

Zera Shimshon

by Rabbi Shimshon Chaim Nachmani zt"l

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אקדמות מילין

Introductory Words^{*,1}

סוד התורה וכבוד תורה, על חוג שמים ותהלה במשרים, עבים סתר לו לגבר אשר נרפו נסדרה, בתפיצה בנשיקה בדביקה. שוקד בלימודים בשבילי נהר דעה, נעוץ סופו בתחלת המחשבה להשיב העקוב למישור והרכסים לבקעה, מודע לבינה יקרא להשיב אמרים, אמת יהגה חכו, כביר מצאה ידו. די השיב קושיות נהניות בהרבה פתחים, לגינה ולביתו. ושם ישלח ידו ולקח מעץ החיים, לאכול לשבעה, מחמדים מימינו, ממתקים משמאלו, וזה חלקו מפל עמלו.

Translation	Translator's Interpretation
“The foundation of the Torah”² “and its majestic glory”^{3,4} “As [G-d] moves about the circuit of Heaven impartially, the clouds screen Him”⁵ “from the man whose path has been arranged”⁶ by Him “with desire, with affection, and with attachment.”⁷	G-d created man and provided rules of conduct. He favored the Jewish people, giving us the Torah, but He is impartial with regard to individuals. That is, He does not ignore the sins of those who are generally righteous, nor does He ignore the good deeds of those who are generally wicked. G-d has now hidden Himself, as prophecy has ended, but this ensures that we have free will. We should strive to cling to Him and to His Torah.

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For this Preface, the translator has provided a table in which the left-hand column features a translation of the author's very poetic Hebrew and Aramaic text, with bold font reflecting a near-literal translation and normal font used to add any words needed for clarity. The right-hand column features the translator's subjective interpretation.

¹ The Preface is entitled אקדמות מילין (*Akdmut Milin*) (Introduction to the Words), which is the name of a *piyyut* (authored by Rabbi Meir bar Yitzchak Nehorai of Worms, Germany) that is recited on the first day of Shavuot.

² Perhaps Menachot 99b; Ibn Ezra's Yesod Mora 1:3; or Rambam's Guide for the Perplexed, Part 2, 27:1.

³ Ps. 145:12: “to make known among men His mighty acts and *the majestic glory* of His kingship.”

⁴ In the Hebrew text, the initial letters of the first four words spell the four-lettered name of G-d.

⁵ Job 22:12–14: Eliphaz rebukes Job, “G-d is in the Heavenly heights; see the highest stars, how lofty! You say, ‘What can G-d know? Can He govern through the dense cloud? *The clouds screen Him* so He cannot see *as He moves about the circuit of Heaven.*’” Instead of a scoffer's view of G-d being unable to see man, Rabbi Nachmani applies the words to mean that man can't see G-d, and must strive to become close to Him.

Prov. 23:31: “Do not ogle that red wine, as it lends its color to the cup, as *it moves about impartially.*” Yoma 75a says that when a person drinks too much, he views every act as though it is on the same level ground, and thus views sins as inconsequential. But G-d does not view sins as inconsequential. Rather, speaking of G-d as impartial means that He does not show favoritism (Deut. 10:17), and will not ignore the sins of a man who was previously righteous, or ignore the repentance of a man who was previously wicked (Ezek. 18:21-30).

⁶ Cf. Job 3:23: “*To the man whose path is hidden . . .*” Rabbi Nachmani altered נסתרה (*nistara*) (*hidden*) to נסדרה (*nisdara*) (*is arranged*), adding a *geresh* to emphasize the change.

⁷ Gen. Rabbah 80:7: “Reish Lakish said, with three terms of affection the Holy One, blessed be He, loved Israel: *with attachment, with affection, and with desire.*”

“Being diligent in learning is,”⁸ for me, “the river of knowledge”:⁹ “its end lies at the beginning of the thought”¹⁰ of “making the rugged ground level and the ridges a plain”;¹¹ “calling Understanding a kinswoman”¹² “to give a reply,”¹³ “let his palate speak the truth,”¹⁴ “in his hand attaining plenty. It was sufficient to answer”¹⁵ “questions and problems”¹⁶ “in many openings, to the garden and to the palace.”¹⁷

Rabbi Nachmani strived to learn Torah, such as the Talmud, which has no formal beginning, but in which each tractate references teachings from other tractates, and in which each chapter ends with a stated desire that we should return to learn it again. He has tried to explain a number of difficult concepts, to clear the way for others to learn and to understand the Torah. He hopes that his interpretations are correct. Rabbi Nachmani has shared his insights by asking questions and by providing answers. For some questions, he offers a number of alternative answers.

⁸ Perhaps Avot D’Rabbi Natan 29:2: “[Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar] would say that each person who is *diligent about the words of Torah* will be granted diligent students.”

⁹ The text נהר דעה (*nahar deah*) (the river of knowledge) alludes to the celebrated Babylonian yeshivah נהרדעא (Nehardea).

¹⁰ Sefer Yetzirah 1:7: “These ten Sefirot which are, moreover, ineffable, have *their end even as their beginning*, conjoined, even as is a flame to a burning coal: for our G-d is superlative in His unity, and does not permit any second one.” [There are many other sources.] Ir Gibborim 41b (by the author of the Kli Yakar): “. . . because the end of an action has its *beginning in thought*.” Rabbeinu Bahya on Gen. 1:2: “Because the purpose of creation is to prepare for the era of the Messiah, and thus the beginning of the though the Messiah's day, and thus what begins with a though ends with an action.” [The words also appear in: Rabbeinu Bahya on Gen. 10:1; Rabbi Shimon ben Tzemach Doron (the Rashbatz), Magen Avot, Introduction 4; Tzror haMor on the Torah, Ex. 30:1; Tzror haMor on Song of Songs 6:1; Pardes Rimonim 11:5, 14:3.]

¹¹ Isaiah 40:4: “Let every valley be raised, every hill and mount made low. *Let the rugged ground become level, and the ridges become a plain.*” Chavot Yair 174:5: “. . . *making the rugged ground become level.*”

¹² Prov. 7:4: “Say to Wisdom, ‘You are my sister,’ and *call Understanding a kinswoman.*”

¹³ Prov. 22:21: “To let you know truly reliable words, that you may give *a faithful reply* to him who sent you.”

¹⁴ Prov. 8:7: “*My palate utters truth*; wickedness is abhorrent to my lips.”

¹⁵ Job 31:25: “Did I rejoice in my great wealth, *in my hand finding plenty?*” Lev. 25:28: “If his *hand* does not *find sufficient means to recover it*, what he sold shall remain with the purchaser until the jubilee.”

¹⁶ Rashba on Chullin 62a; Beit Yosef, Choshen Mishpat 210:2:1; Bach, Yoreh Deah 199:11:1.

¹⁷ Megillah 12a: “ ‘In the court of the *garden of the king’s palace*’ (Esther 1:5). Rav and Shmuel [disagreed with regard to how to understand the relationship between these three places: Court, garden, and palace:] One said: ‘[The guests were received in different places.] One who [according to his status] was fit for the courtyard [was brought] to the courtyard; one who was fit for the garden [was brought] to the garden; and one who was fit for the palace [was brought to the palace].’ And [the other] one said: ‘He first sat them in the courtyard, but it did not hold them, [as they were too numerous]. [He then sat them] in the garden, but it did not hold them either, until he brought them into the palace and it held them.’ A third understanding was taught in a *Baraita*: ‘He sat them in the courtyard and *opened two entranceways for them, one to the garden and one to the palace.*’ ”

<p>There “he will send his hand and take from the tree of life,”¹⁸ “to eat his fill”¹⁹—“delightful things on his right side, delicious things on his left side”²⁰—“and this is his portion from all his labor.”²¹</p>	<p>He has found great satisfaction through his efforts to apply wisdom to resolving some of the mysteries of the Torah. This <i>sefer, Zera Shimshon</i>, is something that will remain of that wisdom after his death.</p>
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אָמְנָם קוּשְׁטָא קֵאָי פִּי הַתּוֹרָה חֲתוּמָה נִתְּנָה, וְהִגָּה הַיּוֹצֵא מִפִּי הַנְּבִיאִים—רוּחַ ה' דִּבֶּר בָּם—כְּדִבְרֵי הַסֵּפֶר הַחֲתוּמָה וּמְלִיצָה חִידוֹת לָהֶם. דּוֹרוֹת הָרֵאשׁוֹנִים שָׁתוּ מִי הַבְּרָכָה הָעֲלִיוֹנָה, וְעָשׂוּ לָהֶם דְּדִים בְּמָקוֹם בִּינָה. חֲקָם וְחֲכָם מִמַּתְקִים וְכָלוּ מִתְמַדִּים. וְאַרְשֵׁת שְׂפָתָם מִימַר קַדִּישׁוֹ, מְעַט מִסִּגָּה אֶת הַמְּרוּבָה.

Translation	Translator’s Interpretation
<p>Actually, “the truth stands”²² that “the Torah was given as a sealed book,”²³ “and the utterance emanating from the mouths of the prophets”²⁴—“the spirit of G-d was spoken through them”²⁵—they are “like the</p>	<p>The Five Books of Moses are written in challenging language and contain many secrets that are hard to grasp. The prophets also spoke in complex language that is frequently difficult to understand.</p>

¹⁸ Gen. 3:22: “And the L-rd G-d said, “Now that the man has become like one of us, knowing good and bad, what if *he should stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life* and eat, and live forever!”

¹⁹ Isaiah 23:18: “And her gain and her hire shall be holiness to the L-rd; it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her gain shall be for them that dwell before the L-rd, *to eat their fill*, and for stately clothing.”

²⁰ In the Italian liturgy (Bnei Roma), the burial service ends: “Guardians of the hidden places of the Garden of Eden, guardians of the hidden places of the Garden of Eden, open the gates of the Garden of Eden for him and he will come into the Garden of Eden and will be entertained by the fruits of the Garden of Eden, *delightful things on his right, and delicious things on his left*. She answered and said to him, ‘Welcome, come!’ ” The text is found, for example, in Siddur Beracha k’Minhag Kahal Kadosh Bnei Roma (edited by Ya’akov ben Moshe ha-Levi, Venice, 1690). This was likely derived from Song of Songs 5:16: “His mouth is *delicious*, and all of him is *delightful*.”

²¹ Eccl. 2:10: “I withheld from my eyes nothing they asked for, and denied myself no enjoyment; rather, I got enjoyment out of all my wealth. *And that was my portion from all my labor.*”

²² Shabbat 104a: “And why do the letters [that comprise the word] *sheker* (falsehood) stand on one foot, and [the letters that comprise the word] *emet* (truth) [stand on bases that are wide like] bricks? [Because *the*] *truth stands* [eternal], but falsehood does not stand [eternal].”

²³ Gittin 60a: “One opinion is that *the Torah was given as a complete book*, [meaning that it was not written down incrementally, but rather, after teaching the Jewish people the entire Torah, Moses committed it to writing all at once].”

²⁴ Job 37:2: “Just listen to the noise of His rumbling, *To the sound that comes out of His mouth*” and Zech. 8:9: “these words *from the mouths of the prophets.*”

²⁵ II Sam. 23:2: “*The spirit of the L-rd has spoken through me.*”

words of the sealed book”²⁶ “and a figure of a riddle for them.”²⁷	
“The earlier generations”²⁸ “drank waters of the Upper Pool, and they made them breasts in the place of understanding.”²⁹	In Biblical days, the people were strengthened in learning Torah by the reassurance of prophets to trust in G-d. The prophets provided the wisdom of Torah as spiritual sustenance.
Their laws and “their mouths delicious and all of them delightful.”³⁰	The way of Torah—the laws recorded by Moses and promoted by the prophets—can be very rewarding to those who follow it.

²⁶ Isaiah 29:10-11: “For the L-rd has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep, and He has shut your eyes; the prophets and your heads who stargaze, He has covered. And the vision of everything has been to you *like the words of a sealed book*, which they give to one who can read, saying, ‘Now read this;’ and he will say, ‘I cannot, for it is sealed.’ ”

²⁷ Habakkuk 2:6: “Shall not all these take up a parable against him *and a figure of a riddle against him*?”

²⁸ Berachot 35b: “Come and see that the latter generations are not like the *earlier generations*; [rather they are their inferiors].”

²⁹ This is taken verbatim from an approbation of Rabbi Isaiah Mordechai Basan (c. 1673–1739) (Italian rabbi of Padua and Reggio Emilia) to a 1738 Amsterdam edition of Sefer haTashbetz (authored by R. Shimon ben Tzemach Duran, the “Rashbatz”). Rabbi Basan was related to Rabbi Nachmani’s mother through marriage, and Rabbi Nachmani took over the rabbinate of Reggio Emilia after Rabbi Basan’s death. The quotation was likely intended as a tribute to Rabbi Basan.

Regarding “drank waters of the Upper Pool,” Bava Kamma 17a states: “And [the reference to] ‘water’ refers only to [the study of] Torah, as it is stated [with regard to Torah study]: ‘Ho, all who are thirsty, go to water’ (Isaiah 55:1).” The significance of the Upper Pool may be understood from Isaiah 7:1–7. Immediately upon his accession, King Ahaz had to meet a coalition formed by northern Israel, under Pekah, and Damascus (Syria), under Rezin. These kings wished to compel him to join them in opposing the Assyrians, who were arming a force against the Northern Kingdom under Tiglath-Pileser III (also called Pul). The L-rd told Isaiah to meet Ahaz at the Upper Pool, and to reassure Ahaz to trust in G-d rather than in foreign allies.

“They made them breasts in a place of understanding” is derived from Berachot 10a: “Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai: What is [the meaning of] that which is written: ‘She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of loving-kindness is on her tongue’ (Prov. 31:26)? [The Sages explain that the chapter discusses the wisdom of Torah and those who engage in its study.] Solomon said this verse about his father, David. . . . As [David] nursed from his mother’s breast, he looked upon her bosom and said a song [of praise], as it is stated: ‘Bless the L-rd, O my soul, and do not forget all His benefits [*gemulav*]’ (Ps. 103:2). [There is an etymological association between *gemulav* and *gemulei mechalav*, which means weaned from milk (Isaiah 28:9).] What is [meant by] ‘all His benefits’? Rabbi Abbahu said: [In contrast with most other animals, G-d] *created* [woman’s] *breasts near* [her heart,] *the place* [that is the source] *of understanding*. What is the reason [that G-d did this]? Rav Yehuda said: So that the nursing child would not look upon the place of his mother’s nakedness. Rav Mattana said: So that [the child] would not nurse from a place of uncleanness.”

Berachot 10a is stated in the singular form, “*He* [G-d] created breasts near the place of understanding,” while Rabbi Basan altered this to the plural, “*they* created breasts near the place of understanding.” Rabbi Basan may have intended “they” to refer to “earlier generations,” while perhaps Rabbi Nachmani intended the prophets, who provided spiritual sustenance in a holy manner.

³⁰ Song of Songs 5:16: “*His mouth is delicious, and all of him is delightful. . .*”

<p>“The request of their lips”³¹ “is a brief saying of the holy ones,”³² “the few words hold many thoughts.”³³</p>	<p>A few words of the prophets can hold deep concepts, which can be revealed if one investigates closely enough.</p>
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וְהִנֵּה אִפְּסוֹן אֶחָד בְּאֶרֶץ שֶׁ דָּבַר ה' בְּמַחְזָה, וְהָא דְמַעֲיִין בַּה פְּמָה פְּנִים לְפָנִים, הַגְּרָאִים בְּפִים רַבָּנָן וּבְפִים תַּלְמִידֵיהוֹן. בְּפָה מְפִיק מְרַגְלִיּוֹת אֶפִיק שְׁפָה—צָפְנַת פְּעֻנָה רְזָא דְנָה עַל חֲמַדַּת שְׂכִיּוֹת—וּמַעֲיִיל שְׁפָה בְּהַצְנַע לְכַת. כְּבָשִׁים לְלְבוּשִׁים, סוּדְרָא סוּד נְאָה, גִּלּוֹ טַפַּח וְכֶסֶף טְפָחִים. כִּי לְבָם פְּתוּחַ כְּפִתְחוֹ שֶׁל אֲוִלָּם, וְלֹא צָרִיכָא לְהוּ לְהַעֲדָפָה, וְכֹל יִתֵּר פְּנִטוּל—לְחֻפְיֵמִיָּא בְּרַמִּיזָא.

Translation	Translator’s Interpretation
<p>“Here is the first manner in the utterance of our lips”³⁴ “of the word of G-d in a vision,”³⁵ and “this is contemplated by”³⁶ “a few, face-to-face,”³⁷ “seen in the mouths of the teachers and in the mouths of their students.”³⁸</p>	<p>The Torah was revealed to Moses face-to-face, but to the other prophets only in visions. Those who study Torah are few in number. While the Five Books of Moses were written for everyone to read, some details and other concepts essential for properly understanding the Written Law were given verbally, and were meant to be transmitted verbally from teacher to student as the Oral Law.</p>
<p>While expounding Torah, “the mouth produces pearls [of wisdom]”³⁹ “one row of</p>	<p>Torah teachings are often couched poetically or require wisdom and discernment to properly</p>

³¹ Ps. 21:3: “You have granted him the desire of his heart, have not denied the *request of his lips*. Selah.”

³² Dan. 4:14: “The matter is by the decree of the watchers, And the sentence *by the word of the holy ones*.”

³³ Gen. Rabbah 5:7: “In practice, a man empties a full vessel into an empty one; does he ever empty a full vessel into a full vessel? Now, the world was full of water everywhere, yet G-d said, ‘Let the waters under the Heaven be gathered together unto one place’ (Gen.1:7). In truth, from this we learn that *the small* [quantity] *held the large* [quantity].” Yalkut Shimoni on Nach 14 also has the term, in a different context.

³⁴ Ezek. 1:15: “As I gazed on the creatures, I saw *one wheel on the ground* next to each of the four-faced creatures.” The word אֶפֶן, which in Ezekiel is verbalized *ofan* (wheel), can instead be verbalized *ofen* (manner). Also, Rabbi Nachmani altered בארץ (*ba’aretz*) (on the ground) to באר"ש (an abbreviation for שפתינו (in the utterance of our lips). “The utterance of our lips” is a term used in the Rosh Hashanah mussaf service, derived from the singular form in Ps. 21:3: “the utterance of his lips.”

³⁵ Gen. 15:1: “Some time later, the *word of the L-rd* came to Abram *in a vision*. . . .”

³⁶ Berachot 55a: “*This* [first case is] *where one expects it*.”

³⁷ Zohar II:86b.

³⁸ Shabbat 67b: “There was an incident with Rabbi Akiva who made a banquet for his son, and over each and every cup he brought he said: ‘Wine and life to the mouth of the Sages, wine and life *to the mouth of the Sages and to the mouth of their students*.’”

³⁹ The words “the mouth produces pearls” are found in a number of sources, including: R’ Samuel ben Moses de Medina (the RaShDaM) (1505–89), She’elot u’Teshuvot ha’Shayachot be’Tur Choshen Mishpat (Salonica 1595); Naftali Hertz ben Yaakov Elchanan (Bacharach), Emek HaMelech (Amsterdam, 1648); Yosef ben Yitzchak Almosnino (1642–1689), Edut bi-Yehosef, part 2, note 6 (Constantinople, 1715); Ma’adnei Melech (Frankfort 1726) (attributed to Abraham ben Meir ibn Ezra (1089–c. 1167)); Aviad Sar-Shalom Basilea (1680–1749), Emunat Chachamim (Mantua

<p>upper teeth projecting (“the explainer of the hidden”⁴⁰ ‘reveals the secret’⁴¹ of ‘the delightful imagery’⁴²), and one row of lower teeth receding”⁴³ “with humility.”⁴⁴</p>	<p>understand. The teacher of Torah should teach with humility, though a student should appreciate the beauty of the Torah and the wisdom of his teacher.</p>
<p>“Lambs are for clothing,”⁴⁵ “a turban is a pleasant secret,”⁴⁶ “revealing a handbreadth but covering other handbreadths.”⁴⁷</p>	<p>Esoteric teachings should not be broadly revealed. They should only be taught to selected students, sometimes only to one student at a time. Teachings should be arranged so that those with the wisdom and discernment can grasp the esoteric teachings, while others will be protected from them.</p>
<p>“Because their hearts were like the doorway to the Entrance Hall [of the Temple],”⁴⁸</p>	<p>The early rabbis had great wisdom that far exceeds ours. They could be taught without the</p>

1730); and Moses ben Mordecai Zacuto (c. 1625–97), *Tifteh Aruch v’Aden Aruch* (Venice 1744). The words “*a mouth that is wise and holy produces pearls,*” is found in an earlier sefer, Isaac ben Moses Arama, *Akedat Yitzchak* (Venice 1574).

⁴⁰ Gen. 41:45: “Pharaoh then gave Joseph the name *Tzafnat Paneach*.” Rashi interprets: “the explainer of hidden things.”

⁴¹ Dan. 2:30: “Not because my wisdom is greater than that of other creatures has this *mystery been revealed* to me, but in order that the meaning should be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind.”

⁴² Isaiah 2:16: “And upon all the ships of Tarshish; and upon all *delightful imagery*.” Also Siddur Sefard, Yotzerot for Mussaf l’parshat haChodesh.

⁴³ Sukkah 51b: “The rows of stones were set with *one row slightly protruded and one row slightly indented*.” Also quoted in Bava Batra 4a.

⁴⁴ Micah 6:8: “And *go humbly* with your G-d.”

⁴⁵ Mishnah Chagigah 2:1 (Chagigah 11b) says that one may not reveal esoteric teachings to more than one student at a time. In the Gemara of Chagigah 13a, Rabbi Abbahu derives this from Prov. 27:26: “*The lambs will provide you with clothing,*” that just as parts of the body that are covered by clothing are private and should not be revealed to the world, so too esoteric teachings should not be broadly revealed to more than one student at a time.

⁴⁶ The text “סודרא סוד נאה” (*sudara sod na’eh*) (a turban is a pleasant secret) combines two quotations.

Pesachim 113a reads: “סודנא . . . סוד נאה” (*sodna . . . sod na’eh*), that the Aramaic word for a brewer, *sodna*, is derived from *sod na’eh*, a pleasant secret, because brewing is a good way to make money.

Shabbat 77b quotes Rabbi Yehudah telling Rabbi Zeira: “The turban of Torah scholars is called *sudara* in reference to the verse: ‘The secret [counsel] of the L-rd is for those who fear Him (*sod Hashem lire’av*)’ (Ps. 25:14).” In other words, a parallel construction to Pesachim 113a would have been: “סודרא סוד ירא” (*sudara sod yareh*), that the Aramaic word for a turban, *sudara*, is derived from *sod yareh*, that a turban [symbolizes that] His secret [counsel] is for those who fear Him.

By combining the two, Rabbi Nachmani means “the turban of a Torah scholar [conceals] pleasant secrets,” i.e., a Torah scholar’s mind can conceal mystical teachings.

⁴⁷ Nedarim 20b: “*he reveals a handbreadth and covers a handbreadth*.”

⁴⁸ Eruvin 53a: “Rabbi Yochanan said: *The hearts*, i.e., the wisdom, of the early Sages *were like the doorway to the Entrance Hall* [of the Temple, which was twenty by forty cubits], and the hearts of the later Sages were like the doorway to the Sanctuary], which was ten by twenty cubits]. And we, i.e., our hearts, are like the eye of a fine needle.”

<p>“they did not need this surplus,”⁴⁹ “and everything extra is treated like something missing”⁵⁰—“for the Sages, a hint is enough.”⁵¹</p>	<p>need to spell out every detail. In fact, giving too much information was considered a negative, so esoteric teachings were given obliquely.</p>
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וְדִין גְּרָמָא דְעֵצִי "רָאָה בְּמִיעוּטָא דְשִׁכִּיחַ לְדוֹרוֹת הַבָּאִים, כִּי מְעוּטוֹ וּבְטָלוֹ הַטּוֹחַ'נּוֹת. וְהִיא הַנּוֹחֶתֶת, לְרַבּוֹת שִׁכְחַת קֶצֶר וְשִׁכְחַת קָמָה, בְּהוֹצִיּוֹ, חֲצִיּוֹ, מְחִיּוֹ, שֶׁל מִפְּרֶסֶת פְּרֶסָה וּפְרֶסוֹתֶיהָ סְדוּקוֹת כְּרוּכּוֹת וְחֲדוּקוֹת. בְּהַבְלֵי הָעוֹלָם, רִיחִים בְּצִנּוֹר וְהַלֵּב אֵינּוּ מִבִּין, בְּרוֹב שְׂאֵינּוּ נִרְאָה לְעֵינַיִם. וּקְלוּטָה לְאוֹ כְּמִי שֶׁהוֹנְחָה דְמִיָּא, וְנִתְּהִי הָאֲמַת נִעְדָּרַת.

Translation	Translator's Interpretation
<p>“A law was fixed on account of fear”⁵² “of its diminution by being forgotten”⁵³ “by the coming generations,”⁵⁴ just as even strong “molars [denoting sharpness in Torah scholarship] eventually grow few and become idle.”⁵⁵ “These laws that were given”:⁵⁶ “include forgetting the harvest and forgetting standing grain”;⁵⁷ “forgetting measurements in small branches with their</p>	<p>As noted above, many of the Torah's teachings are coached poetically, or require great wisdom and discernment to comprehend. This is true not only of the esoteric teachings, but even of the mitzvot incumbent on all of us. As noted, the Oral Law was intended to be passed down verbally from teacher to student. However, following the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans, the proper</p>

⁴⁹ Kiddushin 32a; Ketubot 43a.

⁵⁰ Chullin 58b: “[An animal] with an extra [limb] is considered like one with a missing [limb].”

⁵¹ Midrash Mishlei 22:15: “to the wise man a hint, to the fool a fist.” Also Tikkunei Zohar 36a and 142a.

⁵² The Hebrew/Aramaic text reads דִּין גְּרָמָא דְעֵצִי "רָאָה" (*ve'din gerama da'atzeira*). *Atzeira* is an abbreviation for the term עַל צוֹרֵךְ יִרְאָה (*al tzorech yirah*). The clause therefore means, “and a law was fixed on account of fear.” The Hebrew/Aramaic text is a play on a quotation from Berachot 5b: דִּין גְּרָמָא דְעֵשִׂירָא בִּיר (*dein garma da'ashira bir*) (this is the bone of my tenth son). While the meaning here is completely different than the meaning of the words of Berachot, the spelling of the first two words is the same (though the pronunciation varies), and the spelling and pronunciation of the third word is similar.

⁵³ Niddah 32a: “Might it not be suggested that R. Meir was heard [to take a minority into consideration only where that] *minority is frequent*?” (The meaning in Niddah 32a doesn't fit the Introductory Words, so the translator has proposed a different meaning).

⁵⁴ Eduyot 1:4: “Why are the opinions of Hillel and Shammai recorded [only] to be nullified? To teach *the coming generations* that one should not be insistent in his opinions, for the fathers of the world did not insist on their opinions.”

⁵⁵ Eccl. 12:3: “When the guards of the house become shaky, and the men of valor are bent; *and the molars become idle because they are few*, and the ladies that peer through the windows grow dim.” Sanhedrin 24a: Rabbi Meir and Reish Lakish each had his Torah study described as uprooting mountains and grinding them into each other i.e., being very sharp in analysis of Torah.

⁵⁶ Eruvin 10a; Yevamot 68b.

⁵⁷ Deut. 24:19: “When you reap the harvest in your field and overlook a sheaf in the field, do not turn back to get it.” Sotah 45a; Yerushalmi Peah 22a.

<p>leaves that hang down into the air space of a <i>sukkah</i>, interpositions that can invalidate an immersion in a <i>mikvah</i>, and partitions relevant, for example, to building a <i>sukkah</i>”;⁵⁸ “forgetting of laws of true hooves and split hooves,”⁵⁹ “and of scaled and notched horns.”⁶⁰</p>	<p>performance of some mitzvot became disputed. Recognizing the danger that more knowledge would be lost, Judah the Prince redacted the Mishnah in the 3rd Century of the Common Era. The Jerusalem Gemara (Yerushalmi) was redacted in the Land of Israel in the 4th Century, and the Babylonian Gemara (Bavli) in the 5th Century.</p>
<p>These were forgotten because of involvement “in the vanities of the world,”⁶¹ “with a millstone hanging from his neck”⁶² “and his heart not understanding,”⁶³ “with most of the details invisible to the eyes.”⁶⁴</p>	<p>Rabbi Nachmani blames the necessity of earning a living and an interest in secular topics as leading to the improper transmission of the Oral Law. Unlike the translator, he does not cite Roman persecution as a factor. (Perhaps censorship was still a concern in northern Italy in the 1770s. As late as 1733, Rabbi Solomon Abi'ad Basila was imprisoned in Mantua for possessing “forbidden books.”)</p>

⁵⁸ Sukkah 4a discusses the minimum and maximum height of a sukkah, and then discusses the significance of הוצין (*hutzin*) small branches with their leaves that droop down within the ten handbreadths. Sukkah 5b quotes Rabbi Yehuda that the Sages learned the minimum height of a sukkah as a halacha transmitted to Moses from Sinai. It also quotes R' Chiyya bar Ashi that Rav said: Other measures used in various areas of halacha were also not written in the Torah, but were received via the Oral Law, and these include חציצין (*chatzitzin*) interpositions that serve as an invalidating barrier between a person's body and the water in a ritual bath and מחיצין (*machitzin*) halachic partitions.

⁵⁹ Animals that have split hooves and that chew their cud are kosher. See, e.g., Lev. 11:3, Bava Batra 16a. The Oral Law, Chullin 59a, adds that all animals with cloven hooves chew their cud, except for the pig, and that all animals that chew their cud have cloven hooves, except for the camel and its relatives. Therefore, if one finds an animal that cannot be identified, as long as one can be sure it is neither a pig nor a camel, then one could check either the hooves alone or the mouth alone (to confirm there are no incisors).

⁶⁰ While the Torah states that animals that have split hooves and that chew their cud are kosher, it does not tell how to distinguish between domesticated animals (for whom the meat and fat are permitted) and wild animals (for whom the meat is permitted but not the fat). The Oral Law teaches that the details of the horns can distinguish the domesticated animals from the wild animals. See Chullin 59b, and Sefer haMitzvot 153.

⁶¹ Midrash Lekach Tov on Eccl. 8:16; Chovot haLevavot (Duties of the Heart), Addenda, Prayer 2.

⁶² Kiddushin 29b: “Rav Yehuda says that Shmuel says: The halacha is that one should marry a woman and afterward study Torah. Rabbi Yochanan says [with] a millstone hanging from his neck [i.e., with the responsibility of providing for his family weighing upon him], can he engage in Torah [study]?”

⁶³ Isaiah 57:1: “The righteous man perishes, and no one takes it to heart; pious men are taken away, with no understanding, that it was because of evil [to come that] the righteous was taken away [i.e., to spare him from it].”

⁶⁴ Cf. Chullin 29a for the opposite statement, “Rava said: The matter of *treifa* is different, as we require a majority that is clearly visible.”

<p>“An object in airspace is not considered to be at rest,”⁶⁵ “and the truth has been lacking.”⁶⁶</p>	<p>As restated in Newton’s first law, a body at rest remains at rest and a body in motion continues to move at a constant velocity, unless acted upon by an external force. Similarly, the inertia of our diminished state of scholarship has continued through the centuries, and we lack understanding of how to properly interpret some Torah teachings.</p>
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ומילתא דצריכה רבה מינייהו אודא, כי לא פורש ולא מצאו פתח פתוח בהצד השונה לכל נפש. אבין ורקין מיעוטיין. ילקטו המרבה והממעט כדי טעימה לזה וכדי שביעה לזה. ויהויל איש אשר רוח בו לפי שכלו, לפי פחו, ולפי ערכו. יתא גידון בקישג יד, יד גדולה ויד פחה, שתי ידות משולבות אחת אל אחת. וטובות השמים מן האחת, כי לא ראי זה פראי זה. זה עושה לו פותחת וזה עושה לו פותחת, מפתחות פנימיות ומפתחות חיצוניות. תרנייהו צריכי בסדר המעלות ובחקרי לבבם, צאת ובא בסדר המדרגות.

Translation	Translator’s Interpretation
<p>“Of great necessity this thing followed from them,”⁶⁷ as the truth “hadn’t been decided”⁶⁸ “and did not find an open mouth”⁶⁹ “applicable for everyone.”⁷⁰</p>	<p>The redactors of the Mishnah and Gemara considered their work essential to explain some Torah concepts that weren’t clearly known and broadly accessible to all Jews.</p>
<p>“The words ‘but’ and ‘only’ in the Torah are expounded for what they can exclude.”⁷¹</p>	<p>No detail in Torah is too small to be considered.</p>

⁶⁵ Shabbat 4a: “Rabbi Akiva holds that we say that an object in airspace is considered at rest. And the Rabbis hold that we do not say that an object in airspace is considered at rest.”

⁶⁶ Isaiah 59:15: “And the truth has been lacking, and he who turns away from evil is despoiled.”

⁶⁷ Dan. 2:5: “The king said in reply to the Chaldeans, ‘I hereby decree . . .’” Bava Metzia 101a: “Rabbi Yirmiya said: For rulings such as this, it is necessary to have a great Sage explain it.”

⁶⁸ Num. 15:34: “He was placed in custody, for it had not been decided what should be done to him.”

⁶⁹ Ketubot 9a: “If he says: I encountered an unobstructed orifice, he is credible to render her forbidden to himself.”

⁷⁰ Ketubot 7a: “a matter that is equal for every person.” Mishnah Bava Kamma 1:1 (Bava Kamma 2a): “the equal side (i.e., the common denominator) of these [primary categories] is that their typical manner is to cause damage.”

⁷¹ Yerushalmi Berachot 67b: “Akiva taught what one could include [in the interpretation of a verse based on the particles] את and גם, and what one could exclude [in the interpretation of a verse based on the particle] א (ach) (but) and רק (rak) (only).” See also Yerushalmi Sotah 25b (with the spelling רכין instead of רקין).

<p>“[Some] gathered much and some a little”⁷² “in order for tasting this and in order for satisfying that.”⁷³</p>	<p>The interests of Torah scholars vary. Furthermore, some learn a great deal, while others only a little. Some develop a broad expertise, while others have a narrow focus.</p>
<p>“A man who has spirit within him is commended according to his wisdom,”⁷⁴ “according to his power,”⁷⁵ and “according to his worth.”⁷⁶</p>	<p>A person’s contributions to Torah scholarship are more important to G-d than his status in the eyes of others. Whoever contributes to Torah scholarship is praiseworthy.</p>
<p>“He shall be judged as his hand attains,”⁷⁷ “a great hand”⁷⁸ “and a weak hand,”⁷⁹ “two hands joined to each other.”⁸⁰ “The two hands are greater than one,”⁸¹ “because the aspect of this case is not like the aspect of that case.”⁸²</p>	<p>Sometimes Torah is learned from two sources. If Torah is learned in partnership, both parties merit a reward. This is true even in a Yissachar-Zevulun partnership, where one party learns while the other party provides financial support.</p>
<p>“This one makes a lock for that one, and that one makes a lock for this one,”⁸³ “the keys to the inner door of the treasury (i.e., to access Torah) and the keys to the outer door</p>	<p>Teachers who motivate others to strengthen their trust (<i>bitachon</i>), faith (<i>emunah</i>), and especially fear of Heaven perform a very</p>

⁷² Ex. 16:17: “The Israelites did so, some gathering much [of the manna], some a little.”

⁷³ Bava Batra 11a: “*there is enough for this one and enough for that one.*”

⁷⁴ Num. 27:18: “. . . take Joshua son of Nun, *a man who has spirit within him.*” Prov. 12:8: “*A man is commended according to his wisdom*; a twisted mind is held up to contempt.”

⁷⁵ Mekhilta d’Rabbi Yishmael 20:15: “[Regarding the verse,] ‘All the people witnessed [the thunder and lightning],’ (Ex. 20:15) . . . The intent is that each heard *according to his power* [to absorb what he experienced].”

⁷⁶ Akeidat Yitzchak 24:1:8, 33:1:4, 33:1:6, 46:1:13, 55:1:12, 76:1:5; Maggid Meisharim 22:26; Alshich, Gen. 46:3, Ex. 33:19, 35:29; Shoshanat HaAmakim on Song of Songs 1:7:4; Gur Aryeh, Deut. 6:7:2; Pardes Rimonim 4:5:9, 19:3:2; Responsa Maharashdam, Yoreh Deah 158:5, Choshen Mishpat 1:2, 150:1; Sefer Etz Chaim 11:4:2.

⁷⁷ Temurah 10a: If a nazir vows a greater offering than he can afford, he must solicit donations from others. “A nazirite *is judged as his hand obtains* (i.e., he will receive credit for a sacrifice donated by others on his behalf).”

⁷⁸ Ex. 14:31: “When Israel saw *the great hand* that the L-rd had wielded against the Egyptians . . .”

⁷⁹ Menachot 37a: “Rav Ashi said: [The requirement that tefillin be donned on the left arm is derived from the verse]: ‘[It shall be for a sign upon] your arm (ידכה)’ (Ex. 13:16), which is written with a letter ה [at the end]. [This is expounded as though it stated]: Your *weak* (כהה) *arm.*”

⁸⁰ Ex. 36:22: “Each plank had *two tenons (hands), joined together to each other.*”

⁸¹ Eccl. 4:9: “*Two are better off than one*, in that they have greater benefit from their earnings.”

⁸² Appears dozens of times in the Talmud, such as Berachot 35a: “[The halacha is derived from a combination of two sources.] *The aspect of this is not like the aspect of that*, and the aspect of that is not like the aspect of this.”

⁸³ Mishna Bava Batra 6:5; Bava Batra 99a; Yerushalmi Bava Batra 19b.

(i.e., the fear of Heaven, which is needed to advance to the inner door and access Torah). ⁸⁴	valuable service, for fear of Heaven is required to properly learn the Torah.
“Both are required”⁸⁵ “in ranking attributes”⁸⁶ and “in investigations of their hearts,”⁸⁷ “going and coming”⁸⁸ “in the order of steps.”⁸⁹	G-d judges us by our learning of Torah, and by our fear of Heaven, which are interconnected.

הכל מעלין והכל מוציאין, שקדים ופרחים, הדרי פירי ופירי דפירי. ובין קוץ לקוץ תלי תלים של הלכות. זה אומר הגיעני כפול, ואין מלאך אחד עושה שתי שלוחיות. רק כל הקרב הקרב לשפת אמת מחידושא ילפינו, ויראה וירצה. והביאו המלך הדרי, עד יעלה ויבוא ויגיע, כמסייע שיש בו ממש אל חדר הדרתו. קטון וגדול שם הוא, בכל אמת ואמת, וכיון פתיחו ליה במאור הגדול ומאור הקטן, שתי ידים זכות פאחת.

Translation	Translator’s Interpretation
“All are caused to ascend and all are removed,”⁹⁰ “almonds and flowers,”⁹¹ “the splendor of the produce”⁹² “and the produce of the produce.”⁹³	Beautiful secrets within the Torah have been lost to us, or at least have been hidden away.

⁸⁴ See Shabbat 31a-b: “Rabba bar Rav Huna said: Any person who has Torah in him but does not have fear of Heaven is like a treasurer to whom they gave keys to *the inner doors of the treasury* but they did not give *keys to the outer door*. With which key will he enter? Although the Torah is the inner key, without fear of Heaven he cannot gain access to the genuine Torah.”

⁸⁵ Eruvin 27b: “All are required.” The exact quotation “both are required” appears in Tosafot on Ketubot 73a; Tosafot on Nazir 48b; Tosafot on Sanhedrin 45a; Tosafot on Chullin 88b; Tosafot on Bechorot 19a.

⁸⁶ Rabbeinu Bahya on Ex. 22:27, on Lev. 8:8, and on Lev. 27:2.

⁸⁷ Judges 5:16: “Among the clans of Reuben were great *searchings of the heart*.”

⁸⁸ I Kings 3:7: “I am but a little child; I know not how *to go out or come in*.”

⁸⁹ Kli Yakar on Ex. 19:4; Shenei Luchot HaBerit (*see* Asara Maamarot, Third and Fourth Maamar 123; *also* Shaar HaOtiyot, Derech Eretz 5; *also* Shenei Luchot HaBerit, Shaar HaOtiyot, Shetikah 2).

⁹⁰ Cf. Mishnah Ketubot 13:11 (Ketubot 110b): “*All are caused* [by their spouses] *to ascend* to the Land of Israel, [i.e., one may compel his or her spouse to immigrate to the Land of Israel], but all are not *caused to be removed* [by their spouses] from the Land of Israel [as one may not coerce one’s family to leave].”

⁹¹ Aaron’s staff miraculously sprouted flower blossoms and almonds (Num. 17:23). It was kept with the Ark of the Covenant, together with a jar of manna, a jar of anointing oil, and a chest gifted by the Philistines. These were either captured by the Babylonians, or, as some rabbis believe, hidden by Josiah, the king of Judah, to prevent their capture. (Keritot 5b).

⁹² Bava Metzia 66b: “. . . the land must be returned and *the* [value of any] *produce* [the creditor consumed from this land] *must be returned*.” In the context here, הדרי may mean “splendor.”

⁹³ Ketubot 83b discusses the ability of a husband to enter a clause in his marriage document whereby he relinquishes any claim to his wife’s produce and the produce of her produce (the produce of her produce being if he sold produce, bought land with the proceeds, and then that land produced more produce).

<p>“Each and every stroke [of the letters of the Torah] contains heaps and heaps of law.”⁹⁴</p>	<p>Each word and letter has a teaching, but we understand only a tiny portion of what the Torah has to offer.</p>
<p>This means “I have received a bean-sized portion,”⁹⁵ and “one angel [i.e., messenger] does not perform two commissions.”⁹⁶</p>	<p>We have only grasped a little of the Torah, and we are limited in our abilities.</p>
<p>“Only one who ventures near truthful speech”⁹⁷ “will derive novelties”;⁹⁸ may it (i.e., the novelty) be seen (i.e., by G-d) and be acceptable to Him.⁹⁹</p>	<p>While it is important to derive novelties, the utmost care must be taken to avoid mistakes, and to avoid misleading others. The author hopes that his caution in this area will be appreciated by G-d.</p>
<p>“May the King bring it (i.e., the novelty) into His chambers,”¹⁰⁰ until “it ascends and enters and arrives”¹⁰¹ “like an esteemed assistant”¹⁰² “to the chambers of the Creator.”¹⁰³</p>	<p>He hopes that the novelties he has developed will be appreciated by G-d.</p>

⁹⁴ Eruvin 21b: “This teaches that it is possible to expound from *each and every stroke [of the letters in the Torah] heaps upon heaps of laws.*”

⁹⁵ Pesachim 3b: “One [priest] said to the [other priests], ‘*I received a bean-sized portion.*’”

⁹⁶ Gen. Rabbah 50:2: “*One angel does not carry out two commissions, and two angels do not carry out one commission.*”

⁹⁷ Num. 17:28: “Each *one who ventures near* the L-rd’s Tabernacle must die.” Prov. 12:19: “*Truthful speech* abides forever; a lying tongue for but a moment.”

⁹⁸ Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer Edels (“Maharsha”) (1555–1631), Chidushei Halachot on Chullin 98b: “. . . certainly a leniency is not *derived from a chidush.*” Shita Mekubetzet on Ketubot 40b; Darchei HaTalmud 3:1.

⁹⁹ From the *Ya’aleh v’Yavo* prayer that is added on holidays and Rosh Chodesh: “G-d and G-d of our ancestors, may there ascend and come and reach and *be seen and be acceptable* and be heard and be recalled and be remembered—our remembrance and our recollection.”

¹⁰⁰ Song of Songs 1:4: “And *may the King bring them into His chambers.*”

¹⁰¹ From the *Ya’aleh v’Yavo* prayer that is added on holidays and Rosh Chodesh: “G-d and G-d of our ancestors, *may there ascend and come and reach* and be seen and be acceptable and be heard and be recalled and be remembered—our remembrance and our recollection.”

¹⁰² Shabbat 93a: “Rav Yehuda of Diskarta said, ‘Actually, I will say to you that *a person or an object that assists is substantial.*’”

¹⁰³ Song of Songs 3:4: “Scarcely had I passed them, when I found the one I love. I held him fast, I would not let him go, until I brought him to my mother’s house, *to the chambers of the one who conceived me.*” This translator has

<p>“Small and great alike are there,”¹⁰⁴ “in every place,”¹⁰⁵ “and the directions of its openings face”¹⁰⁶ “the greater light and the lesser light,”¹⁰⁷ “two hands meriting as one.”¹⁰⁸</p>	<p>Torah scholars vary greatly in their interests and abilities, but there is something in Torah to appeal to each scholar. By learning from each other, Torah scholarship can be advanced.</p>
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כך היא המדה, גדול לפי גדלו וקטן לפי קטנו, הצד השונה ביניהם הלא לאלהים פתרונים. רבתי בדיעות ובהידווש מציאותם, השג תשיג גד כל אדם קזו בו. פשט העני את ידו לפנים, מפשח ונהיב אלונתא אלונתא. ועתיר משח עתיר תקוע. קו"ל שישנו בלמידה, ידו פשוטה. מאי רבי? רבי כל מיליה. ידיהם אמונה לעשות רצון קונם, ומקבלין דין מן דין, הא למגמר הא לאגמוריה. בהתאסף ראשי עם, מתכנין שומע ומשמיע. באמתה של תורה, שלחיה פחדס רמונים. טלטל מתן שכרן של מצות על כל דיתבין ועסקין באוריתא, הנך דמטו ודלא מטו, פלא קדושה אריכתא.

Translation	Translator’s Interpretation
<p>“Such is the measure: the great person according to his greatness, and the small person according to his smallness,”¹⁰⁹ “the common denominator between them”¹¹⁰ “surely G-d can interpret.”¹¹¹</p>	<p>The great Torah scholar will make great discoveries, while the lesser scholar will make more modest discoveries. Each will be recognized by G-d for his efforts.</p>

rendered “who conceived him” as “its Creator,” because the ultimate source of novelties (and Torah) is G-d. The text “to the chambers of its Creator” parallels the beginning of the sentence, taken from Song of Songs 1:4.

¹⁰⁴ Job 3:19: “*Small and great alike are there; and the slave is free of his master.*”

¹⁰⁵ From the full Kaddish prayer: “Upon Israel, upon the teachers, their disciples and all of their disciples and upon all those who engage in the study of Torah, *in every place*, may they and you have abundant peace, grace, kindness, and mercy, long life, ample nourishment, and salvation from before their Father Who is in Heaven and on earth. Now respond: Amen.” Also Dan. 2:35.

¹⁰⁶ Dan. 6:11: “When Daniel learned that it had been put in writing, he went to his house, in whose upper chamber he had *had windows made facing* Jerusalem, and three times a day he knelt down, prayed, and made confession to his G-d, as he had always done.”

¹⁰⁷ Gen. 1:16: “G-d made the two great lights, *the greater light* to dominate the day *and the lesser light* to dominate the night and the stars.”

¹⁰⁸ Mishnah Gittin 6:2 (Gittin 64b): “For a betrothed young woman, she and her father could each receive her bill of divorce. Rabbi Yehuda said: *Two hands* [i.e., two people] do not *acquire* [an item] *as one* [i.e., on behalf of one person]. Rather, her father alone receives her bill of divorce on her behalf.”

¹⁰⁹ Mishnah Yoma 5:1 (Yoma 47a): “[The high priest] took two hands full [of incense] and put it into the ladle: *a large* [man] *according to his size*, *a small one according to his size*, and thus was its measure.” I.e., the amount of incense depended upon the size of the high priest who was serving at that time.

¹¹⁰ Mishnah Bava Kamma 1:1 (Bava Kamma 2a): “*The common denominator of these* [primary categories] is that their typical manner is to cause damage.”

¹¹¹ Gen. 40:8: “So Joseph said to them, “*Surely G-d can interpret!* Tell me [your dreams].”

<p>“Great in knowledge”¹¹² “and in the novelty of their discoveries,”¹¹³ “wealth shall surely be attained”¹¹⁴ “which all men have beheld.”¹¹⁵</p>	<p>One who is devoted to learning and disseminating Torah will gain spiritually and will also gain the respect of others.</p>
<p>“The poor person extended his hand inside”¹¹⁶ for a morsel of food, and was found liable for violating the Sabbath, while Rav Yehuda “would break many sticks and give them to us,”¹¹⁷ a much greater physical action, and yet he was not liable for violating the Sabbath.</p>	<p>It’s not enough to read one opinion or to see one example, for we may extrapolate the law improperly. Rather, it is important to learn many examples, to more properly understand the exact parameters of the Torah’s laws.</p>
<p>There are also different types of Torah scholars, and one is wealthy in oil (i.e., is a master of halachic traditions), while another is wealthy in houses (i.e., a master of dialectics).¹¹⁸</p>	<p>In addition to different levels of intelligence and areas of interest, some Torah scholars are experts in traditions, while others are experts in identifying contradictions and their solutions. [Not mentioned is that others are expert at giving sermons. All depend upon one who has mastered Talmud, who understands the reasons behind the rulings and traditions.]</p>
<p>“The verse states: ‘That you may learn them,’ that anyone who is engaged in</p>	<p>Torah study is essential for properly observing the mitzvot. G-d’s hand is extended to receive</p>

¹¹² Eichah Rabbah 1:4, 1:19; Shimon ben Tzemach Duran (“Rashbatz”), Sefer HaTashbetz, Introduction 1; Rabbi Moshe Alshich, Devarim Nichumim on Lam. 1:1.

¹¹³ The source has not been located, but see Tosafot on Bava Kamma 52b: “That he is able to *find a novelty*.”

¹¹⁴ I Sam. 30:8: “David inquired of the L-rd, ‘Shall I pursue those raiders? Will I overtake them?’ And He answered him, ‘Pursue, for *you shall secure* them and you shall rescue.’ ” Lev. 25:47: “And if a stranger who is a settler with you *becomes rich*, and your brother becomes poor . . .”

¹¹⁵ Job 36:25: “. . . *which all men have beheld*; man has seen it from a distance.”

¹¹⁶ Mishnah Shabbat 1:1 (Shabbat 2a): “[If] the poor person reaches his hand inside and . . . takes [something] from [the homeowner] and brings it outside, the poor person is liable and the homeowner is exempt.”

¹¹⁷ Beitzah 33b: “Rava bar Rav Adda and Ravin bar Rav Adda both say: ‘When we were at the house of Rav Yehuda, *he would break and give us many sticks* [of wood of a spice tree], [although] they were [hard enough to be] fit for handles of axes and hatches.’ ”

¹¹⁸ Bava Batra 145b: “The Sages taught [in a *Baraita*]: There are different types of Torah scholars. One is wealthy in [figurative] property and wealthy in public [renown]; this is the master of homiletics. One is wealthy in coins and *wealthy in houses*; this is the master of dialectics. One is *wealthy in oil* and wealthy in hidden [stores]; this is the master of [halachic traditions]. Everyone is dependent on the owner of wheat; [this is the master of] Talmud, [who understands the reasons behind the rulings and traditions].”

performing mitzvot is engaged in Torah study”; ¹¹⁹ “His hand is extended.” ¹²⁰	those who repent, who return to an observance of the mitzvot.
“What has [Torah study] amplified? It has amplified everything.” ¹²¹	Torah study can clarify all aspects of observance.
“Their hands were steadfast” ¹²² “to do the will of their Creator,” ¹²³ “and one received [an invitation] from another [to act simultaneously],” ¹²⁴ “this is to learn, and this is to teach.” ¹²⁵	Torah study, leading to observance of mitzvot, is laudable, even when one learns Torah for his own benefit. A teacher receives higher praise, because he learns not just for his own benefit, but to share with others. When a student learns from a teacher, both share in the mitzvah.
“Then the heads of the people assembled,” ¹²⁶ “until both the hearer and the sounder had intent.” ¹²⁷	Both the teacher and the students should have the proper intent in learning Torah, of learning not just for their own sakes, but to pass it on to future generations.
“Through the truth of Torah,” ¹²⁸ “Pardes Rimoni [an orchard of pomegranates] was sent.” ¹²⁹	The skin of a pomegranate has a pleasing scent, while the inner fruit is also pleasing in scent and flavor. So too, the Torah is pleasing on the surface, and even more so as one delves more

¹¹⁹ Yevamot 109b, quoting an abridged version of Deut. 5:1.

¹²⁰ Yalkut Shimoni on Nach, 932:4.

¹²¹ Eruvin 27b; Sukkah 50b; Kiddushin 21b; Bava Kamma 64b, 117b; Menachot 28b; Bechorot 51a.

¹²² Ex. 17:12: “his hands remained steady until the sun set.”

¹²³ Sanhedrin 42a: “And they are joyous and glad to perform the will of their Creator.”

¹²⁴ Targum Jonathan on Isaiah 6:3. The Hebrew original in Isaiah translates as: “And one would call to the other, ‘Holy, holy, holy! The L-rd of Hosts! His presence fills all the earth!’ ” Targum Jonathan’s Aramaic version translates as: “And one received [an invitation] from another [so that they would praise G-d simultaneously] . . . ”

¹²⁵ Bava Kamma 17a. The Gemara discusses the nature of the praise received by King Hezekiah, alluded to in II Chron. 32:33. One opinion is that he was praised for fulfilling the mitzvot of the Torah (which inherently implies learning the Torah). While learning the Torah is praiseworthy, even when done for one’s own sake, the Gemara decides that Hezekiah was praised for having taught the Torah, i.e., having learned it for the sake of then teaching it to others.

¹²⁶ Deut. 33:5: “Then He became King in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people assembled.”

¹²⁷ Rosh Hashanah 28b–29a: “Rabbi Zeira said to his servant: ‘Have intent [to sound the shofar on my behalf] and sound it for me.’ Apparently, he maintains that he who sounds [the shofar for others] is required to have intent [to discharge the hearer’s obligation].”

¹²⁸ Num. Rabbah 12:3: “Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: The Holy One, Blessed is He, said, ‘I will make a shield for all who are merchants of the truth of the Torah.’ ” See also Megillah 16b, which has the text כאמיתה של תורה (as with the Torah itself).

¹²⁹ Song of Songs 4:13: “שלחך פרדס רמונים” (your limbs are an orchard of pomegranates).” Also note that Pardes Rimoni (Orchard of Pomegranates) is a primary text of Kabbalah, composed by the Jewish mystic Rabbi Moses ben Jacob Cordovero (1522–70). It was composed in Safed in 1548, first published in Krakow in 1591. It was a

	deeply into it. This could also reference the <i>sefer</i> “Pardes Rimonim” by Rabbi Moses Cordovero (the Ramak), an integration of differing methods of interpreting Kabbalah.
<p>“He removed the gift of the reward of the mitzvot”¹³⁰ “for all who understand and engage in Torah law,”¹³¹ “those [teachings] that are ripe and those that are not ripe,”¹³² “are all [one] great holiness.”¹³³</p>	All mitzvot are important, whether there is a stated reward or not. People should fulfill the mitzvot out of faith, not to seek a reward. Some of the Torah’s teachings can be understood now, and others only in the future. The holy Torah is applicable throughout the ages.

* * *

וְזֹאת לְפָנִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל לְקַיִם דְּבָר וְאֶפִּילוּ מִקְצַת דְּבָר, עַל הַגְּאוּלָּה וְעַל הַתְּמוּדָה: דוֹר דוֹר וְדוֹרֶשׁוּ, רָחַשׁ לָבֵם דְּבָר טוֹב, לְשׁוּם בְּסִדֵּר עֲלִיוֹן; מִשְׁפָּטֵי ה' אֵמֶת. מִן הַבָּא בְּנִדּוּ לְהִתְקִין מְאוּרֹת וּלְזַנֵּג זִיווּגִים. לְיִהוּדִים הִיָּתָה אוֹרָה, זוֹ תוֹרָה. הָרִי הַקְּלִים כְּתוּמֹרִים, כְּתוּבָא נִפְקִין וְכְתוּבָא שְׂרִיָּו, לְעֵינֵי כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, אִידֵי וְאִידֵי חֵד שִׁיעוּרָא. כְּשֵׁם שְׂבָא לְרֵאוּת, כְּפָּ בָּא לִירְאוּת. וְמִי שְׂרָאָה אֶת הַחֵדֶשׁ חַיִּיב לְהַעֲרִיר אֲזֵן חֲכָמִים יוֹשְׁבֵי עַל מַדִּין, לְפָרְסָם הַנֶּס. דְּכֹוֹלֵי הָאִי נְאוּלֵי חֲזִי לְאִיִּצְטְרוּפֵי בְּקוּלָּן שֶׁל סוּפְרִים. וּבֵין דָּא לְדָא יְחוּנְרוּ הַדְּבָרִים כְּשִׁמְלָה חֲדָשָׁה, וְיִתְבָּאֵרוּ בְּאֵר הַיֵּטִיב עַד שְׂיָבֹאוּ לְכָלֵל יִישׁוּב עַל אוֹפְנֵיָהֶם, עֲנִינְגִים סְתוּמִים וְעֲמוּקִים בְּמִרְאֵיָהֶם. זֶה פּוֹתַח נְזָה נוֹעֵל, זֶה דוֹלָה וְנָה מְשַׁקָּה, עַד יֵצֵא כְּנוּגָה צְדָקָה, דִּיִּתְגַּלִּי בְּשִׁפְרָא נְהוּרָה.

Translation	Translator’s Interpretation
<p>“Now this was formerly done in Israel to establish a <i>dvar</i> [<i>Torah</i>] (‘and even a small <i>dvar</i> [<i>Torah</i>]’) concerning redemption and concerning change”:¹³⁴</p>	The righteous of the early generations would attempt to develop <i>divrei Torah</i> as a way of improving themselves.

comprehensive explanation of Medieval Kabbalah, though its rationally influenced scheme was superseded by the later scheme of Rabbi Isaac Luria (the Arizal).

¹³⁰ Yerushalmi, Peah 3b. “The Holy One, Blessed be He, removed the gift of the reward for doing the mitzvot in order that people would do them out of faith.”

¹³¹ From Kaddish d’Rabbanan for Sephardim and Bnei Roma.

¹³² Chagigah 5a: “One day [Rabbi Yochanan] was walking along the road, and he saw a certain man who was picking figs, leaving the ones that had reached [the stage of ripeness] and taking those that had not yet reached [that state]. [Rabbi Yochanan] said to him: ‘Aren’t these [ripe ones] much better?’ He said to him: ‘I need these [dates] for the road; these [that are not yet ripe] will be preserved, and these [that are already ripe] will not be preserved.’ ”

¹³³ Rosh on Beitzah 1:4: Discusses whether a freshly laid egg is forbidden on Rosh Hashanah, and notes that the two days of Rosh Hashanah are like “[one] long [day of] holiness.”

¹³⁴ Ruth 4:7: “Now this was formerly done in Israel concerning redemption and concerning exchange: to validate any transaction, one man would take off his sandal and hand it to the other.” The text can also be interpreted as shown to relate to a dvar Torah and self-improvement. Sanhedrin 86a: “even half a matter.”

<p>“Every generation and those who seek Him,”¹³⁵ “their hearts astir with good words,”¹³⁶ “to be solitary in the arrangement of the Most High”;¹³⁷ “The judgments of the L-rd are true.”¹³⁸</p>	<p>There are Torah scholars who devote themselves to learning holy texts and who strive to be close to G-d. The Torah wasn't given to fools, but to scholars to investigate and to share with others.</p>
<p>“Using what was at hand”¹³⁹ “to fix luminaries”¹⁴⁰ and “to arrange matches.”¹⁴¹ “The Jews had light—this is Torah.”¹⁴²</p>	<p>By learning the disclosed Torah, one can make <i>chidushim</i>, creating Torah, which is light. The match may refer not to a husband and wife, but two <i>chavrusas</i>. Alternatively, it can refer to the concept that Torah learning establishes the <i>zivug ha'elyon</i> (the uppermost match), a Kabbalistic concept representing the bond between G-d and the created beings (specifically Adam, mankind, and the Jewish people).</p>
<p>“The less stringent must follow [the rules governing] the more stringent,”¹⁴³ “one goes</p>	<p>When learning together to advance Torah scholarship, the <i>chavrusas</i> must agree on their</p>

¹³⁵ Ps. 24:6: “Such is *the generation of them that seek after Him.*” Avoda Zara 5a: “[Gen. 5:1] teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, showed Adam, the first man, *every generation and its expositors*, every generation and its Sages, and every generation and its leaders.”

¹³⁶ Ps. 45:2: “*My heart is astir with gracious words*; I speak my poem to a king; my tongue is the pen of an expert scribe.”

¹³⁷ Cf. Ps. 91:1: “*O you who dwell in the shelter of the Most High . . .*” (ישב בסתר עליון). Rabbi Nachmani altered the first word from ישב (*yoshev*) (sits/dwells) to לשום (*lashom*) (to be solitary). He also altered the second word from בסתר (*be'seter*) (in a hiding place, a shelter) to בסדר (*be'seder*) (in an arranged place), the second time he has made such a change (see footnote 6).

¹³⁸ Ps. 19:10: “The fear of the L-rd is pure, abiding forever; *the judgments of the L-rd are true*, righteous altogether.” Otzar Midrashim, Yaakov Our Father, Lekach Tov on the Blessings of Yaakov Our Father 6, cites this verse that the Torah wasn't given to fools, but rather to wise men to investigate and to compose teachings for others.

¹³⁹ Gen. 32:14: “After spending the night there, he selected *from what was at hand* these presents for his brother Esau.”

¹⁴⁰ In the Nusach Sephard liturgy for the Yotzer Or prayer preceding the reading of the Shema. Also see Gen. 1:16–17.

¹⁴¹ Num. Rabbah 3:6: “He *arranges matches* in His world, saying, ‘He will marry her’”

¹⁴² Esther 8:16: “*The Jews had light* and gladness, happiness and honor.” Megillah 16b: “Rav Yehuda said: ‘Light’; this is referring to the Torah that they once again studied.” And similarly, it says: ‘For the mitzvah is a lamp and the Torah is light’ (Prov. 6:23).”

¹⁴³ Mishnah Zevachim 11:8 (Zevachim 97a): “[If] one cooked both sacred things and non-sacred things [in one vessel], or [cooked in one vessel] both Kodshai Kodashim and Kodashim Kalim, if there is enough [meat] to impart flavor, *the less stringent* [meat] must be eaten *following the [rules governing] the more stringent* [meat], and [the vessels] do not require scouring and rinsing and [the mixture] does not render invalid through contact. [If] a wafer touched another wafer, or a piece of meat touched another piece of meat, neither the whole wafer nor the whole piece of meat become prohibited, rather just the place of absorption does.”

<p>out and one is admitted,”¹⁴⁴ “in the sight of all Israel”¹⁴⁵—“this and that are one, the same measure.”¹⁴⁶</p>	<p>approach. Each receives equal credit for any <i>chidushim</i> developed.</p>
<p>“In the same manner that one comes to see, so he comes to be seen.”¹⁴⁷</p>	<p>One who develops an understanding of the Torah should teach others.</p>
<p>“He who has seen the interpretive Torah novelty”¹⁴⁸ “must awaken the ears of the wise men”¹⁴⁹ “sitting in judge’s attire,”¹⁵⁰ “to publicize the miracle.”¹⁵¹</p>	<p>One who recognizes a <i>chidush</i> (a novel interpretation of Torah) should publicize it.</p>
<p>“For each of these novel interpretations is possibly”¹⁵² “fit to be combined”¹⁵³ “with bookmaker’s glue.”¹⁵⁴</p>	<p>It is worthwhile to publish such <i>chidushim</i>.</p>

¹⁴⁴ The complete term appears in Pri Etz Chaim, Gate of Tefillin (16:10); and also in Sefer Etz Chaim (7:2), (14:8), (16:1), (25:5), (36:1). The terms appear separately in Zohar I:85b (“one goes out”) and in Zohar III:102a (“one is admitted”).

¹⁴⁵ Deut. 31:7: “Then Moses called Joshua and said to him *in the sight of all Israel*: “Be strong and resolute. . .”

¹⁴⁶ Appears repeatedly in the Gemara, such as Shabbat 76a.

¹⁴⁷ Chagigah 2a and 4b; Sanhedrin 4b.

¹⁴⁸ See Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1:9 (Rosh Hashanah 22a). The original text reads *שְׁחֻדָּה* (*hachodesh*) (the new [moon]), and the sentence reflects the fact that before the Hebrew calendar was fixed by Hillel II, the beginning of each month (Rosh Chodesh) was determined by the Sanhedrin after listening to the testimony of witnesses who saw the new moon. Here, the author adds a *geresh* to signify that we are to pronounce and interpret the word as *חִדּוּשׁ* (*hachidush*) (the novel interpretation of Torah).

¹⁴⁹ Isaiah 50:4: “He *rouses my ear* to give heed like disciples.” Prov. 18:15: “The mind of an intelligent man acquires knowledge; *the ears of the wise* seek our knowledge.”

¹⁵⁰ Judges 5:10: “You riders on white donkeys, *sitting in judge’s attire* . . .” Also discussed in Eruvin 54b.

¹⁵¹ Publicizing the miracle of Chanukah or Purim (פְּרִסְמוֹת גִּיסָא) is mentioned in Berachot 14a; Shabbat 23b, 24a; Pesachim 112a; Megillah 3b, 18a.

¹⁵² Chagigah 4b: “[A sinner suffers through] *all this* [punishment] *and* [only] *perhaps* [there may be hope]?”

¹⁵³ Bava Batra 3b: “There [half-handbreadths are mentioned] as they are *fit to be combined*.”

¹⁵⁴ See Mishnah Pesachim 3:1 (Pesachim 42a): On Passover, one may not possess bookmakers’ glue. Rabbi Nachmani added a *geresh* to קוֹלָן (*kolan*) (glue), presumably to alert the reader that the word *kolan* should not be taken for its more usual meaning of “voices.”

<p>“Between this and that”¹⁵⁵ “let the matters be as clear as a new nightgown,”¹⁵⁶ clarified “very distinctly”¹⁵⁷ “until they will arrive at a fitting explanation in a proper setting,”¹⁵⁸ “of matters vague and profound in their appearance.”¹⁵⁹ “This one opens and that one locks,”¹⁶⁰ “this one draws [water] and that one gives drink,”¹⁶¹ “until her righteousness goes forth like brightness,”¹⁶² “that it will be revealed like the light of dawn.”¹⁶³</p>	<p>Torah scholars working together can clarify difficult subjects.</p>
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¹⁵⁵ Dan. 5:6: “Then the king’s countenance changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; and the joints of his hips gave way, and his knees knocked *one against another*.” Also Zohar I:216a, II:70a, 195b, III:10a, 82b, 119a, 187b, 218a.

¹⁵⁶ Deut. 22:16–17: “And the girl’s father shall say to the elders, ‘I gave this man my daughter to wife, but he has taken an aversion to her; so he has made up charges, saying, “I did not find your daughter a virgin.” But here is the evidence of my daughter’s virginity!’ And they shall spread out the nightgown before the elders of the town.”

Yerushalmi Ketubot 26a: “Spreading out the nightgown isn’t the end of the matter. Rather, *they clarify the matter like a nightgown*.” I.e., hear testimony of the witnesses for the husband and the father, and then rule on the allegation.

Sanhedrin 102a: “[I Kings 11:29 states:] ‘And the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the way, and he was clad in a *new [chadasha] garment*, and the two were alone in the field.’ What is [taught by the phrase] ‘in a new garment’? . . . That they introduced novelties [*shechideshu*] matters that no ear had ever heard.

¹⁵⁷ Deut. 27:8: “And on those stones you shall inscribe every word of this Teaching *very distinctly*.”

¹⁵⁸ Rashi on Gen. 37:2: “And these are an account of the generations of Jacob: these are their settlements and the events that happened to them *until they formed a permanent settlement*. The first cause is found in the narrative, “Joseph being seventeen years old, etc. etc.” — it was through this incident that it came about that they went down to Egypt. This is the real explanation of the text and in it each statement finds its *proper setting*.” Prov. 25:11: “Like golden apples in silver showpieces is a phrase *properly* spoken.”

¹⁵⁹ Perhaps the Shem Tov commentary (by Shem-Tov ben Joseph ibn Falaquera, c. 1225–95) on Rambam’s Guide for the Perplexed, Introduction: **ענין סתום ומאוד קשה לציירו במה שהוא סתום ועמוק** (it is a *vague matter*, and it is very difficult to portray it as it is *vague and profound*). Ezek. 1:16 provides “*their appearance*.”

¹⁶⁰ Num. Rabbah 19:28: “All words of Torah need each other, for *this one closes and this one opens*.” Also in Yalkut Shimoni 764:27.

¹⁶¹ Yoma 28b: “Rabbi Elazar said: The word [*Dammesek* (Damascus)] is a contraction of he who draws (*doleh*) and gives drink (*mashkeh*) to others.”

¹⁶² Isaiah 62:1: “For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not be quiet, *until her righteousness goes forth as brightness*, and her salvation as a burning torch.”

¹⁶³ Targum Jonathan on the same clause just quoted from Isaiah 62:1.

ואילין מיליא יהון לרקיעיא, וכלם ניתנו מרועה אחד, טוביא לדוכי לפתוח פתח פחודה של מחט. באר"ש לא ישב אדם שם. בבאר היטב המקראות וההגדות קבועים במקומם. אומרות דרשנו. ושם נמצאו ושם היו, בפרט בראיה הראשונה. חדקי חדקי, פפרודים דמו; ובאידיד גיסא, אדוקים זה בזה. ומובלע חדקייהו. כתבין קרין, מוקדמים ומאחרים, קרחין נסבין, טעמים מספיקין לחצי שיעור, טעמים מפסיקים, בין הלב ובין מפיק ונדחיק. וכל אמת אמת תפסיה להאי. באתי מרחיק, קשו קראי אהדדי. רישא לסיפא, מידריש במר'פבת המש'נה. והתלמוד ילמד סתום מן המפורש, מוקף מענגן לענגן ולבסוף ישב. משוד כנחל, ופה חלק, סובב הולך וחוזר על דברי חכמים, דגים דברי סופרים מדברי סופרים.

Translation	Translator's Interpretation
<p>“These words will be a firmament,”¹⁶⁴ “and they were all ‘given by one shepherd,’”¹⁶⁵ “happy is one who is privileged,”¹⁶⁶ “to make an opening the size of a needle’s point.”¹⁶⁷</p>	<p>While there are many different interpretations of Torah passages, both the Written and the Oral Torah were transmitted to us from G-d through Moses. One who can develop <i>chidushim</i> should feel fortunate.</p>
<p>“In the utterance of our lips, no man was dwelling there.”¹⁶⁸ “Very distinctly,”¹⁶⁹ the Written Law and the Oral Law “are fixed in their places.”¹⁷⁰ “We interpreted sayings.”¹⁷¹</p>	<p>A <i>chidush</i> can occur in an area that wasn't previously explored. In the wilderness, Moses and the elders commanded the publication of the Torah. The Oral Law was also later reduced to writing. As we “find” the Torah “fixed in its place” (i.e., printed), it is like a lost object that has an identifying characteristic. Therefore, we are obliged to publicize the finding, so that one</p>

¹⁶⁴ From the song Asader L'Seudata, written by Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534–72).

¹⁶⁵ Chagigah 3b: “Lest a person say: Now, how can I study Torah [when it contains so many different opinions]? The verse states that *they are all ‘given from one shepherd’* (Eccl. 12:11). One G-d gave them; one leader [i.e., Moses], spoke them . . .” Num. Rabbah 13:15: “The written Torah and the oral Torah, *they are all ‘given from one shepherd,’* for one G-d spoke them all, to Moses at Sinai.” There is a dispute whether “shepherd” refers to G-d or Moses, but Shabbetai Bass (1641–1718), in his Siftei Chachamim supercommentary on Rashi, notes that the deficient spelling in Eccl. 12:11, מרעה, is an acronym for משה רבנו עליו השלום (our teacher, Moses, peace be upon him).

¹⁶⁶ Sanhedrin 99b: “*Happy is one who is privileged*, who is a receptacle for Torah.”

¹⁶⁷ Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah 5:2: “‘Let me in’ [in Song of Songs 5:2]—Rabbi Yisa says: The Holy One, Blessed is He, said to Israel, ‘My sons, *make for Me an opening of repentance like [the size of] a needle’s point*, and I will open entrances for you [for repentance] through which cattle and wagons can enter.’” Yalkut Shimoni on Ecclesiastes 988:58 has similar text.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Jer. 2:6: “*In a land no man had traversed, where no man had dwelled.*” As with note 34, the author altered the original בארץ (be'erezt) (in a land) to בא"רש (an abbreviation for שפתינו) (in the utterance of our lips).

¹⁶⁹ Deut. 27:8: “And on those stones you shall inscribe every word of this Teaching *very distinctly.*” Sota 32a and 36a interprets this as meaning a translation into seventy languages. Curiously, the author prefixes the term with a ב (beit), suggesting a reading of “in the Be'er Heitev,” perhaps an allusion to the 18th century commentary by Zechariah Mendel ben Aryeh Leib on the Shulchan Aruch.

¹⁷⁰ Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 260:10: “If they find [a prayer shawl] *in a fixed location*, they need to publicize it.”

¹⁷¹ Perhaps Tanchuma, Vayeshev 13.

	who has lost it, i.e., who is far from Torah, can be reunited with what he has lost.
<p>“They were found there, and they were created there,”¹⁷² specifically in the “first sighting.”¹⁷³ “Grooved [giving the appearance of being separable into parts],”¹⁷⁴ his worth is like “crumbs”;¹⁷⁵ “on the other hand,”¹⁷⁶ “all are bound, one to another.”¹⁷⁷ “Its grooves are absorbed in each other.”¹⁷⁸</p>	All Jewish souls were present at Mt. Sinai, witnessing G-d’s Revelation to the entire nation. While an individual looks like an insignificant collection of body parts, he can accomplish great things, especially when joining others in pursuing a common goal. As it says in Sefer Chasidim, “All Israel is interconnected with each other.”
<p>“Written and read,”¹⁷⁹ “early and late,”¹⁸⁰ “omissions and inclusions”¹⁸¹ “we will</p>	We can derive a <i>chidush</i> in many ways, including: Masoretic traditions that call for a variance between what is written in Scripture and what is read; a verse chronologically belonging to an earlier or later time than the

¹⁷² Ketubot 75b discusses blemishes and has the language כֵּאֲן נִמְצְאוּ וְכֵאֲן הָיוּ (they were found here, and they existed here). The exact language used in this Preface appears in the commentary of Rabbi Moshe Alshich (1508–93) on Lev. 9:1 and Deut. 29:9, speaking about the presence of Jewish souls at Mt. Sinai.

¹⁷³ Pesachim 67b: “A man with an abnormal seminal discharge also becomes impure through an accident, in accordance with the opinion of Rav Huna, for Rav Huna said: ‘The *first sighting* of [such a man] establishes ritual impurity even through an accident.’”

¹⁷⁴ Shita Mekubetzet on Beitzah 22a: “‘Beit Hillel hold that there is no prohibition against building with regard to vessels’—At the end of the “Chapter of the Stove” [the third chapter of tractate Shabbat] it says [Shabbat 46a] that with regard to a jointed menorah (i.e., one assembled from parts) . . . , it is forbidden to move it on Shabbat [because of the fear it would fall and break apart, and someone would reassemble it in violation of the Sabbath] . . . It also says there that if it is *grooved* [i.e., having the appearance of being jointed, whether separable or not], everyone agrees that it is forbidden [to move it on the Sabbath, because people would mistakenly believe that it’s okay to move a jointed menorah on the Sabbath].”

¹⁷⁵ The word פְּרוּדִים (*parudim*) (separated things) is used to refer to grains or crumbled food. See Joel 1:17, “The *seeds* have shriveled under their clods”; Mishnah Tahorot 8:8, “Rabbi Dosa says: *crumbled food* cannot be combined together.”

¹⁷⁶ Eruvin 50b: “If you were to establish [residence] on the *other side* of the tree, it would be situated outside [his Sabbath limit].”

¹⁷⁷ Sefer Yetzirah 6:5: “G-d, faithful King, rules over them all from His holy habitation forever and ever . . . And *all are bound, one to another.*”

¹⁷⁸ Chullin 59b: “Therefore, where [an animal’s horns] are branched, there is neither judgment nor judge [and the animal is without a doubt undomesticated]. Where they are not branched, we require that they be layered, rounded, and grooved. And it [must be grooved in a pattern such] that its *grooves are absorbed* [into one another].”

¹⁷⁹ Nedarim 37b: “Rabbi Yitzchak said: The vocalization of the scribes, and the ornamentation of the scribes, and [the verses with words that are] read but not written, and those that are *written* but not *read* are all halacha [transmitted] to Moses from Sinai.”

¹⁸⁰ Pesachim 6b: “There is no earlier or later in the Torah.” I.e., it’s not necessarily in chronological order.

¹⁸¹ Minchat Shai on Deut. 5:18. Minchat Shai is a Masoretic commentary, composed in 1526 by Jedidiah Solomon ben Abraham Norzi. He notes that the Torah verse excludes a conjunctive *vav* (signifying the word “or”) for two words in a list, while including it for the other words. The words omitting the *vav* are קָרְחִין (“bald headed”), while the words including the *vav* are נֹטְבִין (“taking,” i.e., they take the conjunctive).

<p>explain sufficient reasons”¹⁸² “for half a measure”;¹⁸³ “cantillation notes indicating a pause,”¹⁸⁴ “between the heart”¹⁸⁵ “and between [Masoretic diacritic marks] <i>mapik</i> and <i>dachik</i>.”¹⁸⁶</p>	<p>adjoining text; the presence or absence of a conjunctive; if a preposition is presented as a prefix or a complete separate word; the use of particular cantillation notes and punctuations; which spelling of a word is used; and diacritic marks.</p>
<p>“Every ‘truth,’ ‘truth’ has caught this one.”¹⁸⁷ “Coming from a distance,”¹⁸⁸ “the verses contradict each other.”¹⁸⁹</p>	<p><i>Chidushim</i> can also be derived from how Scripture is presented in prayer. Also, some verses may appear to contradict each other, providing a fertile ground for developing <i>chidushim</i> by resolving the apparent conflict.</p>
<p>“From beginning to the end, [a verse] can be interpreted”¹⁹⁰ “by the chariot of the second-in-command.”¹⁹¹</p>	<p>Some verses can be interpreted with the beginning being the cause and the end being the effect, or with the end being the cause and the beginning being the effect. Furthermore, verses can be interpreted Kabbalistically,</p>

¹⁸² The text, טעמים מספיקין (sufficient reasons), is likely an alteration of the later text טעמים מפסיקים (cantillation notes and punctuations). See note 184.

¹⁸³ Shabbat 71b, 102a, 105a; Yoma 73b; Keritot 12b, 17a.

¹⁸⁴ Chagigah 6b: “What is the practical difference [between the two readings]? Mar Zutra said: ‘The *punctuation* of [the *cantillation*] notes.’”

¹⁸⁵ Berachot 61a: “Rav said: ‘The evil inclination is like a fly and it sits *between* the two entrances of the *heart*.’”

¹⁸⁶ Yesod haNikud (Amsterdam, 1730), written by Shlomo Zalman Katz (1687–1746), “And now I will clarify the [pronunciation] rule[s] of *mapik*, *mafsik*, *dachik*, and *atei marchik*.” The rules are discussed in earlier sources, such as *Minchat Shai*.

¹⁸⁷ Berachot 14b discusses that after reading the final two words of the Shema, one appends the first word of the subsequent blessing, thus: “The L-rd, your G-d, is True [*emet*].” The Gemara asks: “Does one repeat [the word] *emet* [when he begins the next blessing of *emet veyatziv*], or does he not repeat *emet*? Rabbi Abbahu said that Rabbi Yochanan said: ‘He repeats *emet*.’ Rabba said: ‘He does not repeat *emet*.’ [The Gemara relates:] A man descended [to lead the service] before Rabba, and Rabba heard that he said *emet*, *emet* [i.e., he said it] twice. Rabba [mocked him and] said: *Every emet, emet has caught this one* [i.e., he must be passionate about the pursuit of truth].”

¹⁸⁸ The text באתי מרחיק references the diacritic mark *atei mei’rachik* (Aramaic for “coming from a distance”). See *Minchat Shai* (Gen. 1:11, 10:20, 16:8, 43:15; Ex. 33:12; Num. 26:30; Deut. 22:19, 32:15; Isaiah 40:7; Ps. 77:16; Job 4:2, 5:27, 10:13). However, as punctuation rules were discussed in the text associated with note 186, perhaps here the author means the literal translation, “coming from a distance.”

¹⁸⁹ Appears a score of times in the Gemara, such as Rosh Hashanah 3b.

¹⁹⁰ Berachot 60a: “The verse says: ‘He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the L-rd’ (Ps. 112:7). Rava said: ‘Any way that you interpret this verse [its meaning is clear]. *It can be interpreted from beginning to end* or it can be interpreted from end to beginning.’ [The Gemara explains:] *It can be interpreted from beginning to end*. Why is it that ‘He shall not be afraid of evil tidings’? Because ‘his heart is steadfast, trusting in the L-rd.’ And it can be interpreted from end to beginning. One whose ‘heart is steadfast, trusting in the L-rd’ is a person who ‘shall not be afraid of evil tidings.’”

¹⁹¹ Gen. 41:43: “He had him ride in *the chariot of his second-in-command*.” The author adds a *geresh* to each word to signify another meaning, the Kabbalistic lower chariot. Whereas G-d has an upper chariot, corresponding to some of the Sefirot, the righteous person can access the lower chariot, corresponding to the feminine force, the *nukvah*. See Zohar I:196a; Zohar III:247a; Zohar Chadash, Ki Tavo 40; Pardes Rimonim 23:13.

	relying upon the feminine force (<i>nukvah</i>) that can be accessed by scholars.
Torah “will derive what is not explicitly stated by analogy from what is explicitly stated,”¹⁹² “circling from topic to topic and in the end settled.”¹⁹³ “Elongated like a brook, its edge is smooth,”¹⁹⁴ “ever turning and repeating”¹⁹⁵ “on the words of the sages,”¹⁹⁶ “inferring the Oral Law from [elsewhere in] the Oral Law.”¹⁹⁷	As demonstrated in the Gemara, Jewish scholars derive laws and interpret Scripture using a number of different rules.

¹⁹² Yoma 59a: “Granted, Rabbi Yishmael maintains that the rabbis *will learn what is not explicitly stated* [the halacha of outer sin-offerings, by analogy] *from what is explicitly stated* [the inner sin-offerings].

¹⁹³ Kiddushin 6a: “Abaye said: ‘[They have not changed to an entirely different topic; rather, they changed] *from* [discussing one] *topic to* [discussing another] *topic* within the same [general] topic.’” Megillah 3b: “ ‘And if a man sells a residential house in a walled city’ (Lev. 25:29). [The wording of the verse indicates that it is referring to a place that first] was *encircled* [by a wall] and [only] *later settled*.” Arachin 33b: “Here it was *encircled* and *later settled*; there it was settled and later encircled.”

¹⁹⁴ Sukkah 33b–34a: “ ‘Willows of the brook’ (Lev. 23:40) . . . is an allusion to . . . a tree whose leaf is *elongated like a brook . . . the edge* [of its leaf] *is smooth*.”

¹⁹⁵ Eccl. 1:6: “Southward blowing, turning northward, *ever turning* blows the wind; On its rounds the wind *returns*.” “Turning and repeating” appears in a number of places, such as Midrash Tanchuma (Ex. 21:1), Yalkut Shimoni on Torah (173:5), Rashi on Ex. 28:6, Abarbanel on Gen. 3:8, Chavot Yair 15:1.

¹⁹⁶ Eccl. 12:11: “*The words of the sages* are like a cattle prod, like nails fixed in prodding sticks. They were given by one Shepherd.”

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Mishnah Yadayim 3:2: “We cannot infer Words of Torah from Words of Scholars, nor Words of Scholars from Words of Torah, nor Words of Scholars from Words of Scholars.” I.e., we cannot infer laws in the written Torah from laws in the oral Torah, nor laws in the oral Torah from laws in the written Torah, nor *laws in the oral Torah from other laws of the oral Torah*.

ומי שזכה למרום חובר חובר בדבר המעמיד אפילו באלף לא בטיל. והמעמיד הוא בונה שמנים מעליותיו, והתקין לו ממנו בגן עדי עד. ואף אם שנים בעמק שנה, יעקרו חוליא אחת, והשלימו לעשרה דקדמא ואחיא שכונתא. גבואת ה' תהיה בין שניהם כאחד טובים, והביאור מתמלא מחוליא לבר חוליא. קול דפריש מרו'בא פרי'ש, באר היטב, בשבעים פנים. והכל עולה על שלחן מלכי רבנו לפרפראות לתקמה, מיטב שדהו ומיטב פרמו. תנא יחידאה בדידה: שימינן בינונית ועדיית, במעשה חידודיו, שנים שלשה כתובים באים כאחד ומלמדים, האי כדאיתיה והאי כדאיתיה.

Translation	Translator's Interpretation
<p>“He who merits Heaven”¹⁹⁸ “makes a connection”¹⁹⁹ “with something that even if diluted a thousand-fold is not nullified.”²⁰⁰</p>	<p>One who merits to find a <i>chidush</i> receives a great reward, even if he considers the discovery to be unremarkable.</p>
<p>The One who set it up, “He built His chambers in Heaven,”²⁰¹ “and out of His very Self formed a building for eternity.”²⁰²</p>	<p>G-d is the ultimate source of Torah and indeed the universe, and He can grant a great reward for those who follow His will.</p>
<p>Even if two are “in the valley of the King,”²⁰³ “they will remove one chunk, completing the ten [so that] the Divine Presence [Shechinah] arrives.”²⁰⁴ “The prophecy of G-d will be between both who are equally good”²⁰⁵ “and the explanation</p>	<p>Two scholars learning G-d's Torah together may individually feel lost, as though deep in a valley, but by working together they can each make a bit of progress until they finally arrive at a <i>chidush</i>, becoming joint owners of it, the <i>chidush</i> bringing forth the Shechinah.</p>

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Mishnah Tamid 1:4: “*One who merited to remove ashes* (מי שזכה לתרם) from the altar, would remove them . . .” The author has altered לתרם (to remove ashes) to למרום (to Heaven).

¹⁹⁹ Deut. 18:11: “[Or] *one who casts spells* [lit. “connects connections”], or one who consults ghosts or familiar spirits, or one who inquires of the dead.”

²⁰⁰ Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De’ Ah 87:11 (gloss of the Rema): “Because *something* that's intrinsically forbidden, and one *used* it [to curdle milk], *even in a thousand parts it's not nullified.*”

²⁰¹ Amos 9:6: “*Who built His chambers in Heaven* and founded His vault on the earth . . .”

²⁰² Ketubot 8a: “And [the third blessing is: Blessed are You . . .] Who made humanity in His image, in the image of the likeness of His form, *and out of His very self, formed a building for eternity.* Blessed are You, L-rd, Creator of mankind.” Forming a building refers to fashioning Eve from Adam's rib (see Gen. 2:22).

²⁰³ Gen. 14:17: “When he returned from defeating Chedorloamer and the kings with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him *in the Valley of Shaveh*, which is the Valley of the King.”

²⁰⁴ Bava Kamma 51a: “How can you find [a pit belonging to two partners]? Rabbi Yochanan says: Where they both *removed a chunk* [of earth from the bottom of the pit] at *one* time, and [thereby] *completed it to* [a depth of] *ten* [handbreadths].” Berachot 6a: “*The Divine Presence arrives* before a group of ten.”

²⁰⁵ Ex. 22:10: “an oath in the name of *the L-rd will be between the two of them.*” Eccl. 11:6: “*both are equally good.*”

<p>will be fulfilled from a segment to a subsegment.”²⁰⁶</p>	
<p>“A voice that is separated was separated from a majority,”²⁰⁷ “very distinctly,” “in seventy faces.”²⁰⁸</p>	<p>Deut. 27:8 called for the word of G-d to be written “very distinctly,” which the Gemara interprets as “in seventy languages.” A <i>chidush</i> should be similarly published and made clear.</p>
<p>“It is served at the table of kings of sages”²⁰⁹ “for condiments of wisdom,”²¹⁰ “the best of his field and the best of his vineyard.”²¹¹</p>	<p>Just as a small quantity of a condiment can enhance an entire meal, a small <i>chidush</i> can be very valuable to the wise.</p>
<p>“An individual teaches himself.”²¹² “we make an average or best assessment,”²¹³ “in an act of sharpening”²¹⁴ “two [or] three verses that come as one teach a</p>	<p>While ideally two will learn Torah together as <i>chavrusas</i>, a person can also learn by himself. One man may only have average skills, and another excellent skills, but each can review the Torah that he has learned in the past, and</p>

²⁰⁶ Cf. Berachot 3b, 59a and Sanhedrin 16a, which all have the text: “a pit cannot *be filled from its own segment* [i.e., its own earth; when a pit is excavated, the earth that was excavated from it is insufficient to refill it].” The author has altered the original הבור (*ha'bor*) (the pit) to הב'אור (*ha'bei'or*) (the explanation). Chullin 50a. “Abaye and Rava both say: One may compare [severed or perforated areas] in the windpipe. Rav Pappa said: We said this only [when the two areas are] in the same segment [of the windpipe]. But [one may] not [compare] from a segment to [another] segment. And the halacha is: [One may] even [compare] from a segment to [another] segment, and from a subsegment [i.e., a thin segment between the main segments], to [another] subsegment, but not *from a segment to a subsegment*, and not from a subsegment to a segment.

²⁰⁷ The Hebrew/Aramaic text קול דפריש מרובה פריש is a play on כל דפריש מרובה פריש, a principle in halacha that any item separated, i.e., not fixed in its place, is presumed to have been separated from the majority of that class of items. The original appears in Berachot 28a; Yoma 84b; Yevamot 16b; Ketubot 14a, 15a, 24a; Kiddushin 73a; and Zevachim 73a, 73b. It is unclear to the translator why a *geresh* was added to each of the last words.

²⁰⁸ Deut. 27:8: “And on those stones you shall inscribe every word of this Teaching *very distinctly*.” Sota 32a, 36a interprets this to mean in seventy tongues (languages). Otzar Midrashim, The Book of Chanoch 1:4: “All of the hidden places of wisdom, all were given to his hand, and all of them were opened to Moses at Sinai until they were learned in the forty days during which he stood on the mountain: the Torah *in seventy faces* of seventy tongues.”

²⁰⁹ Yevamot 46a: “*Anything that is not served at the table of kings* to be eaten with bread is not [subject] to [the prohibition against] food cooked by gentiles.” Regarding “kings of sages,” see Gittin 62a, where one sage greeted two other sages, calling them kings. “They said to him: From where do you know that the Sages are called kings? He said to them: As it is written [with regard to the Torah in the book of Proverbs]: ‘Through me, kings rule’ (Prov. 8:15).”

²¹⁰ Pirkei Avot 3:18: “Astronomical calculations and Gematria [numerical calculations] are the *condiments of wisdom*.” It is unclear to the translator why a *geresh* was added.

²¹¹ Ex. 22:4: “When a man lets his livestock loose to graze in another’s land, and so allows a field or a vineyard to be grazed bare, he must make restitution according to *the best of his field and the best of his vineyard*.”

²¹² Shabbat 140a: “Rabbi Yannai said to him: If so, that is [the difference] between my [knowledge] and yours. *The Mishnah is an individual* [opinion].”

²¹³ Mishnah Gittin 5:1 (Gittin 48b): “[Compensation for] damages *are assessed* from the *highest* [quality field]; and for a creditor, from the *medium* [quality field].”

²¹⁴ Sanhedrin 66b, where “*an act of sharpening*” is a euphemism for intimate contact between husband and wife.

precedent;” ²¹⁵ “this is as it is, and this is as it is.” ²¹⁶	learn new subjects, and strive to sharpen his intellect and develop new <i>chidushim</i> .
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ואתרי ראותי ואתרי הנדעי המצנה המוטלת על כל איש ואיש, ומהיכן אדם מציין לעתיד לבא, אם לא בהוצאות ובהכנסות תבילות תבילות ספיקות, ולהתירם ולהכינם להרצאת אדון הוא דאָתו. לצאת ידי החובה אשר ברא אלהים לעשות, לעבדה לשמרה, לקבר בירורים, וליטול פירורין, דמעלקא אתו, ולהוסיף נופך משלו על קניית שמים התדשים, ולהשלים תקו ולהוציא לאור תעלומת חלקו, הכל לפי מה שהיה אדם.

Translation	Translator’s Interpretation
<p>“Having seen”²¹⁷ “and having been made aware of”²¹⁸ “the mitzvah incumbent on”²¹⁹ “each and every man,”²²⁰</p>	<p>Torah study is a basic mitzvah, as explained in Kiddushin 29b, that even if a father did not teach Torah to his son (as required by Deut. 11:19), the son is obligated to teach himself.</p>
<p>“and from where will man sprout in the Hereafter,”²²¹ if not by “carrying out and</p>	<p>The way to fulfill the mitzvah of Torah study, and to be worthy of resurrection, is to study slowly and to review the material. This will</p>

²¹⁵ Kiddushin 35a: “And according to Rabbi Yehuda, who says that *two verses that come as one do teach [a precedent]*, and that [donning] phylacteries is a positive mitzvah that is not time bound, what can be said? [It is not derived from here that women are obligated in positive, time-bound mitzvot] because [the verses that mention] matza, rejoicing, and assembly are three verses that come as one, and [everyone agrees] *three verses that come as one do not teach a [precedent]*.”

²¹⁶ Sukkah 43b: Abaye raised an objection to [Rav Yosef from the Mishnah, which states: The] lulav [is taken] and [the altar is encircled with] the willow branch either six or seven [days]. What, is it not [learned from the juxtaposition of these mitzvot in the Mishnah that the mitzvah of the willow branch is] like [the mitzvah of] lulav in that just as [the mitzvah of] lulav [is performed] by taking it, so too, [the mitzvah of the] willow branch [is performed] by taking [it and not by standing it upright? He answered him:] Are the cases necessarily comparable? [Perhaps] *this [mitzvah of lulav is as it is, by means of taking], and this [mitzvah of the willow branch] is as it is [by means of standing it upright]*.”

²¹⁷ Gen. 46:30: “Then Israel said to Joseph, ‘Now I can die, *having seen for myself* that you are still alive.’ ”

²¹⁸ Jer. 31:19: “Now that I have turned back, I am filled with remorse; *Now that I am made aware*, I strike my thigh. I am ashamed and humiliated, for I bear the disgrace of my youth.”

²¹⁹ Kiddushin 30b: “All *mitzvot* concerning a father, which are *incumbent upon a son* to perform for his father, both men and women are obligated thereby.”

²²⁰ Ex. 35:29: “Thus the Israelites, *each man and each woman* whose hearts moved them to bring anything for the work that the L-rd, through Moses, had commanded to be done, brought it as a freewill offering to the L-rd.”

²²¹ Eccl. (Kohelet) Rabbah 12:5: “Hadrian, may his bones be crushed and his name be erased, inquired of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanina, asking him, ‘*From where will man sprout in the Hereafter?*’ He replied, ‘From the nut of the spinal column.’ ” Similar passages appear in Gen. Rabbah 28:3; Lev. Rabbah 18:1; Yalkut Shimoni 47:2.

<p>bringing in”²²² “sufficient bundles,”²²³ and to untie them and prepare them “to appease the Master.”²²⁴</p>	<p>allow one’s Torah knowledge to grow, and will be pleasing to G-d.</p>
<p>“To fulfil the obligation”²²⁵ “which G-d created him to do,”²²⁶ “to work it and to tend it,”²²⁷ “to clarify inquiries,”²²⁸ “and to take crumbs,”²²⁹ “to come from the [outside] world,”²³⁰ “and to add his own jewel”²³¹ “on creating the new Heaven,”²³² “and to complete his task”²³³ “and to bring to light his hidden portion,”²³⁴ “all according to the particular person.”²³⁵</p>	<p>In this way, slowly and with careful review and consideration of numerous sources, he can fulfill his obligation to learn Torah, as well as by adding his own contribution of <i>chidushim</i>, in accordance with his abilities. In this way, he will be contributing to a better atmosphere on earth, where people will be healthy, will enjoy a longer life, and will be more productive.</p>

²²² C.f. Horayot 4a: “It is *carrying out* an object to the public domain and *carrying in* an object from the private domain that is prohibited.”

²²³ Berachot 49a: “And what is the reason that one does not conclude [a blessing] with two [themes]? Because one does not perform mitzvot in *bundles* [i.e., each mitzva must have its own blessing].” See also Eruvin 54b; Pesachim 102b; Sotah 8a; Avodah Zarah 19a.

²²⁴ Kiddushin 14b: “[How does the Sage derive that a slave is not transferred as an inheritance? Because the phrase,] ‘And he shall serve you,’ is written another [time, and he derives this halacha from there.] And the other, [Rabbi Elazar, what does he do with that other verse? In his opinion,] *that comes to appease the master*. [I.e., to stress that the servitude is of limited duration, to encourage the master to free the slave without hesitation.]”

²²⁵ Mishnah Challah 1:2: “One who eats an olive’s bulk of them as matzah on Passover *has fulfilled one’s obligation*.”

²²⁶ Gen. 2:3: “And G-d blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on that [day] G-d ceased from all the work *of creation that He had done*.”

²²⁷ Gen. 2:15: “The L-rd G-d took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden, *to work it and to tend it*.”

²²⁸ Rabbi Chayim Vital, Pri Etz Chaim, Gate of Prayer 7:10 and Gate of Putting Down the Head 2:6.

²²⁹ Berachot 52b: “And Beit Hillel say: If the attendant is a Torah scholar, *he takes the crumbs* that are an olive-bulk [from the table at the end of the meal] and leaves only crumbs that are not an olive-bulk.”

²³⁰ Megillah 26a: “Rav Ashi said: This synagogue of Mata Mechasya, although people from the [outside] *world come to it*, since they come at my discretion [as I established it], if I wish, I can sell it.”

²³¹ Kiddushin 48b: “And if one [attempts to] betroth [a woman] with a loan, she is not betrothed. But with what are we dealing here? A case where *he added a jewel of his own* for her, as one Sage [Rabbi Meir] holds [that if a man betroths a woman with] a loan and a small coin, his mind is focused on the coin.” Also appears in Bava Kamma 99b.

²³² Gen. 14:19: “*Creator of Heaven and earth*.” Isaiah 65:17: “For behold! I am creating *a new Heaven and a new earth* . . .” Ibn Ezra interprets “a new Heaven” to mean a new good atmosphere, that people will be healthy and enjoy a long life; that G-d will likewise increase the productive power of the earth, that it will be as though it were new.”

²³³ Job 23:14: “For He *will complete my task*; and many such things are with Him.”

²³⁴ Job 28:11: “He dams up the sources of the streams, *to bring to light hidden things*.”

²³⁵ Mishnah Kelim 17:11: “*All according to the particular person* [involved, e.g.,] the handful of [flour that a priest scoops out from] a meal-offering, and the handfuls of incense [the High Priest would offer on Yom Kippur,] and one who drinks a cheekful on Yom Kippur.” See also Eruvin 30b, 48a.

מעטתה אף כי ערפי עלי כערך הדיוט שבהדיוטים, מל שבקלים, ועדיין לא הגעתי לחצי שיעורא דרבנן, ולשליש ולרביע, ולא למדתי חכמה, ובביתי אין להם ואין שמלה. ומגרסא דינקותא אין בי כדי גמישא, והבור ריק, אין בו מים. ותורה איזוב הקצור ואין בו כדי הנה וטבילה. ושמי מוכים עלי תולעת ש'ני. ומה לי פה לדבר, ומילין לחבר, ומי אנכי שבאתי עד היום?

Translation	Translator's Interpretation
<p>From now on, even though “my value is that of”²³⁶ “the commonest of common men,”²³⁷ “the lightest of the lightweights,”²³⁸ “and I have not yet reached half the level of the rabbis,”²³⁹ “or one third or a fourth,”²⁴⁰ “and I have not learned wisdom,”²⁴¹ “and with no food or clothing in my house.”²⁴²</p>	<p>Rabbi Nachmani is being self-deprecating, alleging that he has accomplished little in learning Torah. “No food or clothing” is also meant allegorically as being deficient in Torah, rather than the literal meaning referring to material wealth.</p>
<p>“From the knowledge of youth”²⁴³ I don’t have “even have a mouthful,”²⁴⁴ “the pit was empty; there was no water in it.”²⁴⁵</p>	<p>He alleges that he achieved little Torah learning in his youth.</p>

²³⁶ Pesikta Zutrata 35a (Venice, 1546).

²³⁷ Yalkut Shimoni on Torah 766:7: “Rabbi Yehuda the son of Rabbi Shalom said, ‘Even the *commonest of common men* does not extend a slice of bread into his mouth until he performs mitzvot.’”

²³⁸ Rosh Hashanah 25b: “This serves to teach you that even the *lightest of the lightweights* [i.e., the least distinguished individual], once he has been appointed as a leader over the community, he [must be treated] like the greatest of the great.”

²³⁹ Avot D’Rabbi Natan 7:1: “The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Job, ‘Job, you *still haven’t reached half the level* of Abraham . . .’” Berachot 20b: “What are we dealing with here? With a case where he [is obligated to recite grace after a meal because he] ate *a measure of* [the law of] *the rabbis*.”

²⁴⁰ Mishnah Peah 5:5: “Someone who contracts for a field to harvest, is forbidden in [taking] Leket, Shichecha, Peah, and Ma’aser Sheni. Rabbi Yehudah said: ‘When? At a time that he contracts for one half, *one third, or a fourth* [of the harvest].’”

²⁴¹ Prov. 30:3: “*I have not learned wisdom*; neither do I possess knowledge of the Holy One.”

²⁴² Isaiah 3:7: “On that day he will protest, saying, ‘I will not be a healer, *with no food or clothing in my house*; You shall not make me ruler of a people.’”

²⁴³ Shabbat 21b: “Didn’t he [ultimately] learn [the halacha]? [What difference does it make from whom and at what point he learned it? The Gemara answers:] The practical difference is [with regard to] *knowledge of one’s youth* [which is better remembered].”

²⁴⁴ Mishnah Shabbat 8:1 (Shabbat 76b): “[One is liable if] he carries out sufficient wine to pour a goblet [of wine]; or milk *equal to a mouthful*.”

²⁴⁵ Gen. 37:24: “And they took him and cast him into the pit. *The pit was empty; there was no water in it.*” Note also that water is analogized to Torah (Bava Kamma 17a).

<p>“The teaching of the short hyssop lacked enough for sprinkling and dipping.”²⁴⁶</p>	<p>A hyssop was used to sprinkle <i>chatat</i> water (the water of purification created with the ashes of the red heifer). The hyssop also had to be dipped directly into the <i>chatat</i> water. This could be challenging if the hyssop was too short. By analogy, Rabbi Nachmani suggests that his Torah knowledge is “too short.”</p>
<p>“My name proves me”²⁴⁷ “a strange worm.”²⁴⁸</p>	<p>He suggests that his reputation in life was deficient.</p>
<p>“What is my mouth to speak, and words to compose,”²⁴⁹ and “who am I that I have come so far?”²⁵⁰</p>	<p>The author alleges he has insufficient talent as a writer, and indeed asks if he is even worthy of publishing <i>seforim</i>.</p>

²⁴⁶ Mishnah Parah 12:1: *Chatat* water (containing the ashes of a red heifer) was used as a means of purification. The *chatat* water was contained within a vessel, and a hyssop was dipped into the water and then used to sprinkle the water. “*The short hyssop* [which is not long enough to reach the bottom of the vessel containing the waters], one should provide it with string or a rod and dip it, and raise it [out], and hold the hyssop and sprinkle with it. Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Shimon say: *Just as sprinkling* must be [done] with the hyssop, *so too dipping* must be [done] with the hyssop.”

²⁴⁷ The term appears (in the third person) in a number of earlier sources, including: Tanna debei Eliyahu Zuta, Additions to Seder Eliyahu Zuta, Mavo 38; Tur haAroch on Deut. 10:6; Kessef Mishneh, Vessels of the Sanctuary 1:7:2; Pardes Rimonim 4:1:2, 8:1:5; Sefer Etz Chaim 1:1:5; Kli Yakar on Ex. 31:2.

²⁴⁸ The term תלעת שני (*tola'at shani*) appears throughout Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, appearing first in Ex. 26:1, with the meaning “crimson yarn.” However, a more literal translation of *tola'at* is “worm,” as in Ps. 22:7: “But I am a *worm*, less than human; scorned by men, despised by people.” The author added a *geresh* to שני to indicate that the pronunciation (and meaning) should be changed from “*shani*” (red) to “*shanei*” (different or strange). The word שני is used with that meaning in Targum Tehillim 24:1. [The word also appears with the variant spelling שאני, such as in Berachot 20a and Chullin 100a, sources used by the author below (see footnotes 253 and 303).]

²⁴⁹ Prayer composed by Rabbi Abraham Shabbetai Segal, “. . . I have no mouth to speak, and words to compose,” published in Tefilla kefi Minhag ha-Ashkenazim (Sulzbach 1701) and also in Seder Tefilla Derech Yeshara (Amsterdam 1748). Likely derived from Isaiah 52:5, amending “*ma li po* (what do I gain here?)” to “*ma li peh* (what is my mouth?)” and Berachot 31b “a nose to smell, *a mouth to speak*.”

²⁵⁰ Cf. II Sam. 7:18: “Then King David came and sat before the L-rd, and he said, ‘*Who am I*, O L-rd G-d, and what is my family, *that You have brought me thus far?*’” King David realized that he had achieved greatness, but at least properly attributes this to G-d and modestly asks if he is worthy. The author has altered the text from “that You have brought me so far” to “that I have come so far”—removing G-d from his achievements. He is not doing this out of haughtiness, but rather he is saying that in his case, he has no greatness for which he even needs to credit G-d.

עם כל זה, אין דרך לנטות, בשוב ואל תעשה. יען מיום שהוצאתי לאור ספר תולדות שמשון על מסכת אבות, אנכי פציתי פי, והריני נדור. וכא להעלות על מזבח הדפוס קרבן מנחה על מקרא משנה ואגדה. ומי דרכו להתנדב מנחה, עני בדעת. ואשר נדרתי, אשלמה, כי האי תניא דמסייעא לי, נאמר במנחה רים ניהום. ובצפיתי צפיתי—כי דלתות העזרה לא ננעלו—מאשר בא להסתפח בנחלת ה', לנטוע שמים ליסוד ארץ חדשה, אשר לא תהו ברעה, וכל אדם לעמל יולד.

Translation	Translator's Interpretation
<p>“With all this,”²⁵¹ “there is no way to stretch out,”²⁵² “sitting and doing nothing.”²⁵³</p>	<p>Although the author has questioned his abilities, he believes that some action is better than nothing.</p>
<p>Since the day “I brought to light”²⁵⁴ the book of <i>Toldot Shimshon</i> on the tractate of Avot, “I have uttered a vow,”²⁵⁵ “and I am obligated to the vow.”²⁵⁶ I come “to offer on the altar of printing”²⁵⁷ “a meal offering”²⁵⁸ “on Scripture, Mishnah, and Aggadah.”²⁵⁹</p>	<p>The author has long planned writing this <i>sefer</i>, reviewing the weekly Torah portions in light of the Talmud and Midrash. He modestly refers to his work as a meal offering, as a meal offering was less expensive than an animal offering.</p>

²⁵¹ Chovot haLevavot (Duties of the Heart), Second Treatise on Examination, Introduction 12, also 5:64, also Tenth Treatise on Devotion to G-d 3:22; Kuzari 1:95, 3:44, 3:48, 5:20; Iggerot HaRambam, Maamar Kiddush HaShem 3; Zohar I:104b:17 and III:193a:80; Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim 178:6.

²⁵² Num. 22:26: “Once more the angel of the L-rd moved forward and stationed himself on a spot so narrow that *there was no room to swerve* right or left.”

²⁵³ Berachot 20a: “The Gemara suggests: Let us derive [a general principle that human dignity takes precedence over all mitzvot in the Torah] from this case. [This possibility is rejected: This is a special case, because a case of] *sitting and doing nothing* is different.”

²⁵⁴ Tanna debei Eliyahu Zuta, Additions to Seder Eliyahu Zuta, Mavo 1; Chavot Yair 81:18 (written by Rabbi Yair Chaim Bacharach, 1638–1702).

²⁵⁵ Judges 11:35: “On seeing her, he rent his clothes and said, “Alas, daughter! You have brought me low; you have become my troubler! For *I have uttered a vow* to the L-rd and I cannot retract.””

²⁵⁶ Yerushalmi Nedarim 2a: “If he said, ‘this loaf is restricted from me and I [am restricted] from it. Here *I am obligated to the vow* regarding the loaf . . .’”

²⁵⁷ The exact words appear in publishers’ notes, for example by Naftali Hertz Emden, in the 1738 Amsterdam edition of Sefer HaTashbetz. Cf. II Chron. 29:21: “to offer them on the altar of the L-rd.”

²⁵⁸ Lev. 2:1: “When a person presents a meal offering to the L-rd, his offering shall be of choice flour; he shall pour oil upon it, lay frankincense on it.”

²⁵⁹ Yerushalmi Peah 13a: “*Scripture, Mishnah, Talmud, and Aggadah.*” Also Yalkut Shimoni on Torah 405:1.

<p>“For who is it that usually brings a meal-offering? One who is poor (in mindset).”²⁶⁰</p> <p>“What I have vowed, I will perform,”²⁶¹</p> <p>“because of this teaching of a <i>Baraita</i> that supports me,”²⁶² speaking “of a meal offering of pleasing odor.”²⁶³</p>	<p>Nonetheless, a meal offering presented by a poor man is considered by G-d as highly as an animal offering presented by a rich man.</p>
<p>“It is in expectantly watching”²⁶⁴—</p> <p>“because the doors of the Temple courtyard were not locked”²⁶⁵—that he came “to share in the inheritance of G-d”²⁶⁶ “to plant the Heavens and to lay the foundations for the new earth,”²⁶⁷ that “He did not create it for empty chaos,”²⁶⁸ and “every man is born to toil.”²⁶⁹</p>	<p>The author thus hopes that <i>Zera Shimshon</i> will receive a good reception, just as a meal offering is brought into the Temple and is accepted there. He is fulfilling a mitzvah of Torah study, and hopes that spreading Torah will create a better atmosphere for the peoples and nations of the earth.</p>

²⁶⁰ Rashi on Lev. 2:1: “*For who is it that usually brings a meal-offering? The poor man.*” Menuchot 104b: “*who is it that usually dedicates a meal-offering? The poor man!*” Ketubot 68a: “Isn’t it the case that ‘poor’ means ‘*poor in mindset*’ [i.e., he’s not truly poor, but he spends his money thriftily as though he were poor].”

²⁶¹ Jonah 2:10: “But I, with loud thanksgiving, will sacrifice to You; *what I have vowed, I will perform.* Deliverance is the L-rd’s!”

²⁶² Rabbi Chananel ben Chushiel (965–1055) on Shevuot 37a.

²⁶³ See Keritot 9a, citing a *Baraita* that when Num. 15:14 speaks of “an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the L-rd,” it means any offering by fire, even a meal offering.

²⁶⁴ Lam. 4:17. The exact wording appears in an approbation by Rabbi Jacob ben Israel ha-Levi in Joseph Solomon Delmedigo’s *Sefer Elim* (Amsterdam, 1629).

²⁶⁵ Mishnah Pesachim 5:5 (Pesachim 64a): “The first group [of people sacrificing the offering] entered, [and when] the Temple courtyard became filled [with them], *they locked the doors of the Temple courtyard.*” The author has added a *geresh* to העזירה, presumably to alert the reader that the word should be given the pronunciation and meaning *ha’azara* (the Temple courtyard), as opposed to the more common pronunciation and meaning *ha’ezra* (the help). Alternatively, perhaps he means that it should be pronounced *ezra*, so that the meaning should be “the doors of help are not locked,” i.e., that if someone makes an effort to learn Torah, G-d will help him.

²⁶⁶ I Sam. 26:19: “For they have driven me out today, so that I cannot have a *share in the inheritance of the L-rd.*”

²⁶⁷ Isaiah 51:16: “And with the shadow of My hand, I have covered you; *to plant the Heavens, and to lay the foundations of the earth.*” Isaiah 65:17: “For behold! I am creating a new Heaven and a *new earth.*”

²⁶⁸ Isaiah 45:18: “For thus said the L-rd, The Creator of Heaven who alone is G-d, Who formed the earth and made it, Who alone established it— *He did not create it for empty chaos*, but formed it for habitation; ‘I am the L-rd, and there is none else.’ ”

²⁶⁹ Job 5:7: “*For man is born to toil*, just as sparks fly upward.”

ואף כי לא ראי זה פראי זה—דא תהי למיקם ולמקווי. עדות ה' נאמנה, מחכימת פתי, וטהולכים בחשך, תנומת תמונתם. נאפילו אחד יושב ועוסק בתורה, יש ה' בקרבו, נהורא עמיה שרי, עם קדושים נאמן, אהוב למעלה ונחמד למטה. הו הקיש למחצה אזיל תגא ויתיב אדוכתיה בי גזא דרחמנא. כל שאתה יכול לרבות ספקות כולא מטא, מידי דאתנא מדרשא חביבה היא, ומתוקה מחלב חטה. מוכרי סדקית ומוכרי מרגליות, אגרא דפרקא ריהטא. מרחוק ה' נראה, רואים אור נגה עליהם. דרחמנא לבא בעי, ונשמת כל חי תשיג פסומא בארובה לעשות פוננים למלאכת שמים, לרצון לפני ה', וכנה אשר נטעה.

Translation	Translator's Interpretation
<p>“Also surely,”²⁷⁰ “the aspect of this is not like the aspect of that”²⁷¹—“this will be to stand and exist.”²⁷²</p>	<p>Even though its sanctity doesn't rise to the level of a Temple sacrifice, a well-received <i>sefer</i> can attain some permanence, and <i>Zera Shimshon</i> is given to us as a bequest.</p>
<p>“The testimony of the L-rd is trustworthy, making wise the simple,”²⁷³ and “those who walk in darkness,”²⁷⁴ “the slumber of their image.”²⁷⁵</p>	<p>Studying the word of G-d will lead one to wisdom, even if he is simple-minded or ignorant.</p>
<p>“Even for one sitting and engaging in Torah,”²⁷⁶ “G-d is in his midst,”²⁷⁷ “light dwells with him,”²⁷⁸ “he is faithful to the</p>	<p>One who is already wise, being learned in Torah, should continue to learn, and he will be further blessed by G-d as he continues fulfilling the mitzvah of Torah study.</p>

²⁷⁰ Deut. 31:27: “Well I know how defiant and stiffnecked you are: even now, while I am still alive in your midst, you have been defiant toward the L-rd; *also surely* after my death!”

²⁷¹ Appears dozens of times in the Talmud, such as Berachot 35a: “[The halacha is derived from a combination of two sources.] *The aspect of this is not like the aspect of that*, and the aspect of that is not like the aspect of this.” The author used this same quotation earlier; see note 82 and the accompanying text.

²⁷² Bava Metzia 19a: “What is a will? This is a deed *that is to stand and exist* as proof that if this person dies, his property goes to so-and-so.” Also Bava Batra 135b.

²⁷³ Ps. 19:8: “The teaching of the L-rd is perfect, renewing life; *the testimony of the L-rd is trustworthy, making wise the simple.*”

²⁷⁴ Isaiah 9:1: “The people *that walked in darkness* have seen a brilliant light . . .”

²⁷⁵ Rabbi Shmuel Arkevolti, Arugat HaBosem (Venice 1603), Introduction: “The path of haughty speech I will stone with my words. A golden tongue will awaken *my image which slumbers*. It shall be in a time of old age, a gift of my garden bed. For the portion in every corner, an exchange of my contribution.”

²⁷⁶ Pirkei Avot 3:2: “From where [is there proof that] *that even for one [person] sitting and engaging in Torah*, the Holy One, Blessed be He, determines a reward for him? As it is said, ‘He sits alone and is silent, since he takes [a reward] for it’ (Lam. 3:28).” See also Berachot 6a.

²⁷⁷ Ex. 17:7: “The place was named Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and because they tried the L-rd, saying, ‘*Is the L-rd in our midst*, or not?’”

²⁷⁸ Dan. 2:22: “He reveals deep and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and *light dwells with Him.*”

<p>Holy One,”²⁷⁹ “beloved above and treasured below.”²⁸⁰</p>	
<p>There is “a partial [analogy] from juxtaposition”;²⁸¹ “the crown goes and sits in its place”²⁸² “in the treasure house of the Merciful One.”²⁸³</p>	<p>Just as G-d is entirely holy, one learning Torah will attain a portion of holiness. The efforts of the scholar will glorify G-d, metaphorically crowning Him.</p>
<p>“However many uncertainties that you might increase,”²⁸⁴ “all this happened”²⁸⁵ from something that you “derived from a homiletical interpretation—it is dear,”²⁸⁶ and sweeter than “the finest wheat.”²⁸⁷</p>	<p>Even if by your efforts you raise many questions for which you cannot develop definite answers, it is still laudable that you are making the effort.</p>

²⁷⁹ Hosea 12:1: “Ephraim surrounds Me with deceit, the House of Israel with guile; but Judah stands firm with G-d and *he is faithful to the Holy One.*”

²⁸⁰ Berachot 17a: “[One should act] so that he will be *beloved above* in G-d’s eyes, and *treasured below* in the eyes of the people.” See also Kiddushin 71a.

²⁸¹ Cf. Nedarim 7a and Keritot 22b, which state the opposite: “there is no partial analogy from juxtaposition.” There is a Talmudic principle, *hekesh*, that you can apply the known law from one case to a second case. This generally occurs where the two cases are presented in the same Scriptural verse. Saying there is no partial analogy means that if we are indeed to apply a law from one case to another, it must be done with the same parameters.

²⁸² Chagigah 13b (Guadalajara, Spain printing c. 1488): “A certain angel . . . Sandalfon . . . says a hidden name of G-d, and *the crown goes and sits in its place* (ואזל תגא ויחיב בדוכתיה).” Note that our modern Vilna edition (1886) has a different reading: “A certain angel . . . Sandalfon . . . says a name for the crown, and it goes and sits on His head (אתגא ואזל ויחיב ברישיה).” The Hagahot haBach there shows the reading from Guadalajara used by *Zera Shimshon*.

²⁸³ Rosh Hashanah 6a: “If he set aside [a specific animal for his vow] but did not yet sacrifice [it on the altar, one might be inclined to say that] anywhere that it is, it is *in the treasure house of the Merciful One*, [as the world and everything in it belongs to G-d].”

²⁸⁴ Mishnah Tahorot 6:4: “*However many uncertainties you may increase*, and uncertainties upon uncertainties, a case of uncertainty in a private domain is impure, and [an uncertainty] in a public domain is pure.”

²⁸⁵ Dan. 4:25: “*All this befell King Nebuchadnezzar.*”

²⁸⁶ Yevamot 2b, 3a; Bava Kamma 17b; and Bava Batra 108b all state: “That [halacha] is *derived from a homiletical interpretation*, [and] is [therefore] *dear* to him.”

²⁸⁷ Ps. 81:17: “He fed them *the finest wheat*; I sated you with honey from the rock.”

<p>“Sellers of notions”²⁸⁸ and “sellers of pearls,”²⁸⁹ “the reward for attending the lecture is for running to hear it.”²⁹⁰</p>	<p>Even someone who is not a Torah scholar and who doesn't understand the material will still benefit from having made the effort.</p>
<p>“The L-rd appeared from afar,”²⁹¹ “people seeing that light has dawned upon them.”²⁹²</p>	<p>When people make the effort to learn Torah, they will see that they are making progress, that G-d is helping them to learn.</p>
<p>“The Merciful One seeks the heart,”²⁹³ “the soul of every being”²⁹⁴ grasping “like a blind man who only by chance makes his way through a skylight”²⁹⁵ “to direct themselves to the work of Heaven,”²⁹⁶ “to be accepted before the L-rd,”²⁹⁷ “and the shoot has been planted.”²⁹⁸</p>	<p>G-d measures the devotion of a person's heart. He just wants to see people make a serious effort to seek Him and His Torah, even if they are not proceeding in the most organized fashion, and He will help them to attain wisdom.</p>

²⁸⁸ Sotah 40a: “To what is this matter comparable? To two people, one who sells precious stones and one who *sells* types of *notions*.”

²⁸⁹ Mishna Bava Metzia 4:9 (Bava Metzia 58b): “Rabbi Yehuda says: Even in the case of one who *sells* a Torah scroll, a *pearl*, or an animal, those items are not [subject to the prohibition against] exploitation [i.e., charging too much].”

²⁹⁰ Berachot 6b: “Rabbi Zeira said: *The reward for [attending] the lecture is for running* [to hear it].”

²⁹¹ Jer. chap. 31, v. 3: “*The L-rd appeared to me from afar . . .*”

²⁹² Isaiah 9:1: “The people that walked in darkness *have seen a brilliant light*; for those who dwelt in a land of gloom, *light has dawned* upon them.”

²⁹³ Sanhedrin 106b: “**The Holy One, Blessed be He, seeks the heart** [i.e., He measures the devotion of a person's heart].” The exact words appear in: the Rashi on that page; Chovot haLevavot (Duties of the Heart), Introduction of the Author 38; Ibn Ezra on Ex. 31:18 and on Eccl. 5:1; Ibn Ezra, Yesod Mora 5:2; Kuzari 5:26; Iggerot HaRambam, Teshuvat She'elot 9 and Techiyat haMetim 2; Zohar III:281b.

²⁹⁴ Prayer from the Amoraic era, or earlier: “*The soul of every living being shall bless Your Name, L-rd our G-d.*” Cited in Pesachim 118a.

²⁹⁵ Bava Batra 12b: “But perhaps [he arrived at this idea by chance, without the assistance of prophecy] *like a blind man [who makes his way] through a skylight.*” See also Niddah 20b.

²⁹⁶ Jer. 7:18, in which context it translates to idolaters who “make cakes for the Queen of Heaven (i.e., Ishtar).” In the context of this Preface, it refers to Jews who “direct themselves for the work of Heaven.”

²⁹⁷ Ex. 28:38: “It shall be on Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may take away any sin arising from the holy things that the Israelites consecrate, from any of their sacred donations; it shall be on his forehead at all times, *to win acceptance for them before the L-rd.*”

²⁹⁸ Ps. 80:16: “*And the shoot has been planted by Your right hand, the stem you have taken as Your own.*”

יתהי זאת נחמתי שפשמ שאי אפשר לבר בלא תבן, כך אי אפשר לתבן בלא בר, ולזמנין באפרקסותא דענא משתפס מרגניתא. ומנה הראוי להתכבד בפני הגדולים לא בטלה. והיא הנותנת והמכרעת לכף זכות כל מלאכת הקדש. ואם לא יהיו לרצון אמרי פי, לאבירי הרועים אשר קטנם עבה ממתיני, האי דישנא להאי פרדשנא, יהיו למאורות לעוללים לא ראו אור, כמוני היום.

Translation	Translator's Interpretation
<p>“Let that be my consolation”:²⁹⁹ “just as it is impossible for the [to exist] without chaff,”³⁰⁰ “similarly it is impossible to have chaff without grain”;³⁰¹</p>	<p>Rabbi Nachmani modestly refers to his efforts as “chaff,” but notes that even winnowed chaff will have some grain mixed with it. Thus, he is consoled that his <i>sefer</i> will necessarily have some desirable elements.</p>
<p>and “sometimes a mill funnel will find gems.”³⁰²</p>	<p>Harvested grain may accidentally include pebbles, which could rarely include a valuable gemstone. I.e., Rabbi Nachmani is modestly suggesting that <i>Zera Shimshon</i> may only rarely include a gem.</p>
<p>“A portion . . . suitable to give honor before Torah giants won’t be worthless.”³⁰³ “This fact [provides support]”³⁰⁴ “and is the</p>	<p>Even if the <i>sefer</i> is only a modest offering, as long as it honors <i>gedolim</i> (by showing an appreciation of Torah), it will have value.</p>

²⁹⁹ Job 21:2: “Listen well to what I say, *and let that be your consolation.*”

³⁰⁰ Berachot 55a: “With regard to the verse: ‘Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream; and let he who has received My word speak it faithfully. For what is the chaff compared to the grain? says the L-rd’ (Jer. 23:28), the Gemara asks: What do chaff and grain have to do with a dream? Rather, Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai: *Just as it is impossible for grain [to exist] without chaff*, so too it is impossible to dream without idle matters.” I.e., even if elements of a dream are prophetic, there are also nonsensical elements within a dream. See also Nedarim 8a.

³⁰¹ This was likely an alteration of the preceding text, “it is impossible for grain [to exist] without chaff,” rather than having a separate source. There is a possible separate source: the introduction to the 1746 Amsterdam reprinting by Shmuel ben R’ Baruch Mansano of Chibbur Yafeh me-haYeshu’ah le’ha’Chacham (the *sefer* authored by Nissim ben Yaakov, c. 990–1062), which includes: “Just as it is impossible to have *chaff without grain*, so too it is impossible to publish without errors.” However, this seems to be an (ironic) error, which should have retained the original “grain without chaff.” In contrast, the author’s alteration makes sense in his context.

³⁰² Zohar III:157a: “The same man said, ‘Say your words, because *sometimes a mill funnel will find gems.*’”

³⁰³ Chullin 100a: The Mishnah states that if a piece of non-kosher meat or fish is cooked with kosher meat or fish, then identified and removed, without imparting taste to the remainder, “let [the non-kosher piece] *be nullified* by the majority [or the remaining food].” The Gemara challenges: “A piece [of meat or fish] is different [and thus not nullified], since *it is suitable to give honor with it* [by placing it] *before* guests.”

³⁰⁴ Eruvin 10a; Yevamot 68b; Sotah 7a; Bechorot 59b.

<p>decisive factor”³⁰⁵ “of all the work of holiness.”³⁰⁶</p>	
<p>“But if the words of my mouth are not acceptable to you,”³⁰⁷ “to the chiefs of the herdsmen”³⁰⁸ “whose little fingers are thicker than my waist,”³⁰⁹ “this gift for this gift”³¹⁰ “there will be lights”³¹¹ “for babies who never saw the light,”³¹² “like me today.”³¹³</p>	<p>The author suggests that <i>Zera Shimshon</i> may not be accepted or appreciated by the <i>gedolim</i>. but it could at least be enlightening for lesser scholars, into which category he places himself.</p>

ויהיו עוד לשמחת לב, אוהבי ורעי ותלמידי. כפאשר אני מחלה פניהם בעשר לשונות של תפלה לברור המנה היפה, אפוא ייטב בעיניהם בחידושים הללו. ובפרט אחרי מותי, פי לימודם יהיה לי להשיב נפש, ולעידון רוח, ולנכות נשמת. וצדקה תהיה להם, וצדקתם תעמוד לעד, לאכול בעולם הזה ולשבו בעולם הבא. ובעל הגמול ישלם בנכות זה שכר טוב לגומלי חסד של אמת במוטב תלתא, בני חיי ומזוני טבי, דבנכותא תלו.

Translation	Translator’s Interpretation
<p>“There will be more”³¹⁴ “for the joy of the heart,”³¹⁵ “my friends, and my companions,”³¹⁶ and my students. “When I</p>	<p>Rabbi Nachmani asks people to learn this <i>sefer</i> after his death. He feels a bond with those</p>

³⁰⁵ Pirkei Avot 1:6; Yerushalmi Kiddushin 22b; Kiddushin 40b.

³⁰⁶ Ex. 36:4: “All the artisans who were engaged *in all the work of the sanctuary* came, each from the task upon which he was engaged.”

³⁰⁷ Ps. 19:15: “*May the words of my mouth and the prayer of my heart be acceptable to You, O L-rd, my Rock and my Redeemer.*”

³⁰⁸ I Sam. 21:8: “Now one of Saul’s officials was there that day, detained before the L-rd; his name was Doeg the Edomite, Saul’s *chief herdsman*.”

³⁰⁹ I Kings 12:10 (also II Chron. 10:10), “And the young men who had grown up with him answered, ‘Speak thus to the people who said to you, “Your father made our yoke heavy, now you make it lighter for us.” Say to them, “*My little finger is thicker than my father’s waist.*” ’”

³¹⁰ Yalkut Shimoni on Nach 235:1; Yad Ramah on Sanhedrin 94b:1; Ritva on Avodah Zarah 71a.

³¹¹ Gen. 1:14: “G-d said, ‘*Let there be lights* in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night; they shall serve as signs for the set times—the days and the years.’”

³¹² Job 3:16: “Or why was I not like a buried stillbirth, *like babies who never saw the light?*”

³¹³ Isaiah 38:19: “The living, only the living, can give thanks to You, *like me today*; fathers relate to children Your acts of grace.”

³¹⁴ Ezek. 13:21: “I will tear off your bonnets and rescue My people from your hands, *and they will not be any longer prey* in your hands; then you shall know that I am the L-rd.”

³¹⁵ Jer. 15:16: “When Your words were offered, I devoured them; Your word brought me the delight and *joy of the heart*, that Your name is attached to me, O L-rd, G-d of Hosts.”

³¹⁶ Ps. 38:12: “*My friends and my companions*, stand back from my affliction; my kinsmen stand far off.”

<p>implore them³¹⁷ “with ten languages of prayer”³¹⁸ “to select a nice portion,”³¹⁹ that these novelties “will be good in their eyes.”³²⁰</p>	<p>who do learn this <i>sefer</i>, and he hopes that they will enjoy his <i>chidushim</i>.</p>
<p>And specifically “after my death,”³²¹ because their teachings will act “to keep me alive,”³²² “and for refinement of spirit,”³²³ and “in the merit of my soul.”³²⁴</p>	<p>He hopes that the novelties will serve a good legacy for him.</p>
<p>“It will be righteousness to them,”³²⁵ and “their righteousness will endure forever,”³²⁶ “to eat in this world and to be satiated in the World-to-Come.”³²⁷</p>	<p>He also offers a blessing that those who learn his <i>sefer</i> will attain righteousness, and that G-d will reward them in this world, as well as in the World-to-Come.</p>
<p>In this merit, “may the Master of reward pay”³²⁸ “a good reward to those who perform true kindness”³²⁹ “in a session of</p>	<p>Finally, as he views our learning of <i>Zera Shimshon</i> as performing a true kindness toward him, he asks G-d to reward us with</p>

³¹⁷ Ps. 119:58: “*I have implored You* with all my heart; have mercy on me, in accordance with Your promise.”

³¹⁸ Deut. Rabbah 2:1: “*Prayer is referred to by ten names.*” Also Yalkut Shimoni 157:7.

³¹⁹ Beitzah 15b: “[The Sages created a way to allow cooking on a Friday yom tov for the Sabbath.] Rava said: so that one will *select a nice portion* for Sabbath and a nice portion for the Festival.”

³²⁰ II Sam. 18:4: “And the king said to them, ‘I will do *what will be good in your eyes.*’ So the king stood beside the gate as all the troops marched out by their hundreds and thousands.”

³²¹ Deut. 31:27: “Well I know how defiant and stiffnecked you are: even now, while I am still alive in your midst, you have been defiant toward the L-rd; how much more, then, *after my death!*” Also Deut. 31:29.

³²² Lam. 1:11; Ruth 4:15; Ps. 19:8.

³²³ Perhaps Yerushalmi Berachot 45a: “After eating [rice, according to] Rabbi Yona in the name of Rabbi Shimon the Chasid, [one should make the blessing] ‘Who created a variety of delicacies (לעדן בהן נפש) *to delight the soul* of every living creature.’”

³²⁴ Chavot Yair 214:2: “. . . to learn . . . every day in the merit of the soul of his departed mother.”

³²⁵ Deut. 6:25: “*And it shall be righteousness unto us*, if we observe to do all this commandment before the L-rd our G-d, as He has commanded us.”

³²⁶ Ps. 111:3: “His deeds are splendid and glorious; *His righteousness will endure forever.*” Also Ps. 112:9.

³²⁷ Akeidat Yitzchak 65:1: “Because it is enough to achieve what he desires *to eat in this world* and to benefit himself *in the next world.*” Derech Chaim 5:19: “They deserved *to eat in this world* and to inherit *the World-to-Come.*”

³²⁸ Ketubot 8b: “Our brothers, *may the Master of reward pay* you your reward.”

³²⁹ Eccl. 4:9: “Two are better off than one, in that they have a *good reward* from their labor.” Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer 17:16: “Blessed are You, L-rd, who gives a *good reward to those who show loving-kindness.*” Also Ruth Rabbah 2:14. Gen. Rabbah 96:5: “If you will do me kindness after my death, this is *true loving-kindness.*”

three”³³⁰ “things that depend on merit: children, life, and good sustenance.”³³¹	three things: children, a long life, and a good income.
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וְאֵנִי בְּעֲנִי וּבְמִירוֹתַי לְבָבִי הוֹלֵךְ וּבוֹכָה, עַל כִּי אֵין לִי בָנִים וְנֹרַע יַעֲבֹדְנִי אַחֲרַי מוֹתִי. וּמוֹכְרָח אֲנִי לְצִאֲת בְּעַקְבוֹת אֲנָשִׁי שְׂמוֹת לְהַשְׁאִיר אַחֲרַי בְּרָכָה, וְלִהְיוֹת שְׁמִי לְזִכְרוֹן בְּדָבָר שֶׁדָּרְכּוֹ לְהַמְנוֹת. אוֹרַח חַיִּים לְמַעֲלָה לְמַשְׁכִּיל, לְמַעַן סוּר מִשְׂאוֹל מָטָה. וְגִלּוּי וְנִדּוּע לְפָנָי מִי שֶׁאֲמַר וְהָיָה הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁלֹּא לְכַבּוּדִי עֲשִׂיתִי, וְלֹא לְכַבּוּד בֵּית אֲבָא, אֶלָּא פְּנוּנְתִי רְצוּנָה לְסֶלֶק קוֹצִים וְנִרְדָּרִים מִן פָּרֶם ה' צְבָאוֹת, לְקַרֵּב רְחוּקִים, לְהַאִיר חֲשׂוּכִים לְהַשִּׁיר הַמְסִילָה הָעוֹלָה בֵּית אֵל בְּדָרֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל, לֹא יִפְשְׁלוּ בָּהּ בְּדָבָר הַקָּשֶׁה. כִּי נִרְאֵתִי כִּי אֲמַרְתִּי, כִּן אֲגִזּוֹל וְאֲמַנַּע טוֹב מִבְּעַלְיָו, בְּמָה שֶׁכְּפוּנְתִי אֵל הָאֲמַת, וְנִרְאָה וְנִרְצָה.

Translation	Translator’s Interpretation
“I, in my poverty”³³² “and in my heartfelt bitterness”³³³ “am going on my way weeping,”³³⁴ “for I have no”³³⁵ “sons and offspring to serve me”³³⁶ “after my death.”³³⁷ “I have to follow”³³⁸ “on the heels of famous men”³³⁹ “to leave a blessing after myself,”³⁴⁰ “and for my name to be a	Rabbi Nachmani explains that as he will leave no offspring, his <i>seforim</i> will be his legacy.

³³⁰ Ketubot 22a; Bava Batra 165b, 168b; Sanhedrin 30a: “We were *in a session of three* [judges].”

³³¹ Cf. Moed Katan 28a, which gives the opposing view: “Rava said: [Length of] *life, children, and sustenance* do not *depend on one’s merit*, but rather they depend upon fate.” Rabbi Nachmani asks G-d to reward the reader with these things. Besides altering the text from a negative to a positive, he also rearranges the order, placing children before life. He also adds the word טַבִּי, altering “sustenance” to “*good sustenance*,” as in the Rachmana Idkar prayer in Selichot in the Sephardic and Italian liturgies.

³³² I Chron. 22:14: “*And here, in my poverty* (וְהִנֵּה בְעֲנִי), I have laid aside for the House of the L-rd one hundred thousand talents of gold . . .” Yerushalmi Peah 21a quotes this, but alters וְהִנֵּה (and here) to וְאֵנִי (and I).

³³³ Sanhedrin 19a: “On account of his *bitterness* [due to the death of his loved one], perhaps it will happen that he comes and touches [the bier].” Rashi interprets bitterness as “his *heartfelt bitterness*.”

³³⁴ Jer. 41:6: “Ishmael son of Nethaniah went out from Mizpah to meet them, *going on his way weeping*.”

³³⁵ Deut. 31:17: “Surely it is *because* our G-d is *not* in our midst that these evils have befallen us.”

³³⁶ Kli Yakar on Gen. 25:19: “. . . that he would have *sons and offspring*.” Ps. 22:31: “*Offspring shall serve him*.” “*Serve me*” appears in II Sam. 22:44, Ezek. 20:40, and Ps. 18:44.

³³⁷ Deut. 31:27: “Well I know how defiant and stiffnecked you are: even now, while I am still alive in your midst, you have been defiant toward the L-rd; how much more, then, *after my death!*” Also Deut. 31:29.

³³⁸ Yafeh To’ar commentary on Gen. Rabbah 8:9. Yafeh To’ar was written by Rabbi Samuel ben Isaac Ashkenazi Jaffe (d. late 16th century), rabbi of the Ashkenazi community of Constantinople.

³³⁹ I Chron. 5:24 and 12:31 have “*famous men*.” “*On the heels of famous men*” is found in Yashen al Teiradam, poem by Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi, recited at the beginning of Selichot by Sephardim during the Ten Days of Repentance.

³⁴⁰ Joel 2:14: “Who knows whether He will not turn and relent, *and leave a blessing behind Him*; even a meal-offering and a drink-offering to the L-rd your G-d?”

remembrance” ³⁴¹ in something that is “a way to be counted.” ³⁴²	
“For an intelligent man, the path of life leads upward, in order to avoid <i>Sheol</i> below.” ³⁴³	One should always strive for self-improvement and for growth in Torah learning.
“It is revealed and known before Him, Who spoke and the world was [created],” ³⁴⁴ “that I did not act for my own honor, nor did I act for the honor of my father’s house,” ³⁴⁵ but my intention is to remove “thorns and thistles from the vineyard of the L-rd of Hosts,” ³⁴⁶	The author does not seek to aggrandize his name. He leaves no offspring who would benefit from such honor. Rather, the author acts to increase Torah knowledge, by resolving difficult passages or apparent conflicts.
“to bring closer those who are distant,” ³⁴⁷ “to illuminate the darkness to straighten” ³⁴⁸ “the highway that goes up to the house of G-d” ³⁴⁹ “by a level road, where they will not stumble” ³⁵⁰ “on a difficult thing.” ³⁵¹	He also hopes to influence the irreligious to return to the proper path.

³⁴¹ Ex. 3:15: “This shall be *My name* forever, and this *My remembrance* for every generation.” Also, “my name to be a remembrance” is found in the reader’s repetition for mussaf of Rosh Hashanah.

³⁴² Mekhilta d’Rabbi Yishmael 22:6: “. . . vessels, whose way is to be counted.”

³⁴³ Prov. 15:24, quoting the entire verse.

³⁴⁴ Mekhilta d’Rabbi Yishmael 20:12, 22:22; Sifra, Acharei Mot, Chapter 13; Eruvin 13b; Megillah 13b; Kiddushin 30b, 31a; Sanhedrin 76b, 105a; Chullin 63b.

³⁴⁵ Taanit 20a; Megillah 3a; Bava Metzia 59b; Avot D’Rabbi Natan 6:3.

³⁴⁶ Gen. 3:18: “*thorns and thistles.*” Isaiah 5:7: “For *the vineyard of the L-rd of Hosts* is the House of Israel.” Bava Metzia 83b: “Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, sent a message back to him: I am merely eradicating *thorns from the vineyard*. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha sent back to him: Let the *Owner of the vineyard (i.e., G-d)* come and eradicate His own thorns.” Kli Yakar (on Gen. 49:16 and also Ex. 3:2). “*Thorns from the vineyard of the L-rd of Hosts.*”

³⁴⁷ Iggerot HaRambam, Iggeret Kanaut 55; Zohar Chadash, Tikuna Kadma’ah 2.

³⁴⁸ Midrash Tanchuma, Bechukotai 4, “Who like You *enlightens* the eyes of *those in the dark*. . .” Perhaps the author altered Prov. 11:24, הַחֹשֶׁךְ מִיִּשְׁרָר (“and who stints on doing what is right”) to הַחֹשֶׁךְ לְהִקְשִׁיר (“*darkness to straighten*”).

³⁴⁹ Judges 21:19: “It lies north of Beth-el, east of *the highway that goes up from Beth-el* to Shechem.”

³⁵⁰ Jer. chap. 31, v. 9: “I will lead them to streams of water, *by a level road where they will not stumble.*”

³⁵¹ Ex. 18:26: “And they judged the people at all times: *a difficult matter* they would bring to Moses, and all the minor matters they would decide themselves.”

<p>“I was afraid because I thought, maybe I’ll be stealing”³⁵² “and withholding good from one who deserves it,”³⁵³ “while I intended the truth,”³⁵⁴ “and it should be seen and it should be favored.”³⁵⁵</p>	<p>Another motivation for writing is that if G-d reveals something to a person with writing ability who does not share it, that person is a thief. (Sefer Chassidim 530). Therefore, the author wrote this <i>sefer</i>, and hopes it will be read and appreciated.</p>
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ומחידושא ילפינן אם יהיה נצב על כנהו [פנו] וחו' יתן לידידו. לעומת מחברתו, מתובל בחיזיון עד שמגיע לפך'פרת. דרשינן סמוכים לכל העשויים באמת וישר. דין הוא הד'ר, ויקובל האמת ממי שאמר. והכי נמי לאידך גיסא, מה שלעינא פקיקא לא יבא בהצד השנה בהרגשה מילתא דכע' זיוניה או לא? הרי זה ה' הטוב יכפר—כי רחמנא ליבא בעי, ודרי מטה, מצדיקי הרבים, העולים במעלות הסולם של עליה—לעשות שאינו זוכה כזוכה. לב כל חכם הקורא להגיה ישכיל פיהו. ויקימהו בצייץ ובנהורית שביין עיני חכמתו ותבונתו, נגדיל תורה ונאדיר. יסוכבנהו? בוננהו, הוא מותיב והוא מפרק. דרשי ה' לא יחסרו כל טוב.

Translation	Translator’s Interpretation
<p>“From a novelty, He will determine”³⁵⁶ “if He will stand on His pedestal”³⁵⁷ and “give grace to His beloved.”³⁵⁸</p>	<p>G-d will consider the merit of each <i>chidush</i> and determine an appropriate reward for the author.</p>
<p>“Because of his composition,”³⁵⁹ “he brings apples until he reaches the dessert”³⁶⁰ of wisdom.</p>	<p>One should review and judge his <i>chidushim</i> until, in their presented form, they will represent wisdom that is as sweet as a dessert,</p>

³⁵² Gen. 31:31: “Jacob answered Laban, saying, ‘I was afraid because I thought, maybe you’ll steal your daughters from me.’”

³⁵³ Prov. 3:27: “Do not withhold good from one who deserves it when you have the power to do it [for him].”

³⁵⁴ Bach, Orach Chaim, 301:2: “And I gave an acknowledgement to Him, may He be exalted, that I intended the truth.”

³⁵⁵ From the Ya’aleh v’yavo prayer.

³⁵⁶ See footnote 98.

³⁵⁷ Cf. Jer. 22:24: “if you, [King] Coniah . . . would be.” The author has altered כניהו (Coniah) to כנהו (His pedestal). See also Num. 23:6: “and found him standing beside his offerings.”

³⁵⁸ Cf. Ps. 127:2. Rabbi Nachmani altered the text from וכן יתן לידידו (for He gives to His beloved) to וכן יתן לידידו (and grace He gives to His beloved), adding a *geresh* to signify the change.

³⁵⁹ Ex. 28:27: “And make two other rings of gold and fasten them on the front of the ephod, low on the two shoulder-pieces, close to its seam above the decorated band.”

³⁶⁰ Cf. Mishnah Pesachim 10:3 (Pesachim 114a), where the text reads מטבל בחזרת עד שמגיע לפרפת (he dips the lettuce until he reaches the accompanying food). The author altered the text from מטבל בחזרת (Hebrew for “he dips the lettuce”) to מתובל בחזרת (Aramaic for “he brought apples,” with Targum Yonaton on Jer. 11:19 providing a source for מתובל and Lev. Rabbah 27:1 providing a source for חיזורין).

The word פרפת (accompanying food) can refer to either a condiment or a dessert. In the context of Pesachim, it refers to the bitter herbs, but the author adds a *geresh* to signify that he intends an alternate meaning, such as in the

	so that they will be favorably received by the hearts of those who hear them.
“We find support for all novelties that are made in truth and uprightness.” ³⁶¹ “The law is glorious,” ³⁶² and “the truth will be received from he who uttered it.” ³⁶³	<i>Chidushim</i> made in truth and uprightness are well-founded and have support.
But also, “on the other hand,” ³⁶⁴ what about a case where “a watchful eye” ³⁶⁵ won’t arrive at “the common denominator” ³⁶⁶ “in perceiving a matter,” ³⁶⁷ such as “if crowns [on letters] are needed or not” ³⁶⁸ which can	What if the Torah scholar is careful, but still fails to arrive at the proper solution to a problem, such as a halachic ruling as to whether an action is in violation of the Sabbath?

context of Pirkei Avot 3:18 (typically translated as “Astronomical calculations and Gematria [numerical calculations] are the *condiments* of wisdom”), where the accompanying food is not bitter but rather sweet, as a dessert.

³⁶¹ Berachot 10a: “Rabbi Yochanan said: ‘From where [do we learn that we can draw homiletical inferences from] *adjacent* [verses]? As it is said: “[The works of His hands in truth and justice, all His commandments are sure.] Adjoined forever and ever, *made in truth and uprightness*” (Ps. 111:7–8).’”

The word סמוכים is a plural noun that can mean “adjacent [things]” or “supports” (the words being related in that two objects that are adjacent but leaning together can provide support to each other). The author has provided a *geresh* in the word to signify that in the context of the primary reference, it means “adjacent,” but as he uses it here, it means “support.” For “*we find support*,” see: Chidushei Ramban on Yevamot 4a; Ritva on Kiddushin 33b; Abarbanel on Torah, Ex. 20:16; Mizrachi, Deut. 21:14.

³⁶² The original source is likely Yevamot 37b, הדר דינא (the law [verdict] is reconsidered). The author has added a *geresh* in his version, דין הוא הדר, to indicate a change in meaning to “the law is glorious.” Also Ps. 149:9: “*This is the glory of all His faithful.*”

³⁶³ Rambam, Eight Chapters, Introduction: “Know, however, that the ideas presented in these chapters and in the following commentary are not of my own invention; neither did I think out the explanations contained therein, but I have gleaned them from the words of the wise occurring in the Midrashim, in the Talmud, and in other of their works, as well as from the words of the philosophers, ancient and recent, and also from the works of various authors, as *one should accept the truth from whatever source it proceeds.*”

³⁶⁴ Eruvin 10a: “*On the other hand*, regarding boards surrounding a well, you were lenient and gave one leniency, so now be lenient and issue another leniency.”

³⁶⁵ Zohar III:128b, 294b.

³⁶⁶ Berachot 35a: “[The halacha is derived from a combination of two sources.] The aspect of this is not like the aspect of that, and the aspect of that is not like the aspect of this; *the common denominator* is: Both are items from which one derives benefit and each requires a blessing. [A general principle may be derived:] So too, any item from which one derives benefit, requires a blessing.”

³⁶⁷ Niddah 43a: “The practical difference between them is the case where the detachment of the semen was felt but the emergence was not *felt*. *This matter* was obvious to Samuel, but was a matter of enquiry for Raba.”

³⁶⁸ Shabbat 105a: “That case [where on the Sabbath he altered a single letter, making it appear as two letters] is where [the two letters] *need crowns* [and since they didn’t appear with crowns, he is not liable for violating the prohibition against writing on the Sabbath]. This [case where he is liable] is where they *do not need crowns.*”

make the difference between an act violating the Sabbath or not?	
Here this “good L-rd will pardon,”³⁶⁹ because “the Merciful One seeks the heart,”³⁷⁰ “and the inhabitants of the earth,”³⁷¹ “and those who lead the many to righteousness”³⁷² “ascending the ascent”³⁷³ “of the ladder of ascent”³⁷⁴ “to render one who does not acquire like one who acquires.”³⁷⁵	G-d will forgive such inadvertent errors. He measures the devotion of a person’s heart: He wants people to make a serious effort to seek Him and His Torah, and to influence the irreligious to return to the proper path. If they do so but err in making a ruling, G-d will forgive them and consider them as though they had given the correct guidance.
“The mind of every wise person reads in order to emend mistakes and make his speech effective.”³⁷⁶	One who is able to learn Torah should do so, to correct any misunderstandings he has, and to become an effective teacher of others.
“It shall be established as a frontlet and as a bright ribbon between the eyes”³⁷⁷ “of his wisdom and understanding,”³⁷⁸ “that he may magnify and glorify His teaching.”³⁷⁹	Just as people stood in respect for the Divine Name engraved on the frontlet of the High Priest, they stand today to honor a scholar for his accomplishments and for his spreading of G-d’s Torah.

³⁶⁹ II Chron. 30:18: “Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, ‘*The good L-rd will pardon.*’”

³⁷⁰ Sanhedrin 106b: “*The Holy One, Blessed be He, seeks the heart* [i.e., He measures the devotion of a person’s heart].” The exact language appears in the Rashi.

³⁷¹ Literally, “those who dwell below.” From the Keter prayer in mussaf; Netivot Olam, Netiv Halashon 9:5; Kli Yakar on Ex. 20:7; Chavot Yair 219:6.

³⁷² Dan. 12:3: “And the knowledgeable will be radiant like the bright expanse of sky, *and those who lead the many to righteousness* will be like the stars forever and ever.”

³⁷³ Ex. 20:23; Mishnah Tamid 6:1 (Tamid 33a); Sanhedrin 32b.

³⁷⁴ Beitzah 9b: “However, in the case of *an attic ladder* [which has a variety of uses], everyone agrees that it is prohibited [to move it on a yom tov].”

³⁷⁵ Gittin 30a; Bava Metzia 12b; Bekhorot 18a, 18b.

³⁷⁶ Ex. 31:6: “*the heart of every wise person.*” Berachot 13a: “*reading in order to emend* [mistakes].” Prov. 16:23: “*The mind of the wise man makes his speech effective*, and increases the wisdom on his lips.”

³⁷⁷ Kiddushin 66a: “Have them stand by wearing the *frontlet between your eyes.*” Tosefta Shabbat 5:5: “A horse may not go out with a foxtail *or a scarlet ribbon between its eyes.*”

³⁷⁸ Jer. 10:12: “He made the earth by His might, established the world *by His wisdom, and by His understanding* stretched out the skies.”

³⁷⁹ Isaiah 42:21: “The L-rd desires His [servant’s] vindication, *that he may magnify and glorify [His] teaching.*”

<p>“He engirded him, watched over him,”³⁸⁰ “he raised the objection and resolved it.”³⁸¹</p>	<p>As noted before, G-d assists one who strives to learn Torah. The scholar will grow by noting possible conflicts, and then by resolving them to his satisfaction.</p>
<p>“Those who turn to the L-rd shall not lack any good.”³⁸²</p>	<p>G-d will accompany those who seek Him, and will provide for their needs.</p>

שְׁתֵּי יָדַימֵי זִכּוּת, כֹּל אֶחָד זָכָה בְּחֶלְקוֹ, אֵימְתָקְשׁוּ הַנְּיוּזִת לְהַדְדִי. לֵב יוֹדֵעַ מְרָאוֹת נִפְשׁוֹ. בְּאַוּנוֹנְתָא דְלִיבָא פִלְיָא מִיִּלְתָּא, לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּוֹנִימֵי לְמִלְאֲכָת הַשְּׁמַיִם מְסַפְרִים כְּבוֹד אֵל. וְכַבּוֹד אֱלֹהִים, הַסְּדֵר דְּבָר דְּבוּר עַל אוֹפְנִי, אָנָּא דְלֵאֵי חֲסָפָא וְהוּא יִשְׁפַח מְרַגְנִיתָא, וּמִינֵי וּמִינֵיהּ, יִתְקַלֵּס עֵילְאָהּ. מְגִדוֹל יִשׁוּעוֹת מִלְכּוֹ, עַד דְּקִימָא סִיְהָרָא בְּאַשְׁלֵמוֹתָא, וּבְקִישׁוּטִין אֲזֵלָא בְּמֵאֲנִין וּלְבוּשִׁין, כְּפִדּוּעַ לִיּוֹדְעִים.

Translation	Translator’s Interpretation
<p>“Two hands merit,”³⁸³ “each one meriting his portion,”³⁸⁴ “they are considered equal.”³⁸⁵</p>	<p>One learning a <i>sefer</i> becomes a partner with the author; both share in the merit of the learning.</p>
<p>“The heart knows visions of its soul.”³⁸⁶ “The matter depends upon the heart’s comprehension,”³⁸⁷ “to direct themselves</p>	<p>A person’s intellect allows him to comprehend something that cannot be seen. Thus, his intellect can examine his soul, and he should search his soul as a means of attaining</p>

³⁸⁰ Deut. 32:10: “He found him in a wilderness region, in an empty howling waste. *He engirded him, watched over him*, guarded him as the pupil of His eye.”

³⁸¹ The term is found in over 20 places in the Gemara, such as Shabbat 145a and Eruvin 91a.

³⁸² Ps. 34:11: “Lions have been reduced to starvation, *but those who turn to the L-rd shall not lack any good.*”

³⁸³ See footnote 108.

³⁸⁴ Mishnah Pesachim 8:3 (Pesachim 89a): “*He has acquired his portion* and acquires on behalf of his brothers their portions together with him.” The exact quotation appears in Teshuvot HaRivash 517:3 (composed c.1350–1400 by Rabbi Isaac ben Sheshet Perfet of Spain and Algeria, 1326–1407). It also appears in the commentary by R’ Ovadiah ben Abraham of Bartenura (c. 1445–1515) on Mishnah Bechorot 8:3.

³⁸⁵ Ketubot 46b, 74a; Gittin 85a. “[The different ways of] becoming [betrothed] *are compared to each other* [i.e., they are considered equal].

³⁸⁶ Cf. Prov. 14:10: “*The heart* [alone] *knows the bitterness of its soul.*” The author has altered the text from מֵרַת (bitterness of) מֵרָאוֹת (*visions of*), adding a *geresh* to highlight the change.

³⁸⁷ Megillah 24b: “It is taught [in a *Baraita* that] they said to Rabbi Yehuda: Many have seen [enough with their mind] to expound upon the [Divine] Chariot, although they have never [actually] seen it. And Rabbi Yehuda [would say] there [with regard to the Chariot], *the matter depends upon the heart’s comprehension*, and one can concentrate [his mind] and understand [the Chariot even if he has never actually seen it].”

<p>for the work of Heaven”³⁸⁸ “declaring the glory of G-d.”³⁸⁹</p>	<p>repentance. In this way, he should strive to learn Torah and attach himself to G-d.</p>
<p>“[As for] the glory of the L-rd, who arranged everything into an appropriate phrase,”³⁹⁰ I “lifted an earthenware shard and he will find a pearl,”³⁹¹ and “through me and through him, the One above will be exalted.”³⁹²</p>	<p>In some cases, the author’s teachings will lead a reader to his own <i>chidushim</i>. Through this partnership, both the author and the reader combine to glorify G-d.</p>
<p>“He is a tower of salvation for His king,”³⁹³ until “the moon rose in its fullness,”³⁹⁴ “approaching, adorned in ornaments, jewels and robes,”³⁹⁵ “as is known to those who know [Kabbalah].”³⁹⁶</p>	<p>G-d will deal graciously with those who strive to learn His Torah, allowing the reader to achieve great wisdom, like King Solomon. Such a reader will grow to be knowledgeable in the 24 books of the Torah; he will pursue repentance by soul searching; and he will be clothed in mitzvot.</p>

³⁸⁸ Jer. 7:18, in which context it translates to idolaters who “make cakes for the Queen of Heaven (i.e., Ishtar).” In the context of this Preface, it refers to Jews who “direct themselves for the work of Heaven.” The author used this same quotation earlier; see note 296 and the accompanying text.

³⁸⁹ Ps. 19:2: “*The heavens declare the glory of G-d, the sky proclaims His handiwork.*”

³⁹⁰ Cf. Prov. 25:2: “*It is the glory of G-d to conceal a matter.*” The author has altered the text from הסתר (*ha’sater*) (Who conceals) to הסדר (*ha’sadar*) (Who arranged), the third time he has made the change (see footnotes 6 and 137). Prov. 25:11: “*a phrase well turned.*”

³⁹¹ Yevamot 92b; Bava Metzia 17b; Makkot 21b.

³⁹² Sotah 40a: “[The wife of Rabbi Abbahu’s interpreter told Rabbi Abbahu’s wife that the interpreter could teach the lesson on his own. Rabbi Abbahu’s wife relayed this to Rabbi Abbahu, but instead of becoming angry, he modestly replied,] ‘And what difference does it make to you? *Through me and through him the One above will be exalted, and it does not matter which one of us is teaching.*’”

³⁹³ II Sam. 22:51: “[He is] *a tower of salvation for His king, and He deals graciously with His anointed, with David and his offspring evermore.*”

³⁹⁴ Zohar I:149b and III:297b describe the great wisdom of Solomon as: “*the moon rose in its fullness.*” The term also appears in Zohar I:242b and II:85a.

³⁹⁵ From the Sabbath song, Azamer Bishvachin, written by Isaac (ben Solomon) Luria Ashkenazi (1534–72) (“the Arizal”). In a later source, Rabbi Zadok ha-Kohen Rabinowitz of Lublin (1823–1900) writes in Pri Tzadik, Korach, chapter 9, that “ornaments” refers to the 24 books of the Torah, “jewels” refers to an examination of repentance by soul searching, and “robes” refers to being clothed with mitzvot. Presumably Rabbi Nachmani had the same understanding, whether from an earlier written source, or from his teachers of Kabbalah.

³⁹⁶ Akeidat Yitzchak 77:1: “And in the Midrash [Ex. Rabba 1:1; also Berachot 5a], it was taught in a *Baraita*, Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai says: ‘The Holy One, Blessed be He, gave Israel three precious gifts, all of which were given only by means of suffering, and these are: Torah, the Land of Israel, and the World-to-Come.’ . . . And here, the second gift, which is the Land [of Israel], as is *known to those who know* . . .”

וְאֶקוּד וְאֶשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לָהּ, וְאוֹדָה לּוֹ בְּמְאֹד מְאֹד בְּכֹל מִדָּה וּמִדָּה, כִּי בְּחֶסֶדְךָ הִרְבִּיתָ. אִף בְּשִׁעַת פְּעֻסוֹ—שֶׁלָּקַח מִמֶּנִּי בְּנֵי יְחִידִי, בְּכוֹרִי, יָדִיד נַפְשִׁי—זָכַר לִי אֶת הַרְחָמִים, כִּי שָׁת לִי זֶרַע אַחֵר. וְהִגִּיעַנִי לְכָלֵל זֶרַעִי עַל כָּל מֵיִם, אִין מֵיִם אֶלָּא תוֹרָה, זֶרַע הַשְּׁלוֹם, זֶרַע אֱמֶת, וְלָכֵן קָרָאתִי סֵפֶר זֶה בְּשֵׁם זֶרַע שְׂמִינִי.

Translation	Translator’s Interpretation
<p>“I bowed low in homage to the L-rd,”³⁹⁷ “and I am grateful to Him, to the greatest extent, with every measure,”³⁹⁸ “for His many favors.”³⁹⁹</p>	<p>Rabbi Nachmani was a man of great faith, who was able to see G-d’s kindnesses.</p>
<p>Even “in the hour of his anger”—“when He took from me my only son, my firstborn,”⁴⁰⁰ “beloved of my soul”⁴⁰¹—“He remembered me for compassion,”⁴⁰² “because He has provided me with another offspring.”⁴⁰³ “I have arrived at the principle”⁴⁰⁴ “ ‘one who sows seed by abundant waters [is satisfied],’ ”⁴⁰⁵ “and the word ‘waters’ refers to nothing but Torah”:⁴⁰⁶ “the seed of peace, the seed of truth.”⁴⁰⁷</p>	<p>This ability to see G-d’s kindness was true even in his deepest grief. The author has “adopted” this <i>sefer</i>, with its teachings of his Torah, as his “child.”</p>

³⁹⁷ Gen. 24:48: “*And I bowed low in homage to the L-rd* and blessed the L-rd, the G-d of my master Abraham, who led me on the right way to get the daughter of my master’s brother for his son.”

³⁹⁸ Shevuot 31a: “[The debtor] shall not say: I will deny his claim in court, and *I will acknowledge to him* outside court, so that I will not become liable to take an oath to him.” Ex. 1:7: “But the Israelites were fertile and prolific; they multiplied and increased *very greatly*, so that the land was filled with them.” Mishnah Berachot 9:5 (Berachot 54a): “ ‘With all that you have’ (means) *with every measure* that is measured for you, thank Him very much.”

³⁹⁹ Lam. 3:32: “*But* first afflicts, then is merciful in His *abundant kindness*.”

⁴⁰⁰ Gen. 22:2: “And He said, ‘*Take your son, your only one*, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you.’ ” Also, Ex. 4:22: “*My first-born son*.”

⁴⁰¹ Jer. 12:7: “I have abandoned My House, I have deserted My possession, I have given over *the beloved of My soul* into the hands of her enemies.”

⁴⁰² Pesachim 87b: “*Even at the time of the anger* of the Holy One, Blessed be He, *He remembers compassion*.”

⁴⁰³ Gen. 4:25: “Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, meaning, ‘G-d *has provided me with another offspring* in place of Abel,’ for Cain had killed him.”

⁴⁰⁴ Tosafot on Sotah 22b; Tosafot on Sotah 34b.

⁴⁰⁵ Isaiah 32:20: “Happy shall you be *who sow by all waters*; who send out cattle and asses to pasture.”

⁴⁰⁶ Bava Kamma 17a; Avodah Zarah 5b.

⁴⁰⁷ Meir ben Ezekiel ibn Gabbai (1480–1540), Avodat HaKodesh 3:39:3: “The people of Israel are called children as we have written, and for this reason it is written in the Mishnah (Pirkei Avot 3:14) ‘beloved are Israel, since they

<p>So I call this book by the name of <i>Zera Shimshon</i> (the offspring of Samson).⁴⁰⁸</p>	<p>He therefore names it after himself, as “the offspring of Samson.”</p>
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ומעתה אחי ורעי, אהבי ומיודעי, זרע ברוכי ה', הא לכם זרע, אור זרוע לצדיקים כמותכם. במטותא בעינא מינייכו, זרעו לכם לצדקה, וקצרו לפי חסד של אמת, וכי מרובה מדת תשלומי חן וחסד, ושלמא רבא מן שמיא. ועיניכם תראינה בנים בני בנים, כשתילי זיתים סביב לשלחנכם, חכמים ונבונים, ובתים מלאים כל טוב. גם עושר גם כבוד לא יסופו מזרעכם, עד יתקיים בכם המה יראו כבוד ה', הדר אלהינו, ונשא נס לגוים ואסף נדחי זרע ישראל, במהרה בנינו, אמן.

Translation	Translator's Interpretation
<p>From now on, “my brothers, my companions, my beloved,”⁴⁰⁹ “my familiar friends,”⁴¹⁰ “a people blessed by the L-rd,”⁴¹¹ “here is seed for you;”⁴¹² “light is sown for the righteous like you”⁴¹³.</p>	<p>As noted earlier, Rabbi Nachmani feels a close bond with those who will learn his <i>sefer</i>. The seed (<i>zera</i>), references both the title of this <i>sefer</i>, as well as offspring, as well as light being sown, i.e., the reader will grow in Torah.</p>
<p>“Please I ask of you,”⁴¹⁴ “sow righteousness for yourselves, and reap with true disinterested kindness.”⁴¹⁵ For “the principle of double payment is”⁴¹⁶ “grace,</p>	<p>He encourages his readers to pursue righteousness, and notes that they can receive a reward from Heaven.</p>

are called children of the Omnipresent.’ And from this they are *the seed of peace, the seed of truth . . .*” See also Zech. 8:12 “seed of peace” and Jer. 2:21 “seed of truth.”

⁴⁰⁸ Compare to *Zera Avraham* (the offspring of Abraham), appearing in Isaiah 41:8, Jer. 33:26, Ps. 105:6, and II Chron. 20:7. Compare also to *Zera Yaakov* (the offspring of Jacob), appearing in Isaiah 45:19, Jer. 33:26, and Ps. 22:24.

⁴⁰⁹ Ps. 122:8: “For the sake of *my brothers and companions*, I pray for your well-being.” Ps. 38:12: “*My beloved* and my friends, stand back from my affliction; my kinsmen stand far off.”

⁴¹⁰ Ps. 55:14: “But it was you, a man my equal; my confidant, *my familiar friend*.” Also Ps. 88:9: “You make my *familiar friends* shun me; You make me abhorrent to them; I am shut in and do not go out.”

⁴¹¹ Isaiah 65:23: “They shall not toil to no purpose; they shall not bear children for terror, but they shall be *a people blessed by the L-rd*, and their offspring shall remain with them.”

⁴¹² Gen. 47:23: “Then Joseph said to the people, ‘Whereas I have this day acquired you and your land for Pharaoh, *here is seed for you* to sow the land.’”

⁴¹³ Ps. 97:11: “*Light is sown for the righteous*, radiance for the upright.” The words “*righteous like you*” appear in Kli Yakar on Gen. 6:11 and in Alshich, Torat Moshe, Gen. 6:9.

⁴¹⁴ Avodah Zarah 18b: “*Please, I ask of you* that you not scoff, so that suffering will not befall you.” Also Sanhedrin 97a: “Rabbi Zeira, when he would find Sages who were engaging in [discussions about the coming of the Messiah], said to them: *Please, I ask of you*, do not delay [his coming by calculating the end of days].”

⁴¹⁵ Hosea 10:12: “*Sow righteousness for yourselves; reap with kindness*.” Gen. Rabbah 96:5: “He said to him, if you will, do me a kindness after my death, that is *true, disinterested kindness*. Please don’t bury me in Egypt.”

⁴¹⁶ Mishnah Bava Kamma 7:1 (Bava Kamma 62b): “*The principle of double payment* applies more broadly than the principle of fourfold or fivefold payment, as the principle of double payment applies both to [the theft of]

<p>and favor,”⁴¹⁷ and “abundant peace from Heaven”.⁴¹⁸</p>	
<p>“Your eyes shall behold”⁴¹⁹ “children, and children of children”⁴²⁰—“like olive saplings around your table,”⁴²¹ “wise and discerning”⁴²²—and “houses filled with every good thing.”⁴²³</p>	<p>He previously blessed those who learn this <i>sefer</i> with children, a long life, and good income. Here, he reiterates the blessing of children and wealth.</p>
<p>“Also wealth and also honor”⁴²⁴ “won’t cease from your descendants,”⁴²⁵ until the promise will be fulfilled within them that: “They shall behold the glory of the L-rd, the splendor of our G-d,”⁴²⁶ “and He will hold up a signal to the nations and gather up the banished (seed) of Israel,”⁴²⁷ “speedily in our days, Amen.”⁴²⁸</p>	<p>He adds that wealth and honor will not end with those who learn his <i>sefer</i>, but will continue to their descendants, who will merit to see the ultimate messianic redemption and ingathering of those exiled.</p>

something that is alive and to [the theft of] something that is not alive, but the principle of fourfold or fivefold payment applies only to [the theft of] an ox or a sheep.”

⁴¹⁷ Esther 2:17: “The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she won his *grace and favor* more than all the maidens. So he set a royal diadem on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.”

⁴¹⁸ From the Kaddish prayer.

⁴¹⁹ Mal. 1:5: “*Your eyes shall behold it*, and you shall declare, ‘Great is the L-rd beyond the borders of Israel!’”

⁴²⁰ Deut. 4:25: “When you have begotten *children and children of children* and are long established in the land . . .”

⁴²¹ Ps. 128:3: “Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons, *like olive saplings around your table*.”

⁴²² Deut. 1:13: “Pick from each of your tribes men who are *wise, and discerning*, and experienced, and I will appoint them as your heads.”

⁴²³ Deut. 6:11; Nehemiah 9:25.

⁴²⁴ I Kings 3:13: “And I also grant you what you did not ask for—*also riches and also glory* all your life—the like of which no king has ever had.”

⁴²⁵ Esther 9:28: “And these days of Purim shall never fail among the Jews, and the memory of them *won’t cease from their descendants*.”

⁴²⁶ Isaiah 35:2: “It shall blossom abundantly, it shall also exult and shout, it shall receive the glory of Lebanon, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon. *They shall behold the glory of the L-rd, The splendor of our G-d*.”

⁴²⁷ Isaiah 11:12: “*And He will hold up a signal to the nations and assemble the banished of Israel*; and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” Isaiah 45:25: “It is through the L-rd that all *the offspring of Israel* have vindication and glory.”

⁴²⁸ Mishnah Taanit 4:8; Mishnah Tamid 7:3 (Tamid 33b); Yerushalmi Ta’anit 26b.