְתָּה חֲבִיבָה עַל דָּוִד, פָּתַח בָּהּ בְּ"אֲשֶׁרִי" וְסִיִּים בָּהּ בְּ"אֲשֶׁרִי". פָּתַח בְּ"אֲשֶׁרִי", דְּכָתִיב: "אֲשֶׁרִי הָאִישׁ". וְסִיִּים בְּ"אֲשֶׁרִי", דְּכָתִיב: "אֲשֶׁרִי כָּל חוֹסֵי בּוֹ".

⁸ Berachot 34b.

⁹ Torat Menachem 5743, night before Rosh Hashanah, p.2075.

Every chapter that was dear to David, he began with “happy is” and concluded with “happy is.” He opened with “happy is,” as it is written: “Happy is the man who has not walked in the counsel of the wicked or stood in the way of sinners or sat in the dwelling place of the scornful” (Psalms 1:1). **And he concluded with “happy,” as it is written** at the end of the chapter: “Pay homage in purity, lest He be angry, and you perish on the way when His anger is kindled suddenly. **Happy are those who take refuge in Him**” (Psalms 2:12). We see that these two chapters actually constitute a single chapter.

The Rebbe comments that Ashrei is regarded by the Kabbalah as relating to the Sefirah Keter¹⁰. Keter has two aspects, inner (Atik) and outer (Arich). Hence it sometimes might be seen as one, and sometimes as two. Either way, it expresses blessings pouring to us.

Hence in Tractate Berachot which is about Blessings, and especially when we are close to Rosh Hashanah, which concerns bringing Divine blessing to us, the emphasis is on this aspect¹¹.

Tosafot points out that this is the only example in the whole of Psalms where a Psalm begins with Ashrei and ends with Ashrei (taking Psalms 1 and 2 as one). Tosafot suggests that this also applies where the opening phrase is repeated at the end of the Psalm, such as the many Haleluka Psalms, which begin and end Haleluka.

¹⁰ As seen at the beginning of the comment on Ashrei in the Siddur with Chassidic Teachings.

¹¹ Torat Menachem 5743, night before Rosh Hshanah, p.2075.

The Rebbe explains why in the time of King David the first two Psalms were one, while later they separated into two. They speak of a time when (Psalm 1) the Jewish people observe the Torah properly, and therefore (Psalm 2) are able to defeat the nations who rise up against them. In the time of King David both of these statements were fulfilled. In later generations, and especially in a time of Exile, they constitute a hope for the future, and especially for the time of Moshiach¹².

There is a Chabad custom to say the Tehilim (Psalm) for the year of one's life. So if one is forty, meaning one is in one's 41st year, one says Psalm 41 daily. (So too for one's close loved ones). King David is known to have lived for 70 years. At the end of Psalm 72 it says 'The Prayers of David son of Yishai are ended'. Taking into account what the Talmud says here, that Psalms 1 and 2 were originally one, this statement would be at the end of Psalm 71, which he would say on his 70th birthday¹³.

הָנָהוּ בְּרִיּוֹנֵי דָהוּוּ בְּשִׁבְבוֹתֶיהָ דְּרַבִּי מֵאִיר וְהוּוּ קָא מְצַעְרוּ לֵיה טוֹבָא. הָנָה קָא
בְּעֵי רַבִּי מֵאִיר רַחֲמֵי עֲלוּיָהּוּ כִּי הֵיכִי דְלִימוֹתוֹ. אָמְרָה לֵיה בְּרוּרָא דְבִיתָהּוּ: מֵאִי
דְעַתְרָךְ — מִשּׁוּם דְּכָתִיב "יִתְמוּ חַטָּאִים", מִי כָתִיב "חַטָּאִים"? "חַטָּאִים" כָּתִיב.

With regard to the statement of Rabbi Yehuda, son of Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi, that David did not say *Halleluy-a* until he saw the downfall of the wicked, the Gemara relates: **There were these hooligans in Rabbi Meir's neighborhood who caused him a great deal of anguish. Rabbi Meir prayed for G-d to have mercy on them, that they should die. Rabbi Meir's wife, Berurya,**

¹² Likkutei Sichot vol.10 p. 77-9.

¹³ Source?

said to him: What is your thinking? On what basis do you pray for the death of these hooligans? Do you base yourself on the verse, **as it is written: “Let sins cease from the land”** (Psalms 104:35), which you interpret to mean that the world would be better if the wicked were destroyed? But **is it written, let sinners cease?**” Let **sins** cease, **is written**. One should pray for an end to their transgressions, not for the demise of the transgressors themselves.

ועוד, שפיל לסיפיה דקרא "ורשעים עוד אינם", כיון ד"יתמו חטאים" "ורשעים עוד אינם"? אלא בעי רחמי עלויהו דלהדרו בתשובה, "ורשעים עוד אינם".

Moreover, go to the end of the verse, where it says: “And the wicked will be no more.” If, as you suggest, **transgressions shall cease** refers to the demise of the evildoers, how is it possible that **the wicked will be no more**, i.e., that they will no longer be evil? **Rather, pray for G-d to have mercy on them, that they should repent**, as if they repent, then the wicked will be no more, as they will have repented.

בעא רחמי עלויהו, והדרו בתשובה.

Rabbi Meir saw that Berurya was correct **and he prayed for G-d to have mercy on them, and they repented.**

In fact the word חטאים could be read as meaning ‘sinners’ or ‘sins’. Berurya emphasized the interpretation that it means ‘sins’ rather than sinners¹⁴.

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¹⁴ This is a comment by the 16th cent editor of the Eyn Yakov, Rabbi Yakov ibn Habib, cited by Rabbi Adin Even Yisrael.

אמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי שמעון בן יוחי. מאי דכתיב, "פיה פתחה בחכמה ותורת חסד על לשונה". כנגד מי אמר שלמה מקרא זה? — לא אמרו אלא כנגד דוד אביו, שדר בחמשה עולמים, ואמר שירה.

Rabbi Yohanan said explanations of other verses in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai: What is the meaning of that which is written: "She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of loving-kindness is on her tongue" (Proverbs 31:26)? The Sages explain that this chapter discusses the wisdom of Torah and those who engage in its study, so **with reference to whom did Solomon say this verse? He said this verse about none other than his father, David,** who was the clearest example of one who opens his mouth in wisdom, and **who resided in five worlds** or stages of life **and his soul said a song** of praise corresponding to each of them. Five times David said: "Bless the Lord, O my soul," each corresponding to a different stage of life.

דר במעי אמו ואמר שירה, שנאמר: "ברכי נפשי את ה' וכל קרבי את שם קדשו".

He resided in his mother's womb, his first world, **and said a song** of praise of the pregnancy, **as it is stated:** "Of David. **Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me bless His holy name**" (Psalms 103:1), in which he thanks G-d for creating all that is within his mother, i.e., her womb.

יצא לאויר העולם ונסתפל בכוכבים ומזלות ואמר שירה, שנאמר: "ברכו ה' מלאכיו גברי כח עושי דברו לשמע בקול דברו ברכו ה' כל צבאיו וגו'".

He emerged into the atmosphere of the world, his second world, **looked upon the stars and constellations and said a song** of praise of G-d for the entirety of

creation, as it is stated: **“Bless the Lord, His angels, mighty in strength, that fulfill His word, listening to the voice of His word. Bless the Lord, all His hosts, His servants, that do His will. Bless the Lord, all His works, in all places of His kingship, bless my soul, Lord”** (Psalms 103:20–23). David saw the grandeur of all creation and recognized that they are mere servants, carrying out the will of their Creator (*Ma’ayan HaBerakhot*).

יִבַּק מִשְׁדֵּי אָמוֹ וְנִסְתַּכַּל בְּדַדְיָהּ וְאָמַר לְשִׁירָהּ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: “בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת ה’ וְאֵל תִּשְׁכַּחֵי כָּל גְּמוּלָיו”.

He nursed from his mother’s breast, his third world, and he looked upon her bosom and said a song of praise, as it is stated: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all His benefits [*gemulav*]” (Psalms 103:2). The etymological association is between *gemulav* and *gemulei mehalav*, which means weaned from milk (Isaiah 28:9).

מֵאֵי “כָּל גְּמוּלָיו”. אָמַר רַבִּי אֲבָהוּ: שֶׁעָשָׂה לָּהּ דְּדִים בְּמִקּוֹם בֵּינָהּ.

We still must understand, however, **what is** meant by **all His benefits?** What in particular is praiseworthy in what G-d provided, beyond merely providing for the infant? **Rabbi Abbahu said:** In contrast with most other animals, G-d **placed her breasts** near her heart, **the place** that is the source of understanding...¹⁵

רָאָה בְּמִפְלְתּוֹ שֶׁל רִשְׁעִים, וְאָמַר לְשִׁירָהּ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: “יִתְמוּ חֲטָאִים מִן הָאָרֶץ וְרִשְׁעִים עוֹד אֵינָם בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת ה’ הַלְלוּיָהּ”.

¹⁵ טעמא מאי? אמר רב יהודה: כדי שלא יסתכל במקום ערוה. רב מתנא אמר: כדי שלא יינק ממקום הטנופת.

What is the reason that G-d did this? **Rav Yehuda said: So that** the nursing child **would not look upon the place of** his mother’s nakedness. **Rav Mattana said: So that** the child **would not nurse from a place of uncleanness.**

He witnessed in both vision and reality the downfall of the wicked and he said a song of praise, as it is stated: “Let sins cease from the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul, *Halleluy-a*” (Psalms 104:35).

נסתפל ביום המיתה, ואמר שירה, שנאמר: “בְּרַכִּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת ה', ה' אֱלֹקֵי גְדֹלָתְךָ מְאֹד הוֹד וְהָדָר לְבָשֶׁתְךָ.”

The fifth world was when David **looked upon the day of death and said a song of praise, as it is stated: “Bless the Lord, O my soul. Lord my G-d, You are very great; You are clothed in glory and majesty” (Psalms 104:1);** for even death is a time of transcendence for the righteous.

מאי משמע דעל יום המיתה נאמר? אומר רבה בר רב שילא, מסיפא דעננינא, דכתיב: “תסתיר פניך יבהלון תסוף רוחם יגועון וגו'”.

The connection between this final praise and the day of death is unclear. The Gemara asks: **From where is it inferred that this verse was stated with regard to the day of death?** Rabba bar Rav Sheila says: We can derive this **from the verses at the end of the matter, where it is written: “You hide Your face, they vanish; You gather Your breath, they perish and return to the dust” (Psalms 104:29).**

What does this teach us about how we should live? Torah should always be a ‘hora’ah’, a teaching, instruction. Perhaps we too can see ourselves as living in different periods of life, and in each one, like King David, we look for the way to praise G-d.

רב שימי בר עוקבא ואמרי לה מר עוקבא, הנה שכית קמיה דרבי שמעון בן פזי, והנה מסדר אנדתא קמיה דרבי יהושע בן לוי. אמר ליה: מאי דכתיב, “בְּרַכִּי

נִפְשֵׁי אֶת ה' וְכָל קָרְבֵי אֶת שֵׁם קְדוֹשׁוֹ? אָמַר לִיה: בֵּא וּרְאֵה שְׁלֹא כְּמִדַּת הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מִדַּת בְּשָׂר וְדָם. מִדַּת בְּשָׂר וְדָם צָר צוּרָה עַל גְּבֵי הַכּוֹתֵל, וְאֵינּוּ יְכוּל לְהַטִּיל בָּהּ רוּחַ וּנְשָׁמָה קָרְבִים וּבְנֵי מַעֲיָם. וְהַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֵינּוּ כֵן, צָר צוּרָה בְּתוֹךְ צוּרָה וּמְטִיל בָּהּ רוּחַ וּנְשָׁמָה קָרְבִים וּבְנֵי מַעֲיָם. וְהֵינּוּ דְאָמְרָה חֲנָה: "אֵין קְדוֹשׁ כֵּה' כִּי אֵין בְּלִתְּהָ וְאֵין צוּר כְּאֱלֹהֵינוּ".

Other interpretations of this verse exist. The Gemara relates how **Rav Shimi bar Ukva, and some say Mar Ukva, would regularly study before Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi**, who was well versed in *aggada* and **would arrange the *aggada* before Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi.**

Once, Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi **said to him: What is the meaning of that which is written: "Bless the Lord, my soul, and all that is within me bless His Holy name"?**

Rav Shimi bar Ukva **said to Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi:**

Come and see that the attribute of the Holy One, Blessed be He, is not like the attribute of flesh and blood, as this verse praises the formation of man in his mother's womb. The attribute of flesh and blood is such that he shapes a form on the wall for all to see, yet he cannot instill it with a spirit and soul, bowels and intestines. While the Holy One, Blessed be He, is not so, as G-d shapes one form within another form, a child in its mother's womb, and instills it with spirit and soul, bowels and intestines. And this is the explanation of what Hannah said with regard to the birth of Samuel: "There is none holy like the Lord, for there is none like You, and there is no Rock like our G-d" (I Samuel 2:2).

מאי "אין צור כאלהינו" — אין צייר כאלהינו.

What is the meaning of there is no rock [tzur] like our G-d? There is no artist [tzayyar] like our G-d.

A Lubavitch teacher commented: a good artist can make the inanimate paint and canvas look as if it's a living being. He makes something appear to be what it is not. Likewise, Hashem makes the universe look inanimate, even though really it is filled with Divine life-force. Thus Hashem too is making things appear to be what they are not. Hence Hashem too is called an artist¹⁶.

More literally, the artist tries to show the inwardness of what he or she is depicting, or the inwardness of existence. Hashem creates the world and gives us much evidence that it has a Divine creator, as in the verse 'lift up your eyes to the heavens, and see Who created these'¹⁷ שאו מרום עיניכם וראו מי ברא אלה – noting that the initials of the first three words make the word Shema. In this sense we could say that indeed, Hashem is an artist.

¹⁶ Based on Nishmata d'Oraita, Berachot, p.55, from Biurei HaRaNaG (R.Nachum Goldschmidt) laTanya, pp.313-4, 417.

¹⁷ Isaiah 40:27.