

Toldot Shimshon

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Chapter I – Prologue

כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, שְׁנַאֲמַר "וְעַמּוּךָ כָּלָם צְדִיקִים לְעוֹלָם יִירְשׁוּ אֶרֶץ נֶצֶד מִטַּעוּ [מִטְעֵי] מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶי לַהֲתַפְאָר".

“All Israel have a portion in the World-to-Come, as it is said, ‘And your people, all of them righteous, shall possess the Land for all time; they are the shoot of My planting, My handiwork in which I glory’ (Isaiah 60:21).”¹

G-d gave Torah to the Jewish people as a guideline for life, with a desire to reward us for practicing the commandments. This requires Torah study, so that we can properly understand these commandments and how to fulfill them. An important complement to the Torah learning is the study of the ethical teachings of Pirkei Avot, which is learned every Sabbath between Passover and Shavuot.

יְאִיר הָאֵוֹר הַטּוֹב הַצֶּפוּן, כִּי רָצָה הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְזַכּוֹת אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, לְפִיכָף הִרְבָּה לָהֶם תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת. "תְּהִלָּה לְכָל-חֹסֵידוֹ לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַם-קָרְבוֹ", שְׁאֶפִּילוּ שִׁחְתָּו וּמְנַהֲגוּ, צְרִיכָה תְּלַמּוּד.

The light and the goodness reserved for you will shine,² for “the Holy One, Blessed be He, wanted to grant merit to Israel. Therefore, He gave them Torah and commandments in abundance.”³ “A praise for all His faithful ones, for the children of Israel, the people close to Him,”⁴ for even their conversation and their customs require analysis.⁵

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¹ The prologue, which is read as an introduction to each chapter of Pirkei Avot, is taken from Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1, Sanhedrin 90a.

² In the Hebrew original, the initial letters of the first four words are printed in bold, and spell the Tetragrammaton, the four-lettered name of G-d.

³ This teaching by Rabbi Chananiah ben Akashya comes from Mishnah Makkot 3:16; Makkot 23b. It is read as a conclusion of each chapter of Pirkei Avot.

⁴ Ps. 148:14.

⁵ Avodah Zarah 19b: “ [He is like a tree planted beside streams of water, which yields its fruit in season] and whose leaf does not wither [and whatever he does prospers]’ (Ps. 1:3). Rav Acha bar Adda says Rav says, and some say Rav Acha bar Abba says Rav Hamnuna says Rav says, that even the ordinary conversation of Torah scholars requires analysis, as it is stated, ‘And whose leaf does not wither.’ ”

"היטיבו כל-אשר דברו" המפרשים, בטעם לשבח על מה שנהגו כל ישראל, ה' ישמרם, לשנות פרקי מסכת אבות מדי שבת בשבתו בין פסח לעצרת. כי הזמנה מילתא היא, להכין עצמם בהכנה דרבה לקבל התורה הקדושה, האי יומא דקא גרים לאשר בשם ישראל יכונה, יום סג העצרת הקדוש, על דרך "שמע בני מוסר אביך ואל-תטש תורת אמך", ואם אין דרך ארץ, אין תורה, דרך ארץ קדמה לתורה, כנודע.

The commentators “did well to speak thus,”^{6,7} praising what all Israel did, may G-d preserve them, to review the chapters of tractate Pirkei Avot every Sabbath of the Sabbaths between Passover and Shavuot,⁸ the latter marking the reception of the Torah at Mount Sinai. For “the designation of something is significant,”⁹ to prepare themselves “by the preparation of Rabba,”¹⁰ i.e., preparing in advance of the holiday, to receive the Holy Torah. “This day caused”¹¹ “the name of Israel to be adopted,”¹² the day of the Holy holiday of Shavuot, in the way of, “My son, heed the discipline of your father, and do not forsake the instruction of your mother,”¹³ and “if there is no proper conduct, there is no Torah,”¹⁴ and “proper conduct precedes Torah,”¹⁵ as is known.

אבל ראינו "ונהנה מנורת זהב כלה נגלה על-ראשה", ממשינת "כל ישראל", ומקומה נצב לעומתה בפרק י"א דסנהדרין, ומה-ראו על-פכה", ועדיין צריכים אנו למודעי.

But we have seen “a lampstand entirely of gold, with a bowl above it.”¹⁶ From the Mishnah “All Israel have a portion in the World-to-Come,” and her place stands in parallel to its appearance in the 11th chapter of tractate Sanhedrin,¹⁷ “and of what they have experienced

⁶ Deut. 5:25, “The L-rd heard the plea that you made to me, and the L-rd said to me, ‘I have heard the plea that this people made to you; they did well to speak thus.’ ”

⁷ “The commentators” may include Rabbi Shimon ben Tzemach Duran (1361–1444) (“the Rashbatz”), *Magen Avot* (Livorno 1762); Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac Levi (1532–1600), *Lev Avot* (Thessaloniki 1565); Rabbi Samuel ben Isaac de Uçeda (1500s), *Midrash Shmuel* (Venice 1579).

⁸ The Hebrew text uses the word *Atzeret*, which is the Talmudic term for Shavuot. See Mishnah Rosh Hashana 1:2; Rosh Hashana 16a; Pesachim 68b.

⁹ Berachot 23b: “And according to Abaye, who said [that the] designation [of an item] is significant [as he holds that all relevant halachot apply to an object once it’s designated for a specific purpose, whether or not it has been already used for that purpose].”

¹⁰ Beitzah 2b–4a.

¹¹ Pesachim 68b: “Rav Yosef, on the day of Shavuot, said: Prepare me a third-born calf. He said: If not for this day that caused [us to have the Torah], how many Yosefs would there be in the market?” I.e., if not for the Torah, he would have been a common man, but as a scholar he recognizes his obligation to rejoice on Shavuot.

¹² Cf. Isaiah 44:5, “One shall say, ‘I am the L-rd’s,’ another shall use the name of ‘Jacob,’ another shall mark his arm ‘of the L-rd’s’ and adopt the name of ‘Israel.’ ”

¹³ Prov. 1:8.

¹⁴ Pirkei Avot 3:17.

¹⁵ Lev. Rabbah 9:3.

¹⁶ Zech. 4:2

¹⁷ I.e., as discussed in footnote 1, our Mishnah, “All Israel have a portion in the World-to-Come,” is taken from Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1. However, in the Gemara, it appears at the beginning of the 11th chapter, page 90a.

in this matter,¹⁸ **“and we still need the knowledge.”**¹⁹ I.e., if Pirkei Avot is the “lampstand entirely of gold,” then the Prologue, “All Israel have a portion in the World-to-Come,” is the bowl above it. In Sanhedrin, it stands to teach that even sinners deserving of the death penalty have a part in the World-to-Come. While not formally a part of Pirkei Avot, it has traditionally been added as a Prologue to each chapter. According to *Machzor Vitri*,²⁰ it is added to Pirkei Avot to teach less knowledgeable Jews that they shouldn’t give up on repentance or redemption; that they shouldn’t lose hope because of the sins they have committed.

Toldot Shimshon now begins to ask questions about the text of the Prologue.

וְהוֹאִיל וְאַתָּא לִיְדוֹן, גִּימָא בָּהּ מִלְתָּא, בְּמַה שְּׁהַקְדִּימוּ הַמְפָרְשִׁים לְשֵׂאוֹל וְלַחֲקוֹר, מַה צּוֹרֵךְ הִיָּה לוֹ לַפְנֵי לְהִבִּיא סוּף הַפְּסוּק "נִצָּר מְטָעִי מַעֲשֵׂה נְדִי לְהִתְפָּאֵר", דְּהָא מְרִישִׁיה דְקָרָא "וְעַמְדָּה בְּלָם צְדִיקִים לְעוֹלָם יִרְשׁוּ אֶרֶץ", דְּהִיָּינוּ אֶרֶץ חַסִּים, שְׁפִיר שְׁמַעֲיָנוּ מִיָּנָה שְׁפָל יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֶלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא. וְהַפְּסוּק עֲצָמוּ, אִידָּהּ מְקוּשָׁר רִאשׁוֹ עִם סוּפּוֹ. וּמַהוּ טַעַם הַקָּרִי כְּתִיב שְׁבִמִלַת 'מְטָעִי', דְּמְטָעוֹ כְּתִיב.

“Since this has come to hand, let us say something about it,”²¹ **of what the commentators advanced to question and to investigate.**

Question 1: That is, **what need was there for the Tanna**²² **of our Mishnah to bring the ending of the verse** Isaiah 60:21, **“They are the shoot of My planting, My handiwork in which I glory”?** **For the beginning of the verse of Scripture, “And your people, all of them righteous, shall possess the Land for all time”—by which “Land” is referring to “the land of the living”**²³**—is fine on its own.** I.e., the interpretation “your people . . . shall possess the Land [of the living] for all time” means that Israel will have eternal life. Thus, **we learn from this beginning of Isaiah 60:21 that “All Israel have a portion in the World-to-Come.”** So why did the Tanna quote the entire verse? We will see that the answer to this question **also** answers a question regarding **the verse itself: How is its beginning connected with its ending?**

Question 2: **Also, what is the meaning of the spoken Scripture, regarding the word pronounced *ma'ta'ai* [מְטָעִי] [“My planting”], for which *ma'ta'o* [מְטָעוֹ] [“his planting”] is written?** I.e., the Masoretic tradition tells us that the word is to be pronounced one way, but written a different way.

¹⁸ Esther 9:26.

¹⁹ Sefer haChinuch 92:2.

²⁰ *Machzor Vitri* was authored by Rabbi Simcha ben Shmuel of Vitry (d. 1105), French Talmudist, a student of Rashi, though the included commentary on Pirkei Avot was authored by another of Rashi’s students, Jacob ben Samson.

²¹ Bava Kamma 89a.

²² A rabbinic sage of the Mishnah.

²³ Deut. 30:19; Ps. 142:6.

והיגו, שמתחלה הקדים התנא שכל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא, ודוקא כל ישראל, ולא האומות, "כי חלק ה' עמו", שהם נקראים חלקו, כמו שאנו מברכים על הרוצה חכמי ישראל ומלכי ישראל, שחלק מתחמתו ומכבודו ליראיו. אמנם על חכמי ומלכי האומות אנו אומרים "שנתן", לפי שהם אינם חלקו של הקדוש ברוך הוא.

That is, from the start, the Tanna advanced that all Israel have a portion in the World-to-Come, and specifically all Israel, and not the nations. "For the L-rd's portion is His people,"²⁴ for they are called "His portion," as we say when we make a blessing upon seeing sages of Israel and kings of Israel, "Who has apportioned of His wisdom and His glory to those who revere Him."²⁵ Indeed, regarding the sages and kings of the nations, we don't say "Who has apportioned," but instead we say, "Who has given,"²⁶ because they are not the portion of the Holy One, Blessed be He.

וכן פתבו המקבליים על מה שאמרו רבותינו ז"ל, "אדם אתם", "אתם" קרויים "אדם", ואין אומות העולם קרויים אדם, שכל הנשמות והרוחות והנפשות של כל ישראל שהיו מצד הטוב, היו כלולות ותלויות באדם הראשון, פדאיתא במדרש על פסוק "איפה היית ביסדי-ארגז" וכו', ולכן אמרו "אדם אתם", שכל כללות נשמותיהם הוא נשמת "אדם", ו"אתם" ניצוצות ואיברים שלו. ומטעם זה נקראו ישראל "גוי אחד", דכתיב "ימי כעמך כישראל גוי אחד בארגז".

The Kabbalists²⁷ also wrote about what our rabbis, of blessed memory, said, "For you, My flock, flock that I tend, you are man [Adam] [אדם]; and I am your G-d."²⁸ You, the Jewish people, are called 'man,' but the gentiles are not called 'man.'"²⁹ For all "the *neshamot*, and the *ruchot*, and the *nefashot*"³⁰ of all Israel who were on the side of good, were included and dependent upon the first man [Adam], as it brought in the midrash³¹ on the verse, "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations?"³² Therefore, [the rabbis] said, "you are man [Adam]," that all of the general characteristics of their souls were the soul of Adam, and you are his sparks of holiness and limbs. For this reason, Israel is called "one nation," as it is written, "And who is like Your people Israel, a unique nation on earth."³³

²⁴ Deut. 32:9.

²⁵ Berachot 58a. For seeing a Jewish sage, the blessing is "Who has apportioned of His wisdom to those who revere Him." For seeing a Jewish king, the blessing is, "Who has apportioned of His glory to those who revere Him."

²⁶ Berachot 58a. For seeing a non-Jewish sage, the blessing is "Who has given of His wisdom to flesh and blood." For seeing a non-Jewish king, the blessing is, "Who has given of His glory to flesh and blood."

²⁷ Rabbi Chaim Vital (1542–1620), *Sefer haGilgulim*, chapter 1.

²⁸ Ezek. 34:31.

²⁹ Yevamot 61a.

³⁰ For our purposes here, *neshamot*, *ruchot*, and *nefashot* can all be translated as "souls." A more nuanced translation might be to refer to the *neshama* as the life force, to the *ruach* as the spirit, and to the *nefesh* as the soul.

³¹ Ex. Rabbah 40:3: "While Adam was still a lifeless mass, G-d showed him all the righteous people that would descend from him. There were some that hung on Adam's hair and others on his head; some on his forehead, on his eyes, nose, mouth, ear; some on his earlobes."

³² Job 38:4.

³³ II Sam. 7:23; see also I Chron. 17:21.

וכשלקח הקדוש ברוך הוא האדם והניחו בגן עדן ולמדו התורה, כדאמר ריבון "לעבדה", אלו מצוות עשה, "ולשמרה" אלו מצוות לא תעשה. היו כל האיברים שלו מתעדנים שם, וכל אחד קבל חלקו. ואף אחר שחטא אדם, וגרם התערבות טוב ברע, וגרם עוד לאותן הנשמות הטובות הנאחזות באיבריו, להתלבש באותן של אדם בליעל - ראש בראש וכו' ידיו בידיו, רגליו ברגליו. עם כל זה, בכל דור דור יוצאות הנשמות הטובות מתוך הרע שהוא, ובאות לעולם הזה על ידי מצוות פרייה ורבייה שצננו הקדוש ברוך הוא, וזכות לחיי העולם הבא, ליטול חלק הראוי להם על ידי עסק התורה והמצוות.

When the Holy One, Blessed be He, took the man [Adam] and placed him in the Garden of Eden and taught him Torah, as it says in the Zohar I:27a on Gen. 2:15, the word “to work it” refers to the positive commandments, and the word “and to guard it” refers to the negative commandments.³⁴ There, all of his limbs became refined to fulfill the commandments, and each [limb] received his portion, i.e., reward. This is so even after Adam sinned, when the souls became mixed with the *klipot*, the husks of spiritual impurity, and caused the mixing up of good and evil, and also caused these good souls that had grasped his limbs to become “clothed” with the same limbs of the “despicable man” [Adam HaBelial], the good head mixing with the evil head, etc. the good hands mixing with the evil hands, the good feet mixing with the evil feet. Despite all this, in every generation, good souls will exit from the evil, and they come to this world through the commandment of being fruitful and multiplying that the Holy One, Blessed be He, commanded,³⁵ and they merit life in the World-to-Come, to take a portion suitable for them based on their occupation in the Torah and the commandments.

ונזהו מה שרוצה להוכיח התנא, שכל ישראל יש להם חלק, שאף שנדחו לקליפות, עם כל זה, יש להם חלק, ולא "ידח ממנו נדח". זולתי אותם שיצאו מכלל ישראל, כמו שמונה התנא אחר כך - ואלו שאין להם חלק לעולם הבא, שהן אותן הנשמות שיבאו מצד הרע, שפכר הוברר הטוב שבהן.

This is what the Tanna wanted to prove, that all Israel has a portion in the World-to-Come, that even those who were led astray in the husks of spiritual impurity, nevertheless, they have a portion in the World-to-Come, “and he that is banished will not be banished.”³⁶ The exception are those who leave the category of Israel, whom the Tanna names afterwards, saying “and these are those who have no portion in the World-to-Come,”³⁷ for they are the

³⁴ Gen. 2:15: “The L-rd G-d took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden, to work it [*l'avda*] [לעבדה] and to guard it [*ul'shamra*] [ולשמרה].”

³⁵ Gen. 1:28.

³⁶ II Sam. 14:14.

³⁷ Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1; Sanhedrin 90a: “And these are those who have no portion in the World-to-Come: One who says: There is no resurrection of the dead [derived] from the Torah, and [one who says]: Torah is not from Heaven, and an *apikores* [who treats the Torah and Torah scholars with contempt]. Rabbi Akiva says: Also one who reads external literature, and one who whispers [invocations] over a wound and says [as an invocation for healing]: ‘Every illness that I placed upon Egypt I will not place upon you, for I am the L-rd, your Healer’ (Ex. 15:26). Abba Shaul says: Also one who pronounces the name [of G-d] with its letters [i.e., the Tetragrammaton].”

souls that come from the bad side, for they already separated out and discarded the good that was within them.

ומביא ראיה מפסוק "ועמך כלם צדיקים לעולם יירשו ארץ", לעתיד לבא כל בני ציון, שהיא הכנסת ישראל, דהיינו כל ישראל, יהיו "כלם צדיקים", ויזכו לחיי עולם הבא הנקראים חיי עולם, וזהו "לעולם יירשו ארץ", דהיינו ארץ החיים.

[The Tanna] brings proof from the verse, “And your people, all of them righteous, shall possess the Land for all time,” as we said above, “the Land” refers to the “Land of the living,” and thus the verse is saying that Israel will possess the Land [of the living] for all time, i.e., that Israel will have eternal life. The Future-to-Come for all the children of Zion, which is the congregation of Israel, which is all Israel, all of them will be righteous, and they will merit life in the World-to-Come,³⁸ which is called “eternal life.”³⁹ This is the meaning of, “shall possess the Land for all time,” which is the Land of the living.

ואם תאמר, ואיך אפשר שיהיו כלם צדיקים, והאיכא הרבה רשעים חוץ מאותם שמונה אחר כך התנא, ויש כמה צדיקים שלא השלימו התיקון שלהם בתרי"ג מצוות, ואין לומר בהם "לעולם יירשו ארץ".

Question 1 asked why the ending of the verse Isaiah 60:21 was included in the Mishnah. The answer is that perhaps you will say, how is it possible that all of them will be righteous, for aren't there many wicked besides those named afterward by the Tanna? Also, there are some righteous who have not completed their correction in observance of all the 613 commandments, and it should not be said about them that “they shall possess the Land for all time.”

משום הכי מביא סוף הפסוק "נצר מטעי" וכו', שהקדוש ברוך הוא נוטע נטיעות בעולם, ובתוכם מקריה ומרפיב אינה נצר מן האילן הראוי להתתקן, כלומר, ששולח אותן הנשמות פסוד עיבור וגלגול, תוך אנשים אחרים, שהם הנטיעות של הקדוש ברוך הוא, כנודע מפסוק "הן-כל-אלה יפעל-אל פעמים שלוש עם-גבר". ובזה הדרך ישלים חסרונו מי שצריך להשלים, ויתקן הקלקול והפגם, מי שצריך לתיקון.

Because of this, [the Tanna] brings the ending of the verse, “they are the shoot of My planting” etc. That the Holy One, Blessed be He, planted seedlings in the world, and amongst them He blesses and combines some shoot from the tree worthy of repair. That is, He sends those souls by *sod ibur*, a temporary and beneficial possession of a living person's body by a

³⁸ Some rabbis, such as Maimonides (Rambam), believe that the World-to-Come (*olam haba*) or synonymous Future-to-Come (*atid lavo*) describe an entirely spiritual existence for souls, whereas Nachmanides (Ramban) believes it relates to an existence on Earth where spirituality and physicality are merged.

³⁹ Berachot 21a.

righteous soul,⁴⁰ or by reincarnation, amongst other people who are the seedlings of the Holy One, Blessed be He. This is known to Kabbalists⁴¹ from the verse, “Truly, G-d does all these things two or three times to a man.”⁴² In this way, if one has a deficiency and requires completion, He will make him whole, and He will repair the breakdown and defect of one needing repair, and thus “all of them are righteous,” connecting the verse’s beginning and ending.

ולפי שרוב הגלגולים והעבורים הם משורש אֶחָד, כמו שפֶּתַב בְּפָרֶק ה' מִסֵּפֶר הַגִּלְגּוּלִים כְּתִב יָד, לָכֵן כְּתִיב "מִטְעוֹ" בְּנֵא"ו, דְּהֵינּוּ הַשּׁוֹרֵשׁ "שָׁלוֹ" - הוּא עֵיבוּרוֹ וְגִלְגּוּלוֹ וּמִטְעַע שָׁלוֹ. וְקָרִינוּ "מִטְעִי" סְתָם, שְׂכּוֹלֵל כְּלָם מֵאִינָה מִיּוֹן שִׁיְהִיוּ.

Question 2 asked why Isaiah 60:21 included a word pronounced differently than it was written. The answer is that **Because most of the reincarnations and the *iburim*⁴³ are from one root, as is written in the fifth chapter of the manuscript of Sefer haGilgulim, therefore it is written “his planting” [מִטְעוֹ] [*ma'ta'o*] with a vav. That is, it's his root**, referring not to G-d but to the original roots that the Kabbalists have identified, such as Cain, Abel, Adam, Eve, etc. – **it is his *ibur* and his reincarnation and his planting**, those of the original incarnation. **But it is pronounced “My planting” [מִטְעִי] [*ma'ta'ai*], i.e., referring to G-d's planting, which includes everyone of whatever type they will be.**

וְאֵז, "מַעֲשֵׂה יָדַי" - שֶׁהֵם הַנְּבֻרָאִים כְּלָם, הַנְּקֻרָאִים מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו שֶׁל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, הֵם "לְהַתְּפָאֵר", כִּי כְּלָם נִתְקַנּוּ וְנִשְׁלְמוּ.

Thus, we read it as “My handiwork,” which are all the creations, they are called the handiwork of the hands of the Holy One, Blessed be He, they are that “in which I glory,” because all of them were repaired and made whole.

⁴⁰ In non-Kabbalistic terms, *sod ibur*, “the secret of the pregnancy,” relates to the intercalation of the Jewish calendar, deciding when an extra day or leap month was needed, which required a “secret” council prior to the fixing of the calendar by Hillel II. However, in the Kabbalistic terminology being discussed here, *sod ibur* relates to a temporary and beneficial possession of a living person’s body by a righteous soul. The living person may know that it has taken place, and may have consented to it, or may not even know that it has taken place. The objective of the righteous soul is to complete an important task, such as to fulfill a promise or to fulfill a commandment.

⁴¹ Rabbi Chaim Vital (1542–1620), *Sefer haGilgulim*, chapter 4.

⁴² Job 33:29. That this refers to reincarnation is discussed, e.g., in Zohar II:114b; Zohar Chadash, Ki Teitzei 16; Tikkunei Zohar 22b:2 and 76b:4; Rabbi Chaim Vital (1542–1620), *Sha'ar haGilgulim* 2:8 (“And this matter which is an incarnation in life, is called by the sages ‘*sod ha'ibur*,’ and this is the difference that there is between a *gilgul* [reincarnation] and an *ibur*”).

⁴³ I.e., people experiencing a spiritual possession via *sod ha'ibur*, as discussed above.

ועוד יש לומר, שהקרי כתיב של "מטעי", בא לרמוז להקושי והספק הגדול שיש בענין הגלגול, לפי שהחסידים והקדושים אשר בארץ, לא היה להם להפטר מן העולם, עד שהשלימו החלק שלהם בתרני"ג מצות, כדי שלא יהיו צריכים להתגלגל עוד. ואף על פי כן, אנו רואים שברצונו של הקדוש ברוך הוא נפטרים, ומתגלגלים כדי להשלים תיקונם, כמו משה רבנו עליו השלום, שהיה קשה עליו למות, לפי שהיה רוצה להשלים כל התיקון הצריך לו, אלא שהקדוש ברוך הוא גזר עליו מיתה. ולהשלים תיקונו, אמרו עליו בתיקונים, דנשמתא של משה אתפשטת עד ס' רבוא דרא, והטעם הוא, לפי שצריך להשלים תיקון חלק שלו שהוא גדול מאד, ואין גלגוליו נגמרים כל כך במהרה.

An alternate answer to question 2: **Also, it can be said that the reading of the Scripture as “My planting,” comes to hint at the difficulty and great doubt that exists regarding reincarnation, such that the pious and holy men who are in the Land did not have to depart from the world until they completed their part of the 613 commandments, in order that they would not have to reincarnate further.**

Accordingly, we see that it is the will of the Holy One, Blessed be He, that there are deceased Jews, and those who reincarnate in order to complete their corrections, such as our teacher Moses, peace be upon him. It was difficult for him to die, because he wanted to complete all the correction necessary for him; but the Holy One, Blessed be He, decreed death upon him.

To complete his correction, they said about him in the Tikunim, i.e., the Tikunei haZohar, that the soul of Moses spread out to six hundred thousand generations, and the meaning is that, it's because he needed to complete the correction of one part of him, for he was a very great man, and his reincarnations will not be completed so swiftly.⁴⁴

ומשום הכי קרינו 'מטעי', מפני שאלו הנטיעות באות מרצונו של הקדוש ברוך הוא, שהרי אם לא היה גזר מיתה על משה, היה מתקן הכל, ולא היה צורך ליטע נטיעות חדשות לתיקון שלו. וכמו שמציינו בדגנאל, דכתיב ביה "ואתה לך לקץ ותנוח" וכו', דמשמע שהיה לו לנחם שלא לבא בגלגול, שפבר השלים התיקון שלו.

Because of this, we pronounce it as “My planting,” because these plantings come from the will of the Holy One, Blessed be He, for if He had not decreed death upon Moses, he

⁴⁴ Tikkunei Zohar, 69th essay, page 112a: “Rabbi Shimon said: Friends, certainly the Holy One, Blessed be He, will agree with us, that the worlds above and below will be with us in this combination. Happy is the generation in which this is revealed, that the future of all is to be renewed by the hand of Moses at the end of days in the final generation. This is to fulfill the Scripture, **מה שיהיה הוא שיהיה** [‘What has happened before, will happen again’] (Eccl. 1:9), and in which **ממכון שבתו השגית** [‘from His dwelling place, He gazes’] (Ps. 33:14). [For both quotations, the highlighted letters spell “Moses.”] ‘Happy is the people who have it so’ (Ps. 144:5) [**אשרי העם שככה לו**] [the Gematria of the highlighted word is the same as the Gematria of “Moses”], ‘happy is the people whose G-d is the L-rd.’

“About this, it is said that there is no generation less than sixty myriad [souls], and about him it is said, ‘the word which He commanded to a thousand generations’ (Ps. 105:8), and [his soul] has spread out in every generation, and in every righteous person and every wise person who engages in Torah, for sixty myriads, to complete all from their deficiencies. This is the esoteric secret of the matter – ‘He was wounded because of our sins’ (Isaiah 53:5), for he is equal to all, as the masters of the Mishnah clarified: One woman gave birth to six hundred thousand, and who is that? [Jochebed, who bore] Moses, who is equivalent to sixty myriads of Israel]. Because of that, it says about him, ‘one generation goes [and another generation comes]’ (Eccl. 1:4). [This means that they come] to the same world, and [that] the generation that comes will come like that of the past.”

would have corrected everything, and there would not have been a need to plant new plantings for his correction. As we find in Daniel, in which it is written, “But you, go on to the end; you shall rest, and arise to your destiny at the end of the days,”⁴⁵ that means that he should rest so that he shouldn’t come again as a reincarnation, for he has already completed his correction.

ומכל מקום כתיב "מטעו" בנא"ו, לפי שישי הרבה אנשים שהיו יכולים להשלים תיקונם בימי חייהם, ולא השלימו, מפני שנתעצלו ונתבטלו, או טטאו, חס ושלום, ולפי זה צריך שיתגלגלו פעם אחרת. אמנם זה הגלגול וזאת הנטיעה החדשה, באה מחמת התבטלות אותו האדם וכדומה, וזהו "נצר מטעו".

In any case, it’s written “his planting” with a *vav*, because there are many people who would have been able to complete their correction in the days of their lives, but nevertheless don’t complete them, because they were lazy and negligent, or because they sinned, G-d forbid, and because of this they needed to be reincarnated another time. Indeed, this reincarnation and the new planting comes about because of this man’s negligence and the like, and this is the meaning of “the shoot of his planting,” i.e., referring to the negligence of the man in his previous incarnation.

Toldot Shimshon now addresses a comment of Rashi on the Mishnah, “All Israel have a portion in the World-to-Come.”

ובנה נבאר לשון רש"י ז"ל, שקמת שם בסנהדרין בפירוש הבבא הזאת, וזה לשונו, דמעיקרא איירי בארבע מיתות, ומפרש להו לקלהו, והדר מפרש הגי דאין להם חלק לעולם הבא, עכ"ל. ותמהו עליו, דמה ענין אוקרו - והדר מפרש הגי דאין להם חלק, על פירוש הבבא של כל ישראל יש להם חלק וכו'.

In this way, we will clarify some language of Rashi, of blessed memory, who wrote there in Sanhedrin (90a), in explanation of this opening of chapter 11, “All Israel have a portion in the World-to-Come.” This is his language, that: “From the outset, i.e., from the earlier chapters of Sanhedrin, [the Mishnah] discusses four [types of] deaths [meted out by the court], and now in this chapter explains “all,” i.e., that “all Israel have a portion in the World-to-Come,” and then it goes back to explain those who have no portion in the World-to-Come,” listing a few categories of sinners, such as one who disputes the Divinity of the Torah.⁴⁶

[Commentators]⁴⁷ wondered about this statement of Rashi, that what is the connection he is talking about, that [the Tanna] goes back to explain those that have no portion in the World-to-Come. How is that relevant to the explanation of the opening of Chapter 11 that “All Israel have a portion in the World-to-Come”?

⁴⁵ Dan. 12:13.

⁴⁶ See above, footnote 37.

⁴⁷ Solomon ben Isaac Levi (1532–1600), *Lev Avot* (Thessaloniki 1565), also quoted by Rabbi Samuel ben Isaac de Uçeda (1500s), *Midrash Shmuel* (Venice 1579).

ונראה, דקשנא ליה איד קאמר, כל ישראל יש להם חלק, והא איכא הני דאין להם חלק, שברשעתם אבדו חלקם, ולא שייד לומר "כל" ישראל. והנה לו לומר, אלו יש להם חלק, שאפילו שפשעו ועברו ונתחייבו מיתה בבית דין, עם כל זה, מיתתו פפרתו, ויש להם חלק. ואחר כך, ואלו שאין להם חלק.

It appears that it is difficult for [Rashi] that it says, “All Israel have a portion in the World-to-Come,” for aren’t there those that have no portion in the World-to-Come, for because of their wickedness they lost their portion? Thus, perhaps it’s not proper to say “all” Israel have a portion in the World-to-Come? To explain away this concern, it should have said that these are those that have a portion in the World-to-Come, that even though they sinned and violated the commandments and deserve death at the hands of the court, nevertheless, their deaths serve as their atonement; and therefore, they still have a portion in the World-to-Come. Afterward, it should have said, these are those who have no portion in the World-to-Come, then listed the categories of sinners whose wickedness is not forgiven.

לכן פרש רש"י על בבא זו דכל ישראל - והדר מפרש הני דאין להם חלק, משום דפירוש "כל ישראל" רצונו לומר, כל אותן הנשמות שנקראו ישראל, כלומר, ישראל רוחני, דהיינו אותן שהיו מצד הטוב כלולות באדם הראשון, יש להם חלק, כמו שאמרנו, וכמו שמביא מהפסוק "נצר מטעי", ואף שקבלו ארבע מיתות, והנה להם חלק. והדר מפרש הני דאין להם חלק, דלאחר ששנה הדין של כל מי שנקרא ישראל, חוזר ומפרש דינו של כל מי שלא נקרא ישראל רוחני, שלא באו מצד הטוב, רק מצד הרע, והוברר הטוב שבהם, ואין להם חלק, וסיפא דמתניתין לא איירי בלל במי ששמו ישראל רוחני. ורישא מיירי בכל ישראל, ודוקא קתני כל ישראל.

Therefore, Rashi expounded on this opening that “All Israel have a portion in the World-to-Come,” and that [the Tanna] goes back to explain these are the ones that have no such portion. This is because the explanation “All Israel” means to say: All of these souls that are called “Israel”—that is, who are spiritually Israel—that is, those from the side of good contained in the first man—they have a portion in the World-to-Come, as we have said, and as is brought from the verse, “the shoot of My planting.” This is so even for those who received the four death penalties meted out by the court, even they will have a portion in the World-to-Come.

Then [the Tanna] goes back to say that these are ones who have no portion in the World-to-Come, that after it taught the law of everyone who is called “Israel,” it goes back and explains the law of those who are not called Israel spiritually, who do not come from the side of good, but only from the bad side of the first man, and who have separated out and discarded the good that was within them, and they have no portion in the World-to-Come.

This ending that we learn, those who have no portion in the World-to-Come, is not at all speaking of those whose name is Israel from a spiritual point of view, but rather it speaks of a few specific categories of people, such as one who has rejected the Divinity of Torah.

In contrast, the beginning that we learn, those who do have a portion in the World-to-Come, is speaking of all Israel spiritually, such as one who accepts the Divinity of Torah and who

is respectful to the Torah and its scholars, even if he has violated its precepts to the point of receiving a death penalty from the court, **and thus the Tanna specifically teaches “all Israel have a portion in the World-to-Come.”**

Toldot Shimshon now discusses the reason that the Prologue has been traditionally added to each chapter of Pirkei Avot.

הטעם שנהגו כל ישראל לשנות משנה זו קודם כל פרק ופרק ממסכת אבות, היינו משום דקימא לן דמאן דבעי למנהוגי חסידיא קיימי מיילי דאבות, שהם תיקון לגוף ולנפש. ו"יקיימי מיילי דאבות" משמע, שיקיימי כולם. ועל זה יש להקשות, והלא המוסרים של מסכת אבות נשנו מהרבה חכמים, ומי שאמר זה, לא אמר זה, ואפשר נמי, שתקם אחד לא תשוב מעולם לקיימי המוסר של חבריו, רק שכל אחד קנה אומר מה שהיה נזהר בו, ותו לא. ולמה יתנסף עלינו החוב לקיימי כלם, יותר ממה שהיו עושים הם, והלא קנה די שכל אחד ואחד יקיימי מה שאמר תנא אחד, ותו לא.

The reason that all of Israel is accustomed to repeat this Mishnah before each and every chapter of tractate Pirkei Avot, is because we hold in accordance with the teaching that one who wants to be pious should fulfill the words of tractate Pirkei Avot,⁴⁸ which are a correction for the body and soul.

“He should fulfill the words of tractate Pirkei Avot” means that he should fulfill all of them. Regarding this, we can question: Aren’t the ethical teachings of tractate Pirkei Avot learned from many sages, and one who says this teaching of his own, doesn’t say that teaching of his fellow? It’s also possible, that one sage never thinks to fulfill the ethical teaching of his fellow, rather that each says only what he is personally careful about, and nothing more. Why should the obligation be added to us to fulfill everything, more than what they were doing, for wasn’t it enough that each and every one of them fulfilled what one Tanna⁴⁹ said, and nothing more?

ונש לומר, דאין הכי נמי, דמאן דבעי למנהוגי חסידיא, צריך שיקיימי כלם, אף על פי שאפשר שאותם התנאים לא היו חוששים רק לקיימי מה שהיו אומרים, או כמו שפירש הרב עובדיה מברטנורא בפרק קמא דמכילתין, שכל רבי פלוני אומר, הוא קנה אומר, שבמסכתא זו, פירושן, קנה רגיל לומר פן תמיד, עכ"ל. והטעם יובן, במה שכתוב בספר הגלגולים פתב יד פרק ד', פי התנאים הראשונים היו יודעים מה שחסר מהם, ולכן שאר המצוות שקיימו בגלגולים אחרים, לא היו כל כך נזהרים בהם, דאם כן, אין לדבר סוף, וכיין שכתב קיימו איזו מצנה באיזה גלגול אחר, אין צריך לעשותה.

It can be said, that it’s indeed so, that one who wants to be pious needs to fulfill all of Pirkei Avot, despite the fact that it’s possible that each of the Tannaim was concerned only to

⁴⁸ Bava Kamma 30a: “Rav Yehuda says: One who wants to be pious should fulfill the words of [tractate] Nezikin [so as to avoid causing damage to others]. Rava said [he should fulfill] the words of [tractate Pirkei] Avot. And some say [he should fulfill] the words of [tractate] Berakhot.”

⁴⁹ The first three Mishnayot of Pirkei Avot cite teachings of Moses, Joshua, the elders, the prophets, the Men of the Great Assembly, Shimon the Righteous, and Antigonus of Socho, and the next 12 Mishnayot cite teachings of the five pairs of Zugot. The “Tannaim” (plural of “Tanna”) typically refer to rabbis who came after the Zugot, but here, the term “Tanna” can include even those teachers of the first 15 Mishnayot, viz, Moses through the Zugot.

fulfill what each said. Or, as Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura⁵⁰ explained in the first chapter of our Mechilta,⁵¹ i.e. on Pirkei Avot 1:2: “Every [instance of] ‘Rabbi So-and-so says’ [means] ‘He would say,’ which in [the context] of this tractate, the meaning [of these words] is ‘He was accustomed to saying such a thing constantly.’”

The reason will be understood by what was written in the manuscript of Sefer haGilgulim, chapter 4, that the first Tannaim knew what their deficiencies were. Therefore, regarding the remaining commandments that they hadn’t mentioned, they had already fulfilled them in other incarnations. Therefore, they weren’t so careful about them, for if so, there would be no end to the matter. Since they had already fulfilled whatever commandment in whatever other incarnation, there was no need to fulfill it in the current incarnation. That is, the concept of reincarnation is to allow someone to fulfill a commandment that he had not fulfilled in the past. There is no expectation that in a particular incarnation, a person will live a perfect life and fulfill all 613 commandments, without sin, for that is beyond human capability. If that were the expectation, then there would have to be an endless series of reincarnations for that soul.

וְזֶהוּ מֵהַ שְׂאֵמְרוּ בְּגִמְרָא, שְׂאֵל ר' פְּלוֹנִי אֵת ר' פְּלוֹנִי, אֲבוּדָה, בְּמֵאֵי זְהִיר טָפְּי. וְהַשִּׁיב, בְּצִיּוּצִית וְכוּ'. שְׂנַרְאָה שְׁהִיּוּ נִזְהָרִים בְּמִצְוֵה אַחַת, יוֹמֵר מְשָׂאֵר מִצְוֹת. וְקִשָּׁה, שְׁהִירֵי אֲמָרוּ, וְהִיּוּ זְהִיר בְּמִצְוֵה קִלְיָה כְּבַחְמוּרָה. אֵלָּא מִפְּנֵי שְׁהִיּוּ יוֹדְעִים מֵהַ שְׁחָסַר מֵהֶם, הִיּוּ מְשַׁמְדִּלִּים לְהַשְׁלִים הַחֲסוּרִים.

This is what they say in the Gemara: “Rabbi So-and-so asked Rabbi Such-and-such: In what was your father especially vigilant? He answered, in [the commandment of] ritual fringes [tzitzit]. One day, he was climbing the stairs [when] a string [from his ritual fringes] was severed, and he would not descend until he placed [a new string] on [the garment].”⁵² It appears from the question that they thought it was normal if they were careful about one commandment, more than the other commandments. This is difficult, for they say, “Be careful with a light commandment as with a grave one, for you do not know the reward [for the fulfillment] of the commandments.”⁵³ Rather, because they knew what their deficiencies were, they would endeavor to complete their deficiencies.

אֲמָנָם שְׂאֵר בְּנֵי הָאָדָם, שְׂאֵינָם יוֹדְעִים עַל מָה בָּאוּ לְעוֹלָם וּמָה חָסַר לָהֶם, צָרִיכִים לְקַיֵּים כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת וְלִכְן הִזְהִירוּנוּ הַתַּנָּא, וְהִיּוּ זְהִיר בְּמִצְוֵה קִלְיָה כְּבַחְמוּרָה.

But for the rest of mankind, who do not know for what reason they came into the world and what their deficiencies are, they need to fulfill all the commandments, and therefore the Tanna warned us, “Be careful with a light commandment as with a grave one.”

⁵⁰ The first edition of *Toldot Shimshon* included the Hebrew commentary of Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura (c. 1445–c. 1515), Italian rabbi. This has not been included in the current translation.

⁵¹ “Mechilta” typically refers to a midrash halacha on the Book of Exodus, either the Mechilta of Rabbi Yishmael or the Mechilta of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. Here, however, “Mechilta” refers to Pirkei Avot.

⁵² Shabbat 118b, which identifies the rabbis as both being named Rav Yosef, the second being the son of Rabba.

⁵³ Pirkei Avot 2:1, quoting Rabbi [Judah ha-Nasi].

ומשום הכי, באותן השבתות שאנו שונים מסכתא זו, ללמד את בני ישראל המוסר והדרך ארץ שקדמה לתורה, ואפשר שיבוא אדם ויאמר, שאין צורך לקיים רק שנים או שלשה מהם, כמו שהיה אומר תנא אחד מאותם התנאים, ותו לא. לפיכך נתחכמו ישראל במנהגם הטוב, והקדימו משנה זו של כל ישראל יש להם חלק, נצר מטעי וכו', להודיע לנו שכל אחד צריך להתגלגל כדי להשלים חסרונו, וממילא ידענו שהפרש שיש בינינו ובין התנאים, שהם היו יודעים מה שחסר להם, מה שאין כן בדורותינו, ש"אין עוד נביא ולא אתנו ידע עד-מה", ומטעם זה צריכים אנו להשתדל בקיום כלם, "לטוב לנו כלהימים לחייתנו" לעולם הבא.

Because of this, on these same Sabbaths that we learn this tractate, to teach the children of Israel the moral teachings and the proper conduct that precedes the Torah, it's possible that a man will come and will say that it's necessary only to fulfill two or three of [the teachings], as one Tanna from these Tannaim was saying, and nothing more.

Therefore, Israel was wise in their good custom, and they prefaced this Mishnah of "All Israel have a portion in the World-to-Come," "the shoot of My planting," etc., to inform us that each of us needs to reincarnate in order to complete his deficiency. In any case, we know that distinction between us and the Tannaim, for they knew what their deficiency was, something that is not so in our generations, for "there is no longer any prophet; no one among us knows for how long."⁵⁴ For this reason, we need to endeavor to fulfill all of [the teachings of Pirkei Avot], and all of the commandments, "for our good always, that He might preserve us alive,"⁵⁵ for the World-to-Come.

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⁵⁴ Ps. 74:9.

⁵⁵ Deut. 6:24, "And the L-rd commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the L-rd our G-d, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is at this day."