

Talmud Tour

Berachot 8a-b

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Berachot end of 7b

Prayer with the Congregation

אָמַר לִיהוּ רַבִּי יִצְחָק לְרַב נַחֲמָן: מַאי טַעְמָא לָא אָתִי מָר לְבֵי כְּנִישְׁתָּא לְצַלוּיִי?
אָמַר לִיהוּ: לָא יְכִילְנָא. אָמַר לִיהוּ: לְכַנְפֵי לְמָר עֲשֶׂרָה וְלִיצְלֵי. אָמַר לִיהוּ: טְרִיקָא לִי
מִלְתָּא. וְלִימָא לִיהוּ מָר לְשְׁלוּסָא דְצַבּוּרָא, בְּעֵידָנָא דְמַצְלֵי צַבּוּרָא לִיתִי וְלוֹדְעֵיהּ
לְמָר.

As a prelude to another of the statements by Rabbi Yoḥanan in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai, the Gemara relates the following incident. **Rabbi Yitzhak said to Rav Naḥman: Why did the Master not come to the synagogue to pray? Rav Naḥman said to him: I was weak and unable to come. Rabbi Yitzhak said to him: Let the Master gather ten individuals, a prayer quorum, at your home and pray. Rav Naḥman said to him: It is difficult for me to impose upon the members of the community to come to my home to pray with me (*Sefer Mitzvot Gadol*). Rabbi Yitzhak suggested another option: **The Master should tell the congregation to send a****

messenger when the congregation is praying to come and inform the Master so you may pray at the same time.

אָמַר לִיה מַאי כּוּלֵי הָאִי? אָמַר לִיה דְּאָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן מִשּׁוּם רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחִי:

Rav Naḥman saw that Rabbi Yitzḥak was struggling to find a way for him to engage in communal prayer. **He asked: What is the reason for all this fuss? Rabbi Yitzḥak said to him: As Rabbi Yoḥanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai:**

Berachot 8a

מַאי דְּכֹתִיב "וַאֲנִי תַפְלִיתִי לָךְ ה' עֵת רְצוֹן". אֵימַתִּי עֵת רְצוֹן — בְּשַׁעֲהָ שְׁהַצְבוֹר מִתַּפְלִילִין.

What is the meaning of that which is written: “But as for me, let my prayer be unto You, Lord, in a time of favour; O G-d, in the abundance of Your mercy, answer me with the truth of Your salvation” (Psalms 69:14)? It appears that the individual is praying that his prayers will coincide with a special time of Divine favor. **When is a time of favor? It is at the time when the congregation is praying.** It is beneficial to pray together with the congregation, for G-d does not fail to respond to the entreaties of the congregation.

רַבִּי יוֹסֵי בְּרַבִּי חֲנִינָא אָמַר מִהֲכָא: "כֹּה אָמַר ה' בְּעֵת רְצוֹן עֲנִיתִיד".

Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Ḥanina, said that the unique quality of communal prayer is derived from here: “Thus said the Lord, in a time of acceptance I have answered you and on a day of salvation I have aided you” (Isaiah 49:8).

רבי אהא ברבי חנינא אמר מהכא: "הן אל כביר ולא ימאס": וכתוב: "פדה בשלום נפשי מקרב לי כי ברבים היו עמדי".

Rabbi Aḥa, son of Rabbi Ḥanina, said that it is derived from here: “Behold, G-d is mighty, He despises no one” (Job 36:5). He adopts an alternative reading of the verse: “Behold, G-d will not despise” the prayer of “the mighty,” i.e., the community. And it is written: “He has redeemed my soul in peace so that none came upon me; for there were many with me. G-d shall hear and answer them...” (Psalms 55:19–20). This verse teaches that the prayer was answered because there were many with me when it was offered.

תניא נמי הכי, רבי נתן אומר: מנין שאין הקדוש ברוך הוא מואס בתפלתן של רבים שנאמר: "הן אל כביר ולא ימאס", וכתוב: "פדה בשלום נפשי מקרב לי" וגו', אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: כל העוסק בתורה ובגמילות חסדים ומתפלל עם הצבור — מעלה אני עליו כאילו פדאני, לי ולבני, מבין אומות העולם.

That last proof was also taught in a *baraita*. Rabbi Natan says: From where do we know that the Holy One, Blessed be He, does not despise the prayer of the masses? As it is stated: “Behold, G-d does not despise the mighty,” and it is written: “He has redeemed my soul in peace so that none came upon me; for there were many with me.” Rabbi Natan interprets this not as David speaking about himself, but as G-d speaking to Israel. The Holy One, Blessed be He, says: Anyone who engages in Torah study, which is called peace in the verse: “All its ways are peace” (Proverbs 3:17); and in acts of kindness, and prays with the congregation, I ascribe to him credit as if he redeemed

Me and My children from among the nations of the world.

What is meant by 'acts of kindness'? The Lubavitcher Rebbe taught: the service of 'acts of kindness' should be in such a way that the other person's situation concerns one as much as one's own situation. One doesn't wait till the poor person comes to such a state where he has no choice but to ask for money, despite his shame, so as to look after himself and his family. Rather 'acts of kindness' becomes one's 'profession', so much so that one cannot rest, perhaps there is someone nearby who does not have enough money for food, or for clothing¹.

The Rebbe taught a Maamar on 19 Kislev 5726 (1965) which quotes this passage from the Talmud. 19 Kislev celebrates the release of Rabbi Shneur Zalman from imprisonment on account of false accusations by the Mitnaggedim. He wrote that he was told he would be freed 'as I was reading the verse 'He redeemed in peace my soul' (Ps.55:19).

Redeeming 'in peace' means not simply that one is victorious in war, but that one's enemies make genuine peace. This relates to each of the categories 'active in Torah study', 'acts of kindness' and 'prayer with the community'. Torah study here means the inner dimension of Torah, which draws from the highest level of the Sefirot, Keter, Crown. The same applies to 'acts of kindness'. This concept is not limited: it applies to helping not only the poor but also the rich (such as lending money to a rich man who is temporarily short of cash). In order for 'acts of

¹ Mishnata D'Oraita, Berachot, p.47, from Torat Menachem 5745 vol.2 p.859.

kindness' to have this power, they too draw from Keter, reaching the lowest level of the Sefirot. And prayer with the community means that one's prayer has a special quality, like during the Ten Days of Penitence², that it too reaches the inwardness of Keter. When one achieves these three aspects, one is able to be redeemed 'in peace', that all negative forces are transformed³.

In Chabad the idea of 'praying with the community' is often understood in terms of praying with the inner 'community' of one's entire being. But the concept of praying with the community instead of alone is also taught more literally.

Thus the Rebbe spoke of the text אז ישיר ישראל - 'then Israel sang'⁴. This is called the Song of the Well. The Rebbe linked this to prayer with the community, when all are singing together – as it says, 'then Israel' – all together – 'sang'. But this prayer should also lead to bitul, selflessness.

Through this selflessness one also ensures that the Torah which one studies is being understood in the right way, with genuine interpretations, rather than מגלה פנים שלא כהלכה 'revealing meanings which do not accord with the Halachah'. While generally in Chabad the kind of prayer which leads to a sense of selflessness is understood as solitary contemplative prayer, in this discourse the Rebbe

² See Rosh Hashanna 18a on the verse 'seek G-d when He can be found'.

³ Torat Menachem vol. 45, pp. 201, 209.

⁴ In Parshat Chukat, Numbers 21:17.

adds that it should be with the community, as in our passage in the Talmud⁵.

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דָּאָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי לְבָנָיָהּ: קְדִימוּ וְחַשְׂיכוּ וְעַיִלוּ לְבֵי כְנִישְׁתָּא, כִּי הֵיכִי דְתוֹרְכוּ חַיִּי. אָמַר רַבִּי אַחָא בְרַבִּי חֲנִינְא: מַאי קָרָא — “אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם שָׁמַע לִי לְשָׁקֵד עַל דְּלַתְתִּי יוֹם יוֹם לְשִׁמּוֹר מְזוּזוֹת פֶּתְחֵי”, וּכְתִיב בְּתַרְיָהּ: “כִּי מִלְצָאֵי מִצָּא חַיִּים”.

As Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said to his sons: Go early and go late and enter the synagogue, so that your lives will be extended. And Rabbi Aḥa, son of Rabbi Ḥanina, said: Upon what verse is this based? As it is stated: “Happy is the man who listens to Me, watching daily at My gates, guarding at My door posts” (Proverbs 8:34). And the reward for doing so is written thereafter: “For whoso finds Me finds life and obtains the favor of the Lord” (Proverbs 8:35).

אָמַר רַב חֲסֵדָא: לְעוֹלָם יִפְגַּס אָדָם שְׁנֵי פֶתְחִים בְּבַיִת הַכְּנֻסָּת. שְׁנֵי פֶתְחִים סְלָקָא דְעַתְדָּךְ?! אֵלָא אֵימָא, שְׁיַעוֹר שְׁנֵי פֶתְחִים, וְאַחַר כֵּךְ יִתְפַּלֵּל.

Based on this verse, **Rav Ḥisda said: A person should always enter two doorways into the synagogue.** This statement is unclear. Immediately, the Gemara asks: **Does it enter your mind** that Rav Ḥisda meant that one should enter **two doorways** literally? What if a synagogue only has a single doorway? Rather, emend his statement and **say** that Rav Ḥisda meant that **one should enter a distance of two doorways** into the synagogue **and then**

⁵ Discourse Az Yashir Yisrael, Parshat Chukat, 5743 (1983).

pray. In entering a distance of two doorways, one fulfills the verse: Guarding at My door posts, in the plural.

The Maggid of Mezeritch explains the ‘two doorways’ as love and awe of the Divine. For about awe it says ‘the beginning of wisdom is awe of G-d’ (Psalms 111:10), on which the Zohar comments 'זה השער לה' – this is the Gate to Hashem. The Midrash explains that that one goes through one door, and then another. After going through the first door, Awe of G-d, one comes to the second door, which is Love of G-d⁶.

But there is also a further comment on this, by Rabbi Shneur Zalman. The two doorways of love and awe are only the beginning of service of the Divine. The real service is within [the Palace], one cannot just stay at the doorways. We are in this world like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden ‘to work it and to guard it’⁷.

This means – the keeping of Mitzvot, activism, Torah study. Our inspired deeply felt prayer should be the gateway to dedicated activity.

”על זאת תפיל כל חסיד אליך לעת מצא”, אמר רבי חנינא: “לעת מצא” זו אשה, שניאמר: “מצא אשה מצא טוב”.

Having mentioned the verse, “For whoso finds Me finds life,” the Gemara seeks to clarify its meaning. It is said, **“For this, let every pious man pray to You in the time of finding, that the overflowing waters may not reach him”** (Psalms 32:6). With regard to the phrase, the time of finding, **Rabbi Hanina said: The time of finding** refers to

⁶ Nishnata d'Oraita Berachot p.47.

⁷ Ibid., p.48, from Discourses of R. Shneur Zalman on the Torah, vol.1, p.5.

the time one must find **a wife**, that one should pray to find a suitable woman to marry. **As it is said: “He who finds [matza] a wife finds [matza] good** and obtains favour from the Lord” (Proverbs 18:22).

The discourse Bati Legani by Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn speaks about marriage:

Thus we read (Ketubbot 17a) that "it was said of Rebi Yehudah the son of Rebi Ilai that at weddings he would twirl a sprig of myrtle as he danced before the bride."

"as Rav Shmuel bar Rav Yitzchak danced, he would juggle three twigs of myrtle. Said Rabbi Zeira: 'This venerable sage is embarrassing us' ('by making light of the respect due to Torah scholars through his undignified behavior').

When Rav Shmuel bar Rav Yitzchak passed away, "a pillar of fire appeared, separating him from all those who were near him."

Rabbi Zeira thereupon retracted his previous remark.

Folly of this kind transcends understanding, and thus represents a wondrously superior mode of conduct.

[The following citation from the Talmud throws light on the superrational conduct of the above-named Sages at weddings.]

"If a man (*Ish*) and a woman (*Isha*) are found worthy, the Divine Presence abides between them.

For *Ish* איש is composed of *Esh* ('fire') and the letter *Yud*; *Isha* אשה is composed of *Esh* and the letter *Heh*.

When a man and a woman are found worthy, [i.e., when they approach marriage in a Gdly way], the letters *yud* and *heh* combine to spell the Name of Gd: the *Shechinah* dwells in their midst." (Moreover, the Divine Presence then becomes manifest in the kind of marriage that is called — "an everlasting edifice.")

Because a marriage thus elicits such prodigious spiritual power, the joy of the Sages at weddings would burst the conventional bounds of propriety.

Indeed, in the wake of the dancing of Rav Shmuel bar Rav Yitzchak, he was granted a sublime revelation of Divine...

The explanation [for the necessity for this folly of holiness, for this pattern of behavior that transcends reason,] lies in the fact regarding the infinite *Ein-Sof* light: "No thought can grasp Him at all." For Gd transcends the very category of understanding⁸.

This passage speaks of the sublime holiness of marriage. Regarding the nature of womanhood, the central theme in Chassidic and Kabbalistic thought is the structure of the Sefirot, in which Malchut 'Kingship, is the feminine aspect which is the tenth Sefirah, bringing completion and fulfilment to all the other Sefirot; at the same time it also connects to the highest level, Keter, Crown.

⁸ Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn, *Bati Legani* (1950), ch.5



In Sefer Halikutim, comprising selections of the Chassidic teachings of the Tzemach Tzedek arranged alphabetically, the 62 page entry for 'man and woman' includes sections on: 'extra Understanding was given to the woman', 'beauty was given to the woman rather than the man', 'the woman is higher than the man', 'women did not serve the Golden Calf', 'a woman is considered circumcised...' etc.

Thus on the beauty of womanhood: It is known that 'the end is joined in the beginning, and the beginning in the end. That means that the illumination of Keter, Crown, the highest Sefirah, flows directly to Malchut, Kingship, the Feminine, the lowest Sefirah. As in the blessing 'May Hashem shine His face to you', with the radiance of Arikh Anpin, Keter. This is why the Matriarchs are described as being very beautiful, as it says about Sarah that 'she was very beautiful'. And Sara means Princess, Keter Malchut, the Crown of Kingship [and this applies to all Jewish women]. Malchut, Kingship, can have a quality of Severity, but the flow from Keter sweetens the severity.⁹

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בִּי נָתַן אֹמֶר: "לֵעֵת מְצֵא" — זו תּוֹרָה, שְׁנֵאָמַר: "כִּי מְצֵאִי מְצֵא חַיִּים" וְגו'.

Rabbi Natan says: The time of finding refers to the time of finding **Torah**, as it is stated in a verse referring to Torah: "**He who finds Me finds life.**" The Torah is the object most sought.

⁹ Sefer Halikkutim of the Tzemach Tzedek, section Ish-Ishah, p.1119.

רב נחמן בר יצחק אָמר — "לַעֲת מַצָּא" זוּ מִיתָה, שְׁנֵאמַר: "לְמוֹת תּוֹצְאוֹת".

Rav Naḥman bar Yitzḥak said: The time of finding

refers to **death**. One should pray that when death comes, he will leave the world peacefully, **as it is stated: "Issues [totzaot] of death"** (Psalms 68:21). Rav Naḥman bar Yitzḥak's statement is based on the etymological similarity between *totzaot* and *matza*, finding.

תְּנִיָּא נְמִי הֶכִי: תִּשַׁע מָאוֹת וּשְׁלֹשָׁה מֵינֵי מִיתָה נִבְרְאוּ בְּעוֹלָם, שְׁנֵאמַר: "לְמוֹת תּוֹצְאוֹת", "תּוֹצְאוֹת" בְּגִימְטְרִיָּא הֶכִי הוּוּ. קִשָּׁה שְׁבִכְלָן — אֶסְפְּרָא, נִיחָא שְׁבִכְלָן — נְשִׁיקָה. אֶסְפְּרָא דְמִיָּא כְּחִיזְרָא בְּגִבְבָּא דְעֵמְרָא דְלֹאֲחֹרֵי נִשְׂרָא, וְאִיכָּא דְאֵמְרֵי כְּפִיטוּרֵי בְּפִי וְשֵׁט, נְשִׁיקָה דְמִיָּא כְּמִשְׁחַל בְּנִיתָא מִחֻלְבָּא.

It was also taught in a *baraita*: Nine hundred and three types of death were created in the world, as it is stated: "Issues [totzaot] of death," and that, 903, is the numerical value [gimatriya] of totzaot. The Gemara explains that **the most difficult of all these types of death is croup [askara], while the easiest is the kiss of death. Croup is like a thorn entangled in a wool fleece, which, when pulled out backwards, tears the wool. Some say that croup is like ropes at the entrance to the esophagus, which would be nearly impossible to insert and excruciating to remove. The kiss of death is like drawing a hair from milk.**

The Mittlerer Rebbe said: spiritual death is worse than physical death. Hence, says the Previous Rebbe, one should devote oneself to rescuing people from spiritual death as one would devote oneself to saving people from drowning in the sea or from a burning building¹⁰.

¹⁰ Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn, Igrot Kodesh vol. 7, p.127.

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 אָמַר לִיהוּ רַבָּא לְרַפְרָם בַּר פֶּפְאָא: לֵימָא לָן מָר מֵהֵנִי מִיְלֵי מְעַלְיִיתָא דְאַמְרַתְּ
 מִשְׁמִיָּה דְרַב חֲסִידָא בְּמִילֵי דְבֵי כְּנִישְׁתָּא.

Returning to the tractate's central topic, **Rava said to Rafram bar Pappa: Let the Master say to us some of those outstanding statements that you said in the name of Rav Ḥisda with regard to matters of the synagogue.**

אָמַר לִיהוּ, הֲכִי אָמַר רַב חֲסִידָא: מַאי דְכָתִיב, "אוֹהֵב ה' שְׁעָרֵי צִיּוֹן מִכָּל מִשְׁכָּנוֹת
 יַעֲקֹב": אוֹהֵב ה' שְׁעָרִים הַמְצוּיָיִם בְּהִלְכָּהּ, יוֹתֵר מִבֵּיתֵי וּמִבֵּיתֵי מְדַרְשׁוֹת.

Rafram said to him, Rav Ḥisda said as follows: What is the meaning of the verse: “The Lord loves the gates of Zion [Tziyyon] more than all the dwellings of Jacob” (Psalms 87:2)? This means that the Lord loves the gates distinguished [metzuyanim] through the study of *halakha* as they are the gates of Zion, the outstanding gates, more than the synagogues and study halls. Although those places are the most outstanding of the dwellings of Jacob, they are not engaged in the study of *halakha*.

It is interesting that Malchut (with input from Keter, see below) is the source of Halachah. The Talmud thus moves from discussing women to the theme of Halachah.

וְהֵינּוּ דְאַמַּר רַבִּי חֲזִיָּא בַּר אֲמִי מִשְׁמִיָּה דְעוּלָּא: מִיּוֹם שְׁחָרַב בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ אֵין לוֹ
 לְהַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּעוֹלָמוֹ אֶלָּא אַרְבַּע אַמּוֹת שָׁל הִלְכָּהּ בְּלִבָּד.

And this concept, that *halakha* is the most sublime pursuit, is expressed in that which **Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Ami said in the name of Ulla: Since the day the Temple, where the Divine Presence rested in this world, was**

destroyed, the Holy One, Blessed be He, has only one place in His world where he reveals His presence exclusively; only the four cubits where the study of *halakha* is undertaken.

The Tzemach Tzedek discusses the idea that all the different opinions in the Talmud are sacred, ‘this opinion and that opinion are both words of the living G-d’, which seems to contrast with the fact that only one opinion is the actual Halachah governing the way we live our lives.

The Torah was given with 49 aspects of impure, and 49 aspects of pure. These are the 49 Gates of Understanding (Binah). Hence there are opinions which move to the right, the side of Chesed, Kindness, like Beit Hillel, who often permit a certain action, while there are other opinions which move to the left, the side of Din, Judgement, like Beit Shammai, who often forbid the action. Both of these are called words of the Living G-d, Elokim Chaim, which relates to the Sefirah Binah, Understanding.

But the Halachah is from a higher level: from Chochmah, Wisdom. While Binah expresses Understanding, the power of thought, to understand in many different ways, Wisdom expresses bitul, selflessness, just being bonded to the Infinite Divine beyond. This is called ‘Emet Havaye LeOlam’ ‘The Truth of G-d for ever’, and *חותמו של הקב"ה אמת* – the seal of the Holy One is Truth. This is the source of the Halachah.

In the case of Hillel and Shammai, the Talmud says that while Shammai was more sharp in understanding, Hillel was more meek. This is why the Halachah is like Hillel:

the fact of being meek and humble links with *bitul*, the selflessness of Wisdom, the source of Halachah.

The fact that the Talmud speaks of ‘four cubits of Halachah’ links to the four letters of the Divine Name, the Tetragrammaton¹¹.

וְאָמַר אַבְיִי: מְרִישׁ הָיָה גְּרִיסָנָא בְּגוּ בֵּיתָא וּמְצַלִּינָא בְּבֵי כְּנִישְׁתָּא. כִּיּוֹן דְּשָׁמְעָנָא לְהָא דְּאָמַר רַבִּי חֵיָא בַר אַמֵּי מִשְׁמִיָּה דְּעוּלָא — מִיּוֹם שְׁחָרַב בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ אֵין לוֹ לְהַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּעוּלְמוֹ אֵלָא אַרְבַּע אַמּוֹת שְׁל הֶלְכָה בְּלִבָּד — לָא הָיָה מְצַלִּינָא אֵלָא הֵיכָא דְּגְרִיסָנָא.

This statement has practical ramifications. **Abaye said: At first I studied in the house and prayed in the synagogue. Once I heard what Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Ami said in the name of Ulla: Since the day the Temple was destroyed, the Holy One, Blessed be He, has only one place in His world, only the four cubits of *halakha* alone, from which I understood the significance of the four cubits of *halakha*, and I pray only where I study.**

רַבִּי אַמֵּי וְרַבִּי אֲסִי אַף עַל גַּב דְּהוּוּ לְהוּוּ תְּלִיסַר בֵּי כְּנִישְׁתָּא בְּטַבְרִיא לָא מְצַלוּ אֵלָא בֵּינֵי עַמּוּדֵי, הֵיכָא דְּהוּוּ גְּרַסִּי.

Similarly, the Gemara relates that **Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Asi, despite the fact that they had thirteen synagogues in Tiberias, they would only pray between the pillars where they studied.**

The Rebbe gives another explanation of the idea of ‘four cubits of Halachah.’ A well known concept in the Talmud is that each person has four cubits of space around him or her. (A cubit is about half a metre, 18 inches, or a bit

¹¹ Nishmata d’Oraita, Berachot, 48-9, summarizing Or HaTorah of the Tzemach Tzedek, Bamidbar, vol.3 p. 922-3.

more). In Eruvin 48a it explains that a person's body is 3 cubits, and the fourth cubit is in order for the person to lift something up and place it above his or her head. In other words, says the Rebbe, the fourth cubit concerns the *actions* of the person, which is the realm of the practical halachah. This is why many passages in the Talmud speak of 'four cubits of Halachah', the person and his or her activities¹².

וְאָמַר רַבִּי חֵיִיא בַר אֲמִי מִשְׁמִיחָ דְּעוּלָא: גְּדוּל הַנְּהֻנָּה מִיְגִיעוּ יוֹתֵר מִיְרָא שְׁמַיִם,
 דְּאֵילוּ גַבֵּי יְרָא שְׁמַיִם פְּתִיב "אֲשֶׁרִי אִישׁ יֵרָא אֶת ה'", וְאֵילוּ גַבֵּי נְהֻנָּה מִיְגִיעוּ
 פְּתִיב: "יְגִיעַ פְּפִידָּ כִּי תֹאכֵל אֲשֶׁרִידָּ וְטוֹב לָדָּ." "אֲשֶׁרִידָּ" — בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, "וְטוֹב
 לָדָּ" — לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, וְלִגְבֵּי יְרָא שְׁמַיִם, "וְטוֹב לָדָּ" לָא פְּתִיב בֵּיהּ.

And Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Ami said in the name of Ulla: One who benefits from his hard labour is greater than a G-d-fearing person, i.e., one who is so enthralled by his fear of G-d that he sits idly by and does not work. As with regard to a G-d-fearing person, it is written: “Happy is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly desires His mitzvot” (Psalms 112:1), while with regard to one who benefits from his hard work, it is written: “By the labour of your hands you will live; you are happy and it is good for you” (Psalms 128:2). The Gemara explains this verse to mean that you are happy in this world, and it is good for you in the World-to-Come. And regarding a G-d-fearing person, happy is the man, is written about him but and it is good for you, is not written about him.

This can be understood as relating to the debate about the importance of practical work, earning a living. The Rambam believed that Torah scholars should have jobs

¹² Nishmata d'Oraita Berachot , 49-50, based on Likkutei Sichot vol.16 pp.195-6.

through which they earned their daily living, as he himself did, at first as a businessman (working with his brother) and then as a doctor. But later Sages claimed that full time scholars are needed. The Maharsha gives an ingenious interpretation: if the scholar does not have a way to earn his living, G-d will have to detract from his reward in the World to Come, in order to supply his needs now. He bases this on a story in the Gemoro about Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa who was very poor and – encouraged by his wife – he asked Hashem to help them. Hashem sent a golden table leg. He then saw in a dream that in Gan Eden all the other Tzaddikim are sitting with their wives at golden tables with three legs, while his has only two legs. So, encouraged by his wife, he prayed that the golden table leg should go back to Heaven. Miraculously, this took place¹³.

The Maggid of Mezeritch cites this passage about ‘work’ in the Talmud and applies it to the difference between Noach and Avraham. Noach walked ‘with’ G-d¹⁴ – את האלקים התהלך – while Avraham walked ‘in front of’ G-d¹⁵ – ה' אשר – התהלכתי לפניו . Noach simply went with G-d, fearing G-d and obedient to Him, but without making an effort himself. Hence he did not try to improve society and prevent the Flood from taking place. By contrast Avraham ‘worked’,

¹³ Taanit 25a. The Talmud says the miracle of taking the leg back was greater than the miracle of giving it.

¹⁴ Ber.6:9.

¹⁵ Ber.24:40

he taught people about G-d and raised them to a higher spiritual level, which is a far greater achievement¹⁶.

וְאָמַר רַבִּי חֵיִיא בַּר אַמִּי מִשְׁמִייה דְּעוּלָא: לְעוּלָם יְדוּר אָדָם בְּמִקּוּם רַבּוּ, שְׁפַל זְמַן
שְׁשֻׁמְעֵי בְּוֹן גְּרָא קַיִים, לֹא נָשָׂא שְׁלִמָה אֶת בֵּית פְּרַעֲזָה.

And Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Ami said in the name of Ulla: One should always live in the place where his teacher lives; thereby he will avoid sin. For as long as Shimi ben Gera, who according to tradition was a great Torah scholar and teacher of Solomon (see *Gittin* 59a), was alive, Solomon did not marry Pharaoh's daughter. Immediately after the Bible relates the death of Shimi (I Kings, end of ch. 2), Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter is recorded (beginning of ch. 3).

וְהִתְנַיָּא אֶל יְדוּר!

The Gemara raises an objection: **Wasn't it taught** in a *baraita* that one **should not live** where his teacher lives?

לָא קִנְשִׁיא, הָא דְּכִיִּיף לִיה, הָא דְּלֹא כְּיִיף לִיה.

The Gemara answers: **This is not difficult. This**, which says that one should live where his teacher lives, is referring to a case **where he is acquiescent to** his teacher and will heed his teaching and instruction. **While this *baraita***, which says that one should not live where his teacher lives, is referring to a case **where he is not acquiescent to him** and that will lead them to quarrel.

¹⁶ Or Torah sec.405, with some amplification. This is also in Nishmata d'Oraita Berachot p.50-51.

The relationship between teacher and student in the Talmud can often be seen as following the Rebbe – chassid model, of a dedicated student who follows the Rebbe’s guidance. However in this case the idea that the student disagrees with the teacher is more like the Rosh Yeshiva-student model, where the student might disagree with the teacher.

אָמַר רַב הוּנָא בַּר יְהוּדָה, אָמַר רַבִּי מִנְחֵם, אָמַר רַבִּי אֲמִי: מַאי דְכָתִיב, "וְעוֹזְבֵי ה' יִכָּלוּ" — זֶה הַמְנִיחַ סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה וְיוֹצֵא.

The Gemara again returns to the topic of the synagogue. **Rav Huna bar Yehuda said that Rabbi Menahem said that Rabbi Ami said: What is the practical halakhic meaning of that which is written: “They who forsake the Lord will perish” (Isaiah 1:28)? This verse refers to one who abandons the Torah scroll when it was taken out to be read and leaves the synagogue, as it appears that he is fleeing from G-d.**

רַבִּי אֲבָהוּ נִפִּיק בֵּין גְּבֻרָא לְגְבֻרָא.

Practically speaking, the Gemara relates that **Rabbi Abbahu would go out between one person** who read the Torah **and the next person** who did so. Since the scroll was closed between readers, it was not considered to be a show of contempt.

בְּעֵי רַב פָּפָא: בֵּין פְּסוּקָא לְפְסוּקָא מַהוּ?

Rav Pappa raised a dilemma: What is the ruling with regard to leaving between one verse and the next verse? Is one permitted to leave during a break in the Torah reading while the verse was translated into Aramaic?

תיקו.

An answer to this question was not found, so the dilemma **stands** unresolved.

רב ששית מהדר אפיה וגריס. אָמַר: אָנּוּ כְּדִידּוֹן וְאִינְהוּ כְּדִידְהוּ.

The Gemara relates that **Rav Sheshet would turn his face** away from the Torah while it was being read **and study**. Explaining this practice, **he said: We are engaged in ours**, the study of the Oral Torah **and they are engaged in theirs**, listening to the Written Torah. Since Rav Sheshet was engaged in Torah study, he is not considered one who forsakes the Lord.

אָמַר רַב הוּנָא בַר יְהוּדָה, אָמַר רַבִּי אֲמִי: לְעוֹלָם יִשְׁלִים אָדָם פְּרָשְׁיוֹתָיו עִם הַצְּבוּר. שְׁנַיִם מְקַרְא וְאַחַד פְּרָגוּם.

Rav Huna bar Yehuda said that Rabbi Ami said: A person should always complete his Torah portions with the congregation. The congregation reads a particular Torah portion every Shabbat, and during the week prior to each Shabbat, one is required to read the **Bible** text of the weekly portion **twice and the translation once**.

Berachot 8b

וְאֶפִּילוּ "עֵטְרוֹת וְדִיבָן". שְׁכַל הַמְּשָׁלִים פְּרָשְׁיוֹתָיו עִם הַצְּבוּר מְאָרִיכִין לוֹ יָמָיו וְשְׁבוֹתָיו.

This applies to every verse, **even** a verse like: "**Atarot and Divon** and Yazer and Nimra and Heshbon and Elaleh and Sevam and Nevo and Beon" (Numbers 32:3). While that verse is comprised entirely of names of places that are identical in Hebrew and Aramaic, one is nevertheless required to read the verse twice and its translation once,

as one who completes his Torah portions with the congregation is rewarded that his days and years are extended.

רב ביבאי בר אבאי סבר לאשלומינהו לפרשיותא דכלא שתא במעלי יומא דכפורי,
תנא ליה חייא בר רב מדפתי: כתיב: "ועניתם את נפשתיכם בתשעה לחודש
בערב".

Rav Beivai bar Abaye thought to finish all the Torah portions of the entire year, which he had been unable to complete at their appointed time, on the eve of Yom Kippur when he would have time to do so. But Ḥiyya bar Rav of Difti taught him: It is written with regard to Yom Kippur: “And you shall afflict your souls on the ninth day of the month in the evening, from evening to evening you shall keep your Sabbath” (Leviticus 23:32).

וכי בתשעה מתענין?! והלא בעשרה מתענין! אלא לומר לך כל האוכל ושותה
בתשיעי, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו מתענה תשיעי ועשירי.

The Gemara wonders: **And does one fast on the ninth of Tishrei? Doesn't one fast on the tenth of Tishrei, as the Torah says at the beginning of that portion: “However, on the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement; there shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall afflict your souls” (Leviticus 23:27)? Rather, this verse comes to tell you: One who eats and drinks on the ninth day of Tishrei in preparation for the fast the next day, the verse ascribes him credit as if he fasted on both the ninth and the tenth of Tishrei.** Ḥiyya bar Rav of Difti cited this verse to Rav Beivai bar Abaye to teach him that Yom Kippur eve is dedicated to eating and drinking, not to completing the Torah portions one may have missed throughout the year.

סָבַר לְאַקְדוּמֵינְהוּ, אָמַר לִיהָ הָהוּא סָבָא, תְּנִינָא: וּבְלִבְדָּא שְׁלֵא יְקַדִּים וְשְׁלֵא יֵאָחַר.

When Rav Beivai heard this, **he thought to** read the Torah portions **earlier**, before they were to be read by the community. **A certain unnamed elder told him, we learned: As long as one does not** read the Torah portions **earlier or later** than the congregation. One must read them together with the congregation.

כְּדֹאֲמַר לְהוּ רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי לְבָנָיָהּ: אֲשַׁלְּמוּ פְּרָשְׁיוֹתַי יַיְכוּ עִם הַצְּבוּר שְׁנַיִם מִקְרָא וְאַחַד תַּרְגוּם.

As Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi told his sons: Complete your portions with the congregation, the Bible text twice and the translation once.

The Tzemach Tzedek stated that the Hebrew text of the Torah is like the ‘Upper Unity’, in which all one perceives is the Divine. But the Aramaic translation is like the ‘Lower Unity’, in which one sees the world – but knows that it is impregnated with the Divine¹⁷. Further, he said the Aramaic translation is the ‘external aspect’ of holiness. Hence it relates to or Animal Souls. When a person recites the Hebrew twice and Aramaic once, they are purifying their Animal Souls¹⁸.

The Rebbe comments that Aramais is close to Hebrew. Further, there are phrases in Aramaic in the Torah (and whole sections elsewhere in the Bible). But at the same time, Aramaic is one of the seventy languages. By using

¹⁷ Sefer Halikkutim, letter Tav, p.329, from the Tzemach Tzedek on Nach, p.1117.

¹⁸ Sefer Halikkutim, loc cit., from Drushim for Pesach, p.439.

the seventy languages for study of Torah, the seventy nations are transformed in a positive way¹⁹.

When an English translation of Tanya was published in 1962, the Rebbe wrote a Preface, which includes the following: “..any of the ‘seventy tongues’, when used as an instrument to disseminate the Torah and Mitzvoth, is itself ‘elevated’ thereby from its earthly domain into the sphere of holiness, while at the same time serving as a vehicle to draw the Torah and Mitzvoth from above downward, to those who read and understand this language..”²⁰

.....

וְהִזְהָרוּ בְּזִמְנֵן שֶׁשָּׂכַח תְּלִמּוּדוֹ מִחֶמֶת אוֹנְסוֹ. דְּאִמְרֵינָן: לִוְחֹת וְשִׁבְרֵי לִוְחֹת מוֹנְחֹת בְּאֶרֶץ.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi further advised: **And be careful to continue to respect an elder who has forgotten his Torah knowledge due to circumstances beyond his control.** Even though he is no longer a Torah scholar, he must still be respected for the Torah that he once possessed. **As we say: Both the tablets of the Covenant and the broken tablets are placed in the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple.** Even though the first tablets were broken, their sanctity obligates one not to treat them with contempt. An elder who forgot the Torah knowledge he once possessed is likened to these broken tablets.

¹⁹ Torat Menachem, 5751, vol.1, p.237 n.41.

²⁰ Tanya, bi-lingual edition (1980), p.768.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat any print-out of these pages with care