

# Zera Shimshon

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## Chapter V: Chavei Sarah (Gen. 23:1-25:18)

Essay 6: Why Torah was given to man rather than to the angels, and the rewards available to one who follows Torah.

**מדרש** ילקוט על פסוק ואברהם זקן, עז־נהדר לבושה נתשחק ליום אחרון. עז־נהדר לבושה של תורה. אימתי משחקת ליום אחרון? אימתי גותן שכרה לעתיד לבוא. ממי את למד? מאברהם, על ידי שכתוב בו, ושמרו דרף ה' וכו'. זכה לזקנה, שגאמר ואברהם זקן. ארף ימים בימינה, לעתיד לבוא, ובשמאולה עשר וכבוד, בעולם הזה. אפילו פשהיא באה להשמאיל לאדם עושר וכבוד, ממי את למד? מאברהם, על ידי שכתוב בו יפופית מבגי אדם, נתייפית בעליונים, שגאמר הן אראלם צעקו חצה, נתייפית בתחתונים, נשיא אלהים אתה בתוכנו, על־כן ברכה אלהים לעולם, וה' ברה את־אברהם בכל.

There is a **Midrash Yalkut Shimoni, on the verse, “Abraham was old”** (Gen. 24:1). The Midrash says:

**“She is clothed in strength and splendor; and she will laugh at the final day.”** (Prov. 31:25). **“She is clothed in strength and splendor” of Torah. When is she laughing “at the final day”? When He gives her reward for the Future to Come. From whom do you learn this? From Abraham, as it is written regarding him in Gen. 18:19, “and keep the way of the L-rd to do what is just and right.” He merited old age, as it says, “Abraham was old.” “The length of days is in her right hand,” i.e., for the Future to Come, and “in her left hand is wealth and honor,” i.e., in this world. (Prov. 3:16). Even if wealth and honor are coming to the left hand of a person, from whom do you learn this? From Abraham, as it is written regarding him: “You are fairer than all men” (Ps. 45:3), made fair above, as it is said, “Hark! The Ariel angels<sup>1</sup> cry outside” (Is. 33:7), and made fair below, as it is said, “you are a prince of G-d among us” (Gen. 23:6), so “rightly has G-d blessed you eternally” (Ps. 45:3), “and the L-rd blessed Abraham with everything” (Gen. 24:1).**

- (Midrash Yalkut Shimoni 103:1)

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 33:7 reads in full, “Hark, the Ariel angels (אראלם) (*Erelam*) cry outside; the angels of peace weep bitterly.” *Erelam* literally means “lions of G-d,” and is sometimes translated as “valiant ones.” But in consideration of the second part of the verse, Jewish tradition considers *Erelam* to be a class of angels, as opposed to human warriors.

זוה המדרש תמונה ואין לו הבנה כלל, אמנם כבר נודע שעקר חיובנו בתורה הוא בשני ענינים: לימוד התורה וקיום המצוות. ובכללות הלימוד התורה הוא הפנימיות שלה. וקיום המצוות שהוא ענין גופני הוא החיצוניות והלבוש שלה. אמנם בפרטות בין בלימוד בין בקיום המצוות יש פנימיות, ועוד יש חיצוניות הנקרא לבוש. שהרי בלימוד חלק הסוד הוא הפנימיות וחלק הפשט הוא החיצוניות, וחלק הרמז והדרש למשלום הפרד"ס. יש בהם שייכות לזה ולזה, כנודע.

**This Midrash is strange and not entirely understandable, but in fact it is already known that the principle of our obligation in Torah exists in two aspects: learning the Torah and fulfilling the mitzvot. Included within the learning of the Torah is her innermost aspect. The fulfillment of the mitzvot is a physical matter, that is the outermost aspect of the Torah and which is called her clothing. Actually, it is not just that the innermost aspect of the Torah is relevant to learning and the outermost aspect of the Torah is relevant to fulfillment, but rather within the details of both the learning of the Torah and the fulfillment of the mitzvot is the innermost aspect, and further there is the outermost aspect that is called clothing. Here in the learning there is an esoteric meaning (*sod*) portion that is innermost, and a surface (*pshat*) portion that is outermost, and a portion that hints (*remez*), and the inquiry [*derash*] [portion] that complete the four approaches to learning Torah, the *PaRDeS*.<sup>2</sup> There is within them relevance to this, learning of the Torah, and to that, fulfillment of the mitzvot, as is known.**

וכן בקיום המצוות, המעשה עצמו הוא החיצוניות והכנונה של המצנה היא הפנימיות. ומשום הכי שייך בשניהם עוז והדר, שעוז הוא הפנימיות והדר הוא הלבוש.

**Similarly, in the fulfillment of the mitzvot, the action itself is the outermost aspect and the intent of the mitzvah is the innermost aspect. Because of this, both the fulfillment of the mitzvot and the intent behind them have strength and splendor, with the strength being the innermost and the splendor being the outermost costume.**

והיינו שבלומד התורה, יש עוז והדר, עוז שהרי ניתנה לישראל, שהם עזים. והדר, דכתיב והדרך צלח, רכב על-דבר-אמת. דאמת, זו תורה.

**Here in the learning of the Torah, there is strength and splendor: The strength is that given to the children of Israel, who are impudent.<sup>3</sup> Splendor, as it is written, ‘in your glory, win success; ride on in the cause of truth’ (Ps. 45:5). The ‘truth,’ this is Torah.**

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<sup>2</sup> A *pardes* is an orchard, but the word is also used as an acronym for four approaches to interpreting Torah. *Pshat* (surface) refers to the plain or contextual meaning of the text. *Remez* is an allegorical meaning. *Derash* is a metaphorical meaning. *Sod* represents a hidden meaning.

<sup>3</sup> Beitzah 25b: “It is taught in a *Baraita* in the name of Rabbi Meir: For what reason was the Torah given to the Jewish people? It is because they are impudent [and Torah study will weaken and humble them].”

וכן בקיום המצוות יש בו נמי עוז והדר. עוז, דכתיב ה' עז לעמו? תן, דהיגו המעשה. ועוד שאם הלימוד נקרא עוז, מכל שכן המעשה, שגדול תלמוד שמביא לידי מעשה. ועוד יש לו הדר, דאמרין בשלחן ערוך יורה דעה (סימן רמ"ד סעיף י"ב): חכם, אפילו הוא מופלג בתורה, רשאי לעמוד בפני מי שהוא בעל מעשים. וכתבו האחרונים ז"ל דהטור והר"ן זב"ח פסקו דחייב לקום, וכן יש להחמיר ולעשות עכ"ל.

**Similarly, in the fulfillment of the mitzvot there is also strength and splendor.** There is **strength** in the fulfillment of the mitzvot, as it is written, ‘**the L-rd will grant strength to his people**’ (Ps. 29:11), that is, strength to do **the action**. Also, if the learning is called strength (i.e., because the natural impudence of the children of Israel is redirected to learning Torah), **similarly the action** should also be called strength, for **great is the teaching that brings one to the hands of action.**<sup>4</sup> [The fulfillment of mitzvot] also has splendor, as it says in the Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De’ah (244:12), “**One who is wise in Torah, even one grand in wisdom of the Torah, before whom people are usually obliged to stand, is himself permitted to stand before one who is a master of good deeds.**” The later commentators of blessed memory<sup>5</sup> wrote that **the Tur and the RaN and the Bach obliged one to stand** before a master of good deeds, and that it is good to be strict and to do this. I.e., the fact that one who is performing mitzvot is accorded the honor of having a Torah scholar stand in his presence shows the splendor of fulfilling mitzvot.

ומעתה הואיל שהמלאכים נבראו מחיצוניות אבי"ע, והנשמות של הצדיקים מהפנימיות, נמצא שבלימוד התורה המלאכים אינם יכולים להשיג אלא חלק החיצוניות, כפי ערך בריאתם. והקיום המצוות יהוא להפך: שיכולים הם להשיג בכונת המצוה לעשות אותם היחודים, ולכונן בהם, דהיגו פנימיות המצוה, אבל אין להם חלק בחיצוניות המצוה.

**Now, since the angels were created from the exterior of ABiYA (ע"אבי"ע),<sup>6</sup> while the souls of the righteous were created from the interior, it is found that in learning Torah the**

<sup>4</sup> The second half of the sentence, “great is the teaching that brings one to the hands of action,” is supported by the majority view of Kiddushin 40b that Torah study is greater than the performance of mitzvot, because Torah study leads to the performance. This would support a statement that “if action is strong, learning is at least equally strong, as it leads to action.” But it would not seem to support the opposite statement of the first half of the sentence, that “if learning is called strong, similarly the action.” As the Rambam writes in the Mishneh Torah, Torah Study 1:3, “Torah study brings one to do an action, but doing an action doesn’t bring one to Torah study.” Perhaps the intent is as noted by the Ritva on Kiddushin 40b: “Torah learning has both [components] within it, as it is itself an action which is a mitzvah, bringing one to the hands of action.”

<sup>5</sup> The Be’er Heitev, a commentary on the Shulchan Aruch authored by a number of individuals, states on Yoreh De’ah 244:8: “The Tur and the RaN write that one is obliged to stand before him, and thus writes the Bach [on Yoreh De’ah 244:9:1].”

<sup>6</sup> ABiYA is a Kabbalistic concept, an acronym for the four central worlds: Atzilut (“the world of emanation”), Beriah (“the world of creation”), Yetzirah (“the world of formation”), and Asiyah (“the world of action”). The last three terms appear (in verb form) in Isaiah 43:7, “Every one that is called by My name, and for My glory, I have created him, I have formed him, indeed, I have made him.” Atzilut emerges directly from G-d’s infinite light (revelation); this world is all good. Atzilut is the soul and the source of life to Beriah, the first world created from nothing, where Seraphim are created. Beriah is mostly good, with some bad. Beriah is the soul and the source of life to Yetzirah, where angels are created, forces entrusted with performing tasks without any free choice. Yetzirah is half good and half bad. Yetzirah is the soul and the source of life to Asiyah, our finite world in which created beings have

angels are able to comprehend only an exterior portion, in accordance with the principle of their creation. But the fulfillment of the mitzvot is the opposite: [the angels] are able to comprehend the intent of the mitzvah to make singularities, connections between spiritual forces,<sup>7</sup> and to direct them, which is the interior of the mitzvah, but they have no portion in the exterior of the mitzvah.

ואף על פי שטענת המלאכים, שאמרו תנה הודך עליהם, היא לכאורה טענה רעועה, שהרי יפה פתם של בני אדם מהמלאכים, שהרי בני אדם שייכים בלבד של המעשה, דהיינו חלק הגופניות שלו. ועוד יכולים להגיע לכל שאר החלקים דהיינו פנימיות המצוה, ועוד בחיצוניות התורה דהיינו הלבוש שלה, ואף בפנימיות עצמו של התורה. והם אינם יכולים להשיג אלא פנימיות המעשה וחיצוניות התורה, שהרי אינם יכולים לחדש בתורה כגודע.

Even though the claim of the angels is, as it is said, “Your majesty is placed above the heavens” (Ps. 8:2), this is apparently a shaky claim, as the power of the sons of man is better than that of the angels. That is because the sons of man belong in garments of the action of performing a mitzvah, which is a portion of man’s corporeality. I.e., men are able to have a portion in the exterior of mitzvot, and at the same time men are also able to arrive to every gate of the portions that are the interior of the mitzvot. Furthermore, [men are able to have a portion] in the exterior of the Torah which is her garment, and also to have a portion in the interior itself of the Torah. But in contrast, the angels are able to arrive only at the interior of actions of performing a mitzvah and the exterior of the Torah. That is, they are not able to develop novelties (*chidushim*)<sup>8</sup> for the Torah, as is known.

מכל מקום, מצד אחר, נשאר מקום טענה למלאכים לומר שהואיל שבני אדם עלולים הם לחטוא, ואף לאחר שזכו לעשות הרבה מצות אפשר שיחללו הקדושה שפבר קנו להם, כדכתיב הן בקדושו לא יאמין. וקניא לו, איז מביאין קדושים לבית הפיסול, דהיינו למעט זמן אכילתו, כגון לשחוט התודה בערב פסח, מחמת ספק שמה לא יגמרו לאכול אותה בזמן הראוי. אם כן, מטעם זה ראוייה התורה להם יותר מבשר נדם, שהרי הם תמיד טהורים וקדושים. לכן כשהצדיק הגיע ליום אחרון, הוא משחק מהם. וזהו אימתי משחקת? ליום אחרון.

In any event, from a different viewpoint, room remains for the angels to claim that since the sons of man are liable to sin, that after they merited to do many mitzvot it would be possible they would desecrate the holiness that they already established, as it is written, “He puts no trust in His holy ones” (Job 15:15).<sup>9</sup> It’s known to us that, “One doesn’t bring consecrated offerings to a situation of disqualification” (Pesachim 13b), that is, of having little

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a strong sense of independence. Asiyah is mostly bad, though there is some good. Therefore, the worlds are all linked, and all have a connection to G-d’s infinite light.

<sup>7</sup> In Kabbalah, a singularity is a connection of spiritual forces. The existence of creation depends upon these singularities, with every particle being related to every other particle, such that matter and energy are a single dynamic.

<sup>8</sup> A *chidush* is a form of innovation that is made within the system of the halacha, as distinguished from *shinui*, an innovation outside tradition. Nachmanides (the Ramban) writes in Sefer ha’Milchamot that it is an “obligation imposed upon us to search through the subjects of the Torah and the precepts and bring to light their hidden contents.”

<sup>9</sup> Job 15:15 is usually understood to refer to angels, and the quotation is used in that context later in this essay. However, here it is applied to mankind, that just because someone has previously achieved holiness, there is no guarantee that he will not sin in the future.

time for eating it, thereby increasing the likelihood of disqualification. **For example, it's wrong to sacrifice the thanksgiving offering on the eve of Passover, because of doubt lest people won't finish eating it in the proper time.**<sup>10</sup> I.e., the angels were arguing that Torah shouldn't be given to man, because we could first create holiness by doing mitzvot, and then desecrate the holiness by sinning, and this would be analogous to first creating holiness by designating a sacrifice but then disqualifying it by not eating it within the allotted time. **If so, from this opinion, the Torah is more fitting for [angels] than for flesh and blood, because [the angels] are always pure and holy. Therefore, when the righteous person arrives to the final day, he will laugh at [the angels].** I.e., despite the angel's legitimate concerns about man's shortcomings, the Torah was given to man, and the righteous person took advantage of man's ability to both perform mitzvot (reach the external part of the mitzvah action) and to also develop novelties (*chidushim*) (reach the interior part of Torah study). **This is the meaning of the statement of the Midrash, "when is she laughing 'at the final day.' "**

ובנה יובן הטעם שאמר הקב"ה למשה, הקזור להם תשובה, כשאמרו הם, מה לילוד אשה בינינו וכו'. תנה הודך עליהשמים וכו', שפנונת המלאכים היתה לומר שפינון שנוולד מאשה הרי הוא סרוס ונבנה, ונטמא בטומאת יולדתו ובטומאת העולם, וכדכתיב הן-בפיוון חוללתי ובחטא יחמתני אמי, ואינו ראוי לקבל התורה, אלא אדרבא התורה ראוייה להם.

**In this will be understood the meaning that the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses, "provide them an answer," when [the angels] said,**

**"What is one born of a woman** doing here (i.e., on Mount Sinai) **among us?** The Torah is a hidden treasure that Your concealed 974 generations before the creation of the world, and you seek to give it to flesh and blood? . . . 'What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You think of him?' (Ps. 8:5) Rather, 'G-d our L-rd, how glorious is Your name in all the earth **that Your majesty is placed above the heavens**' (Ps. 8:2). (I.e., the rightful place of G-d's majesty, the Torah, is in the heavens.)"

- (Shabbat 88b)

**That is, the intent of the angels was to say that one born of woman would be rotting and wretched, and impure from the impurity of his birth and from the impurity of the world, as it is written, "Indeed I was born with iniquity; with sin my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:7).** The angels meant that as [man] is not suitable to receive the Torah, therefore instead the Torah is suitable only for [the angels].

ואמר לו הקב"ה הקזור להם תשובה, דהיינו שישיב להם ראיה מוכחת, שהתורה אדרבא ראוייה לישראל, חדא שפל ישראל בקזקת פשרים הם, ובכל דיני איסור וקיתר, אנו מחזיקים את האדם בקזקת פשרות. וכן הקב"ה אינו דן את האדם אלא לפי מה שהוא שם.

**The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to [Moses], "Provide them an answer that will answer them with proven evidence. That to the contrary, the Torah is suitable for Israel, as**

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

**“all Israel has the presumption of fitness,”<sup>11</sup> and in all the laws of forbidden and permitted things, we strengthen the man in the presumption of being fit.”<sup>12</sup> Similarly, the Holy One, Blessed be He, judges man only according to “where he is” (Gen. 21:17).<sup>13</sup>**

ועוד שהמלאכים אינם שייכים לא בחיצוניות המעשה, דהיינו הלבוש והגופניות של המעשה עצמו, כמו ששייכים ישראל. וגם אינם יכולים להשיג הפנימיות של התורה, דהיינו להחדש בה חידושים כנ"ל. ומכל שכן שגופניות וחיצוניות המעשה קודם לכל שאר המדרגות של התורה בכלל ובפרט, כדחזינו שאף מי שהוא חכם גדול בתורה חייב לקום בפני מי שהוא בעל מעשים. וזו ראיה מוכחת שהתורה ראויה דוקא לישראל, ידשייכי במעשה ולא למלאכים שאין להם שום שייכות במעשה.

**Furthermore, the angels have no connection to the exterior portion of performing an action as a mitzvah, which is the costume and the substance of the mitzvah action itself, whereas Israel does have such a connection. Also, [the angels] are not able to achieve the interior of the Torah, that is to develop novelties as discussed above. Furthermore, both the corporeality and also the exterior of the mitzvah action precede every gate of the levels of the Torah in total and in detail, as we have said that even one who is very wise in Torah is obliged to rise in the presence of one who is a master of good deeds. This is proven evidence that the Torah is fitting especially for Israel, as the actions of performing the mitzvot belong to them and not to angels, who are not connected to performing an action for the sake of fulfilling a mitzvah.**

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<sup>11</sup> Commentary by Rabbi Yom Tov ben Avraham Isbilli (“Ritva”) (1260s–1320s) on Ketubot 23b.

<sup>12</sup> Rashi on Gittin 2b writes: “Each one is faithful with regard to the laws of forbidden things, for each and every one of Israel believes in Torah with regard to tithed offerings and kosher slaughter and on not eating the sciatic nerve and forbidden fats.”

<sup>13</sup> Gen. 21:17–19: “G-d heard the cry of the boy, and an angel of G-d called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, ‘What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for G-d has heeded the cry of the boy where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him fast by thy hand; for I will make him a great nation.’ And G-d opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.”

Gen. Rabbah 53:14 quotes Rabbi Simon that the angels argued that G-d should not save Ishmael: “Master of the Universe, You are raising a well for a man whose future is to kill Your sons [i.e., the Jewish people] by thirst?” [Eichah Rabbah 2:4 explains that while being carried into exile by the Babylonians, the Jews asked to approach Arabs in the hope of being given water. Instead, the Arabs gave them salted meat and fish, and tricked them with water-bags that were full of hot air that entered the Jews’ lungs and killed many.] G-d answered the angels, “What is he now, righteous or wicked?” They answered Him, “Righteous.” [I.e., Ishmael had repented for the behavior that caused Abraham to send him away.] G-d said to them, “I judge man only according to his hour [of judgment].”

Rosh Hashanah 16b: And Rabbi Yitzchak said: A man is judged only according to his deeds at the time of his judgment, and not according to his future deeds, as it is stated with regard to Ishmael: “For G-d has heard the voice of the lad where he is” (Gen. 21:17). I.e., although Ishmael and his descendants would act wickedly in the future, his prayer was heard and answered because he was innocent at the time.

מכל מקום, משה רבינו עליו השלום לא מילא לבו להשיב להם תשובה, מפני שאף לאחר שהוכחנו שהתורה ראוייה יותר לישראל מהמלאכים, עם כל זה עדיין קושית המלאכים במקומה עומדת. והנה לנו לומר שאינה ראוייה לא להמלאכים לפי שאינם במעשה, ולא לישראל מפני שהם עלולים לחטוא פנ"ל. ולכן אמר לו משה, מתיירא אני שמא ישרפוני בהבל שבפיהם, כלומר שמא יאמרו הטענה שהבל פיהם הוא הבל שאין בו חטא כלל והוא פלו קדוש. וכשם שאין אמה גותן התורה למלאכים בשביל הגריעות שיש להם במעשה, כך אין לה ליתן התורה לישראל נמי, מפני הגריעות שיש להם בלימוד.

**In any regard, our rabbi Moses, peace be upon him, did not circumcise his heart,<sup>14</sup> i.e., did not pay heed to G-d's instructions to give them an answer, because even after we proved that the Torah was more fit for Israel than for the angels, nevertheless the difficulty raised by the angels remains standing. To be fair, we should say that [the Torah] is not suitable for angels because they are not involved in the action of doing a mitzvah, and not [suitable] for Israel because they are liable to sin, as mentioned above. Therefore, when G-d told Moses to answer why the Torah should be given to people, "Moses said to Him, 'I am afraid lest they burn me with the breath of their mouths' " (Shabbat 88b). Moses intended to say: "lest they claim that the breath of their mouths is breath that has no sin at all within it and is entirely holy. Just as You will not give the Torah to the angels because they are removed from the action of performing a mitzvah, similarly you should not give the Torah to Israel because they are removed from learning Torah."**

אמר לו הקב"ה, אחוז בכסא כבודי וכו'. מלמד שפירש שדי מזיו שכינתו ונעננו עליו, דהיינו שהצדיקים והחסידים נעשים מרובה לשכינה. לקדושים אשר-בארץ המה, בנדאי שה' לא יעזבם ביד יצרם הרע, והוא מצילם ומגינם. כדכתוב, צופה רשע לצדיק וכו'. ה' לא יעזבנו בידו. ומילתא דלא שכיחא היא, שלאחר שזכו וקנו הקדושה שישללו אותה. ובזה נסתרה נמי טענת המלאכים, שאין מביאין קדושים לבית הפיסול. ואז גבר פחו של משה להשיב להם, שהואיל שאין להם גופניות אינם יכולים לקיים מצותיה של תורה.

**The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to [Moses], "Grasp my throne of glory for strength and protection, and provide them with an answer. As it is stated: 'He causes him to grasp the front of the throne, and spreads His cloud over it' (Job 26:9), and Rabbi Nachum said: 'This verse teaches that G-d spread the radiance of His presence and His cloud over [Moses].' " (Shabbat 88b). That is, the righteous and the pious were created as a chariot for the *Shechinah*,<sup>15</sup> and are certainly worthy of receiving Torah. "As to the holy ones that are in the land" (Ps. 16:3), certainly G-d would not leave them in the hand of their evil inclination to sin, but He would save them and protect them, allowing them to learn Torah. As it is written, "The wicked watches for the righteous, seeking to put him to death. The L-rd will not abandon him to his power; He will not let him be condemned in judgment" (Ps. 37:32–33). This is an uncommon**

<sup>14</sup> Rashi on Deut. 10:16: " 'Circumcise the foreskin of your heart' means you shall remove the closure and cover that is on your hearts, [which prevent G-d's words gaining entrance to them]."

<sup>15</sup> Rashi on Gen. 17:22, from Gen. Rabbah 47:6.

matter,<sup>16</sup> that after they merited and acquired the holiness, they would desecrate the Torah. In this way, the claim of the angels—“One doesn’t bring consecrated offerings to a situation of disqualification” (Pesachim 13b)—will be invalidated. Thus, Moses exerted his strength to answer [the angels], that since they have no physicality, they are not able to fulfill the mitzvot of the Torah.

ואַפְשֵׁר גַּם יִשְׁמַטְעֵם זֶה כְּתִיב, מִפִּי עוֹלָלִים וְיִנְקִימֵי יִסְדֶּתָּ עִזּוֹ, שֶׁבְּנֵינוּ הָיוּ הָעוֹרְבִים שְׁלָנוּ. לְפִי שֶׁהִבֵּל פִּיהֶם שָׁל הַתִּינּוֹקוֹת הוּא הִבֵּל שֶׁאֵין בּוֹ חֵטָא, כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמְרוּ ו'ל. וְאָפְשֵׁר עוֹד שֶׁהִקְב"ה אָמַר לְמִשָּׁה, אָחִיו בְּכֶסֶף פְּבוּדֵי לְרִמּוֹז לֹא שֶׁאֵף אִם יִחַטְּאוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל, יַעֲשׂוּ תְּשׁוּבָה. וּמִכָּל שֶׁפֶן הַצְּדִיקִים, שֶׁאֲמַרִּינּוּ אִם רָאִיתָ תְּלִמִּיד חֲכָם שֶׁעָבַר עֲבִירָה בְּלֵילָה, אֵל תִּהְרַהֵר אֶתְרֵיו בַּיּוֹם וְכו'. וְגִדּוּלָה תְּשׁוּבָה, שֶׁמִּגַּעַת עַד כֶּסֶף הַכְּבוֹד.

It’s possible that from this viewpoint it was written, “From the mouths of infants and sucklings, You have founded strength on account of Your foes; to put an end to enemy and avenger.” (Ps. 8:3). Midrash Rabbah, Shir haShirim 1:4 quotes Rabbi Meir that at Mount Sinai, G-d asked the Jewish people for a guarantor that they would keep the Torah. They answered that, “Our children will be our guarantors.” This is because all the mouths of the infants are empty, with no sin, as [the rabbi] of blessed memory has said.<sup>17</sup> It’s further possible that the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses, “Grasp my throne of glory” (Shabbat 88b) to hint to him that even if Israel would sin, they would repent. This is even more so true of the righteous ones, as it is said, “It was taught in the school of Rabbi Yishmael: ‘If you saw a Torah scholar transgress a prohibition at night, do not think badly of him during the day; perhaps he has repented in the meantime.’ The Gemara challenges this: ‘Does it enter your mind that only perhaps he has repented? Shouldn’t he be given the benefit of the doubt? Rather, he has certainly repented.’” (Berachot 19a). Yoma 86a quotes Rabbi Levi as saying, “Great is repentance, as it reaches the Heavenly throne, as it is stated in Hosea 14:2, ‘Return, Israel, to the L-rd your G-d,’ ” which implies that repentance literally reaches to G-d.

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<sup>16</sup> In multiple places, the Talmud makes a distinction between a common occurrence and an uncommon occurrence, and notes a rule that the rabbis did not issue decrees to prevent violations in the case of uncommon occurrences. See, e.g., Eruvin 63b, Beitzah 2b, Ketubot 56b, Bava Metziah 47a.

<sup>17</sup> Rabbi Simeon ben Zemah Duran (the Rashbaz) (1361–1444), writes in Magen Avot 1:2:4, “And similarly the rabbis of blessed memory say that the world exists only because of the emptiness of the mouths of infants, because they are empty with no sin.”



ונחזור לענין המדרש הנ"ל במה שאמרו ז"ל, שבזכות הצדיקים בא השפע למלאכים. ומעתה שפיר קאמר אימתי היא משחקת ליום אחרון, שהן בקדושי לא יאמין. וכן אמרו ז"ל בגמרא ולעבדתו עדי-ערב, במי שהשלים עבודתו עדי ערב. ומי שהוא צדיק, אף שאינו בעל תורה רק שהוא בעל מעשים, שאינו אוהב רק בלבד של תורה, יש לו עוז והדר, שהרי הבעל תורה יש לו לקום מפניו. והוא משחק מן המלאכים שהיו תובעים התורה, והם אינם ראויים להיות בעלי מעשים. ואדרבא הם זוכים ליהנות מהשפע הבא עליהם על יד צדיק זה, בעל מעשים. וזהו שאמר המדרש עז-והדר לבושה של תורה וכו'.

**We'll return to the subject of the Midrash Yalkut Shimoni 103:1 mentioned above about what the rabbis of blessed memory said, that in the merit of the righteous, the bounty arrived to the angels.<sup>18</sup> Now all is well and we can understand why it was said in the Midrash, “When is she laughing ‘at the final day’? When He gives her reward for the Future to Come.” That is, “He puts no trust in his holy ones; and the heavens won’t merit in his eyes.” (Job 15:15). I.e., as the verse is explained by Malbim, G-d doesn’t put his trust in angels, who can’t achieve the merit that man can achieve, despite the purity of the angels in contrast to man’s materiality. Therefore, when the righteous person reaches the end of his life, he can laugh that he overcame man’s nature and performed mitzvot, and that he will receive a good reward in the World-to-Come. Likewise, as [the rabbis] of blessed memory said in the Gemara, the verse, “And to his labor until the evening” (Ps. 104:22), refers “to one who has completed his labor by the evening, i.e., one who has fulfilled the mitzvot and repented from any sins before the end of his life” (Bava Metziah 83b). Someone who is righteous, even though he is not a Torah scholar but only a master of good deeds—that is, that he grasps only the costume of the Torah (i.e., its exterior)—he nevertheless has strength and splendor, for one is required to stand before him. So even he laughs at the angels who had demanded to receive the Torah, but who are not suited to be masters of good deeds (i.e., to fulfill the mitzvot). To the contrary, [the angels] merit to enjoy the bounty that comes to them from this righteous one, who is a master of good deeds. This is the one about whom the Midrash Yalkut Shimoni 103:1 says, “‘She is clothed in strength and splendor’ (Prov. 31:25) of Torah.”**

ויוכן נמי הקושר של ואימתי נותן שכרה לעתיד לבוא, עם, אימתי משחקת ליום אחרון. שאחר שאמרנו שישאל אל זכו לתורה מפני שהם גופניים ולא רוחניים כמלאכי השרת, מן הראוי הוא שגם הגוף שטרח במצות יהיה לו שכר טוב, מהטעם שפיתב בחידושי אגדות בסוף חולין, שעקר השכר צריך לתת לגוף ולנפש, והואיל שמתן שכר בהאי עלמא ליכא. אם כן, כל השכר יהיה לנפש ולא לגוף. אמנם זה יהיה לתחיית המתים, שאז יתעדנו חסד הגוף והנפש עכ"ל.

**The link the Yalkut Shimoni makes between the statements “and when He gives her reward for the Future to Come” and “when is she laughing ‘at the final day’? ” will also be understood. We have said that Israel merited the Torah because they were material and not**

<sup>18</sup> Rabbi Moses ben Jacob Cordovero (1522–70), the “RaMaK,” leader of a school of Kabbalah in Safed, writes in *Pardes Rimonim* 24:10, “The angels seek the abundance from the righteous ones and therefore by the existence of the righteous man, G-d willing even the angels will receive goodness thanks to him.”

Rabbi Chaim Vital (1542–1620), writes in *Pri Etz Chaim*, Gate of Reading the Torah 3:2: “After we have prayed in the World of Unity, we need to bring blessing and abundance to the angels, the *chayot*, and the *ofanim*.”

spiritual like the ministering angels. Because of this, it appears that the body that toiled in the mitzvot should also receive a good reward. This is according to the view written by the Maharsha, in his commentary *Chiddushei Agadot* at the end of *Chullin* 142a<sup>19</sup> that the principal reward needs to be given to the body and to the soul, but according to a *Baraita* quoting Rabbi Yaakov that is brought in *Kiddushin* 39b, “There is no reward for a mitzvah in this world.” If so, the entire reward will be for the soul and not for the body. But in fact, concludes the *Chiddushei Agadot*, this [reward] will be the resurrection of the dead, which will be an objective for the body and the soul together.<sup>20</sup>

וְשִׁיר קְאָמֵר הַמְדַּרְשׁ וְאִמְתִּי גוֹתֵן שְׂכָרָהּ, לְפִי שֶׁבְכָאֵן אֲיִירִי בְּמִי שֶׁהוּא בֹעֵל מַעֲשִׂים וְלֹא בֹעֵל תּוֹרָה. וְעִיקַר הַמַּעֲשֵׂה תְלוּי בְּגוּף, וְאִם הַשְּׂחֹק יִהְיֶה בְּיוֹם אַחֲרוֹן דְּנִקְא, אִימְתִּי יִהְיֶה הַגּוּף מְשַׁכֵּר הַמַּעֲשִׂים שֶׁעָשָׂה? וְתִירַץ, לְעֵתִיד לְבוֹא, דְּהֵינּוּ לְתַחֲנִית הַמַּתִּים. וְכֵן פִּירֵשׁ הַמְדַּרְשׁ שֶׁמוֹאֵל (סוּף פֶּרֶק ב' דְּאָבוֹת) וְדַע, מִתֵּן שְׂכָרָן שֶׁל צְדִיקִים לְעֵתִיד לְבוֹא, דְּהֵינּוּ אַחֵר תַּחֲנִית הַמַּתִּים וְעִי"ש.

It is good that the Midrash says “and when He gives her reward for the Future to Come,” because here we are dealing with a master of good deeds and not a master of the Torah. The principal action depends upon the body, but if the laughter will literally be on the final day, when will the body enjoy a reward from the deeds that it does? The solution is: in the Future to Come, that is, with the resurrection of the dead. Thus, explains the Midrash *Shmuel* (at the end of the second section of his commentary on *Pirkei Avot*, 2:16), where Rabbi Tarfon says, “And know, the giving of reward to the righteous is in the Future to Come,” that refers to after the resurrection of the dead. And see his comments there.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The Gemara in *Chullin* 142a notes that one who performs certain mitzvot, such as honoring one’s father and mother (*Deut.* 5:16) and sending a mother bird away from her nest before taking her eggs (*Deut.* 22:6–7), will enjoy a long life and have kindness bestowed upon him.

The *Chiddushei Agadot* notes that in *Kiddushin* 39b, there is a Mishnah that “anyone who performs one mitzvah will have goodness bestowed upon him, his life is lengthened, and he will inherit the land (i.e., will gain life in the World-to-Come).” The Gemara in *Kiddushin* suggests that there is a conflict with a Mishnah in *Pe’ah* 1:1, “These are the matters that a person engages in and enjoys their profits in this world, and the principal reward remains for him for the World-to-Come, and they are: Honoring one’s father and mother, acts of loving kindness, hospitality toward guests, and bringing peace between one person and another; and Torah study is equal to all of them.” This indicates that one is rewarded in this world for fulfilling these listed mitzvot, but not for fulfilling other mitzvot. In discussing this apparent conflict, the Gemara in *Kiddushin* quotes a *Baraita* in the name of Rabbi Yaakov, that “There is no reward for performance of a mitzvah in this world,” as one is rewarded for mitzvot only in the World-to-Come. The *Chiddushei Agadot* concludes that after the resurrection of the dead, both body and soul will be rewarded.

<sup>20</sup> *Zera Shimshon* paraphrases the *Chiddushei Agadot*, rather than directly quoting from it.

<sup>21</sup> Rabbi Samuel de Uçeda (1546–1604) was a Rosh Yeshiva and Kabbalist in Safed, a disciple of the Arizal and Rabbi Chaim Vital. The Midrash *Shmuel* on *Avot* 2:16 reads: “And he said, ‘and know that the gift of reward to the righteous is in the Future to Come,’ as if to say, even though I said that I will pay you a reward for your work in the world of souls, nevertheless you should know the principal reward of every righteous person, even the ones who have already died, their principal gift of a reward will be in the Future to Come, after the resurrection [of the dead].”

ממי את למד, מאברהם וכו'. ולמה דוקא מאברהם? לפי שאברהם היה בעל מעשים, כמו שאמרו רז"ל, קנים אברהם אבינו כל התורה פלה עד שלא ניתנה. ולא היה יכול להעמיק כל כך בסודות התורה, הואיל שעדיין לא ניתנה, ובימי עדיין התורה היתה בשמים. והמלאכים לא קיימו אותה כלל, והוא קיים אותה.

The Yalkut Shimoni had said, **“From whom do you learn that one who does good deeds will be rewarded in the next life, even if he doesn’t learn Torah? From Abraham etc.” Why specifically from Abraham? Because Abraham was a master of good deeds, as our rabbis of blessed memory said: “Rav said, ‘Abraham our Patriarch fulfilled the entire Torah before it was given’ ” (Yoma 28b). But he was not able to go deeply into the esoteric secrets of the Torah, since it hadn’t yet been given, as in his days the Torah was still in Heaven. The angels didn’t fulfill [the Torah] at all, but Abraham did fulfill it.**

ואף על פי שלא רצה לקבל משכרו כלום בעולם הזה, מכל מקום זכה לעושר וזכה לזקנה משום עזר וקדר לבושה. אבל זכותו שמור לאורך ימים, לפי שבצד הימין של התורה יש אורה ימים, שזהו עקר שכר התורה לעולם שכולו טוב. ואף בצר שמאלה יש עושר וכבוד, וזה אינו עקר שפירה. ולכן אפילו כשהיא באה להשמאל לאדם, שאינה רוצה לתת לו שכר גמור, או שאותו האדם אינו רוצה לקבל שכרו בעולם הזה, מכל מקום נותנת לו עושר וכבוד. דאיתא בגילקוט משלי על פסוק יד ליד לא ינקה רע, שאבות העולם לא רצו לקבל שכרם בעולם הזה, כדי להניח לבניהם אחריהם.

**Even though [Abraham] didn’t want to receive any of his reward in this world, he nevertheless merited wealth and merited old age because “she is clothed in strength and splendor” (Prov. 31:25). His merit was reserved for a long life, because a reward coming from the right side of the Torah is length of days in the world that is entirely good (i.e., the afterlife), which is always the principal reward of the Torah. From the left side of the Torah is the reward of wealth and honor, though this is not the principal reward. Therefore, even when [the reward] comes to the left of a person, bringing wealth and honor, but [the Torah] doesn’t want to give him a complete reward including long life, or when the same person deserves long life but doesn’t want to receive his reward in this world, regardless [the Torah] gives him wealth and honor.<sup>22</sup> As an example of a person who doesn’t want to receive his reward in this world, it is written in the Yalkut Shimoni on Proverbs (947:21) on the verse, “Assuredly, the evil man will not escape; but the offspring of the righteous will be safe” (Prov. 11:21), that the patriarchs of the world didn’t want to receive a reward in this world, in order to leave [the reward] for their sons after them.<sup>23</sup>**

<sup>22</sup> The text anthropomorphizes the Torah, but of course it is G-d who is giving the blessing.

<sup>23</sup> Yalkut Shimoni on Proverbs 947:21: Rabbi Pinchas said, “Everyone who does a mitzvah in this world and requests to take his reward, ‘assuredly, the evil man will not escape,’ he is evil and won’t leave his descendant anything, like the man that says ‘this is my coin, this is my sack, this is my measure,’ it comes and is measured [only] for you. Similarly, if the first forefathers had requested a reward in this world for a mitzvah that they did, by what merit could their sons stand after them? [After all, it says,] ‘Then I will remember My covenant with Jacob’ [Lev. 26:42]. ‘Assuredly he will not escape,’ i.e., come and see the two hands that a man has: if he steals with one and gives charity with the other, he won’t be cleansed in the future. Thus, the Holy One, Blessed be He, says to the wicked, ‘I created two worlds for you: one in which to do good deeds and one to spend your reward. Now, since you did not do good deeds in this world, what are you requesting? Assuredly you will not escape from the judgment of Gehinnom.’ ”

וְהַזֶּר לֹמֵר, מִמֵּי אֵת לָמַד?—מֵאַבְרָהָם, כְּדֵי שֶׁלֹּא תֵאמַר שְׂאַבְרָהָם זָכָה לְעוֹשֶׁר—לְפִי שֶׁעֲדִיין לֹא הִגִּיעַ לְקַבֵּל שְׂכָר מֵצַד הַיָּמִין, הוֹאִיל שֶׁעֲדִיין לֹא נִתְּנָה הַתּוֹרָה—וְזֶה הִנֵּה סוֹף הַשְּׂכָר שָׁלוּ. שֶׁהָרִי אֲדַרְבָּא כְּתוּב בּוֹ, יִפְּיֵיתָ מִבְּנֵי אָדָם, שֶׁהוֹרִיד שִׁפְעַ וְהִשְׁתַּלְּשְׁלוֹת בְּעוֹלָם. וְזֶהוּ, גְּתִיפֵיתָ בְּעֵלְיוֹנִים, שֶׁהָרִי אֵינָם יְכוּלִים לִהְיוֹת בְּעֲלֵי מַעֲשִׂים, וְהֵם נִבְרָאוּ מִחִיצוֹנִיּוֹת הָעוֹלָמוֹת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר הֵן אֲרָאֲלֶם צְעָקוֹ חֲצָה, וְנִשְׁמוֹת הַצְּדִיקִים נִבְרָאוּ מִהַפְּנִימִיּוֹת.

So we learn from Abraham that one receives as a primary reward a long life in the Future to Come, i.e., after the resurrection of the dead. [The Midrash] then discusses that as a secondary reward one receives wealth and honor in this world, and repeats the phrase, saying, “From whom do you learn this? From Abraham.” This is so that you won’t say that Abraham merited only wealth—because the opportunity to receive a reward from the right side had not yet arrived, since the Torah had not yet been given—and that this merit of wealth was the end of his reward. Thus, to the contrary, the Midrash says that it was “written regarding him, ‘You are fairer than all men’ (Ps. 45:3)”, that he brought down bounty and development in the world. This is the meaning of the Midrash saying, “made fair above,” that Abraham stands in contrast to [the angels], who are not able to be masters of good deeds to do mitzvot, but who instead were created from the exterior of the four central worlds of ABiYA. “As it is said, ‘Hark! The Ariel angels cry outside’ (Is. 33:7),”<sup>24</sup> whereas the souls of the righteous were created from the interior.

עַל כֵּן בְּרַכָּה אֱלֹהִים לְעוֹלָם, שֶׁכָּל הַשְׁתַּלְּשְׁלוֹת הַשִּׁפְעַ, דְּהֵינּוּ הַבְּרָכָה, יִהְיֶה עַל יְדֵי הַחֶסֶד שֶׁהוּא מֵדַת אַבְרָהָם. דְּכַתִּיב חֶסֶד לְאַבְרָהָם, וְהוּא חֶסֶד הָעֲלִיּוֹן שֶׁאֵנוּ צָרִיכִים תָּמִיד אֵלָיו. וְהוּא חֶסֶד הַגְּדוֹל שֶׁכְּתוּב בּוֹ, יוֹמָם יִצְנֶה ה' חֶסֶדּוֹ, וְהוּא יוֹמָא דְּאִזִּיל עִם פְּלֵהוּ יוֹמֵי, כִּידוּעַ לְיוֹדְעֵי ח"ן [חֶסֶד מִתְּהַוָּה]. וְאִפְּלִי שֶׁנֶּחְנֶה בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, כָּל שְׂכָרוֹ גְּנוּז לְבָנָיו אַחֲרָיו לְעוֹלָם, וְזֶהוּ עַל־כֵּן בְּרַכָּה אֱלֹהִים לְעוֹלָם.

Therefore, “rightly has G-d blessed you eternally” (Ps. 45:3), that all the development of bounty, that is, the blessing of which the verse speaks, will be thanks to the kindness that is the character of Abraham. As it is written, “You will show . . . kindness to Abraham” (Micah 7:20), and this is the utmost kindness that we constantly need. This is the great kindness upon which it is written, “By day, may the L-rd vouchsafe his kindness” (Ps. 42:9), and this is “the day that walks with all the days,”<sup>25</sup> as is known to those who know the hidden wisdom, i.e.,

<sup>24</sup> I.e., Isaiah says that the Ariel angels cried outside (*chutza*) (חוצה), and Zera Shimshon connects that to the Kabbalistic concept that the angels are created from the exterior (*chitzoniut*) (חיצוניות) of the four worlds. I.e., there is a parallel between “outside” and “exterior,” and in Hebrew the root is the same for both words.

<sup>25</sup> Kabbalah recognizes ten Sefirot (attributes or emanations) through which Ein Sof (the Infinite) reveals Itself and continuously creates both the physical realm and the chain of higher metaphysical realms. The first Sefirah (Keter per Moses ben Jacob Cordovero, or Da’at according to Isaac Luria) describes the Divine superconscious Will that is beyond conscious intellect. The next two Sefirot, Chochmah and Binah, describe Intellectual Wisdom and Intellectual Understanding. The seven subsequent Sefirot (Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferet, Netzach, Hod, Yesod and Malchut) describe the primary and secondary conscious Divine Emotions. Each of the Sefirot includes a subset of the ten Sefirot, allowing each Sefirah to cooperate with the others.

Kabbalah.<sup>26</sup> **Even if there is enjoyment in this world, his entire reward will be hidden for his sons after him forever, and this is the meaning of “rightly has G-d blessed you eternally.”**

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The Kabbalistic interpretation of Ps. 42:9, “By day, may the L-rd vouchsafe his kindness (*chesed*),” is that the Sefirah of Chesed (which manifests G-d's absolute, unlimited benevolence and kindness) is analogized to a day that walks with all the days, i.e., that just as there are seven days in a week, there are seven Divine Emotions, and the first of those is Chesed, which has an interconnection to the other Divine Emotions.

Therefore, G-d's kindness towards Abraham is guaranteed throughout the ten Sefirot, including the seven Sefirot describing the Divine Emotions, guaranteeing a reward for Abraham in the World-to-Come.

<sup>26</sup> The concept is developed in the Zohar III:191a on the parsha Balak (Num. 22:2–25:9), though *Zera Shimshon*'s primary source is Rabbi Chaim Vital's Pri Etz Chaim, as the text appears practically verbatim in three places in the Pri Etz Chaim: Gate of the Afternoon and Evening Prayers 4:8, Gate of Yom Kippur 3:10, and Gate of Sukkot 1:9.