

THE TZADDIKIM IN GAN EDEN

THE TZADDIK DOESN'T GIVE ANY REST TO HIS EYES, DAY OR NIGHT UNTIL HE REBUKES THE EVILDOERS AND BRINGS THEM TO DO TESHUVA

(THE HOLY ZOHAR 1, 20)

EVEN TZADDIKIM IN GAN EDEN FEEL SHAME IF THEY DID NOT DO A MITZVAH DURING THEIR LIVES

In the Holy Book Reshit Chochma (Chapter 6) we read the following: “Our Rabbis Z”L explain the verse of Isaiah 4:5 in the following way: “Then The Lord will create a cloud of smoke all over the mount of Sion and its ladders, day and night”. Raba bar Hana said, said Rabbi Yochanan: In the future, the Holy One Blessed Be He will make for each Tzaddik seven thrones in Gan Eden, as it is written: “Because on top of each glory there is a cover”. Rabbi Yochanan said that the verse teaches us that for each TZADDIK, the Holy One Blessed Be He makes a chuppa. In the chuppa there is a cloud of smoke. What for? Rabbi Chanina Hagadol says, for each TZADDIK not to feel shame about the other. Woe for this shame. Woe for this sorrow.

G-D INCREASED THE NUMBER OF MITZVOT SO THAT EACH TZADDIK WILL REACH A HIGH LEVEL IN ONE OF THEM

Maharsha explains the reason for the cloud in the chuppa. Since each Tzaddik has eventually a higher level that comes from a specific mitzvah, and that level in that mitzvah other Tzaddikim don't have (That is why G-d increased Torah and the Mitzvoth so that each Tzaddik can have a high level in a particular mitzvah, and that way no Tzaddik will feel shame about one another. That is why there is a cloud in each chuppa, meaning there is a specific mitzvah for each Tzaddik in which he reached a higher level than his neighbor. Then, for whom does he say “Woe for this shame, Woe for this sorrow? For the common man that did not reach any level on any mitzvah.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai Z”L says in the Zohar, and is brought forth at the end of the chapter SHAAR HAYIRA in RESHIT CHOCHMA: We have studied what happens to the body: Seven days after death, the corpse begins to decompose to turn to the dust where it came from, while the soul enters its place, and enters through Mearat Hamachpela (The cave where Adam and the

Patriarchs are buried); sees what it has to see and enters where it has to enter until it reaches Gan Eden. There it finds the cherubs and the flagrant flame that flows around the lower Gan Eden. If the soul deserves it, then it enters.

AT MIDNIGHT THE HOLY ONE BLESSED BE HE ENTERS GAN EDEN TO BE WITH THE TZADDIKIM

It says in the holy book KAV HAYASHAR (Chapter 21): When the Holy One Blessed Be He enters Gan Eden after midnight to join the Tzaddikim, all the gates of heaven open up, and this is the best time to study Torah. Groups of angels and of Tzaddikim with all kinds of fragrances, break up in happiness and joy singing songs in front of the Holy One Blessed be He, as king David (Psalms 140:14) says: “Certainly the Tzaddikim will thank your name and the righteous will sit in your presence”. When will the Tzaddikim thank Your Name? When the righteous are in your presence, that is when they are in front of You, at Eden at midnight.

G-D LOVES THE JEWS WHO WAKE UP EARLY TO PRAY

Immediately, three groups of angels that are in charge of the night guards sing until dawn arrives. Jews have the duty to wake up at dawn to pray in front of the King of the world. Why do they have to wait so long to start singing their prayers? Until that time, the angels are singing and G-d is in Heaven. Only when the Blessed One comes down and is amongst us it is good to worship Him down here. That is what is meant by King Solomon in Proverbs 8:17 when he says “I love the ones that love me, and the ones that desire me, will find me”. These are the ones that pray at dawn, when G-d is accessible to accomplish the wishes of their hearts.

Rabbi Yochanan said, in the name of Rebbi: When the Holy One comes out of those worlds he longs for and comes to join the Tzaddikim in Gan Eden, He waits to see if He hears the voices of the righteous that study TORAH since it is written: that voice is nicer to Him than all the songs of worship of the angels of heaven, as it is written in the Song of Songs (Chapter 6:11): To the orchard of walnuts I came down, to look...” To look what? To look at those who study Torah at night.

GAN EDEN IS COMPARED TO A WALNUT ORCHARD

Rabbi Isaac Said: Is Gan Eden also called the walnut orchard? Yes, replied Rabbi Yochanan; of course, Gan Eden is called the “walnut orchard”, since just as the walnut is enclosed completely and has many shells, so is Gan Eden; completely enclosed, and guarded by guards that can not be seen by angels, seraphim, chashmalim or the eyes of the prophets, as it is written: (Isaiah 64:3)

“For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen, G-D besides you, should do such a thing for him who waits for him.”

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai said: I was standing in front of Rabbi Barrocca who said: Now I will be able to enter the walnut orchard with the pious of Israel, and I did not know what he was saying until I heard Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakay saying that the Holy One Blessed be He called the Gan Eden “Ginat Egoz”, the walnut orchard. Just as the walnut has many layers and the fruit is inside, so the same happens with Gan Eden. The garden (Gan) is outside and EDEN is inside.

Then, happy he whose path is perfection, who studies Torah and all he does is Leshem Shamayim (for heaven’s sake without ulterior motives), then his soul is ready to enter Gan Eden, called the “walnut orchard”, which is the life of the World to Come.

HEAVENLY YERUSHALAYIM PREPARED FOR THE SOULS OF THE TZADDIKIM

Rabbi Yehudah said in the Zohar Chadash (Parashat Noach. MIDRASH HANEELAM 20:4): The Holy One made the Jerusalem of heaven and laid it opposite the Jerusalem of earth, and G-d promised not to enter the Jerusalem of heaven until Israel enters the Jerusalem on earth, as it is written: I am The Eternal and not man, The Holy One in your midst and I will not come to the city (Jerusalem of heaven). And seven groups of angels guard the surroundings, and in each gate, there is a group of angels. Those are the gates called the doors of justice, and those doors open up to let in the souls of the Tzaddikim. King David Z”L wishes to be with them, as it is said: (Psalms 118:14) “Open for me the doors of justice, I will walk through them, I will thank G-d, this is the gate of the Lord; the Tzaddikim will enter through it”. And above them, the guardian angels are on the walls of Jerusalem, as it is written: “On top of your walls, Oh Jerusalem! I have laid sentries that will never rest, day or night”. The reference is to the Jerusalem in Heaven and the Sentries are the angels.

When the souls enter where the other Tzaddikim are, they rejoice with them, and all the other members of the Yeshiva are happy! After being three days in the palaces mentioned above, they go out where a gentle breeze blows and all souls transform, and take their shapes, and from there on they receive the portion that belongs to them.

SEVEN GATES THROUGH WHICH THE SOULS OF THE TZADDIKIM ENTER

We have studied (Zohar Chadash) that the souls of the Righteous have seven doors to go through to get to the place that belongs to them, and in each one there is a guardian angel.

Through the first door the soul enters the Mearat Hamachpela (the cave where Adam and the Patriarchs lay), which is next to the Gan Eden, and Adam Harishon is guarding it, and if the soul has merits, he says: Come in, welcome! And it goes to the second gate.

HOW THE SOUL ENTERS THE SECOND GATE OF GAN EDEN

In the second gate, the soul finds the cherubs and the flagrant sword, and if it has merits, it enters; otherwise it receives its punishment right there (it is judged and burned by the flames that the cherubs spit out of their mouths). And in front of them, down here, the cherubs are in the sanctuary at the time the high priest enters the day of Yom Kippur. If it has merits, it enters and exists peacefully; otherwise, a fire comes out from between the cherubs that burn him down. Both the cherubs above and below stand facing each other. The ones that are in the gate of Gan Eden have the duty of burning the souls.

(If the soul has merit), he is given a pass that allows him to enter the Gan Eden below that is inside the Earth, and when he enters he is surrounded by a wall of fire and smoke, as it has been said (Isaiah 4:5): Then the Eternal One will create over all the Mount of Sion and its ladders, a cloud of smoke during day and flagrant flames, because on all its Glory (of the Temple) there will be a cover (divine protection) and it will be laid from above to the gates of heaven”. If he has the merits to go up, he goes up that channel, otherwise, he stays there and enjoys all the good things that are there.

IF THE SOUL DOES NOT HAVE MERITS, ITS ENTRY PASS IS TAKEN AWAY FROM IT

If it has merit to go up, it goes up until it reaches the third door, that is in front of the firmament called ZEBUL and gets to the Jerusalem there, where the sentries are; if it has merits they open the doors for it to enter; otherwise they close them, it is expelled and its entry pass is withdrawn. The soul then says (Songs: 5,7) “I was found by the sentries that surround the city”, those are the angels that guard the sanctuary and the Jerusalem above; “they beat me, they wounded me and they took my cover from me”, meaning the entry pass and the guards of the walls, as it is written: In your walls, Oh Jerusalem! I laid guards”.

FORTUNATE IS THE TZADDIK THAT DESERVES TO ENTER THE SEVENTH GATE. HE IS CALLED RIGHTEOUS

If it has merits, the soul enters through those doors and worships the Holy One Blessed be He in the sanctuary of above, and Michael, the great angel offers it as a sacrifice. Rabbi Isaac asked Rabbi Chiya: What sacrifice is this? It could be any type of sacrifice, but Rabbi Chiya disagrees,

and explains that Michael offers G-d the soul of the righteous as a man that brings a gift to the King.

And Michael goes with him to the fourth, fifth and sixth gate, and says in front of the Holy One Blessed Be He, Lord of the World, fortunate your sons descendants of your beloved Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Fortunate the good Tzaddikim that deserve this honor and so are taken to the seventh gate that is ARAVOT where the treasures of the good life are. The souls of all the good Tzaddikim are there also, singing together with angels, and worshipping the Holy One Blessed Be He, enjoying the ASPACLARIA HAMEIRA (The shining brightness) of His Divine Majesty, and the repose of the world to Come is there and it has never been seen, as it is written in Isaiah (64:3): "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen, G-D besides you, should do such a thing for him who waits for him."

G-D WILL GIVE GAN EDEN AS TZEDAKKA

In the book Sifte Tzaddikim, of the Holy Rabbi Medinawez, we read the following: The holy Tzaddik, man of G-d, the Rabbi of Apta, may his light shine upon us said: Once, Rabbi Elimelech Z"l, may his soul be enjoying the goodness of heaven, stayed in my house. I fixed for him an independent, private place. I went in there to ask him if he needed anything and I found him taking an accounting of himself, considering whether he was deserving of going to Olam Habba, and enumerating all his defects, and he said to himself: "Let us see. Even if you do not deserve it, anyway, the Holy One Blessed Be He, in His kindness will give you a part in Gan Eden, in Olam Habba". About it, it was said by Our Rabbis of blessed memory (See Sota 14): The Holy One practiced the whole Torah, consoled griever, dressed up the naked, visited the sick, and buried the dead. Let us analyze and see: "In Olam Habba, where there is no food or drink, what kind of tzedakka will be there? We must say that G-d will practice tzedakka with those that do not deserve the future world, so he lets them in to *OLAM HABBA* as tzedakka". That is how Rabbi Elimelech hoped he could enter in the Coming world. Fortunate is he for the faith he had in His Maker, Blessed be His name.

EVEN TZADDIKIM DON'T DESERVE MUCH BY RIGHT

It is brought in Sefer Chassidim ch. 418. (62) "Happy is the man who fears G-d, who is ardently devoted to His commandments" (Psalms 112:1). Our Rabbis expounded: (Avodah Zarah 19a.) "Happy is the person who repents when he is a man" that is to say, when he is in his youthful strength, when his passion seizes him and he conquers it-"who is ardently devoted to His commandments" and not to the reward for His commandments. And so it is taught, "'Don't be like servants who serve their master for the sake of receiving a reward (Avot 1:3.) *Even if a*

person is a faultless Tzaddik and never did anything wrong, by rights he is not entitled to any reward, because if he were to live two thousand years, he would be unable to repay one kindness of even the very smallest favors that the Holy One, blessed be He, does for him.

ON THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT THE TRUTH HAS TO BE TOLD

In the book (Revid Hazahav, parashat Nitzavim Page 72:4) we read the following: When a man comes to the day of the great and terrible judgment, he must tell the truth and nothing but the truth. He must confess to everything he did and did not do in this world, as I heard in the name of the Rabbi of all the Diaspora, Rabbi Elimelech, may his merit protect us, that he said about himself that he was sure he was going to have OLAM HABBA because when the time came for him to go to the heavenly world and he would be asked if he studied, he would answer no, when asked if he prayed, he would answer no, when asked if he did mitzvot and good deeds he would answer no. So they will answer to him from heaven, you are, then, telling the truth, and for that we will give you a part in the World to Come.

ONE OF THE THINGS FOR WHICH MAN WILL BE JUDGED IS WHETHER HE INVESTIGATED THE NATURE OF HIS SOUL, WHAT HE CAME TO THIS WORLD FOR, AND WHAT HE CAME TO FIX IN THIS WORLD. BECAUSE WHEN A MAN PLACES THESE THINGS ON HIS HEART, HE WILL BE SWIFT AS A STRONG MAN TO RUN AFTER THE PATHS OF LIFE, TO CORRECT WHAT HE SHOULD CORRECT, IN ORDER TO FULFILL THE INTENTION OF THE CREATOR, FOR AS LONG AS THE G-DLY SOUL DWELLS WITHIN HIM, BEFORE THE STARS OF HIS SOUL GROW DARK.

ZOHAR CHADASH (SHIR HA SHIRIM 70, 4)

REWARD IN THIS WORLD AND IN THE FUTURE WORLD TO HE WHO FEARS G-D

It is written, "fortunate the man that fears the Eternal and delights greatly in His commandments). (Psalms 112:1). The commentator Metzudat David explains that fearing G-d is considered praising Him. The man who is fearful of G-d fears trespassing a commandment *LO TAASE* (negative), and wishes to accomplish the *MITZVOTH ASE* (positive commandments). That is what is meant by the verse *ASHRE ISH YARE ET ADON-I BEMITZVOTAV CHAFETZ MEOD*, fortunate the man that fears the Eternal

(that fears to trespass the *LO TAASE*) and delights with His commandments (wishes to accomplish the mitzvoth *ASE*).

The psalmist writes further: “His descendants will be powerful on earth, the generation of the Just will be blessed” and not only this, but he is fortunate because also his descendants will do good and each and everyone of them will be powerful on earth and with them all the generation of the Just will be blessed, because they move the scales of all the world to the side of good.

“Good and wealth are in his home, and his justice will prevail forever” even when he receives a great reward in this world and has great wealth at home, the real reward is reserved for the Olam Habba. “His justice prevails forever”.

G-D PLEASE PROTECT THOSE WHO FEAR YOU FROM THE EVILDOERS WHO WANT TO HARM THEM

It is written: (Psalms 31:40) “How great is your kindness! which You have stored for those that fear you”; Rashi comments about this: We know the reward G-d has reserved in the world to come to those that fear his Holy Name. However, in this world that evil surrounds those who fear G-d, I ask G-d to hide them so that the evildoers do not harm them.

THE FEAR OF G-D ELEVATES A PERSON IN THE WORLD TO COME

And in the holy book KAV HAYASHAR (ch. 9) it is written that the reason why princes and officials are called NESIIM in Hebrew, is because when a man does good things and acts with fear of G-d, he rises in level (the word NASI, besides meaning prince and president, denotes elevated). In OLAM HABBA, his soul will be eternally guarded with KEDUSHA (Holiness).

SERVE G-D AND HAVE OTHER WORRIES TAKEN AWAY FROM YOU

Rabbenu Bachya Ibn Pakkuda in Chovot Halebabot (Shaar Habitachon ch. 3) says that if the person imposes himself the rule of serving G-d, decides to respect Him and trusts Him blindly keeping His Torah, then G-d will keep him from the bothers of traveling from one place to another to look for a living, that person will have his income come easy to Him, through permissible means and not through forbidden ones.

“Rabbi Nechunya Ben Hakkana said: Whoever takes upon himself the yoke of Torah has the yoke of government and the yoke of worldly cares taken away from him, but whoever rejects the yoke of Torah, he is given the yoke of the government and the yoke of worldly cares”

Pirke Avot (3:5)

SEPARATION FROM OTHER PEOPLE IS A GREAT WAY TO ACCEPT THE YOKE OF HEAVEN

And in the book Tzeidah LaDerekh, 207a it says: Whoever wants to accept upon himself the service of G-d, may He be blessed, should separate himself from other people. They said: There is no healing --better than graciousness. There is no treasure as the treasure of knowledge. There is no evil like the evil of stupidity. There is no pedigree better than the pedigree of trustworthiness. *There is no rest like the abandonment of desire. There is no action higher than pure thought. There is no righteousness greater than the love of suffering. There is no greater sin than desire. There is no sickness [worse] than worry. There is no worship purer than [one motivated by] love. There is no asceticism better than satisfaction [with one's lot]. There is no protection stronger than silence. There is no poverty greater than covetousness. There is no life sweeter than that of one who is happy with his portion.* Someone said: Shame is a reason for all uprightness. It is told that some travelers became lost. They saw a certain hermit in a tower. They said to him, show us the road that we should follow. He pointed with his hand to the heavens. They said to him, how [can that be]? He said to them, Prepare provisions before you set out on your way, according to the amount of time that you will stay in the World To Come. And they saw a youth of good appearance but thin of flesh. They asked him about the thinness of his flesh. He answered, I have tasted this world and found it bitter as wormwood, and its gold and silver are like its stones. And I look to the highest heavens and see people who are being led to Paradise, and others being led to hell and I am afraid of the burning fire.

600,000 ANGELS SERVE THE TZADDIK WHEN HE ARRIVES IN GAN EDEN

In The book Shevet Mussar it is brought from the book Yalkut Bereshit Remez, 20. Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi says, there are two doors of precious stones in Gan Eden, and on them there are 600,000 angels, and the face of each one of them shines like the

bright sky and when the Tzaddik comes to them they take away the clothes he had in the grave and put him eight dresses from the heavens of Glory. They put two crowns on his head, one made of precious stones and pearls and the other made of gold. They put eight branches of myrtle and praise him and tell him (kohelet 9:7) “Go and eat your bread happily”, they take him to a place rich in brooks, surrounded by a variety of roses and carnations.

MANY LEVELS AMONG THE TZADDIKIM

And in the book Aspaclaria Hameira (Parasha Ki Tisa) we read as follows: In many places in the Zohar and through our Holy sages, it is mentioned that there are different levels among the Tzaddikim, the pillars of Olam Habba in Gan Eden. As our masters of blessed memory said: There is a lower Gan Eden, and a higher Gan Eden. And below there is a big difference between the GAN (garden) and the EDEN because the Eden is very superior to the Gan (garden). He, who deserves to be in the Garden below, does not enjoy the Eden below, but only on Shabbat and Yamim Tovim, and when Shabbat is over, he returns from the Eden below to the Garden below. There are greater Tzaddikim that deserve to be in the Eden all of the time, and when Shabbat and Yamim Tovim arrive, they upgrade and transfer to the Garden above from the Eden below. The Garden above is superior to the Eden below. There is another category of Tzaddikim above these, that remain in the Garden above, and, when Sabbath and Yamim Tovim arrive, they enter the Eden above, about which it has been said (Isaiah 64:3) “For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen, G-d besides you, should do such a thing for him who waits for him.” thus the biggest Tzaddikim of Israel, as our holy fathers and mothers, the tribes, Moshe, Aaron and others, are always in the Eden above. The level that they have on Shabbat and Yamim Tovim cannot be reached by any other creature, and they share with the Shechinah (Presence of G-d) the delights of the Superior Eden.

THERE ARE SIXTY ANGELS STANDING OVER THE HEAD OF EACH TZADDIK

There are sixty angels above the head of each Tzaddik that tell him: go and enjoy and eat the honey because you studied the Torah, which is compared to honey as the psalmist wrote (Psalms 19:11) “Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb”, and drink wine (wine kept since the six days of creation), because you studied Torah compared to wine, as we read in the Song of Songs (ch. 8:2) “I will give you to drink the aromatic wine”.

DEPRIVE YOURSELF HERE TO ENJOY THE AFTERLIFE

The author of the book Shevet Mussar says: It is well known and our Rabbis taught us, that no one can enjoy the pleasures of the future world without limiting and depriving himself from a lot of things in this world; according to the verse that says: “This is the Law (the Torah) when a man dies in the tent”; because there is no real life except after death. Fortunate the one that leaves this world clean of sin and full of good deeds.

The Shevet Mussar brings an example in relation to the cited verse explaining that real life is attained only after death: “When a seed is sown, it will not grow until it rots and smells bad; the same happens with the person: He dies, and is buried and he turns to food for the worms. The soul, trapped in that body, recovers its freedom and that is when it starts to enjoy the pleasures of eternal life. The evolution of this process is what The Holy One Blessed Be He shows us in a natural way. If man stays without sleep two, three or four straight days, he dies of tiredness, as our wise masters Z”L said, and that is the reason why if one promises not to sleep, the promise is nullified immediately because it is impossible to accomplish it.

SLEEP IS ONE SIXTIETH OF DEATH BUT IN ORDER TO LIVE YOU NEED TO SLEEP (DIE)

It is written that dreams are a sixtieth part of death, as our sages Z”L said. The life of the person depends on death. If the person kills himself through sleep that is the sixtieth part of death, then he lives. The good life of Olam Habba is earned only by refraining from earthly pleasures, and by following the path of Torah and Avoda (divine service) as it is written, ADAM KI YAMUT BEOHEL. The man that dies in the tent, the tent of the Torah (berachot 63), because the word “death” applies only to the body, which is matter, but of course, he who separates from materialism and elevates to spirituality, he grabs to life, because when there is no matter (materialism), there is no death.

THE HOLY ZOHAR ON SLEEP, HE WHO IS PURE CAN ASCEND HIGHER TO SEE HIDDEN THINGS

R. Shimon was once on a journey in company with his son R. Eleazar and R. Abba and R. Judah. As they were going along, R. Shimon said: `I marvel how indifferent men are to the words of the Torah and the problem of their own existence! He proceeded to discourse on the text: With my soul have I desired you in the night, yea, with my spirit within me will I seek you early (Is. 26, 6). He said: `The inner meaning of this verse is as follows. When a man lies down in bed, his vital spirit (nefesh) leaves him and begins to mount on high, leaving with the body only the

impression of a receptacle which contains the heart-beat. The rest of it tries to soar from grade to grade, and in doing so it encounters certain bright but unclean essences. If it is pure and has not defiled itself by day, it rises above them, but if not, it becomes defiled among them and cleaves to them and does not rise any further. There they show her certain things which are going to happen in the near future: and sometimes they delude her and show her false things. Thus she goes about the whole night until the man wakes up, when she returns to her place. Happy are the righteous to whom G-d reveals His secrets in dreams, so that they may be on their guard against sin. Woe to the sinners who defile their bodies and their souls!...

REWARD TO THOSE WHO NOT DEFILE THEMSELVES DURING THE DAY

...As for those who have not defiled themselves during the day, when they fall asleep at night their souls begin to ascend, and first enter those grades which we have mentioned, but they do not cleave to them and continue to mount further. The soul which is privileged thus to rise finally appears before the gate of the celestial palace, and yearns with all its might to behold the beauty of the King and to visit His sanctuary. This is the man who ever hath a portion in the world to come, and this is the soul whose yearning when she ascends is for the Holy One, blessed be He, and who does not cleave to those other bright essences, but seeks out the holy essence in the place from which she (originally) issued.

KING DAVID ASKED G-D TO TEACH HIM TO FEAR HIS NAME

Therefore it is written, "With my soul have I desired you in the night", to pursue after you and not to be enticed away after false powers. Again, the words thereupon took the text: Teach me your way, O Lord, I will walk in your truth, unite my heart to fear your name (Ps. 86). He said: `This verse seems to conflict with the Rabbinical dictum that a man's whole life is in the hands of heaven, save his choice of virtue or vice. If this is so, how could David make such a request as this of G-d? What David really asked, however, was only that G-d should teach him His ways, that is, open his eyes to know the right and proper way; then he would himself be able to walk in the way of truth without turning aside right or left. As for the expression "my heart", this has the same significance as in the verse "the rock of my heart and my portion" (Ps. 73, 26). All this I entreat, he said, in order to fear Your name, to cleave to Your fear and to keep to the straight path. The words "to fear thy name" refer to David's allotted place in which the fear of G-d is located. Consider this...(The Holy Zohar I, 59a)

HE WHO FEARS G-D IS SECURE IN HIS FAITH

The Zohar continues: *...Every man who fears G-d is secure in his faith, since he is whole-hearted in the service of his Master. But he who does not constantly fear his Master is not truly possessed of faith, nor is he accounted worthy of a share in the future world.*' R. Shimon further discoursed on the text: But the path of the righteous is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day (Prov. iv, 18). He said: 'Happy are the righteous in this world and the world to come, since G-d desires to glorify them. For their path is as "the shining light", that is to say, that radiant light which G-d created at the beginning of things, and which He set aside for the righteous in the future world. This "shines more and more", for its brightness continually augments.

EVILDOERS KNOW THEY ARE IN THE WRONG PATH BUT THEY DON'T STOP TO REFLECT ON THE PUNISHMENT THAT WILL COME TO THEM

But of the wicked it is written, "The way of the wicked is as darkness, they know not at what they stumble" (Ibid. i9). In truth they do know; but they walk in a crooked path, and will not stop to reflect that one day G-d will judge them in the future world, and chastise them with the punishments of Gehinomm. Then they will bewail themselves every day, saying, "Woe to us that we did not incline our ears and listen." But as for the righteous, G-d will illumine them in the future World and will give them their due reward in a place which eye has never beheld, as it is written, "Eye has not seen beside you, O G-d, what thou wilt do for him that waits for you" (Is. LXIV, 3). Also, "And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me" (Is. LXVI, 2); and again, "And you shall tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet" (Mal. III, 21). Happy are the righteous in this world and in the world to come; of them it is written, "the righteous shall for ever inherit the earth" (Is. Lx, 21), and also, "verily the righteous shall praise thy name, the upright shall dwell in thy presence" (Ps. 140, 14) Blessed is the Lord for ever, Amen and Amen.'

COMPARE OUR KING TO A MERE MORTAL KING?

There is a story about a town that had a King the people loved like G-d. This king saw his people only once a year, and when he would go out on the street, wherever he went, demonstrations of honor were made, offering him every kind of presents, and some would even kill themselves for the king's honor. The benefit acquired by those poor who killed themselves was that the king would take care of the well being of their children and relatives. We see that this people would take their own lives just for their love of the king and their love to their

children, who would be well fed and would never go hungry because of the father's action. It is well known that to kill oneself is condemned by G-d and society, but they did it to please the king and for the good of their children.

How much more, we, the holy congregation of Israel, should sacrifice ourselves to our King and refrain from earthly pleasures, vanity of vanities and dedicate with love and thankfulness to study Torah and accomplish its Mitzvot. Our G-d not only takes care of our children but as opposed to the king of our story, He forbids suicide. Besides all these benefits, the laws of the Divine Torah, more than directed to promote physical health, are also intended to keep the soul's health.

In the words of our Rabbis, we should pray, study the Torah and make as many good deeds as we can, and moreover, and we should analyze our actions in order to correct mistakes and benefit with the immense reward that we, our children and the children of our children will receive. May G-d give us strength to love him and serve him forever and ever, AMEN.

WHAT THE MAGGID OF THE BET JOSEPH REVEALED

In The book Maggid Mesharim, it is told what the Maggid (angel that studied with our master Rabbi Joseph Karo Z"l, author of the Shulchan Aruch) revealed to him what was prepared for him when he would leave this world for a better one.

“All the Tzaddikim of Gan Eden will go out to meet you with the Shechinah on their heads and they will greet you with songs and praises and walk you to your Chuppa as it is done with the groom when he marries. There, seven Chuppot are prepared, one inside of the other, and other seven, one over the other. From the internal Chuppa, seven rivers of balsam flow and give out heavenly scent. A throne made of gold with seven steps and pearls and precious stones is ready for you; all the Tzaddikim will go with you singing until you reach the first Chuppa, there, you will get a second dress. The same honor you will receive in every Chuppa until you reach the last one, garnished with 14 dresses. Afterwards, two Tzaddikim will rise from the group that accompanies you, and one will stand to your right and one to your left. They will take you to the throne, but before leaving, they will put another suit on you, totaling 15 suits. With this, they will take you to the throne and will take a crown that is ready, put it on your head and will sit, one to your right and one to your left.

OTHER TZADDIKIM WILL JOIN YOU TO STUDY FROM YOUR TORAH

The other Tzaddikim will sit around you and will study for 180 days, the words of the Torah, just like Achashverosh's banquet (Esther 1:4) (Achashverosh made a banquet for the princes and

nobles, to show off his wealth and the Glory of his reign and the most precious of the magnificence of his greatness, for one hundred and eighty days, in this same way, will the richness of your Torah be studied during those 180 days...they will go with you, leading proclaiming and requesting respect for a holy son of the Supreme King. Give a well deserved kavod (respect) to this Holy Man created in the image of G-d, and all will sing psalms and praises until they will take you to a place where thirteen rivers of balsam flow. You will immerse in the first, the first dress will be taken off and you will then do tevilah (immersion in a body of water) in the second river and another dress will be taken off, until you bath in the thirteenth river and thirteen dresses are taken off. Then, the river Dinur, where you will submerge and the fourteenth dress will be taken off. Immediately a white dress will be brought and you will dress with it. The angel Michael, the heavenly High Priest is ready to take your soul up to The Holy One Blessed Be He, and more I am not authorized to reveal, as it is written in Isaiah 64:3 “For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen, G-D besides you, should do such a thing for him who waits for him.”

MY OWN EYES SAW A BOOK WITH THE HANDWRITING OF RABBI CHAYIM VITAL, MAY HIS MERIT SHIELD US, AND THERE IT SAID THAT OUR MASTER AND RABBI, THE HOLY ARIZAL, ALWAYS WARNED RABBI CHAYIM VITAL AND EVEN IN DREAMS HE WOULD COME TO HIM TO TELL HIM TO INCREASE HIS LECTURES TO REBUKE THE PEOPLE AND TO BRING THEM TO TESHUVA BECAUSE THE REDEMPTION DEPENDS ON THIS, AND THERE IS NO LIMIT TO THE MERIT OF THE ONE WHO ACTS THUS

(THE CHIDA, MACHAZIK BERACHA, ORACH CHAYIM, SIMAN 290)

THE STORY OF A MAN WITH A GOLDEN SCEPTER IN THE CAVE NEAR THE ENTRANCE TO GAN EDEN

In the Sefer Niflaot ha Zohar, it says the following: Once Rabbi Eleazar, son of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and Rabbi Abba were going from Tiberiah to Tzippori, and on the way they met a friend called Yoezer Ben Yaakob, and as they used to, they started talking about Torah, and particularly about the soul of the human being, and that when a person dies, the soul goes to the lower Gan Eden. They discussed the state of the soul when in Gan Eden, if it had the same form

as the body of the person had while alive or not. Rabbi Eleazar said that, as the body of a person is made up of four elements that are fire, air, water and dust, in the same way the soul, after the death of the person, is made up of four fundamental spiritual elements that exist under the heavenly throne. It is through those elements that the soul receives the same form it had when the person was alive.

A CAVE WITH AN ENTRANCE TO GAN EDEN

In the middle of the conversation, the friend they had met, Yoezer Ben Yaakob, interrupted them and said: I have to tell you something wonderful related to the subject you are discussing. A short while ago, I was on my way to visit a friend that lives in the outskirts of the city and suddenly, I lost my way. I saw a very beautiful tree and I came close to it and saw in one of its sides a cave. I peeked in and smelled a very nice odor, a very special fragrance made of the most select perfumes known to man. As I smelled them, I felt my strength growing and my soul reviving inside of me. I decided to go down into the cave, and as I went in deeper, the clarity increased. I got to a road that split in two and I took the way that was full of trees, flowers whose fragrance perfumed the air, to the point where it became difficult for me to keep breathing for the smell was so good and strong at the same time.

THERE IS A GUARD AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE CAVE TO CHECK WHO CAN GO IN

There I saw a man that held in his hand a scepter of gold, guarding one of the doors. When this man saw me, he came to me surprised and asked me: Who are you and what are you doing inside this cave? I got so scared that I could not even open my mouth, but I tried, and murmuring I told him that I was a member of the Chevra Kadisha (Holy Brotherhood) of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai; that I had lost my way and went into the cave to rest for a while because I felt the fresh and perfumed air that I breathed there. The man told me: Since you are from the Chevra Kadisha (Holy Brotherhood) of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, take this book and hand it to the Chevra Kadisha for they know the secret of the souls of the Tzaddikim in Gan Eden. At that point, he touched me with his scepter and made me fall asleep.

SOULS ENTER AND OTHERS COME OUT TO GREET THEM

In my dream I saw large lines of souls that were entering the cave through the same path, and the man with the scepter was showing them the way and with a light touch of the scepter he showed them which door they should enter through. They flew to the path the man showed them. I could not understand the meaning of that long line of souls.

I woke up and did not see anything else, but I felt very scared; then the man with the scepter came to me and asked me if I had seen something in my dream. I told him what I had seen and heard and he explained: You should know that this is the path taken by the souls of the Tzaddikim after they die to go to the lower Gan Eden. And that big noise you heard is made by the group of souls of the righteous that are in Gan Eden and come out to greet the new souls that arrive. They welcome them happily and that is where the noise comes from. And as the body of a man is made up of four basic elements, the same way, when a soul enters in the lower Gan Eden, it joins the four spiritual elements that are in the Eden, and from them the soul receives the same shape and structure that the person that possessed it had while alive, and also wears the suit of light of Gan Eden, each one according to his category and hierarchy, and to the good deeds the person did while alive.

RABBI ELEAZAR READS THE BOOK AND THEN IT FLIES OFF HIS HANDS

After telling me all this, the man with the scepter sent me out of the cave through the same path, and told me how to go back to my city. He reminded me of the little book he had given me and told me not to forget to give it to the Chevra Kadisha of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, and not to anybody else. So now that I found you, I see that from above I was guided by the Holy One Blessed Be He to find you here.

Then Yoezer Ben Yaacob happily gave the book to Rabbi Eleazar, son of Rabbi Shimon because he had accomplished his mission. When Rabbi Eleazar opened it, light came out from inside it and turned around the book. As soon as Rabbi Eleazar finished the book, it flew out of his hands and left.

THE SOUL IS DRESSED IN A SPECIAL SUIT SO THAT IT CAN RECEIVE THE LIGHT OF GAN EDEN

When man dies, the soul separates from the body and from this world, and wears a special suit that allows it to receive the light of Gan Eden. First, it is taken to the first palace because it is still not used nor prepared for the pleasures of the higher world, and it stays there for a while, until it is prepared. Then it is taken to another one; there are seven large halls in total in Gan Eden, extremely large to be measured.

In the book Tikune Zohar, Page 48:1 it says: The body of a man in this world is a prolonged leprosy for the soul. After it separates from the body and goes back to the Garden of Eden, it dresses up in its holy body.

THERE ARE THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS OF PALACES PREPARED FOR EACH TZADDIK

Each Tzaddik has thousand of palaces reserved for him, according to his category and level (as we see in the Zohar Hakadosh, Parashat BALAK, Page 186a and in Zohar Chadash, Parashat ACHARE MOT at the beginning of the Midrash Haneelam and other holy books). In each palace there are many rooms, as many rooms as the number of mitzvot the person did in his life and according to the enthusiasm of the person when he did the mitzvot, it is all taken into account to figure the reward.

The Tzaddikim are served by thousands of *Malachei Hasharet*, Ministering angels that tell them how to enjoy better the light that comes out of the Shechinah, and how to enjoy better the pleasures that correspond to them, impossible to conceive or calculate with our limited minds.

THE GREAT JOY EXPERIENCED BY THE SOUL WHEN IT IS DRESSED IN THE NEW BODY IN GAN EDEN

We said before that the Tzaddik wears a special suit. About it we read in the Zohar Hakadosh, Parashat Teruma (Page 103) (Explanation of the Sulam to the saying: “And behold it is very good”), when the soul leaves the body, through the agency of the angel of death, it gets a new body for Gan Eden, which is the same one it had before coming to this world and it left before it was born, It feels happy of having returned home. The soul is very happy of having left the material impediments and going back to the body of the spiritual world, from where it can see and know the superior secrets of this holy place, which would be impossible to accomplish in the material body.

THE HOLY ONE BLESSED BE HE REJOICES WITH THE TZADDIKIM IN GAN EDEN

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai said: At this moment, The Holy One Blessed Be He leaves the worlds He so much loves, and comes to Gan Eden to enjoy with the Tzaddikim; the herald says: *URI TZAFON UVOY TEMAN* (wake up winds of the North and come winds of the South), refresh my garden to distill its fragrances, and come my loved to my garden and eat its delicious fruits”. (Song of Songs 4:16)

We have learnt that when the wind of the North blows at midnight, and The Holy Blessed One Be He enters the garden of Eden, all aromatic species release their perfume and sing to Him as it is written in Tehillim: *AZ YERANENU KOL ATZE YAAR* (Then, all the trees in the woods sing in

front of The Lord). Said Rabbi Shimon: “Besides meaning woods, the word *YAAR* connotes beehives, thus meaning that those songs sung by the trees are sweet as honey for G-d”.

And all Tzaddikim are pleased with the bright light irradiated by the Shechinah, which not only lights them, but also feeds them, and they sing psalms of glory to Their Creator in Gan Eden. This is what king Salomon referred to in Song of Songs: *YAVO DODI LEGANO VE YOCHAL PERI MEGADAV* (Come my Beloved to your garden and eat of its pleasant fruits).

We have studied that souls are very dear to The Holy One Blessed Be He; and if you tell me that it is all the souls in the world, I will tell you there is no such thing, but just the souls of the Tzaddikim, whose home is there with Him. There are homes above and below, and we read in Psalms (84): *GAM TZIPOR MATZEA BAYIT*, (“also the bird has found a home”). This verse refers to the souls of the Tzaddikim. As the bird finds a home, the Tzaddikim find their place with G-d.

NO EYE HAS SEEN THE PLEASURE OF THE TZADDIKIM IN GAN EDEN

We have studied: There are three walls in Gan Eden. Between wall and wall, we find the souls and spirits of those, which enjoy inhaling the aroma of the Tzaddikim rejoicing inside the garden. Even though those souls and spirits did not have the merits to be in the garden, no one can imagine how happy they are.

HOW CAN WE TRADE AN ETERNAL JOY FOR A FLETING ONE THAT ALWAYS ENDS IN BITTERNESS

How can we make such stupidity as to trade an eternal world for a perishable one, and how can we sell our souls for a couple of silver coins whose value is vanity of vanities. Trading the immense pleasures of the world to come, the world of truth; where the soul enjoys the close presence of the Divine Majesty, for the vanishing pleasures of this world, pleasures that lead nowhere. Moreover, how do we allow the Yetzer Harah to stalk us constantly and separate us from our Merciful Creator? Let us reason for a moment. Isn't it true that when the person arrives to the world of truth and sees the celestial beauties, he regrets wasting away his time with no use, and recognizes that it was worth it to do mitzvot in this world to be able to enjoy the proximity of The Holy One Blessed He?

Look what our sages Z”L said in the Tractate KALA: Every day, an angel sent by G-d comes to destroy the world, but when Hakadosh Baruch Hu sees the children at the Rabbinic academy, He takes pity on them and withdraws his anger. In the Zohar, it says that when Israel answer Amen, the doors of Blessing and Happiness open in heaven.

THE STORY TOLD BY RABBI APTA

The Rabbi of Apta recounted the following story: There was a Jew without means wondering from one place to another, expecting people to give him Tzeddaka, and as this was embarrassing, he decided to go to a place where nobody knew who he was. And so, he wandered from place to place for a long while, even years until he reached a place called CHAVILA where, according to the Bible, there was lots of gold. In that place, there are many gold deposits and huge quantities of abandoned precious stones.

A PLACE WHERE DIAMONDS WERE WORTHLESS. JUST LIKE IN THIS WORLD FOR US SOMETIMES MITZVOT ARE WORTHLESS, G-D FORBID

There, everyone was allowed to go and take whatever he or she wanted. Therefore, the diamonds in that place were worthless there, unlike in other lands where they are very expensive. Our man did not value those stones because he thought they were plain rocks and he just took a small bag and just because he thought they were somewhat rare. In that country, they even used those stones to make buttons. Once, when he needed to buy a sweater because his was useless, he had to buy one with diamond buttons.

The trip back home took him a long time. On his way, he got lost and it took him several more days to arrive. Naturally, he lacked food. He met a man carrying a bag of old and stale bread covered with a layer of fresh bread to hide the bad one.

EXCHANGING DIAMONDS (MITZVOT) FOR OLD BREAD (PLEASURES THAT ROT)

Our man asked him for something to eat because he was starving: How much will you give me for the whole bag? The man asked. The only thing I have is some stones, He replied. The deal was done, our man took the precious stones from his backpack, handed them and received the bag of bread.

When he arrived home his children and wife went out to receive him, happy and expecting he had brought with him great gifts and some money; what a great disappointment when they opened the bag to find stale bread. They asked sadly: What is it that you brought us back? For this you spent so much time out there. For a bag of stale bread?

A couple of days went by when they took out of the backpack the leftovers. They found a diamond that was left behind in one of the corners of the bag, and they also realized the buttons in his sweater were made out of precious stones; they took them to a jeweler that appraised them for ten thousand rubles of gold; they sold them and the whole family was able to live

comfortably. Nevertheless, he was sad and started yelling and crying bitterly, pulling his hairs and moaned...Poor me, I am so sad. I was in that place filled with precious stones, I could have brought as many as I wanted but I could not value what I had handy. Even worse, I made the stupidity of trading the little I brought for a bag of stale bread. He cried and regretted his bad luck, G-d protect us.

The moral is clear: You come to this world to study Torah and do Mitzvot and good deeds (PICK UP DIAMONDS) in order to enjoy the reward in the World to Come. The person has no idea of the value the Torah's Mitzvot have.

The reward is immeasurable. In this regards, King Salomon said: "For her value is more than the value of pearls and all that you can wish for has no comparison to her". Our Rabbis Z"l said, in this world there is no reward, so there is nothing that serves as a prize for a single Mitzvah. The wise man has his eyes on his head, and does not waste time in useless things. He uses it to study Torah and do Mitzvot and good deeds, and in business he behaves accordingly to the laws of ethics and moral of the Torah, in keeping with the dictum in the book of Proverbs that says: "In all your ways, acknowledge Him". But the fool walks in darkness and spends his days in vanity, and not only that, but when he is in the Synagogue, he continually talks to whoever is next to him and he refrains from answering Amen that is so important. (See further in the section: the Sanctity of the synagogue)

Says Resh Lakish: 'In the future world there will be no Gehinomm. Rather G-d will take the sun out of its sack and it will become extraordinarily hot. The reshaim will suffer from it while the tzaddikim will be cured by it.'

(Nedarim 8B and Avoda Zara 3B)

HOW EASY IT IS TO PERFORM SOME MITZVOT WHOSE REWARD IS INFINITE

It is important to accomplish all the Mitzvot you can: Not to talk during Tefillah, when you hear a Beracha answer amen. This kind of Mitzvot, that are easy to keep, are like those stones mentioned in the previous example, that nobody wants to pick up as they are not considered

important. And if answering Amen seems very little in this world, we tell you it should be compared with the seeds sown with sweat and effort by the farmer. Afterwards, when the harvest grows he comes joyfully to harvest. This happens with Mitzvot also; in the afterworld, you will come cheerfully singing to harvest the reward for your actions.

THE ZOHAR AND THE REWARD FOR ANSWERING AMEN

We have learnt: Greater is he that answers "Amen" than he that says the blessing.' For so we have explained in the presence of R. Shimon, that Amen draws blessings from the Source to the King and from the King to the Matrona; in the inscribed letters of R. Eleazar, from A to M and from M to N, and when the blessings come to N, from there they issue forth to higher and lower and spread through all, and a voice proclaims, "Drink from the stream of blessings that So-and-so the servant of the Holy King has sent forth". *And when Israel below are careful to answer "Amen" with fitting devotion, many doors of blessing are opened for them above, many blessings are spread through all worlds, and great is the joy throughout. For this Israel receive a reward in this world and in the next.* In this world because when Israel are oppressed and offer up prayer a voice proclaims in all worlds, "Open ye the gates that the righteous nation which keeps truth may enter in" (Isa.26, 2): as Israel open for you gates of blessing, so open the gates for them and let their prayer be received for deliverance from their oppressors. In the next world what is their reward? *That when a man who was careful to answer Amen departs from this world, his soul ascends and they proclaim before him: Open the gates before him as he opened gates every day by being careful to answer Amen. But if one hears a blessing from the reader and is not careful to answer Amen, what is his punishment? As he did not open blessings below, so they do not open for him above, and when he leaves this world they proclaim before him: Close the gates in the face of So-and-so that he enter not, and do not receive him-woe to him and to his soul!*

THOSE WHO NEGLECT TO ANSWER AMEN ARE TAKEN TO THE LOWEST LEVEL OF GEHINOMM CALLED AVADON (DESTRUCTION)

We have learnt that the sinners of Gehinomm are in different levels, and that Gehinomm has a number of gates corresponding to those of the Garden of Eden, each with its own name. There is one level lower than all the rest which consists of a level on a level, and this is called the nether Sheol, "sheol" being one level and "nether" another below it. We have learnt that he who descends to Avadon, which is called "nether", never ascends again, and he is called "a man who has been wiped out from all worlds". To this place they take down those who scorn to answer Amen, and for all the amens which they have neglected they are judged in Gehinomm and taken

down to that lowest level which has no outlet, and from which they never ascend. Of such it is written, "As the cloud is consumed and withers away, so he that goes down to Shell shall come up no more" (Job 7, 9); this refers to that nether level.' R. Jose cited the verse: "For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and have hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah). ` "They have forsaken me", by refusing to sanctify the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, with Amen; and their punishment is "to hew out broken cisterns", by being taken down to Gehinomm level after level till they reach Abadon, which is called "nether". But if one sanctifies the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, by answering Amen with all his heart, he ascends grade after grade till he is regaled with that World-to-come which perennially issues forth. (The Holy Zohar V, 285)

AN AWESOME STORY ABOUT THE SEVERITY OF THE PROHIBITION TO TALK IN THE SYNAGOGUE ESPECIALLY WHILE WEARING TEFILLIN

I am copying for you an awesome but inspiring story that teaches about the severity of talking in the Synagogue during prayers, as told by the Tzaddik Harav Hagaon Rabbi Yeshaya Cheshin Zt'l, who taught Torah in public besides having taught thousands of pupils in the Talmud Torah of Etz Chaim in Yerushalayim the Holy City, may it be rebuilt. It is known that this Rabbi Yeshaya used to prepare boys for their Bar Mitzvah. He also wrote the book "Divrei Yeshaya", a book of speeches for Bar Mitzvah boys. He used to tell the following story to every boy who was to become Bar Mitzvah (from the Gaon Hatzadik Rabbi Shmuel Hominer zt'l).

A PLAGUE BREAKS OUT IN THE CITY FOR UNKNOWN REASONS

In the city of Ustra'a (the city where lived the Maharsha, Rav Yebi the grandfather of the author of "Mora Mikdash" and other holy Geonim and Tzaddikim who were Rabbonim in this city) there once broke out a plague, G-d protect us. The Rav of the city and his Beis Din proclaimed a fast and a day of prayer in order to arouse the people of the city to repent, in order to fulfill the verse (Eicha 3, 40) "Let us search our paths and investigate (our actions) and return to Hashem".

The Rav of the city and his Beis Din declared that anyone who knew of anything suspicious was obliged to declare it before the Beis Din. This was in order that it could be determined if that was the cause of the death of so many Jews so that the Tikkun (rectification) of the sin can be made in order to stop the plague, G-d protect us.

A PIOUS MAN RAISES SUSPICION WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

In this city, there was a Jew who was never seen praying in the synagogue but no one paid special attention to this for they thought that he probably prayed in a different synagogue. But

after the proclamation of the Beit Din, two members of the congregation decided to investigate and follow this man until they will discover the reason why he never comes to the synagogue to pray. They followed him around all day long but did not discover anything. They followed him at night and saw that at midnight he got up from his bed, lit a candle, got dressed and left his home. He locked the door after him and walked until he was out of the city. The two people silently followed him but he did not sense them. He continued walking until he entered the forest and disappeared. The two men following him feared to go after him in the forest because they suspected that he might belong to a group of thieves, and since they did not know where he went or what he might do, they decided to return to the city.

The next day they went to the Rav of the city and told him in detail what they had seen the previous night and what they had suspected, and perhaps he is the reason for the plague, G-d protect us. The Rav answered that indeed it is possibly so, but they did not really see what he did in the forest, and a Dayan (judge) can judge only what he actually sees. He therefore asked of them to act on the coming night as they had on the previous one, and to stand guard by his house. When they see him light his candle and to prepare himself to leave, they should come call the Rav as he will go with them. In this way he will see every action in detail with his own eyes.

THE PIOUS MAN CRIES EVERY NIGHT FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE

They did as they were told that night and when they saw him light his candle, they went to call the Rav, who was already waiting for them and ready to go. They returned before the man left his house. They all followed him silently in a roundabout way as on the previous night and saw him go into the forest. **They followed him into the forest until they saw him stop in a certain place and then sit on the floor. He took out a Siddur from his bag and started to say “Tikkun Chatzot” in a bitterly crying voice. He shouted and cried until their hearts melted from hearing his great crying and devotion. There was something else that caught their attention as they listened carefully. They heard, to their astonishment, two voices praying together Tikkun Chatzot – one voice came from this man, but they had no idea from where the other voice came. Even after straining, trying at least to recognize to whom the voice belonged, they did not manage to think of anyone whose voice was similar to this one.**

JEREMIAH THE PROPHET JOINS THE TZADDIK TO MOURN FOR THE BEIT HA MIKDASH

The Rav said to his companions, “It is obvious that this man is not a robber. We will wait here until he ends his “Tikkun Chatzot” and leaves the forest, so that we can see what else he does

here, and hopefully we will discover whose is the second voice that we heard.” They waited for him to finish, pick up his parcel and go out of the forest to return to the city. As soon as he came out of the forest the men suddenly came out of their hiding place and confronted him. The Rav said to him “We have followed you the entire night in order to know your actions because we suspected you of doing unworthy deeds that may be the cause of the terrible plague. After we saw you serving Hashem as you did, we retract our suspicion and we ask of you your forgiveness. But we would like you to answer one question we have. We saw you going alone into the forest but during the saying of Tikkun Chatzot we heard two voices! Please tell us, whose voice was the second one?” The man tried to avoid answering the question but the Rav said to him, “Realize that I am the “Mara De’atra” (Chief Rabbi) and I command you to tell me the truth. Whose was the second voice that we heard?” **He answered, “Since I have no choice because the Rav decreed that I must answer, I shall tell you the truth. My custom for a very long time is to mourn properly the Churban (destruction) of the Beit Mikdash (the holy Temple). There is great satisfaction from this in Heaven so they granted me a present by sending to me every night Yirmiyahu Hanavi (the prophet Jeremiah) himself, who was at the time of the destruction of the Temple and saw with his own eyes the terrible destruction. He comes to the forest to say Tikkun Chatzot with me, and this is the second voice that you heard”.**

MAYBE THIS MAN HAS MERIT TO ELIMINATE THE PLAGUE

The Rav saw that this was an opportune time so he asked him, “Since your words make a great impression in Heaven and you have such a great merit to say Tikkun Chatzot with Yirmiyahu Hanavi, please tell us why don’t you abolish the terrible decree of this plague from the city, G-d protect us. Or at least, let us know the cause of this evil, and what is the hidden sin in the city that is the source of our troubles. If you do not know yourself, perhaps you can ask Yirmiyahu Hanavi! And one more question I shall ask, why don’t you come to pray in the synagogue?” The man answered that on the following morning he shall come to pray Shacharit in the synagogue, and then all the questions will be answered. After saying this he left them, and each one went on his way.

The two people who were there and saw and heard all of these terrifying things could not restrain themselves and publicized in the whole city on that same day that there is a hidden Tzaddik in the city, and that he shall come to pray in the synagogue on the following morning. Everyone in the city heard the news, and thus, the next morning all came to the big synagogue in order to have the merit of seeing the face of the hidden Tzaddik. The synagogue could not hold the big

crowd so many people stood outside. They waited long before the davening in order to see him enter the synagogue but the time of davening came and he still hadn't arrived. The Rav proclaimed that the davening should not be deterred for him further and the prayers should begin.

THE TZADDIK INSTILLS FEAR ON THE CONGREGATION

As could be expected, the entire congregation davened together loudly with great devotion and with great expectation of the upcoming events. Suddenly, in the middle of Psukei D'zimra, the Tzaddik came and entered the synagogue wearing Tallit and Tefillin. When the people saw him, especially in his Tallit and Tefillin, they felt a deep awe and fear and some fainted from anxiety. Quite a commotion began while some tried to revive those who fainted. The Tzaddik went to a corner of the synagogue and prayed regularly. After the prayer the Rav approached him and told him that a new wonder and mystery was added to the previous ones of yesterday. Why did such a fear fall on the congregation when he entered the synagogue, until some people actually fainted? Furthermore, the Tzaddik promised that he would answer all of the questions from the previous night.

HE WHO KEEPS THE SANCTITY OF THE TEFILLIN WILL BE FEARED BY ALL CREATURES

The Tzaddik opened his holy mouth and answered. "It is simple, for it is written (Devorim 28,10): 'And all the nations of the land will see that G-d's name is called upon you, and they shall fear you', and our sages said (Berochos 6a) "Tanya, R' Eliezer the Great says – this refers to the Tefillin of the head. We thus see that the Tefillin have a Segula (a special quality) to cast fear and fright, and therefore when I entered the synagogue wearing my Tefillin, fear and fright fell upon the congregation from the awe of the Kedusha of the Tefillin." The Rav stopped him and asked, "But we too put on Tefillin each day, and it does not cast awe and fear?"

THE PLAGUE IS CAUSED BY PEOPLE TALKING IN THE SYNAGOGUE

The Tzaddik answered, " I am always careful not to talk any profane words with the Tefillin. I have always been careful with them in proper Kedusha and with seriousness and humility, and therefore the great Kedusha that is present in my Tefillin was not cancelled. Its Segula remained intact. Chazal said that the Tefillin of the head would cause all of the nations of the land to fear - their words are fulfilled in me and I am feared. If one is not careful with the Kedusha of the Tefillin, is careless and talks profane words in them, and treats them with mindlessness and frivolity – even though one fulfils the Mitzvah of putting on Kosher Tefillin, the Segula of the awe caused by the holiness that is inherent in them, is lost. **The reason**

for my absence from the synagogue is because people are not careful to refrain from talking profane words in the synagogue where the Kedusha is great and awesome. I can't bear all that, and in order not to be enticed to talk profanity in Shul, I prefer not to pray in the synagogue. This is also the reason for the terrible plague in the city, since people are not careful not to talk profanity in the synagogue, especially with the Tefillin. If you take care to correct all of this, the plague will stop immediately!" As soon as he ended speaking he went out and disappeared.

AFTER THE TZADDIK REBUKES THE PEOPLE, THE PLAGUE GOES AWAY

After the Rav heard all of that, he commanded to announce in the city that he will give a speech today in the great synagogue and no one dare be absent. The entire congregation gathered at the set time in the great synagogue, and the Rav went up and spoke. He gave an uplifting speech with great excitement and fervor about the Kedusha, awe and honor of the synagogue, and about the Kedusha of Tefillin, and the severity of speaking profanity in the synagogue, especially while wearing Tefillin. He told them the entire story told above and that the Tzaddik told him that this is the reason for the plague, G-d protect us. The entire congregation cried bitterly and there was a great arousal to mend their ways. They took upon themselves a Takana (regulation) that no one is allowed to talk in the synagogue any words of profanity especially while wearing Tefillin. They inscribed on a tablet in large letters that it is forbidden to talk any words of profanity in shul and they attached it to the wall of the shul. They strictly maintained this regulation and from that day onwards they were extremely careful about this regulation. When it happened that a guest who did not know from all of this came to the shul and talked about some matter, no one would answer him. He would be taken to the sign and be shown that it was prohibited to talk in shul. Only after taking him outside were they willing to listen to him and help him in all his needs. Immediately after this regulation was set, the plague stopped, and the Jews again had Light and Happiness.

Pay attention and remember this story, and take it upon yourself not to talk profanity in shul. Do not be distracted from the Tefillin, and the verse "And all the nations of the land will see that the name of G-d is called upon you, and they shall fear you" - will be fulfilled in you.

THE MITZVAH OF TZITZIT IS VERY PRECIOUS AND ITS REWARD IS IMMENSE

The Vilna Gaon may his merit protect us, before dying took the Tzitzit in his hands and said: Oh world! Oh world! You are so good! In this world, with just a few coins, we can buy a Tzitzit and just with that, we earn the right to enjoy the light of G-d's Divine Majesty in the World to Come where nothing can be bought”.

Something similar was said by the Baal Shem Tov, of blessed memory, and by the author of the Tzemach Tzedek of Lubavitch: Even the angel Michael, the biggest of all, devoted to serve G-d with all his strength, would give everything to wear a Tallit even with only one of the four fringes wore daily by the Jew. The root of the Mitzvot we practice is higher than the service of the biggest angel.

And now while we are here in this life we have the possibility to correct and make our soul worthy of a part in the Olam Habba. We never know when our day of departure will come, so it is good to do Teshuvah and beg our G-d, as a child does in front of his father, to allow us to return to Him with sincere regret.

A PERSON'S GOOD ACTION, EVEN IF IT IS SMALL, IN THESE TIMES IS WEIGHED AS MANY MITZVOT THAT THE PAST GENERATIONS KEPT

ONCE I ASKED MY TEACHER (THE HOLY ARIZAL), HOW IT WAS POSSIBLE ACCORDING TO HIM THAT I HAVE SUCH A GREAT SOUL, WHEN EVEN THE ONES THAT HAD LOW LEVELS IN THE EARLY GENERATIONS WERE TZADDIKIM AND CHASSIDIM AND I DON'T REACH UP TO THEIR LEVEL. AND HE TOLD ME: "YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT THE GREATNESS OF A SOUL IS NOT DEPENDENT ON THE ACTIONS THAT ARE DISCERNIBLE TO THE NAKED EYE, BECAUSE "G-D IS THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE HEART AND KIDNEYS..." AND A SMALL ACTION IN OUR TIMES IS EQUIVALENT TO MANY MITZVOT IN THE FIRST GENERATIONS, BECAUSE IN OUR GENERATIONS THE KELIPOT (IMPURITIES) ARE VERY BIG AND EVIL IS GREATLY STRENGTHENED WITHOUT END. AND IF I WERE NOW TO LIVE IN THOSE FIRST GENERATIONS, MY ACTIONS AND WISDOM WOULD BE GREATER THAN THAT OF MANY TZADDIKIM, TANNAIM AND AMORAIM...

(RABBI CHAYIM VITAL, SHAAR HA GILGULIM 62B)