

# Toldot Shimshon

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## Chapter V – Mishnah 11

אַרבע מדות בתלמידים. מהר לשמוע ומהר לאבד, יצא שְׂכָרוֹ בְּהִפְסְדוֹ. קָשָׁה לְשִׁמוּעַ וקָשָׁה לְאַבֵּד, יֵצֵא הַפְּסָדוֹ בְּשִׂכְרוֹ. מהר לשמוע וקשה לאבד, חכם. קשה לשמוע ומהר לאבד, זה חלק רע.

**There are four types of disciples: [1] Quick to comprehend, and quick to forget: his gain disappears in his loss. [2] Slow to comprehend, and slow to forget: his loss disappears in his gain. [3] Quick to comprehend, and slow to forget: he is a wise man. [4] Slow to comprehend, and quick to forget, this is an evil portion.**

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**בִּיתְרוֹן** הַכֶּשֶׁר חֲכָמַת אֵלֹהֵי הַתְּלָמִידִים. יֵאִירוּ עֵינֵינוּ בְּמָה שֶׁאֲמָרוּ בְּפֶרֶק ה' דְּבִרְכוֹת, גְּדוּלָה דִּיעָה, שְׁנִיתָנָה בֵּין שְׁתֵּי אוֹתִיּוֹת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "כִּי אֵל דְּעוֹת ה'" . וְהָעוֹלָם מְקַשִּׁים, לְמָה הוּצָרָה לְהַנִּיחָה בֵּין שְׁנֵי שְׁמוֹת שֶׁל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, וְמָה רָמַז יֵשׁ לָנָה.

Wisdom will produce success,<sup>1</sup> these are the Torah disciples. Our eyes will be enlightened by what they said in the fifth chapter of tractate **Berachot**: “And Rav Ami said: Great is knowledge that was placed between two letters [i.e., two names of G-d], as it is stated: ‘For G-d of knowledge is the L-rd’ (I Samuel 2:3).”<sup>2</sup>

The world asks,<sup>3</sup> why was it necessary to place [knowledge] between two Names of the Holy One, Blessed be He? Also, what hint is there in this?

וְיֵשׁ לְתַרְזֵן, דְּאֲמַרְיֵנוּ בְּמַסְכַּת נְדָה שֶׁהַמְּלֵאךָ הַמְּמוּנָה עַל הַהֲרִיזוֹן, נוֹטֵל אוֹתָהּ הַטָּפָה וּמַעְמִידָה לְפָנֵי הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, וְאוֹמֵר, טָפָה זֶה מָה תְּהֵא עָלֶיהָ, חֲכָם אוֹ טָפֵשׁ וְכוּ'. וּבְפֶרֶק ה' דְּבִרְכוֹת, אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן, אֵין הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא נוֹתֵן חֲכָמָה אֶלָּא לְמִי שֶׁבִּלְבוֹ חֲכָמָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "יְהִיב חֲכָמָתָא לְחַפְיָמִין", "וּבְלָב כָּל-חֲכָם-לֵב נִתְּמִי חֲכָמָה". וְגַם עַל זֶה קָשָׁה, אִם כָּבֵד נִגְזַר עָלָיו שִׁיחָה חֲכָם, אִם כֵּן כָּבֵד גִּיתָנָה בּוֹ הַחֲכָמָה מִגִּזְרָתוֹ יִתְבַּרֵךְ, וְמָה צוּרָה שִׁיחָזוֹר וְיִתֵּן הַחֲכָמָה.

**This can be solved, that as it is said in tractate Niddah:**

**That angel that is appointed over conception is called: Night. And [that angel] takes [the] drop [of semen from which a person will be formed] and presents it before the Holy One, Blessed be He, and says before Him: Master**

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Eccl. 10:10: “If the iron is blunt, and one do not whet the edge, then more strength is needed; *but wisdom will produce success.*”

<sup>2</sup> Berachot 33a.

<sup>3</sup> Maharsha on Berachot 33a.

**of the Universe, what will be of this drop?** [Will the person fashioned from it be] mighty or weak? [Will he be] **wise or stupid?** [Will he be] wealthy or poor?

- Niddah 16b

**Also, in the fifth chapter of tractate Berachot:**

**Rabbi Yochanan said: The Holy One, Blessed be He, only gives wisdom to one who has wisdom in his heart, as it is said, “He gives the wise their wisdom,”<sup>4</sup> “and in the hearts of all that are wise-hearted, I have given wisdom.”<sup>5</sup>**

- Berachot 55a

**This is also difficult: If he has already been decreed to be wise, then wisdom has already been given to him by His decree, may He be blessed. What need was there for [G-d] to return and give him the wisdom?**

ובעל כרחוק צריכים אנו לומר, דמאי דאמרינן בנדה "חכם או טפש", אינו רוצה לומר חכם ממש, אלא שגזרים שלאותה הטפה יהיה לה שכל ודעת, הקד גזירת הטפש, שרוצה לומר, שאין לו שכל כלל. ואחר כך, כשיש לו שכל ולומד מעט, מוסיף בו חכמה ודעת, על דרך יתב חכמתא לחכימין.

**We necessarily need to say, that what is said in tractate Niddah, “wise or stupid,” does not want to say truly smart, but that they decreed that the drop would have wisdom and knowledge, which is the opposite of the decree of the fool, that wants to say, that he doesn’t have wisdom at all. Afterward, when he has wisdom and he learns a little, wisdom and knowledge are added for him, in the way of “He gives the wise their wisdom.”<sup>6</sup>**

ונהו "כי אל דעות ה' ", שהדיעה ניתנה בין שני שמות, שמתחלה עושה עמו חסד לגזור עליו שיהיה לו שכל, ואחר כך כשמשמש בשכלו בתורה וביראה ובמעשה הטוב, אז יוסיף לו החכמה.

**And this is the meaning of “For G-d of knowledge is the L-rd,” that the knowledge is given between two of the Names of the Holy One, Blessed be He. That is, initially He acted toward him with kindness, to decree upon him that he would have wisdom. Afterward, when he used his wisdom in Torah, and in the fear of G-d, and in good deed[s], then He will add the wisdom to him.**

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel 2:21.

<sup>5</sup> Ex. 31:6.

<sup>6</sup> See also *Zera Shimshon*, Chapter X - Miketz, essay 5.

ואגב אורחין נפרש נמי על דרף זו, מאי דאמרין התם, גדולה נקמה וכו', גדול מקדש וכו'. משום דשני מיני חסדים הקדוש ברוך הוא עושה עם החוטא. א', שתולה לו לראות אם ישוב, ואינו עושה עמו דין להעבירו מן העולם תכף שחטא. והב', לאחר שעושה תשובה, לפשוט את ימינו אליו ולקבלו ולסייעו, על דרף, הבא לטהר, מסייעין אותו.

**Incidentally, we will also explain in this way, what was said there, “Great is vengeance,” etc., “Great is the Temple,” etc.** The reference is to the same Gemara in which Rav Ami said, “Great is knowledge that was placed between two letters”:

Rabbi Elazar said: Great is the Temple, as it was placed between two letters [i.e., two names of G-d], as it is stated: “[The place in which to dwell which] You have made, L-rd, the Temple, L-rd [which Your hands have prepared].”<sup>7</sup>

[Noting the parallel between these two ideas] Rabbi Elazar added and said: Anyone with knowledge, it is as if the Temple was built in his days; knowledge was placed between two letters and the Temple was placed between two letters, [signifying that they stand together].

Rav Acha Karchina’a strongly objects to this [approach that being placed between two names of G-d accords significance]: However, if so [the same should hold true for vengeance]. Great is vengeance that was placed between two letters, as it is stated: “G-d of vengeance, L-rd, [G-d of vengeance shine forth].”<sup>8</sup>

-Berachot 33a

**It’s because of two kinds of kindnesses the Holy One, Blessed be He, does with the sinner. The first is, it is up to [the sinner] to see if he will repent, and He does not declare judgment upon him to remove him from the world as soon as he sins. And the second is, after he effects repentance, He stretches out His hand to him and receives him and assists him,<sup>9</sup> in the way that regarding one who comes to be purified, He assists him.<sup>10</sup>**

ולכן הניח "נקמה" בין שני שמות של חסד, ד"אל" הוא חסד, כדכתיב "חסד אל כל־היום", וה' - הוא רחמים, כנודע, שיהוא מרחם על החוטא ומקבלו בימינו. וזה שאמר הכתוב "אני ה' עושה חסד משפט וצדקה בארץ", מתחלה חסד שתולה על חטאו. ואם לא ישוב, יעשה משפט. ואם יחזור בו, יעשה עמו צדקה, שידונות נעשות לו כנכיות.

**Therefore, He placed “vengeance” between two names of “Kindness” and “Mercy,” for the name “G-d” is representative of the attribute of kindness. This is as it is written, “the kindness of G-d is all day,”<sup>11</sup> i.e., it never ceases. And the name “L-rd” is representative of the attribute of mercy, as is known,<sup>12</sup> for He shows mercy upon the sinner and receives him with His right hand. This is what Scripture said, “For I, the L-rd, act with kindness, justice, and charity in the world.”<sup>13</sup> In the beginning, there is kindness that depends upon his sin. If he**

<sup>7</sup> Ex. 15:17.

<sup>8</sup> Ps. 94:1.

<sup>9</sup> Zohar II: 162b.

<sup>10</sup> Shabbat 104a.

<sup>11</sup> Ps. 52:3.

<sup>12</sup> Zohar I:251b, III:65a.

<sup>13</sup> Jer. 9:23.

won't repent, He will perform justice. And if he will return to Him, He will act toward him with charity, that intentional sins are counted for him as merits.<sup>14</sup>

וכן מקדש נמי שנימן בין שתי אותיות, ענינו כן, שמתחלה אם זכו ישראל, הנה יורד להם בית המקדש מן השמים, מעשה גדיו של הקדוש ברוך הוא, ולא הנה נחרב לעולם. ובשביל שלא זכו, לא יהיה זה אלא באחרית הימים. וענין אמיתות הקדמה זו, בזוהר פרשת פינחס דף רכ"א ע"א.

Similarly with the Temple, which was also given between two letters [i.e., two names of G-d], the matter is thus: that initially, if Israel had merited, the Temple would have descended to them from Heaven, the work of the Hands of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and it would never have been destroyed. But because they didn't merit, it won't be thus until the end of days. See the truthfulness of this hypothesis, in the Zohar, parashat Pinchas, page 221a.

ומעתה נבא לביאור משנתנו, שמסוף דבריה נודע שראש דבריה אמת, שהרי על מי שקשה לשמוע ומהר לאבד, פסיק ומגי, זה חלק רע. וקשה, מה ענין חלק לכאן. ועוד, דמלתא דפשיטא היא שזה חלק רע. ועוד קשיא לאלהינו, למה עשאו כן, ונראה חס ושלום עול בתיקו יתברך, לעשות זה חכם וזה טפש.

Now we come to an explanation of our Mishnah, that from the end of its words it is known that the beginning of its words are true. That is, for one who is “slow to comprehend, and quick to forget,” the Mishnah teaches, “this is an evil portion.” A difficulty is, what is the relationship of “a portion” to this? Also, it's an obvious matter that this is an evil portion. Another question for G-d is why did He make him thus, and it appears, G-d forbid, to be an injustice in the bosom of the Blessed One, to make this one wise and this one foolish.

אבל חזא מתורצת ביה חבירתה, ודונקא נקט המנא, זה חלק רע, כדי לתרץ הקושיא למה גזר על זה שיהיה טפש, והיינו שיש כמה נשמות שלא קלטתם הנקבה העליונה, ולא נתקנו ברחם הקדוש, והם מסוד הנפלים, שלא יש בהן תועלת, וזהו סוד "זרו רשעים מרחם". ולפי שהם מחלק הטומאה, לכן אמר זה חלק רע. וזהו סוד מה שאמרו, כל מי שאין בו דעת, אסור לרחם עליו, לפי שפשיטא בו דעת, הוא סימן שהוא מחלק הטומאה.

But one excuse is [that] “a woman is jealous only of the thigh of another [woman],”<sup>15</sup> and the Tanna specifically selected the language “this is an evil portion,” in order to solve the question of why [G-d] decreed that this one should be a fool. It is true that there are some souls that weren't received by the supernal female, and weren't prepared in the Holy womb,<sup>16</sup> and these are from the esoteric secret of the stillborn, who have nothing substantial in them, and this is the esoteric secret of “the wicked are defiant from birth.”<sup>17,18</sup> Because they are

<sup>14</sup> Yoma 86b.

<sup>15</sup> Megillah 13a.

<sup>16</sup> Chaim Vital (1542–1620), *Sha'ar haGilgulim*, Introduction to chapter 26.

<sup>17</sup> Ps. 58:4.

<sup>18</sup> Chaim Vital (1542–1620), *Sefer haLikutim*, Kohelet, siman 4.

from the portion of impurity, therefore [the Tanna] said “this is an evil portion.” This is an esoteric secret about which they said, “Anyone who does not have understanding, it is forbidden to have mercy upon him.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, when he has no understanding, this is a sign that he is from the portion of impurity.

אָבֵל מִי שֶׁהוּא מִחֶלֶק הַקְּדוּשָׁה, אוֹ שֵׁישׁ בּוֹ תוֹעֵלָת, אוֹמְרִים עָלָיו שֶׁיִּהְיֶה חֶכֶם, דְּהֵיִינוּ, שֶׁיִּהְיֶה לוֹ שֶׁכֵּל. וְאִם הוּא יָכִין עֲצָמוֹ כְּדֵי שֶׁתִּשְׁרָה עָלָיו הַקְּדוּשָׁה וּמִתְחִיל לְלַמּוֹד, אָז יִהְיֶה לוֹ סִיּוּעַ הָאֱלֹהִי וַיִּמָּהֵר לְשִׂמּוּעַ. וְאִם אֶחָד כָּדִי יִתְרַשֵּׁל, יִהְיֶה מֵהָר לְאַבְדֹּ, וַיֵּצֵא שְׂכָרוֹ בְּהִפְסָדוֹ, שְׂאוֹמֵת הַקְּדוּשָׁה שֶׁהִמְשִׁיךְ עָלָיו מִתְחִלָּה, עֲתָה יִהְיֶה לוֹ עוֹנֵשׁ כְּפוּל שֶׁהוֹצִיא הַקֹּדֶשׁ לְחוּל.

**But one who is from a portion of Holiness, or who has something substantial in him, they say about him that he will be wise, that is, that he should have wisdom. If he will prepare himself in order that the Holiness will spread out over him and he will begin to learn Torah, then he will have Divine assistance and will be quick to comprehend. If afterward he becomes negligent, he will be quick to forget, and his gain disappears in his loss, for the same Holiness that continued for him initially, now will be a doubled punishment, for he has spent the Holiness on the profane.**

וְאִם מִתְחִלָּה לֹא יָכִין עֲצָמוֹ כְּרֵאוּי, וְנָה יִגְרוֹם שֶׁיִּהְיֶה קִשְׁיָה לְשִׂמּוּעַ, כִּי אִין לוֹ סִיּוּעַ מִלְּמַעְלָה, אָבֵל לְבִסּוֹף יִקְדָּשׁ עֲצָמוֹ, וַיִּהְיֶה לוֹ סִיּוּעַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ שֶׁיִּהְיֶה קִשְׁיָה לְאַבְדֹּ, אָז יֵצֵא הִפְסָדוֹ בְּשִׂכְרוֹ. שְׂאוֹף עַל פִּי שֶׁפָּשַׁע מִתְחִלָּה, לְבִסּוֹף תִּיקָן הַמַּעֲנוּת.

**If initially he didn't prepare himself properly, and this caused him to be slow to comprehend, because he did not have assistance from on high, but in the end he will sanctify himself. If so, he will have Holy assistance that it will be hard for him to forget, then his loss disappears in his gain. For even though he initially harmed, in the end he corrected the deformity.**

וְלָכֵן נִיתְּנָה "דִּיעָה" בֵּין שְׁתֵּי אוֹתִיּוֹת, שֵׁישׁ מִי שֶׁמְכִין עֲצָמוֹ מִתְחִלָּה, וְלָכֵן כְּתִיב "אֵל דִּיעוֹת". וַיֵּשׁ מִי שֶׁמְכִין עֲצָמוֹ בְּסוֹף, וְנָהוּ "דִּיעוֹת ה' ". וַיֵּשׁ מִי שֶׁמְכִין עֲצָמוֹ בְּתְחִלָּה וּבְסוֹף, וְהוּא הַחֶכֶם הָאֱמִיתִי, וְאָז דִּיעָה שְׁלוֹ יֵשׁ לָהּ הַשֵּׁם מִתְחִלָּה וּבְסוֹף, כְּדִכְתִּיב "כִּי אֵל דִּיעוֹת ה' ".

**Therefore, the word “knowledge” was placed between two letters [i.e., two names of G-d], for there is one who prepares himself initially, and therefore it is written, “G-d of knowledge,” and there is one who prepares himself at the end, and this is the significance of “knowledge is the L-rd.” Finally, there is one who prepares himself at the initially and at the end, and he is the true wise man, and then his knowledge has the Name of G-d at the beginning and the end of the word “knowledge,” as it is written, “For G-d of knowledge is the L-rd.”**

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<sup>19</sup> Berachot 33a; Sanhedrin 92a.