

Zera Shimshon

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Published Mantua 1778*

Chapter LIII: Haazinu (Deut. 32:1–32:52)

Essay 6. The importance of a fixed place for prayer

בְּרַכּוֹת פָּרַק קמ"א אָמַר ר' יוֹחָנָן מִשּׁוּם ר' שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחִי כָּל הַקּוֹבֵעַ מְקוֹם לְתַפְלָתוֹ אוֹיְבָיו נוֹפְלִים תַּחְתָּיו, שָׁנְאָמַר "וְשִׁמְתִי מְקוֹם לְעַמִּי לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְנִטְעַתִּיו וְנִשְׁכַּן תַּחְתָּיו", וְעוֹד נֶשֶׁם בְּסִמּוּךְ אָמַר ר' חֵלְבּוֹ אָמַר ר' הוֹנָא כָּל הַקּוֹבֵעַ מְקוֹם לְתַפְלָתוֹ אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם יִהְיֶה בְּעֶזְרוֹ, וְכַשְׁמַת אוֹמְרִים עָלָיו אֵי חֲסִיד אֵי עֲנָיו מִתְלַמְּדָיו שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ ע"כ.

In the first chapter of tractate Berachot:

Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai: Everyone who fixes a place for his prayers, his enemies fall before him, for it is said, "I will establish a home for My people Israel and will plant them firm, so that they shall dwell secure and shall tremble no more. Evil men shall not oppress them any more as in the past."¹

- Berachot 7b

Also there in the Gemara, adjacent, Berachot 6b, "Rabbi Chelbo said that Rav Huna said: One who sets a fixed place for his prayer, the G-d of Abraham assists him. When he dies, they say about him: "Where is the pious one, where is the humble one, of the disciples of our father Abraham?"

צָרִיד עֵיוֹן לָמָּה צָרִיד דְּנִקָּא קְבִיעוֹת מְקוֹם לְתַפְלָה וְלָמָּה דְּנִקָּא יֵשׁ לוֹ שְׂכָר זֶה שְׁאֵלְהֵי אַבְרָהָם יִהְיֶה בְּעֶזְרוֹ וְשִׁאוּיְבָיו נוֹפְלִים תַּחְתָּיו, וְכַשְׁמַת אוֹמְרִים עָלָיו אֵי חֲסִיד אֵי עֲנָיו, לָמָּה דְּנִקָּא כַּשְׁמַת אוֹמְרִים זֶה, וְעוֹד לָמָּה מְקַדִּים אֵי חֲסִיד לְאֵי עֲנָיו וְהָא בְּסוּף סוּטָה תַּנּוּן אֵיפְכָא שְׁעֻנָּה מְבִיאָה לִידֵי חֲסִידוֹת.

This requires investigation why one specifically needs a fixed place for prayer, and why specifically the reward for him is that the G-d of Abraham will assist him and that his enemies will fall before him. Also, why, when he dies, do they say about him, "Where is the pious one, where is the humble one," why specifically when he dies do they say this? Also, why do they precede "where is the pious one" to "where is the humble one," for at the end of Mishnah Sotah, 9:15, we learned the opposite, that humility brings one to the fear of sin, and that fear leads one to piety.²

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¹ II Sam. 7:10.

² Note that our Vilna edition of Berachot does read, "where is the humble one, where is the pious one," but the opposite reading given by the Zera Shimshon appears in earlier versions of the Talmud, including Ms. Firenze 7; Ms. Oxford 366; Ms. Munich 95

וְיִשׁ לְתַרְמֵץ עַל רֵאשׁוֹן רֵאשׁוֹן, דְּמַצִּינּוּ בְּחִלְצָה דְּבַעֲיֵנוּ קַבִּיעוֹת מְקוֹם, כְּדֵאִתָּא בְּשִׁלְחֵן עֲרוּדָא אֲבוּיָא הָעֵזֶר (סימן קס"ט סעיף ה') צָרִיכִים הַדְּיָיִנִים לְקַבּוּעַ מְקוֹם לְחִלְצָה וְכוּ', וְיִשׁ שָׁם בְּזֶה שְׁלוּשָׁה טַעְמִים. הַטַּעַם הַפְּשוּט הוּא כְּדֵי שְׂיִתְפָּרֵס הַדְּבָר, וּבִסְפָר בֵּית הַדָּשׁ גִּמְצָא עוֹד טַעַם דְּבַעֲיֵנוּ שְׂיַעֲשֶׂה מַעֲשֶׂה דְּמוֹכַח לְשֵׁם מִצְוָה, וְחֻכְמֵי הָאָמֶת נִתְּנוּ עוֹד טַעַם אַחֵר שְׂצָרִיף הַזְּמַנָּה וְקַבִּיעוֹת מְקוֹם כְּדֵי לְהַרְחִיק הַחִיצוֹנִים שְׂיִשׁ לָהֶם שְׂיִיכוֹת לְהַדְּבֵק בְּאוֹתוֹ הָרוּחַ שְׂהוֹלֵד עֲרִטִילַי בְּלֹא בְּנִים, כְּמוֹ שְׂעוֹשִׂים זִימּוֹן בְּבִרְכַת הַמְּזוּן.

We should excuse the first question first, for we find with *chalitzah* that we need a fixed place. The Torah indicates that a childless widow can either enter into a Levirate marriage with her late husband's brother, or can be released by him through the *chalitzah* procedure. This is as is written in the *Shulchan Aruch, Even ha'Ezer* (siman 169, se'if 4), **"The judges should set a place for *chalitzah*," and there are three reasons for that. The simple reason is to publicize the matter, i.e., so that people will understand that she is not bound to her brother-in-law, and can remarry another. In the sefer *Bayit Chadash*, we find another reason, that we need to create a condition that shows that this is for the sake of a mitzvah.³ Also, the wise men of truth, i.e., Kabbalists, gave another reason, that preparation and fixing a place is necessary, in order to distance the external forces of impurity that act as a spiritual barrier between us and G-d. These external forces have a connection to adhere to the same spirit, i.e., the deceased husband, who goes bare without sons. This preparation is required in this case, just as people joining together in prayers after a meal will first prepare by saying, "My teachers, let us bless [G-d]."⁴**

וּמַחֲמַת אֱלוֹי הַשְּׁלוּשָׁה טַעְמִים מִמֶּשׁ צָרִיף הֵכָא נְמִי קַבִּיעוֹת לְתַפְלָה, שְׂיִדּוּעַ שְׂהַמְזִיקִים כְּשִׁמְם כּוֹ הֵם שְׂכַוְוֹנָתָם תְּמִיד לְהַזִּיק לְאָדָם, וְלַעוֹלָם יֵשׁ לָהֶם צָרוֹת עֵין בְּטוֹבָתוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם וּבְשִׁלְחוֹתוֹ וְתִמִּיד מְקַטְרָגִים עָלָיו. וּבִפְרָט כְּשִׁהֲאָדָם מְתַפְלֵל לְהַקְב"ה שְׂיִמְלֹא מִשְׂאוֹתָיו וְשִׂמְן לוֹ טוֹבָה, וְעַל זֶה אָמַר ר' יוֹחָנָן גּוֹפִיָה בִירוּשְׁלַיִם דְּתַעֲנִית אִם סִדְרַת תַּפְלָה לֹא יִהְיֶה לָךְ צָר עֵין מְלַמְעָלָה, שְׂנֶאֱמַר "הַיְעָרָף שׁוֹעָף לֹא בְּצָר" וְכוּ', וְלָכֵן כְּשִׁהֲאָדָם קוֹבֵעַ מְקוֹם וּמְזַמֵּין הַקְּדוּשָׁה אֵין לָהֶם לְמַקְטְרָגִים עוֹד מְקוֹם מְלַמְעָלָה.

Because of these three reasons, we really need here too a designation for prayer, for it is known that the prosecuting angels, as their names indicate, always have the intent to harm man, and they look askance at man's good fortune and satisfaction and always prosecute him. This is true in particular when a person prays to the Holy One, Blessed be He, that He should fulfill his desires and that He should give him goodness. About this, Rabbi Yochanan himself said in the Jerusalem Talmud for tractate Ta'anit 3:6, "If you are modest in prayer, you won't face jealousy from above." This is as it is said, "Will your limitless wealth avail you."⁵ Thus, when man fixes a place and invites holiness, there is no room above for the prosecuting angels.

³ Joel ben Samuel Sirkis (1561–1640) ("The Bach"), prominent Ashkenazi posek, *Bayit Chadash*, commentary on Arba'ah Turim.

⁴ ArtScroll cites Zohar, Balak 186b that a joining of three or more in prayers after a meal establish holiness and drive away forces of evil.

⁵ Job 36:19.

וְזֶהוּ מֵהַ שְׂאֵמֵר אוֹיְבָיו נוֹפְלִים תַּחְתָּיו, שֶׁהִיא מִדָּה כְּנֶגֶד מִדָּה מִמֶּשׁ, הוּא קוֹבֵעַ מְקוֹם לְהִשְׁרֹת הַשְּׂכִינָה שֶׁהוּא מְקוֹמוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם כְּמוֹ שְׂאֵמְרוּ רז"ל עַל פְּסוּק "הִנֵּה מְקוֹם אֵתִי", אַף אוֹיְבָיו שֶׁהֵם הַמַּדְיָקִים אֵינּוּ מִן הָרְאוּי שֶׁיִּהְיֶה לָהֶם מְקוֹם לְהִיּוֹת נֹצְבִים נִגְדוֹ, כִּי הוּא בַּעַל הַמְּקוֹם וְלֹא הֵם, וְנוֹפְלִים תַּחְתָּיו לְעוֹמְקֵא דְתַהוֹמָא רַבָּה, וְנִהְרִי זֶה נִגְדַּד הַטַּעַם הַנִּלְכָּד לְכַדֵּי לְהַרְחִיק הַחִיצוֹנִים.

This is why he said, “His enemies fall before him,” that this is precisely measure-for-measure: He establishes a place for the Shechinah to dwell, and [G-d] is the “place” of the universe, as the rabbis of blessed memory said on the verse, “See, there is a place near Me.”⁶ They wrote that even his enemies, which are the destructive forces, will not properly have a place to be standing against him, for he is the master of the place designated for prayer and not them, and they fall before him to the depth of the great abyss, and this is corresponding to the reason above in order to distance the external forces that act as a spiritual barrier between us and G-d.

וּמֵהַ שְׂאֵמֵר אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם יִהְיֶה בְּעֶזְרוֹ הֵינּוּ מַחְמַת שְׁתֵּי טַעְמִים אַחֲרֵים הַנִּלְכָּד, שֶׁהָרִי אַבְרָהָם הִקְנֶה לְהַקְב"ה שְׁמִים וְאַרְצֵי כְּדִקְתִּיב "קִנְיָה שְׁמִים וְאַרְצֵי", לְאַחַר שֶׁטָּרַח הַרְבֵּה כְּדֵי לְדַעַת מִי הוּא בַּעַל הָעוֹלָם, כְּדֹאִיתָא בְּמִדְרַשׁ רַבָּה רִישׁ פְּרָשַׁת לֶךְ-לָךְ, תֹּאמֵר שֶׁהָעוֹלָם בְּלֹא מְנַהִיג, הַצִּיץ עָלָיו הַקְב"ה וְאָמַר לוֹ אֲנִי הוּא בַּעַל הָעוֹלָם, וְכָל מַחְשְׁבוֹתָיו הָיוּ לְפָרְסָם אֶל[ה]וֹתוֹ בְּעוֹלָם וּלְהַרְבּוֹת הַקְּדוּשָׁה כְּדֵי שֶׁתִּשְׁרָה הַשְּׂכִינָה בְּעוֹלָם. וְאַמְרִינוּ בְּמִדְרַשׁ עַל פְּסוּק "וְאַהֲבַתְּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ" אֲהַבְהוּ עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת כְּאַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ, שֶׁכָּל כְּוֹנְתוֹ הִיְתָה שֶׁתַּתְּרַבֶּה הַקְּדוּשָׁה עַל יָדוֹ.

As far as him saying, “the G-d of Abraham assists him,” this is because of the other two reasons mentioned above, for “Abraham acquired Heaven and earth for the Holy One, Blessed be He, as it is said, ‘Blessed be Abram of G-d Most High, Creator of Heaven and earth,’^{7,8} after [Abraham] took great pains to identify the Master of the world. This is as it is brought in the Midrash Rabbah, at the beginning of Parashat Lech Lecha (39:1), “[Abraham] said, ‘Can the world have no leader?’ The Holy One, Blessed be He, looked at him, and said to him, ‘I am the Master of the world,’ ” and all of [Abraham’s] thoughts were to publicize His Godliness in the world and to spread the Holiness in order to cause the Shechinah to spread out in the world. It is said in the Midrash on the verse, “ ‘You shall love the L-rd, your G-d’⁹: Cause Him to be loved by the creatures, like your father Avraham did, for his entire intent was to increase Holiness by his hand.”¹⁰

⁶ Ex. 33:21.

⁷ Gen. 14:19.

⁸ Aggadat Bereisheet (also called *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*) 50:2.

⁹ Deut. 6:5.

¹⁰ Yalkut Shimoni on Torah 837:2.

ואף זה שקובע מקום לתפלתו נראה שמקנה להקב"ה אותו המקום, והואיל שעשוי להשראת השכינה, בנדאי שיהיה גוהג קדושה באותו מקום ונרחיק מאותו המקום כל מין טינוף וטומאה. ואם כן בקביעות מקום זה מתפרסם הדבר שפונותו להרבות הייחוד הגדול הצריך לעבודתו ותפלה, כמו שאברהם היו כל מחשבותיו לפרסם אלהותו בעולם. וכשנתיחד לקדושה צריך שהמציאותים בעל פתחם יתרחקו מאותו המקום, לפי שהוא גוהג קדושה באותו המקום.

So too, the one who designates a place for his prayer appears as if he is acquiring this place for the Holy One, Blessed be He. Since the spreading out of the Shechinah is accomplished, certainly he will behave with holiness in the same place, and distance from that place every type of filth and spiritual impurity. If so, in fixing a place, this publicizes the fact that his intent is to increase the great *yichud*¹¹ necessary in His service, may He be Blessed, just as with Abraham, all of his thoughts were to publicize His Godliness in the world. When he had attained *yichud* with the Holiness, the external forces necessarily had to distance themselves from the same place, because he was acting with holiness in the same place.

והוא נגד הטעם דבעינן שיעשה מעשה דמוכח לשם מצוה, וכשילש לו הכנת המקום בנדאי שיהיה זהיר נמי להתפלל בכל לבו, והיינו פאברהם דכתיב ביה "ומצאת את לבו לקבו נאמן לפניך", וזהו דאמרינו בפירק קמא דברכות מיום שנברא העולם לא היה אדם שקרא להקב"ה אדון עד שבא אברהם וקרא "אדון".

This corresponds to the reason that since he has done an action that is proven to be for the sake of a mitzvah, certainly he should also be cautious to pray with all his heart, and to be like Abraham, for it was written about him, "You found his heart true to You."¹² This is the meaning of what was written in the first chapter of tractate Berachot 7b, "From the day that the world was created, man did not call the Holy One, Blessed be He, 'Master,' until Abraham came and called Him 'Master.' "

ובנה יובן הפסוק "והאר פניך על־מקדשך השמים למען ה' ", ואמרינו התם "למענה" מבעי ליה. אלא — למען אברהם שקרא "אדון". וקשה למה דניאל נקט דוקא הכא זכות אברהם ולא זכות שאר הצדיקים, ועוד למה פרט דוקא זכות זה שקרא "אדון". אלא לפי שמי שהוא אדון פשוטא אחרים מחזיקים בנכסיו צריך למחות כדי שלא יקנו חזקה, ומשום הכי אמר דניאל הנה "הרציון ששמים שועלים הלכו־בו" דהיינו הקליפות ואתה בעל המקום יש לה לעשות מתאה כדי שלא יחזיקו בו חס ושלום. ולכן אני מתפלל שתאיר עיניך על אותו המקום למען אברהם שקרא "אדון", שבנה יתרחקו המזיקין המחזיקין "ולא־יבאו לראות פבלע את־הקדש".

In this way will be understood the verse "and let Your countenance shine upon Your desolate Temple, for the sake of my Master,"¹³ and it is said there:

[The verse] should have said: "for Your sake" [as Daniel was addressing G-d]. Rather, [this verse teaches that the prayer should be accepted] for the sake

¹¹ Unification of supernal elements in (and by) one's mystical devotions.

¹² Nehemia 9:8.

¹³ Dan. 9:17.

of Abraham, who called You “Master.” [I.e., by using the same Name of G-d that Abraham had used, Daniel hoped that his prayer would be accepted because of Abraham’s merit.]

- Berachot 7b

It is difficult to understand why Daniel specifically chose here the merit of Abraham, and not the merit of other righteous men. Also, why did he specifically detail this merit that [Abraham] called Him “Master”?

Rather, one who is a master, when he sees others seizing his property, he should protest so that they do not acquire possession. Because of this, Daniel said, “here is ‘Mount Zion, which lies desolate; foxes prowl over it,’ ”¹⁴ which is referring to the *klipot*, the husks or shells of spiritual impurity, and You are the Master of the place; You should make a protest in order that they don’t seize it, G-d forbid. Therefore, I pray that You will shine Your eyes on that place, for the sake of Abraham, who called you “Master,” in order that the damaging forces that are seizing it will distance themselves, and “people won’t come to witness the devouring of the Holiness.”¹⁵

ונקט דנקא ה'לשון של "והאר פניך", משום דאיתא בשלחן ערוך חשן משפט (סימן קנ"ד סעיף י"ב) מי שהיתה לו חלון מוחזקת ובא חבירו ובנה פנגדה וסתמה ושתק בעל החלון אינו יכול להזזר ולערער שיפתח החלון, כיון ששתק מחל, שאין אדם עשוי שסותמין אורו בפניו ושותק אלא אם כן מחל עכ"ל. והנה המזיקים הם "חשך ואפלה" כנודע והם מחשיכים הארת המקום הקדוש, וכדי שלא יקנו חזקה משום הכי אמר "והאר פניך" וכו'.

He took the language of “let Your countenance shine,” because it is brought in the Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat, siman 154, se’if 12:

One who owns a window and another came and built opposite or adjacent to the window without distancing or if he closed up [the window], and the window-owner did not object, he can no longer object and open the window or force the structure to be put at a distance because he has waived his rights by remaining silent. A person does not generally have his light-source shut off in front of him and remain silent unless he has waived his rights.

Here, the damaging forces are “darkness and deep gloom,”¹⁶ as is known, and they darken the radiance of the Holy place, and in order that they not acquire possession of the Temple—because of this, [Daniel] said, “let Your countenance shine.”

¹⁴ Lam. 5:18. Jeremiah is considered to be the author of Lamentations, but Daniel lived shortly afterward and would have been familiar with such thoughts.

¹⁵ Num. 4:20.

¹⁶ Joel 2:2; Zephaniah 1:15.

ונחזור לענין הנ"ל, וכשמת אומרים עליו אי תסיד וכו', לפי שמי שקובע מקום לתפלתו אין אותו מקום מיוחד לקדושה אלא עד שהוא חי, שהרי אינו מיוחד לאחרים אלא דוקא לעצמו, וכינן שמת מתבטלת הקדושה של אותו מקום, וידוע מאי דתנו באבות העושה מצנה אחת קונה לו פרקליט אחד, וכן בפרק קמא דסוטה כל העושה מצנה אחת בעולם הנה מקדמתו והולכת לפניו לעולם הבא וכו'.

We will return to the above matter, “When he dies, they say about him: ‘Where is the pious one, where is the humble one, of the disciples of our father Abraham?’ ” Regarding one who sets a place for his prayers, this place is only designated for holiness while he lives, for it is not designated for others, but rather only for himself. When he dies, the holiness of the same place is nullified, and it is known what is taught in Pirkei Avot 4:11, “One who performs one commandment acquires for himself one advocate.” Similarly, in the first chapter of tractate Sotah 3b, “Anyone who fulfills one mitzvah in this world, it precedes him and goes before him to the World-to-Come.”

ונהי נחמא בשאר המצות שעושות אינה תיקון בעולם הואיל שהמעשה לעולם קיים, אבל בזו אין נראה כאן שום תיקון קיים שהרי מה שנעשה ונתקן חזר להתקלקל, ואם פן איה אפשר שמצנה בזו תלך לפניו. משום הכי קא משמע לן שאף שלגבי המקום אין בה תיקון קיים ונראה, לגבי דידיה מיהא תיקון גדול איכא, שהואיל שכונתו להשרות השכינה עליו ועל מקומו ועל תפלתו נקרא תמיד, דתנו בסוף סוטה תמידות מביאה לידי רוח הקדש, ופירש שם התוספות יום טוב בשם רש"י רוח הקדש הינו להשרות עליו שכינה.

This is convenient for other mitzvot that accomplish some kind of correction in the world, since the action is valid, but for this, [his designation of a place of prayer] does not appear to have any kind of valid correction, for what was done and corrected has gone bad again. If so, how is it possible for such a mitzvah to precede him? Because of this, we hear that even though concerning the place there is no apparent permanence, as it is only effective for him while he lives, concerning this there is a great correction, as since his intent was to spread out the Shechinah upon him and upon his place and upon his prayer, he is called “pious.” For it is taught at the end of tractate Sotah, chapter 9, Mishnah 15, that “piety leads one to Divine inspiration,” and the Tosafot Yom-Tov¹⁷ explains there in the name of Rashi that Divine inspiration means that the Shechinah rests upon him.

ונהו אי תסיד ואחר כך אי עניו, כלומר שאם לא הנה עניו אף על פי שקבע מקום לתפלתו לא היתה שורה עליו השכינה, דבספר עשרה מאמרות כתב שאין השכינה שורה על בעלי גאונה, ושם של ע"ב יזכיר שאין בו אות הגימל עכ"ל. והיינו מתלמידיו של אברהם אבינו שהיה ראש לענוים, כדכתיב "ואנכי עפר ואפר".

This is the meaning of “Where is the pious one,” and afterward “where is the humble one,” as if to say that if he were not humble, even if he had fixed a place for his prayer, the Shechinah would not have rested upon him. It is written in the sefer *Asara Ma’amarot* [Ten

¹⁷ Rabbi Gershon Shaul Yom-Tov Lipmann ben Nathan ha-Levi Heller (c. 1579–1654), Bohemian rabbi and Talmudist. Tosefet Yom-Tov (written 1614–17) was his commentary on the Mishnah.

Utterances],¹⁸ essay *Em Kal Chai* [The Mother of All the Living],¹⁹ section 2, siman 29, **that the Shechinah does not rest upon a haughty [גאָוה] [ga'ava] person, and [G-d's] Name of 72 groups of three letters proves this, for within this Name of 216 letters there is no letter *gimmel*, which represents *ga'ava*, haughtiness.**²⁰

Also, [it says] “of the disciples of our father Abraham,” for he was the head of the humble people, as it is written, “I, who am but dust and ashes.”²¹

וְעֵינֵינוּ יֵשׁ לְדַקְדָּק לְמַה הַקְּדִים אֵי חֶסֶד לְאֵי עֲנִיו הַפֶּה הַסֶּדֶר דְּתַנּוּן בְּסוּף סוּטָה עֲנָנָה מְבִיאָה לִידֵי פְרִישׁוֹת, פְּרִישׁוֹת מְבִיאָה לִידֵי חֲסִידוֹת. וַיֵּשׁ לֹמֵר דְּאֶמְרֵינוּ בְּפֶרֶק קַמָּא דְּתַעֲנִית "אִם-יִשָּׁף הַנֶּחֱשׁ בְּלוֹא-לְחֹשׁ" וְכוּ' מֵאֵי תַקְנֻתִיהָ? יִלְךְ אֲצֶל חֶסֶד שְׂבִדוֹר, וְנִרְבָּה עָלָיו בְּתַפְלָה. וְאִם לְחֹשׁ וְנִעְנָה, וְהִגִּיס דְּעַתּוֹ עָלָיו, מְבִיא אֶף לְעוֹלָם וְכוּ' עכ"ל. וּמִשּׁוֹם הֵכִי הַקְּדִימוּ אֵי חֶסֶד לְאֵי עֲנִיו, לֹמֵר שְׂאֵף עַל פִּי שְׁהִיְתָה בְּנֻדָּאֵי תַפְלָתוֹ וְנִשְׁמַעַת הוֹאִיל שְׂקִבַע מְקוֹם בְּכִנּוּנָה רְצוּנָה מִטַּעַם חֲסִידוֹת, עִם כָּל זֶה לֹא הִגִּיס דְּעַתּוֹ אֶלָּא הָיָה עֲנִיו.

We still need to check why “where is the pious one” precedes “where is the humble one,” the opposite of what is taught at the end of tractate Sotah, “humility leads one to abstinence; abstinence leads one to piety.”²²

It can be said that it’s said in the first chapter of tractate Ta’anit, on the verse, “If the snake bites because no spell was uttered, no advantage is gained by the trained charmer”²³:

And if he whispered [his prayers] but was not answered, **what is his remedy? He should go to the pious man of the generation, and [this pious man] will increase [his] prayers on his behalf. And if he whispered [his prayers] and he was answered, and he becomes prideful [as a result], he brings anger into the world.**

- Taanit 8a

Because of this, he preceded “where is the pious one” to “where is the humble one,” to say that even though certainly his prayer was heard, since he fixed a place with the proper intent for the reason of piety, with all this he did not become prideful, rather he was humble.

¹⁸ Rabbi Menachem Azaria da Fano (“Rema M’Pano”) (1548–1620), Italian Kabbalist and commentator on the Talmud. *Asara Ma’amarot* (“Ten Utterances”) was published in Venice in 1597.

¹⁹ Gen. 3:20, “The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.”

²⁰ The Name of 72 [groups of three letters] comes from Ex. 14:19–21, each of which verses have 72 letters. All letters of the alphabet are present except for the *gimmel*.

²¹ Gen. 18:27.

²² Our version of the Mishnah reads “abstinence leads to Holiness; Holiness leads to humility; humility leads to the fear of sin; and the fear of sin leads to piety.”

²³ Eccl. 10:11.

וּבְדַרְדָּר זה יובן הכתוב "קרוב ה' לכל־קראיו לכל אשר יקראהו באמת", דקשה דאיך תיסק אדעתין שיהיה קרוב למי שיקראהו בשקר דאיצטריך קרא למימר "קרוב ה' " ל"אשר יקראהו באמת". ואם תאמר שפירוש "באמת" היינו שיקראהו בכל לבכם, קשה דהיכן מצינו שמלת "באמת" מורה על פנונת הלב, ועוד שאף אם "באמת" יש לה הוראה על פנונת הלב, קשה למה לא אמר "בכל־לבכם" כדריך הכתוב, ולמה נקט מלת "באמת".

In this way will be understood the verse, “The L-rd is near to all who call upon Him, to all those who call upon Him in truth.”²⁴ For it is difficult to see how it would enter your mind that He would be near to one who calls upon Him in falsehood, that Scripture needs to say, “The L-rd is near” to “one who calls upon Him with truth.” If you’ll say that the explanation of “in truth” is that they will call upon Him with all their hearts, a difficulty is where do we find that the word “in truth” teaches about the intention of the heart. Also, even if “in truth” has an instruction about the intention of the heart, a difficulty is why didn’t [Scripture] say “with all their hearts,” as in the Scripture in other places, and why here did it take the word “in truth.”

וגיש לומר דאיתא בבראשית רבה על פסוק "נעשה אדם", בשעה שבא הקב"ה לברוא את האדם נעשו מלאכי השרת כתות כתות. חסד אומר יברא, שהוא גומל חסדים. אמת אומר, אל יברא, שפוליה שקרים. צדק אומר יברא, שהוא עושה צדקות. שלום אומר אל יברא, דכוליה קטטה. מה עשה הקב"ה? נטל האמת והשליכו לארץ וברא את האדם. הדין הוא דכתיב, "ותשלך אמת ארצה" עכ"ל.

It can be said that it’s brought in Gen. Rabbah on the verse, “Let us make mankind in our image”²⁵:

When the Holy One, Blessed be He, came to create Adam, the ministering angels formed themselves into groups and parties, some of them saying, “Let him be created,” while others urged, “Let him not be created.” Thus it is written, “Kindness and Truth fought together, Righteousness and Peace have taken arms against each other.”²⁶ Kindness said, “Let him be created, because he will dispense acts of kindness.” Truth said, “Let him not be created, because he is made of falsehood.” Righteousness said, “Let him be created, because he will perform righteous deeds.” Peace said, “Let him not be created, because he is full of strife.” What did the Holy One, Blessed be He, do? He took Truth and cast it to the ground, and created Adam. Thus, it is written, “He cast Truth to the ground.”²⁷

- Gen. Rabbah 8:5

²⁴ Ps. 145:18.

²⁵ Gen. 1:26.

²⁶ Ps. 85:11. The verse is typically translated as “Kindness and truth have met each other, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” The Midrash, however, interprets the verse in terms of a conflict.

²⁷ Dan. 8:12.

ומקשים העולם למה דנקא השליד האמת ולא השלום. ויש לומר דאמרינו בפרק ד' דפסחים שבעה דברים מכוסים מבני אדם, וחד מיניהו שאין אדם יודע מה שבלבו של חברו, ופירש מהרש"א שאם הנה יודע הנה כל אהד יורד לחיי חברו ומבטל מחשבתו עכ"ל.

Everyone asks why He specifically cast Truth and not Peace. It can be said that it's said in the 4th chapter of tractate Pesachim (54b) that seven matters are concealed from mankind, and one of them is that man does not know what is in the heart of his fellow.²⁸ The Maharsha²⁹ explained that if a man would know what is in the heart of his fellow, everyone would descend into the life of his fellow and cancel his thought.

נמצא שאם לא הנה משליד האמת לא הנה מתקיים העולם, שהרי אם הנה משליד השלום ומניח האמת אז הנה מוכרח שהעולם יתנהג תמיד על צד האמת. וממילא הנה מוכרח נמי שהאדם ינהיג יודע מה שבלבו של חברו כדי שלא יבוא שקר בעולם, דהיינו שלא ידברו איש את רעהו אהד בפה ואהד בלב שנה הוא שקר, שכינון שאם אהד חושב לדבר שקר לא יועיל לו כלום הואיל שחברו יודע מחשבותיו ומכיר שהוא שקר, אם כן בנדאי לא יבא רק האמת, ולא תהנה בעולם גם כן מדת חגפות. אלא שאם הנה כה כל אהד ואהד הנה יורד לאומנותו של חברו ולא הנה קיום בעולם כלל, ומשום הכי הוצרך דנקא להשליד האמת ולא השלום.

It's found that if He had not cast Truth, the world would not exist, because if He had cast Peace and left Truth alone, then the world would be compelled to always act on the said of Truth. In any case, it would be necessary for man to know what was in the heart of his fellow in order that falsehood wouldn't come into the world, that is, that a man would not say to his fellow "one statement with his mouth and mean another in his heart,"³⁰ which would be falsehood. This would be necessary, since if one would think to speak a lie, it would not avail him anything, since his fellow knows his thoughts and will recognize that it is a lie. Then surely, only the truth will come out, and there would also be no flattery in the world. Rather, if it were so, each and every one would descend to interfere with the trade business of his fellow, since no one would be able to devise a successful business strategy without everyone perceiving it, and the world would not be able to exist at all. Because of this, it was specifically necessary to cast Truth and not Peace.

²⁸ Pesachim 54b: "Seven matters are concealed from people, and they are: The day of death; and the day of consolation [from one's concerns]; the profundity of justice [ascertaining the truth in certain disputes]; and a person also does not know what is in the heart of another; and a person does not know in what way he will earn a profit; [and one does not know] when the monarchy of the house of David will be restored [to Israel]; and when the wicked [Roman] monarchy will cease [to exist]."

²⁹ Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer Eidels ("the Maharsha") (1555–1631), *Chiddushei Agadot*.

³⁰ Pesachim 113b.

נמצא שענין מדת האמת הוא שיהיו פיו ולבו של אדם שוים דאי לאו הכי אינו אמת, ומשום הכי אמר הכתוב "קרוב ה' לכל-קראיו לכל אשר יקראהו באמת" דהיינו שמכוננים בתפלתם ופיהם ולבם שוים, ונעדין קשה למה אמר הכתוב "לכל אשר יקראהו באמת" ולא כתב "לכל אשר יקראהו בכל לבבם", ועוד למה לא אמר בקיצור "קרוב ה' לכל-קראיו באמת".

We find that the principal of the attribute of truth is that the mouth and heart of a man will be equal, for if not, this is not the truth. Because of this, Scripture says, "The L-rd is near to all who call upon Him, to all those who call upon Him in truth," which is that they are focused in their prayer and their mouths and hearts are equal. It is still difficult to understand why Scripture says "to all who call upon Him in truth," and doesn't write "to all who call upon Him with all their hearts." Also, why doesn't it say succinctly, "[The L-rd] is near to all who call upon Him in truth"? I.e., why the duplication of "to all who call upon Him"?

אלא נדאי נשבא לומר שמי שקורא אל ה' ותפץ שיהיה הקב"ה קרוב לו צריך שיקראהו בכל צדדי האמת, ומשום הכי האריך הכתוב לשונו, והיינו שאם אינו מתפלל בכונה, פשיטא שהוא שקר כמו שאמרנו שהרי אין פיו ולבו שוים, ואם הוא אינו קובע מקום לתפלתו להחליש פה המקטרגים שהם מדת השקר, אם כן אינו קורא באמת דמשמעו להגביר ולהרבות פה ואמץ בקדושה שהיא מדת האמת.

Rather, certainly this is coming to say that one who calls to G-d and desires that the Holy One, Blessed be He, will be near to him, needs to call upon Him with every side of truth. Because of this, Scripture expands its language, which is that if he will not pray with the proper intent, it is obvious that this is a falsehood, as we said above, that here the words of his mouth and the thoughts of his heart are not equal. If he does not establish a place for prayer, in order to weaken the strength of the prosecuting angels, who represent the attribute of falsehood, if so, he does not call out to G-d in truth, which means to strengthen and to expand the strength and courage in holiness, which is the attribute of truth.

ועוד יש לומר דקשה דאמר שאמר "קרוב ה' לכל-קראיו" היה לו לומר "לאשר יקראהו באמת", ומהו שחזר לומר "לכל", אלא נדאי דמלת "קרוב" שייכא בין ארישא ובין אסיפ[א] דקרא. וכך משמעו פש"ק רוב ה' לכל-קראיו" דהיינו שעומדים ביראה ובקדושה לפי שחושבים בדעתם שהם יושבים לפניו וסמוכים לו, אז גם הוא קרוב להם ושומע תפלתם לפי שקוראים אותו באמת.

Also, it can be said that it's difficult that after [Scripture] said "The L-rd is near to all who call upon Him," it should have said, "to those who call upon Him in truth," and why did it return to say "to all those who call upon Him"? Rather, certainly the word "near" is relevant to both the latter and the former clause of the verse. Thus, the meaning is that when "The L-rd is near to all who call upon Him," which is that they stand in fear and in holiness because they think in their thoughts that they are sitting before Him and are near to Him, then also He is near to them, and He hears their prayers because they call upon Him in truth.

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