

# Gates Of Repentance

By Rabbeinu Yonah of Gerondi

For the memory of Benyamin son of

Yehie Graydi Z"l

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Rabenu Yonah Gerondi was born in Gerona, Catalonia in the year 1200 and passed away in 1263. He studied along with the Tosafot in France and later under Rav Shlomo ben Avraham of Montpellier. A controversy concerning the works of the Rambam containing philosophy began in 1232. He, like his Rabbis, sided with those that opposed philosophy which entered the Torah study, the yeshivot and into the masses of Torah students. The inquisitors, may their name be forever forgotten, saw this as an opportunity to further assert their hate against the Jews and seized the moment to have the Rambam's works burned, including his works on Jewish law that assisted the layperson and scholar alike. A few years later the inquisitors widen their path of destruction of torah literature and in the same square where the Rambam's works were burned, the Talmud was set to flame.

Upon seeing this event, Rabbeinu Yonah was struck with the horrible devastation to the Torah world and realized that this was a divine retribution to the burning of the works of the Rambam.

In the letter of Hillel of Verona, Rabbeinu Yonah is said to have exclaimed in the synagogues, "I undertake to prostrate myself at Maimonides' grave and to confess that I spoke and sinned against his books". Upon returning from France to his birthplace, Rabbeinu Yonah began a campaign to teach Musar (ethics and morality) to the masses. Later, he settled in Barcelona where many students came to learn from his teachings. At the end of his life, he set out to live in Eretz Yisrael, but upon reaching Toledo he was asked to stay and assist them in creating a Yeshivah. The Yeshivah flourished, but after two years he passed away and never materialized his dream to live in Eretz Yisrael.

Rabbeinu Yonah practiced what he wrote, preached and was known worldwide for his good traits and piety. His works from his time to this day are considered underpinnings to achieving a path of truth in Torah and service of Hashem.

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# Chapter 1

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### Description of repentance and its principles

Among the good things with which Hashem, blessed be He, has bestowed His creations is the path which He prepared for them to ascend from the within the depths of their actions, to escape from the trap of their iniquities, to hold their souls back from destruction, and to remove the divine anger from upon them. He has taught them to return to Him when they sin against Him, because of His goodness and uprightness, for He understands their natures, as it is said (Psalms 25:8): "Good and upright is the Lord; therefore, He shows sinners the way." If they increasingly sin and rebel and commit betrayals - though they betray, the doors of repentance are not closed to them, as it is said (Isaiah 31:6): "Return, O children of Israel, to Him to whom they have been so shamefully false." It is also said (Jeremiah 3:22): "Turn back, O rebellious children, I will heal your afflictions." We are advised about repentance in several places in the Torah. It is revealed that repentance is accepted even when the sinner repents because of his many tribulations. How much more so [will he be accepted] if he returns because of fear or love of Hashem, as it is said (Deuteronomy 4:30): "When you are in distress because all these things have befallen you and, in the end, return to the Lord your God and obey Him." It is detailed in the Torah that Hashem will help those who repent beyond what their natural ability would allow, and that he renews within them a pure spirit to reach great heights in His love, as it is said (ibid., 30:2): "And you return to the Lord your God, and you and your children heed His command with all your heart and soul, just as I enjoin upon you this day." Further, it is said about the body of the matter (ibid., 30:5): "Then the LORD your God will open up your heart and the hearts of your offspring to love the LORD your God." The Prophets and the Writings speak constantly on the subject of the repentance, such that the principles of repentance are all explained in their words, as shall be demonstrated.

Know that for the sinner who delays repenting of his sin, his punishment will grow heavier every day, for he knows that the wrath has gone forth against him and he has an opportunity to escape it. That escape is repentance. Yet he still remains in rebellions and stays within his evil, though it is within his power to leave from within the disorder - he does not fear the anger or the heat. Thus, his evil is great (see also the Midrash to Ecclesiastes, which relates a parable illustrating this concept).

Repentance is delayed only among the ignorant, who are sleeping - lounging. They do not return to their hearts, and they have neither the knowledge nor the understanding to know that they should hurry, to assist in their souls' deliverance. Some of them are led astray from Hashem, Blessed be He, and they do not believe in punishment for sin. Our rabbis, may their memory be a blessing, said: "If you saw a scholar transgress a prohibition at night, do not think badly of him during the day; in truth, he has repented."

And furthermore - reflect upon the evil of the one who delays repenting, as it is great. For if it were not that he had delayed - now when his impulse would confront him a second time and he have the opportunity to sin, he would recoil and sigh with a bitter heart, with anguish and worry; and his eye would weep with grief. He would [then] subdue his impulse, remember that the cup of bitterness had passed over him once and he would not drink it again. As it is stated (Psalms 4:8), "Tremble and do not sin" - its explanation is, tremble and fear and be troubled about your sinning, and do not sin again. For it mentioned their sin above [in that chapter in Psalms], when it stated

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(Psalms 4:3), "you sought falsehood, Selah." And its using the expression, "tremble," confirms this explanation. [As its usage is like in] (Genesis 45:24), "Do not tremble along the way"; and (Habakkuk 3:16), "I trembled where I stood." And their meaning is distress at something that passed and is still present. And it did not state (in Psalms above), "Fear," or "Flinch." But when he delays from repenting - when the sin comes to his hands, he will fall into its trap like he fell at first. And his second iniquity will be very great and his evil will rise up in front of God. For at first, he did not think that the marauding impulse would come upon him. But after he saw the weakness of his power and that his impulse had overcome him and that it is more powerful than he; he should have seen that it is unbridled, and he should have sought to increase his fear of God, to bring down His fright upon his soul, to save it from the ambush of his impulse and to protect it from its iniquity. And King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 26:11), "As a dog returns to his vomit, so a fool repeats his folly." Its explanation is that a dog eats disgusting things; but when he vomits them, they are more disgusting, yet he returns to eat them. Such is the matter of a fool. For he will do a disgraceful act, but when he repeats it, it is [even] more disgraceful, as we explained.

Additionally, repentance is more difficult for one who repeats his sin; for the sin becomes as if it were permitted to him. And his sin is very weighty with regards to this, as it is stated (Jeremiah 3:5), "that is how you spoke; you did wrong, and you were able." The meaning of, "you were able," is that the evil deeds have become like that which is permitted to you, and like something within your ability and your authority - like the usage (in Deuteronomy 12:17), "You are not able to eat in your gates," for which the translation [of Onkelos] is, "you do not have authority." And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yoma 86b), "When a person commits a transgression and repeats it, it becomes to him as if it were permitted. [Additionally,] our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said about a man who commits a transgression and repeats it - that from now on, if he thinks about doing that sin but is prevented from doing it by duress, his bad thought is joined with the act (it is counted as if he did it). And about him is it stated (Jeremiah 6:19), "I am going to bring disaster upon this people, the outcome of their own thoughts."

And now understand - listen to this, for it is a great principle. It is true that there are righteous people who sometimes stumble into sin - like the matter that is stated (Ecclesiastes 7:20), "For there is no man that is righteous on earth, who does good and does not sin." However they conquer their impulses from in front of them. And if they do fall to sin once, they will not repeat it. [Rather] they will have it taken away from in front of them and repent. However anyone who is not careful of a particular sin and does not take upon himself to guard against it - even if it is from the light ones [and] even though he guards himself against all of the [other] transgressions of the Torah - the Sages of Israel call a habitual sinner (mumar) about one thing (Chullin 4b); he is counted with the sinners, and his sin is too great to bear. For surely if a slave said to his master, "I will do everything you tell me except for one thing," he has already broken his master's yoke from upon himself and will do what is proper in his [own] eyes. And this whole matter is stated [in] (Deuteronomy 27:26), "Cursed be he who will not uphold the words of this Torah, to do them" - the explanation of the matter is that he does not accept upon himself to fulfill all of the words of the Torah, from beginning to end. And what indicates this [is the phrase], "who will not uphold [...] to do" - and it did not state, "who will not do them."

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Furthermore, know that one who repeats one sin ten times - even though he guards himself against all of the other transgressions - is surely considered as if he transgressed different transgressions. And so did our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, say (Makkot 21a) that if they tell a Nazirite, "Do not drink [wine]," and he drinks; "Do not drink," and he drinks - at the end, he is lashed for each and every time - like one who eats a terminally sick animal (tereifah), an impure animal, forbidden fat and blood.

And we have surely seen that the iniquities of the generation have increased on account of this. For there are many people who do [not] take upon themselves to guard against specific sins. And they do not guard against them all the days of their lives, but [these sins] are rather like something permitted to them. And if they were only behaving like this with one sin, it would have been a bad disease upon their souls - as we explained. All the more when they behave so with many negative commandments, including weighty ones - such as unnecessary oaths, cursing one's fellow or oneself with [God's] name; mentioning God's name unnecessarily, in an impure place or with unclean hands; diverting one's eyes from the poor, evil speech, baseless hatred, pride, terrorizing [others], staring at those sexually forbidden - and the neglect of Torah is equal to all of them [together]. And there are many like this - we have written some of them for the people of the generation, to remind them and to warn them. And likewise, is it fitting for all penitents to write in a scroll-book the things that they have stumbled upon, and the commandments in which their performance has fallen short; and to read from this book of memoirs every day.

And behold that there are many levels of repentance. It is true that you will find forgiveness for any repentance. However, the soul will only find complete purification - to be as if the iniquities never had been - when a person purifies his heart and prepares his spirit, as will be explained. And so is it written (Psalms 32:2), "Happy is the man whom the Lord does not hold guilty, and in whose spirit there is no deceit." And it is like the matter of a garment that needs washing: For a little washing will be effective to remove its soiling. However, it will [only] whiten according to the amount of washing. And so is it written there (Psalms 51:4), "Wash me thoroughly of my iniquity." And the soul will be washed from iniquity according to how you wash its heart, as it is stated (Jeremiah 4:14), "Wash your heart clean of wickedness, O Jerusalem." And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Avodah Zarah 19a), "'Happy is the man who fears the Lord' (Psalms 112:1) - when he is still a man." This means to say that the most elevated repentance of a man is in the days of his youth - [when] he overcomes his impulse when his strength is still with him. However, any repentance is effective, as it is stated (Psalms 90:3), "You return man to dust; You said, 'Return you mortals!'" And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yerushalmi Chagigah 2:1), "Until the soul turns to dust."

Now we will explain the principles of repentance. The first principle is regret: His heart should understand that leaving God is bad and bitter; and he should place into his heart that there is punishment, vengeance and repayment for iniquity, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 32:35), "To be My vengeance and repayment." And it is stated (Job 19:29), "Be in fear of the sword, for [your] fury is iniquity worthy of the sword." And he should regret his bad deeds and say in his heart, "What have I done? How did I not have fear of God in front of my eyes, and did not become afraid from the rebukes of iniquity and from the harsh judgments? For there are many aches [waiting] for the evildoer. I did not pity my body; and for a moment of pleasure, my eyes did not pity its being destroyed. I became like a man who robs and extorts, eats and is satiated; but who knows that after

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his eating and his drinking, the judge will grind his teeth with gravel - like the matter that is stated (Proverbs 20:17), 'but later his mouth will be filled with gravel.' And worse than this, I was cruel to the dear soul and I rendered it impure with the idols of my impulse. And what did it gain from all of its acquisitions, if they are bad in the eyes of its Master? And how did I trade a passing world for a world that exists for ever and ever? How have I become similar to animals? As I have gone after my impulse like a horse, like a mule that does not understand. And I have strayed from the way of the intellect. And behold the Creator blew a living soul into my nose - a wise heart and the benefit of intellect - in order to recognize Him and fear Him and to govern over the body and all of its actions, like it governs over the other animals that do not speak, because it is precious in His eyes. And though I was created like this, it has become the opposite of this in me. Why am I alive? It is like the matter that is stated (Proverbs 21:16), 'A man who strays from the path of the intellect will rest in the company of ghosts.' Moreover, I have not [even] fulfilled the precept of the animal. Rather I have been lower than that. For the ox knows its master and the donkey the trough of its owner; whereas I have not known and not reflected. And I have sent my soul to be free from its master. So, I have tasted my nectar, but forgotten my end. And I have stolen and extorted and trampled upon the indigent. I have not remembered the day of death, upon which nothing will remain before my soul besides my corpse and my dirt." And this matter that we have explained is that which Jeremiah, peace be upon him, had spoken, "No one regrets his wickedness and says, 'What have I done?'"

The second principle is leaving the sin: That he should leave his evil ways and decide with all of his heart that he will not continue to return this way again. And if he did evil, he shall not do [it any] more, like the matter that is stated, (Ezekiel 33:11), "Return, return from your evil ways"; and [likewise] stated (Isaiah 55:17), "Let the wicked give up his ways." But know that [in the case of] one who sins by happenstance because he had a desire and his impulse overpowered him and attacked him, whereas his ideas and senses did not rescue him when he encountered it; so they were not quick to rebuke him in the sea of desire, to dry it up - hence the impulse dragged him into its nets and he fell into its snares at that particular time and instant, at the time that the spirit of the evil impulse kicked him down, but not because of his [own] desire and will to find his iniquity and to do like this afterwards: The beginning of the repentance of this man is regret; to place sorrow into his heart about his sin, to have his soul be afflicted and bitter like wormwood. Afterwards, he should increase the fear of sin in his heart every day and put the dread of God into his heart at all times, until his heart becomes steady in the trust of God. As if the impulse comes across him again - like it does from time to time - and his desire become fanned like the first case, his heart will not be seduced by it and he will abandon its path. [This is] as it is stated (Proverbs 28:13), "but one who confesses and abandons [them] will find mercy" - it mentions "confesses" first, about the regret and the confession; and afterwards, "abandons." However [in the case of] one who is constantly positioned on the path that is not good, and the man who treads on his sins every day and repeats them in his foolishness; and who runs after it many times in his race, loves his evil all the time, places the trap of his iniquity in front of his face - meaning his desire and impulse - and his craving is his occupation; he does not prevent himself from doing anything that he wants to do: For such a man, the beginning of his repentance is to abandon his evil way and thoughts, and to agree, resolve and accept upon himself to not continue sinning. Afterwards, he should regret and return to God, as it is stated (Isaiah 55:7), "Let the wicked give up his ways, the sinful man his plans; let him turn back to the Lord, and He will pardon him." And the parable for this is about

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one who holds a sherets (an impure crawling animal) and comes to immerse and become pure. For he must first leave the sherets, and then immerse and become purified. But all the time that the sherets is in his hand, his impurity is still with him and the immersion is ineffective. And behold that leaving the thoughts of sin is [equivalent to] throwing out the sherets; and the regret of that which he sinned, the confession and the prayer are in place of the immersion. And when afflictions and aches come upon the evildoer for whom all of his plans are to continue with his crimes, he is first afflicted. And then he repents from the evil thoughts that he thought and cuts off the actions from his hands. And the parable for this is about a calf which they hit with a cow prod to direct his [work on the] furrows. So is one who is positioned on a path that is not good. He should take the chastisement first, to abandon the ways of death and to walk in a straight path - as it is written (Jeremiah 31:18), "I can hear Ephraim lamenting, 'You have chastised me, and I am chastised like a calf that has not been broken.'" And it is further stated after it (Jeremiah 31:19), "Now that I have turned back, I am filled with remorse." [This] means to say, "After you chastised me, and I was chastised and returned from my evil ways; I was filled with remorse afterwards and regretted what occurred with my iniquities." So, behold that all of this matter that we have explained has been clarified for you.

The third principle is grief: His conscience should darken as he thinks about the great evil of one who rebels against his Maker. He should magnify the grief in his heart, experience a storm in his thoughts and sigh with a bitter heart. For it is possible for him to regret all the sins that he did and find them to be bad in his eyes, yet not fill his measure in this. For even the loss of a dinar or an isar (a small coin) is difficult in the eyes of a man. However, if he lost [all of] his wealth in a bad way and was cleaned out of possessions, his soul would [actually] mourn and his sighing would be heavy. And likewise, is his pain infinite and his grief daily for many and frequent troubles. And more than [about] these is it fitting to be distressed and constantly sigh for one who rebelled against God, may He be blessed, was destructive, performed disgusting acts in front of Him; and who did not remember his Maker who created him ex nihilo, did kindness with him, placed His hand upon him at every instant and guards his spirit at all times - how could he have the temerity to bring anger in front of Him? And how were the eyes of the sinner shut from seeing; from having his heart understand? And one who understands and has eyes opened will inscribe these words onto his heart, so that they will enter the chambers of his spirit.

And the levels of repentance and their stature is based on the greatness of the bitterness and the power of the grief. And that is repentance that comes by way of the purification of the soul and the purity of its intellect. For according to his intellect and according to that which he opens his eyes will be the grief of his thoughts about his great poverty. As it is stated (Isaiah 57:16), "For I will not always contend, I will not be angry forever; nay, when spirits in front of Me cover themselves, I who create the souls." Its explanation is that according to that which the spirit - which is in front of me - covers itself and is distressed, and the souls which I have made cover themselves; I will not contend and I will not be angry. For how can I not have grace and mercy upon the precious soul that is in front of Me? Therefore the sin will be light according to the weightiness of the service of the sighing about it. For grief comes from the purification of the highest soul. And it is accepted through this more than it would be accepted by many afflictions and aches of the body. And the parable for this is that a king has mercy on his attendants that were born in his household that are close to him and from the respected nobles of the land - and he gives them grace - more than on the distant and smaller ones. And it states, "I who create the souls," due to their closeness

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to the higher ones, even though the body and everything [else] are the work of His hands. And like this is (Exodus 32:16), "The tablets were God's work." And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, also said (Kiddushin 30a), "There are three partners in a man: His father, his mother and the Holy One, blessed be He." But because the father and mother have no partnership in the soul - therefore, it stated, "I who create the souls," That the matter is as I have explained it, is shown from its stating, "when spirits in front of Me."

And King David, peace be upon him, stated (Psalms 38:10), "O Lord, all my desires are in front of You; my groaning is not hidden from You." Its explanation is [that] that all of my desire is revealed to You - that it is only for Your service. And You know that my sighing is not about matters of the world and finite things; but about my sins and the limits of my reach in Your service. And one of the supplicants said, "Examine His worth: My sighing is from Your fear - remove my sighing from me; I worried from the limits of my reach in Your service - remove my worries from me."

The fourth principle is pain in [his] actions, as it is stated (Joel 2:12), "'Yet even now' - says the Lord - 'Turn back to Me with all your hearts, and with fasting, weeping, and lamenting.'" And they, may their memory be blessed, said (Yerushalmi Berakhot 1:4), "The heart and the eyes are the two intermediaries of sin." And so is it written (Numbers 15:39), "and you shall not go astray after your hearts and after your eyes." Hence with this will the sin of the intermediaries be atoned - with the measure of repentance according to the measure of the affliction. For the iniquity of the heart is atoned by its bitterness and sighing - with the brokenness with which it is broken, as it is stated (Isaiah 57:16), "when spirits in front of Me cover themselves." And it is [also] written (Psalms 51:19), "God, You will not despise a contrite and crushed heart." And the parable about this is from the [impure] vessels - when they are broken, they are purified, as it is stated (Leviticus 11:35), "an oven or stove shall be smashed." And the iniquity of the eyes is atoned by tears, as it is stated (Psalms 119:136), "My eyes shed streams of water, because they do not obey Your Torah ." It does not state, "because I do not obey Your Torah," but rather states, "they do not obey"; since they were what caused the sin - therefore, I shed streams of waters.

The fifth principle is worry: As he will worry and fear from the punishment of his iniquities. For there are iniquities for which the repentance has the atonement depend upon cleansing afflictions, as it is stated (Psalms 38:19), "I acknowledge my iniquity; I am fearful over my sin." The content of grief is about the past, whereas the content of worry is about the future. And he will also doubly worry - maybe he is falling short in his obligation of repentance with pain, bitterness, fasting and crying. And even if he has multiplied the pain and multiplied the crying, he should crawl and fear - maybe corresponding to this had he multiplied his guilt; so that all of his affliction and having his soul cry in its fast did not fill his measure. And one who examines the greatness of the service to the Creator upon his creatures and that there is no end to the evil of one who rebels against His word [will know that even with] all of what he adds to his service and in the ways of repentance, is it not small? Behold it is like a little in his eyes. And King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 14:16), "A wise man is afraid and turns away from evil." And its explanation is that even though a wise man turns away from evil with all of the efforts of his ability, he should crawl and fear - maybe he did not complete his measure, and he was not careful according to the standard of what needs to be done. And like this is (Proverbs 28:6), "than a rich man whose ways are crooked" - even though he is rich. And likewise did our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, say in

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Yilamdeinu (Tanchuma, Lech Lecha, 15), "Do not explain [it as] 'A wise man is afraid and turns away from evil'; but rather, 'A wise man turns away from evil and is afraid.'" And the end of the verse (Proverbs 14:16) proves this - "but a fool rushes and is confident." He states about the traits of a fool, that they are the opposite of the traits of a wise man. For a fool rushes, but is nevertheless confident that iniquity and damage will not come to him. Yet the angry person is given to sins and open to damages, as it is stated (Proverbs 29:22), "A hot-tempered man commits many offenses." And it is [also] stated (Proverbs 25:28), "Like an open city without walls is a man whose temper is uncurbed."

And the penitent should also worry lest his impulse overpower him. [It is] like they, may their memory be blessed, said (Avot 2:4), "Do not trust in yourself until the day of your death" - all the more so, a man whose heart has already vanquished him. For it is fitting to guard oneself every instant from the ambushing impulse; and to add fear of God to himself every day. And it will [then] be a fortress when all of the breakers of the impulse that renew themselves in the future pass upon him.

And King Solomon, peace be upon him, spoke about the matter of repentance and specified this topic. And he surely opened his words and said (Proverbs 28:12), "When the righteous exult there is great glory, but when the wicked rise up, men will be sought." The explanation [of this] is that the righteous will exalt and honor people about all the good traits that are found with them; but the wicked seek peoples' blemishes and their mistakes, to put them down - even when they have already left these actions and returned in repentance. Afterwards he said (Proverbs 28:13), "He who covers up his faults will not succeed; but he who confesses and gives them up will find mercy." For even though a penitent should not reveal his iniquities to people - as is to be understood from that which is stated, "but when the wicked rise up, men will be sought" - he is obligated to confess them [privately], like the matter that is stated (Psalms 32:5), "Then I acknowledged my sin to You; I did not cover up my guilt." And it is [also] stated (Jeremiah 2:35), "Lo, I will bring you to judgment for saying, 'I have not sinned.'" But the Sages of Israel, may their memory be blessed, explained (Yoma 86b) [that] there are times when he who covers up his faults will not succeed - like with sins between a man and his fellow. As he does not attain atonement until he returns what was stolen, extorted or taken unjustly; and until he asks to be pardoned for that which he annoyed him, embarrassed him or spoke evil speech about him. [Likewise must he not cover up his] sins between a man and the Omnipresent that have become known to people. For one who sins publicly desecrates [God's] name (but Rashi, may his memory be blessed, in the Chapter [entitled] Yom HaKippurim, understands it in a different way. See there.) So he is obligated to grieve and mourn about it in front of people to sanctify [God's] name. And this is [the meaning of] that which is written (Jeremiah 31:19), "Now that I have turned back, I am filled with remorse; now that I am made aware, I strike my thigh." The meaning of, "I am filled with remorse," is regret and pain. For the essence of repentance is bitterness of the heart, as we have explained. And [the meaning of,] "now that I am made aware, I strike my thigh," is after people have been made aware and my iniquities have been publicized, I mourned with actions that were visible to people. [This is] like (Ezekiel 21:17), "strike the thigh"; and it is [also] stated (Job 33:27), "He declares to men, 'I have sinned; I have perverted what was right.'"

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"But he who confesses and gives them up will find mercy" (Proverbs 28:13): The explanation is that even though there are three foundations of repentance - regret, confession and leaving the sin - (and here it only appears like two,) regret and confession are [both] included in "he who confesses." For one who confesses, regrets. But there is no repentance without these three - as one who regrets and confesses but does not leave the sin is like one who immerses with a shoretz in his hand. However, "he who confesses and gives them up will find mercy" - for he is a penitent. [This is the case,] even though there are many levels of repentance, as we have explained.

He said after this (Proverbs 28:14), "Happy is the man who is always afraid, but he who raises his heart falls into misfortune." [Its] explanation is, even though he "confesses and gives them up," he should always be afraid [that] maybe he has not filled the [required] measure of repentance. For it requires many levels, so he should increase his fortitude every day to attain [these] levels. He should also be afraid [that] maybe his impulse will return to him. So he should guard against it every instant, always add fear of God to his soul and always pray to God to help him towards repentance and to save him from his impulse. "But he who raises his heart falls into misfortune": One who says in his heart, "I have filled my measure of repentance," and does not always make efforts to acquire [higher] levels of repentance and to add fear to his soul will be punished for this. For he is of a raised heart and does not recognize the deficiency of his spirit. And if he does not recognize the greatness of his obligation to refine his ways with great refinement, he will also not guard himself from his impulse, which always ambushes him. Hence he will fall into the hands of his impulse.

The sixth principle is shame, like the matter that is stated (Jeremiah 31:19), "I am ashamed and also humiliated, for I bear the disgrace of my youth." As behold that a sinner would be very ashamed to do transgressions in front of people; and he would be humiliated if people sensed and noted his transgressions. So how is it that he would not be ashamed in front of the Creator, may He be blessed? And this is only from the Holy One, blessed be He, being distant from his [feelings]. Hence he is ashamed towards the creatures, but he is not ashamed towards the Creator, may He be blessed. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Berakhot 28b) that at the time of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai's death, his students "said to him, 'Our teacher, bless us.' He said to them, 'May it be His will that the fear of Heaven shall be upon you like the fear of flesh and blood.' His students said, 'To that point and not beyond?' He said to them, 'Would it only be so! Know that when one commits a transgression, he says to himself, 'I hope that no man will see me.'""

And the highest level in this is that one would be humiliated by all of his iniquities in front of God, may He be blessed. And the content of humiliation is the feeling of shame and change in the radiance of his face, like the matter that is stated (Psalms 59:8), "shame covers my face." And you will see that in every place, humiliation is mentioned after shame - as it is more than shame: "Be ashamed and humiliated" (Ezekiel 36:32); "I am ashamed and humiliated" (Jeremiah 31:19). And when the sinner sees that God, may He be blessed, passes over his transgression, is patient with him, does not pay him back, does not do to him according to His sins and does not pay him back according to his iniquities, he has greater shame in his heart. For does not one who sinned against a king of flesh and blood and was treacherous to him, yet is forgiven by him, feel shame towards him? Accordingly is it written (Ezekiel 16:63), "Thus you shall remember and feel shame, [...] when I have forgiven you for all that you did." And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Berakhot 12b) that someone who does something and is ashamed by it has all of his iniquities

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forgiven. And so do we find with Saul, who said (I Samuel 28:15), "and He no longer answers me, either by prophets or in dreams," but did not mention the Urim and Thumim. For he was ashamed to mention them, since he killed [the inhabitants of] Nov, the city of priests. So Samuel said to him (I Samuel 28:19), "Tomorrow your sons and you will be with me" - with me in my section [of the world to come]." And one acquires the level of shame by meditating to think about the greatness of God, and how evil is the one who rebels against His words; and in always remembering that God sees his deeds, examines his [feelings] and looks into his thoughts.

And the seventh principle is whole-hearted submission and lowliness. For the one who knows his Creator knows how one who transgresses His words is crooked and lowly - so he is lowered in his worth, like the matter that is stated (Psalms 15:4), "for whom a contemptible man is abhorrent." And it is [also] stated, (Job 15:16), "What then of one loathsome and foul man, who drinks wrongdoing like water"; [and] (Jeremiah 6:30), "They are called rejected silver." Therefore he will be submissive and lowly in his [own] eyes. And when King David, peace be upon him, confessed after Nathan the prophet came to him, he said at the end of his words (Psalms 51:19), "True sacrifice to God is a contrite spirit; God, You will not despise a contrite and crushed heart" - "a contrite spirit" is a lowly spirit. From this we have learned that submission is from the principles of repentance, since this psalm is wholly founded upon the principles of repentance. And with submission, a man is acceptable to God, as it is stated (Isaiah 66:2), "To the poor and brokenhearted." And it is stated about the matter of repentance, (Isaiah 57:14-15), "[The Lord] says, 'Build up, build up a highway, etc.' For thus said He who high aloft forever dwells, whose name is holy, 'I dwell on high, in holiness; yet with the contrite and the lowly in spirit - reviving the spirits of the lowly, reviving the hearts of the contrite.'" We learn [also from here] that submission is from the principles of repentance. And likewise does the entire remainder of this section speak about penitents: "For I will not always contend, etc. For their sinful greed I was angry, etc. I see their ways, and I will heal them and I will guide them, etc." (Isaiah 57:16-18). Its explanation is, I see that their ways are [grounded] in submission, as it stated, "yet with the contrite and the lowly in spirit"; and with bitter-heartedness, as it stated (Isaiah 57:16), "when spirits in front of Me cover themselves"; "and I will heal them," as I will forgive his iniquity, like [in] (Hosea 14:5), "I will heal their affliction," [and in] (Isaiah 6:10), "and repent and save itself"; "and I will guide them" - I will help him to leave the sin, and give him strength against his impulse.

And know that there are many degrees of submission as will be explained in the Chapter on Humility (no longer extant), with God's help. But the highest level that is necessary for the path of repentance is that one aggrandize Torah and enhance it and not claim any benefit for himself. For it will all be small in his eyes compared to what he is obligated to do for the service of God. Therefore he will be submissive and serve with humility, and not desire honor for his honorable actions, nor glory for his glorious deeds. So he will conceal them [from his companions] according to his ability.

And this matter of this principle of repentance is made clear by the words of the prophet, peace be upon him, as it is stated (Micah 6:6), "With what shall I approach the Lord, do homage to God on high?" Its explanation is, "With what shall I approach the Lord" for all of his kindnesses - as he mentioned some of God's kindnesses above in this section - and with what will I "do homage to God on high," for my many sins. And it mentions, "God on high," to teach and make known to what extent it is fitting for one who rebelled against the One who is above everything, to do homage

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and submit. And it explained the matter afterwards (Micah 6:6-7): "Shall I approach Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Would the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with myriads of streams of oil," with which I should approach Him for his great kindnesses? "Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression" - to show my submission and my great subordination for my many sins, as I recognize the greatness of my transgression. For it would be fitting to give my firstborn as a sacrifice on account of my transgressions, for they are many and great. "The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul" - it mentioned "my firstborn" for the transgression, and the fruit of my body for the sin. For transgression (pesha) is rebellion, as our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yoma 36b) - and that is more than sin. And the answer was (Micah 6:8), "He has told you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you - only to do justice and to love goodness," for this is superior to burnt-offerings and meal-offerings with which to approach God for His kindnesses; "and to walk humbly with your God" - this is the essence of your submission and your subordination: To serve God with humility. For this shows your submission, that you do not desire honor for your honorable actions, nor for the virtues that the Maker does not [even] desire in His creations - for one should not glory in them - such as wealth and strength and types of wisdom, but rather only for understanding and knowing God, may He be blessed, as it is stated (Jeremiah 9:22), "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, etc."

And the penitent is also obligated to submit, because he is obligated to remove from himself the traits that cause him to sin and to do rebellious deeds.

And pride causes several transgressions and amplifies the impulse of a man's heart against him, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 8:14), "And your heart grow haughty and you forget the Lord your God." And it is [also] stated (Proverbs 21:4), "Haughty looks, a proud heart - the tillage of the evildoers' sin." Its explanation is: Pride is the tillage of evildoers, for the sins grow from it; as it was stated, "And your heart grow haughty and you forget." And it is [also] stated (Psalms 10:2), "The wicked in his arrogance hounds the lowly." And it is [further] stated (Psalms 31:19), "that speak haughtily against the righteous with arrogance." And it is [also] stated (Ezekiel 32:24), "who struck terror in the land of the living." And just like people make a tillage in the field in order to plant seeds and to harvest much produce, so do the evildoers make pride into a tillage in their hearts, and seed it with their evil thoughts to produce and to grow sins. Metaphorically speaking, these are the fruit of their thoughts - like the prophet stated (Hosea 10:4), "this judgment springs up like poison weeds, etc." And the explanation of "sin" (above in Proverbs 21:4) is, the tillage of the evildoers is the tillage of sin. And all [mention of] sin is [actually] plural, like (in Jeremiah 17:1), "The sin of Judah." Or (alternatively), its explanation is "and sin," like in (Habakkuk 3:11), "Sun, moon" (which means, sun and moon). And the understanding is - beyond [the fact] that pride causes sins, the trait itself is a sin, as it is stated (Proverbs 16:5), "Every haughty person is an abomination to the Lord." And a proud person will be given over to his impulse; for God does not help him, since he is "an abomination to the Lord."

And the penitent is also obligated to be submissive and to fulfill and follow the path about which our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Avot 4:10), "Be of humble spirit before all men." And from this, he will acquire that he will not get angry at - or be exacting with - his fellows; and he will also not pay attention to everything that he hears and will forego his reckonings. And from this, all of his sins will be [forewent to be] atoned, as our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Rosh Hashanah 17a), "Whoever forgoes his reckonings [with others, the heavenly court, in

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turn,] forgoes all his sins" - measure for measure. And this is a very glorious opening for hope. And it is stated (Lamentations 3:29-30), "Let him put his mouth to the dust - there may yet be hope. Let him offer his cheek to the smiter; let him be surfeited with mockery."

The eighth principle is submission in [his] actions - such that one should be accustomed to [giving] a gentle response, as it is stated (Proverbs 15:1), "A gentle response allays wrath." For this is the way of lowliness, as it is stated (Isaiah 29:4), "And you shall speak from lower than the ground, your speech shall be humbler than the sod" - the opposite of that which is stated about a rich man who is proud: "The rich man's answer is harsh" (Proverbs 18:23). And he should not be occupied with the beauty of clothing and jewelry, as it is stated (Exodus 33:5), "and now take off your finery." And it is stated about Ahab, (I Kings 21:27), "he fasted and lay in sackcloth and walked about subdued." And God, may He be blessed, said about this (I Kings 21:29), "Have you seen how Ahab has submitted?" And the matter of "walked about subdued," is the opposite of the way of kings, who walk with many soldiers and the din of a troop. And he should always lower his eyes, like the matter that is stated, (Job 22:29), "for He saves those who lower their eyes." And signs of submission - like a gentle response, a soft voice and lowered eyes - remind him to have a submissive heart.

And the ninth principle is the breaking of physical desire. One should put into his mind that desire causes harm to his soul - to sin and to be pulled after iniquity for worthless vanities. So he should make a vow to protect the path of repentance: He should separate from pleasures and not be drawn after his desire - even with things that are permissible - and follow the path of asceticism. So he should only eat to satiate his spirit and preserve his body, like the matter that is stated (Proverbs 13:28), "The righteous man eats to the satiation of his spirit." And he should not approach a woman except to fulfill the commandment of being fruitful and multiplying; or the commandment of the set time [for his wife]. For anytime that a man pursues desire, he is drawn after the effects of the physical and is distanced from the path of the reasoning soul; and then his impulse will overpower him, like the matter that is stated (Deuteronomy 32:15), "And Jeshurun waxed fat and rebelled." And it is [also] stated (Proverbs 30:9), "Lest, being sated, I renounce." And they, may their memory be blessed, said (Sukkah 52b), "There is a small limb in a man - [if] he satiates it, it is hungry; [if] he starves it, it is satiated."

And behold that the desire placed in the heart of man is the root of all of his actions. Therefore, if he refines the desire - instead of all the limbs serving it, he will draw them after the intellect. So they will accompany him and serve him; and all of his actions will be proper, as it is stated (Proverbs 21:8), "but he is pure and straight in his actions." (And it appears to me that he is understanding, "but he is pure," [as] meaning to say, that he is pure from desire; "and straight in his actions," [as] all of his actions are assumed to be refined and straight. And that is something that can be learned from its [context], as its opposite is written after it - "The desire of the wicked is set upon evil" [Proverbs 21:10].) And it is [also] stated (Proverbs 13:19), "Desire niheyeh is sweet to the spirit." Niheyeh [here] is like broken, as [its usage in] (Daniel 8:27), "I was broken (niheyeti), and languished." It is stating that when a man breaks his desire - even for things that are permissible - it renders his spirit successful. So this trait is sweet to it. For the intellect raises its hand and is victorious. "But to turn away from evil is abhorrent to the stupid" (Proverbs 21:8): The stupid, who do not break their desire but rather always pursue the desires of people - when their desire confronts them [to do a] sin or any bad thing, they will not veer from it. And they are

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called stupid because of [their] pursuit of pleasures - as it is stated (Proverbs 21:20), "and a stupid man will swallow them." And it is stated (Isaiah 5:11-12), "Ah, those who chase liquor from early in the morning, etc. Who have lyre and lute, etc.; but who never give a thought to the plan of the Lord, etc." And it is [also] stated (Proverbs 13:25), "but the belly of the wicked is empty." And it is [further] stated (Malachi 2:3), "and I will strew dung upon your faces, the dung of your festivals." And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Shabbat 151b), "These are people for which all their days are like festivals." And it states (Proverbs 18:1), "He who isolates himself pursues his desires; he disdains all competence." Its explanation is, one who seeks to go after his desire and his will, will be isolated from any friend or countryman. As admirers and companions will distance themselves from him, since the desires and measures of people are [all] different - the will of this one is not like the will of that one. However if he will follow the path of the intellect, many friends will join themselves to him and his admirers will be many. And they said regarding ethics, one who [insists] upon his measures will have many [against] him. And it is possible to explain, "He who isolates himself pursues his desires," about this matter itself: A man is isolated from every brother and friend, by the desire that he seeks. And since he seeks to go after his will - because of that, his companions distance themselves from him. [It is] like the matter [of], "but a poor man loses his friend" (Proverbs 19:4). "He disdains all competence": One who follows his desires will not only sin in one thing. Rather he will disdain every thing in the Torah, since he will transgress all of it - like the wording (of Proverbs 20:3), "but every fool disdains."

And there is another benefit to his breaking his physical desire: That if his desire asks him for something wicked and sinful, he will say to his heart, "Look, I do not fulfill my desire with the permissible; so how could I reach my hand out for the forbidden?"

And you will also find [another] big and great benefit in breaking desire: For he will reveal his true heart and goodly desire for repentance. As he is disgusted by the nature that caused him to sin. And through this, he will become acceptable to God, may He be blessed, and find favor in His eyes. And it is accordingly written (Psalms 51:19), "True sacrifice to God is a contrite spirit; God, You will not despise a contrite and crushed heart." The contrite spirit is a lowly and submissive spirit; and a broken heart is [speaking] about the breaking of physical desire - for desire is placed into the heart, as it is stated (Psalms 21:3), "You have granted him the desire of his heart." And this verse (51:19) is stated in the psalm of repentance. And from its stating, "You will not despise a contrite and crushed heart," we learn that a penitent becomes acceptable to God, through the breaking of his physical desire, and that this is from the principles of repentance. And it is also stated about the matter of repentance (Isaiah 57:15), "reviving the spirits of the lowly, reviving the hearts of the contrite."

And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, stated (Avot 5:19), "Whoever possesses these three things, he is of the disciples of Abraham, our father [...] A good eye, a humble spirit and a moderate appetite." And the meaning of a humble spirit is that he does not follow his physical desire even with permissible things. [This is] like we find that Abraham stated (Genesis 12:11) "Behold I know what a beautiful woman you are" - as he had not stared at her until that day, to contemplate the character of her beauty. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, stated (Yerushalmi Sanhedrin 2:3) about that which is written (II Samuel 20:3), "and they remained in seclusion until the day they died, in living widowhood" - that each day David would command that their heads be beautified and that perfumes be given to them to adorn them in order to provoke his desire and to

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[then] subdue it, when he would conquer his impulse for them, in order to atone for himself about the matter of Bathsheba.

The tenth principle is to improve one's actions with that which he was wont: If he stared at those sexually forbidden, he should accustom himself to lower his eyes. If he sinned with evil speech, he should occupy himself with Torah [study]. Likewise with all the limbs with which he sinned, he should attempt to fulfill the commandments with them. And so our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said that the righteous ones become acceptable with the very thing with which they sin. And they also said (Leviticus Rabbah 21:5), "If you have done piles of sins, do piles and piles of commandments that correspond to them: Feet that ran to do evil shall run to the matter of a commandment; a false tongue, his palate should utter truth, he should open his mouth with wisdom and have the Torah of kindness on his tongue; hands that spilled blood, let him surely open his hand to his poor brothers; haughty eyes, let him be subdued and lower his eyes; a heart that seeks thoughts of injustice, let his heart mull words of Torah and the meditation of his heart be understanding; if he creates arguments between brothers, let him seek peace and pursue it."

And the eleventh principle is examining one's ways, as it is stated (Lamentations 3:40), "Let us search and examine our ways, and turn back to the Lord." And he should do this for three [reasons]: The first is in order that he remembers all of the things about which he sinned and confess them all. For confession is one of the principles of atonement. And the second is in order for him to know how many iniquities and sins he has, and enhance his submission. And the third is that even though he takes on himself to leave the sin - he must know the things about which he sinned in order to make fences for them and to greatly safeguard his spirit from them; from the ambush of the impulse, since his spirit is prone to them, as they have become light in his eyes and his impulse has taken control over them. And behold that his soul is sick from his actions. And when a sick person begins healing, he needs to be careful about many matters, so that he will not have a relapse of his sickness.

The twelfth principle is that one needs to examine, know and recognize the greatness of the punishment for each one of his iniquities - for which of them is there lashes, for which of them is there a liability for excision, for which of them is there a death penalty from the court - in order that he know the greatness of his iniquity when he confesses it, and cry bitterly about that which bitterly angered [God. This is also] in order that he will enhance his submission and in order that he will fear from his iniquities. For [with] weighty sins, repentance only suspends their atonement whereas afflictions absolve them. And so is it written, (Jeremiah 2:23), "Look at your deeds in the valley, consider what you have done!" And this principle will be explained in the third chapter.

The thirteenth principle is that the light sins should be weighty in one's eyes from four angles: The first is that he should not look at the smallness of a sin, but rather at the greatness of the One who commanded it. The second is that the impulse is in control over the light sins, and that may be a cause to do them constantly. And then they will also be considered like weighty ones - when the punishment of all of the times [it is committed] are combined. And they compared it to a silk thread that is loose and weak; but when you combine it many, many times, it becomes a strong rope. And the third is that from his constantly doing the sin, it becomes like something permissible; and he will remove its yoke from upon him. So he will not protect himself against it and he will be considered from those that remove the yoke and are heretics for one thing. And the fourth is that if he defeats the impulse with something small, he will defeat it tomorrow with something big - as

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our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Shabbat 105b), "Anyone who breaks vessels in anger should be in your eyes as if he worships idolatry. For this is the way of the evil impulse: Today it says to you thus, on the morrow, it tells you, 'Go worship an idol.'" And it is stated (Genesis 4:7), "Is it not that if you do right, there is uplift, etc." Its explanation [starting with the end of Genesis 4:6] is: "Why has your face fallen? Is it not that if you do right" actions and repent to Me, "there is uplift" - like the usage (in Job 11:15), "Then, free of blemish, you will uplift your head." And it can be understood as an expression of forgiveness. "But if you do not do right, sin couches at the door" (Genesis 4:7): But if you do not repent from that which you sinned, it is not only this iniquity that will lay with you; but rather the impulse crouches at the door to make you sin in all that you do. And it will always defeat you, since it defeated you and trapped you [now] and it also caught you, and you did not repent. "And its urge is toward you," to lead you astray and it ambushes you at every instant. "Yet you can be its master," if you want to overpower it. Therefore you will be punished for the sin, since I gave you the ability to conquer your impulse.

And King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 13:13), "He who disdains a precept will be injured thereby; and he who fears a commandment will be rewarded." He said this about one who disdains [concern about] light sins. For he will be injured from the angles that we mentioned. "And he who fears a commandment" - to [make efforts not to] negate (fail to perform) a commandment, like he fears from a weighty sin - "will be rewarded": He is destined to receive the full reward [for it]. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Avot 2:1) "And be careful with a light commandment as with a weighty one." And they also said (Avot 4:2), "For the payment for performing a commandment is another commandment and the payment for committing a transgression is a transgression."

The fourteenth principle is confession, as it is stated (Leviticus 5:5), "and he shall confess that wherein he has sinned." And he must mention his iniquities and the iniquities of his fathers. For he is punished [for them] - if he holds on to the actions of his fathers. And likewise is it written (Leviticus 26:40), "and they shall confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers."

And the fifteenth principle is prayer: A man should pray to God and request mercy to atone for all of his iniquities, as it is stated (Hosea 14:3), "Take words with you and return to the Lord; say to Him. 'Forgive all guilt and accept the good; and we will pay with the bulls of our lips'" - this is the matter of confession. "Say to Him. 'Forgive all guilt and accept what is good'" - this is the matter of prayer. And its explanation is, "accept the good" - the good actions that we did. For they, may their memory be blessed, said (Sotah 21a), "Sin extinguishes [the merit of] a commandment." But at the time of repentance, the iniquities will be atoned; so the merit of the commandment will arise, and its merit will shine. For before repentance, its light did not shine forth. And so it is written (Job 8:6), "If you are blameless and upright, He will now awaken [your merit] for you and grant well-being to your righteous home." And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed said (Yerushalmi Rosh Hashanah 1:3), "It does not say, 'If you were blameless and upright,' but rather 'If you are blameless and upright' - since you have repented." "He will now awaken [your merit] for you" - now after the repentance that you have done, "He will now awaken" all of the righteousness that you had done before, and that which your home was wide open and you 'planted a tamarisk' for lodging, as it is written (Job 31:32), "I opened my doors to the road." But before your repentance, your righteousness did not protect you. However, after your repentance and [when] your iniquity was removed, "He will awaken [your merit] for you and grant well-being to

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your righteous home." "And we will pay with the bulls of our lips" - our confession will be considered like the bulls of sin-offerings, for our acceptance in front of You. And it mentions bulls, because the bull sin-offering was inside [the chamber] and they would sprinkle from its blood on the curtain and on the golden (incense) altar.

And the penitent should also pray to God to erase his transgressions like a fog, and his sins like a cloud; and that He desire him, accept him and listen to him as if he had not sinned - like the matter that is written in the words of Elihu about a penitent after [he has suffered] afflictions (Job 33:26), "He prays to God and is accepted by Him." For it is likely for the iniquity to be forgiven and he be redeemed from all afflictions and from all decrees, but God [still] not desire him and not want to accept an offering from him. And it is the desire of the righteous from [their] successes, to incline God's will towards them and that He should desire them. And his will is [for] real everlasting life and for the great light that includes all of the pleasant things - like the matter that is stated (Psalms 30:6), "when He is pleased there is life." And it [also] stated (Psalms 80:20), "O Lord, God of hosts, restore us; shine Your countenance that we may be delivered" - and our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed said "(Midrash Tehillim 80), "We have nothing besides the shining of Your countenance." And that is the matter of [His] desire - and we have already mentioned this and explained it. Therefore you will see in the prayer of David at the time of [his] repentance after he said (Psalms 51:4), "Wash me thoroughly of my iniquity, and purify me of my sin," [that] he prayed further about the desire - that God's desire, may He be blessed - for him to be like before the sin. So he said (Psalms 51:13), "Do not cast me out of Your presence, or take Your holy spirit away from me." Afterwards he prayed and said (Psalms 51:14), "Let me again rejoice in Your salvation" - that the miracles of God and His salvation be found with him, and that the spirit of God would come upon him as at first. And afterwards he [continued], "and a generous spirit sustain me." Its explanation is - behold I have been lessened because of my transgressions and am not fitting to be a prince, and for Your holy arm to be revealed upon Me. And even if you have lifted (forgiven) the iniquity of my sin, I am not worthy to be beloved and acceptable as in earlier times. Yet sustain me with a generous spirit; for there is no end to Your generosity and Your goodness. And [the word,] spirit, comes lacking a [letter,] bet (in front of it, which would mean, with the spirit), like [in] (Genesis 27:37), "sustained him grain and wine" (which is to be understood as if grain was preceded by a letter bet, meaning "with grain, etc."). And Hosea, peace be upon him, said about this matter (Hosea 14:5), "I will heal their affliction, I will take them back in generous love." The matter of generous love is like the matter that David said, ["and a generous spirit] sustain me."

And the penitent should also constantly pray to God that He help him towards repentance, as it is stated (Jeremiah 31:18), "receive me back, let me return; for You, O Lord, are my God."

The sixteenth principle is the rectification of that which is twisted, in as much as one is able to rectify it - as the matter is stated (Jonah 3:10), "God saw what they did, how they were turning back from their evil ways." And it is stated (Jonah 3:8), "Let everyone turn back from his evil ways and from the extortion that is their hands." For with things that are between a man and his fellow - such as robbery and extortion - his iniquity is not atoned until he returns what was robbed. And likewise, if he pained his fellow, harassed him, whitened his face (from embarrassment) or spoke evil speech about him, he is not given atonement until he requests forgiveness from him. And likewise did our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, say (Bava Kamma 92a) that even though

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he gave him the money of the embarrassment and the pain of the strike - the pain and the embarrassment of the strike are not forgiven until he requests forgiveness from him, as it is stated (Genesis 20:7), "Therefore, restore the man's wife - since he is a prophet, he will intercede for you - to save your life."

And it is fitting for a penitent to do this before the confession, so that he can be accepted with his confession. And at the time of [his] repentance, King David, peace be upon him, did this before the confession, as it is stated (Psalms 51:6), "Against You alone have I sinned, and done what is evil in Your sight; so that You are just in Your sentence, and right in Your judgment." The explanation [of this] is that I am only considered a sinner to you, and I need nothing besides your forgiveness; and if I sinned to a person, I have requested forgiveness from him and I have made amends with him. And similar to it is (Genesis 44:32), "I shall stand guilty before my father forever" - for this sin, I will be considered a sinner to my father forever, as he will never forgive me for it. And its translation (Onkelos), is "and I will be a sinner to father." Or (alternatively) the explanation [in the verse in Psalms above] is, "Against You alone have I sinned" - I have not sinned to a person and I have not said extra words about him, nor have I taken anything from a person; that I should require his forgiveness and return his stolen goods. So my atonement is only dependent upon You. "So that You are just in Your sentence, and right in Your judgment" - in order to show Your charity and the greatness of Your forgiveness to the nations, on the day of Your speech and Your judgement at the time that You judged me. And the expression, "so that," is [to mean] that the greatness of the sin is the reason to make known the greatness of Your charity in Your forgiveness. Therefore the thing is compared to the head of sin, in order that God's kindness can be revealed - as well as His charity in His forgiveness - on the day of [David's] judgement. And like it is [the usage of, so that] (in Hosea 8:4), "of their silver and gold they have made themselves images, so that it will be cut off." For their making the images is the reason for the cutting off of their silver and their gold - the thing was compared, as if they made the images in order that they would be cut off. Or its explanation (in Psalms) is, because of this, You will be justified in Your word about the judgement and the repayment (meaning to say that he is justifying His judgement, may He be blessed). And likewise (in Hosea), "so that it will be cut off," [can be understood] as, because of this will it be cut off.

And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, explained - according to the first approach - in Midrash Tehillim 51 about this, "There is a [relevant] parable about a physician who examined a wound and said, 'This is a great wound.' The patient said [back] to him, 'Was I not struck with a severe wound in order to show the sagacity of your healing and in order to show you your strength?'" And we will still add a teaching about this principle in the fourth chapter (4:18-19).

The seventeenth principle is to seek [to do] actions of kindness and truth, as it is stated (Proverbs 16:6), "Iniquity is atoned by kindness and truth; and evil is shunned through fear of the Lord." And now reflect upon the secret of this verse. For surely if the sinner has not repented to God, his sin will not be atoned by doing kindness - as it is stated (Deuteronomy 10:17), "who shows no favor and takes no bribe." And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, explained (Yalkut Shimoni on Nach 947) that [this means] that He will not take the bribe of [the fulfillment of] a commandment, to forgive and pass over iniquities. And they also said (Bava Kamma 50a), "Anyone who states that the Holy One, Blessed be He, is forgoing will have his life foregone." Rather He is slow to anger. But if they do not obey, he measures [the punishment] of their actions into their laps. Rather

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[regarding] that which King Solomon, peace be upon him, said, "Iniquity is atoned by kindness and truth" - he was speaking about a penitent. For there are sins that repentance and Yom Kippur suspend, but afflictions absolve, as will be explained in the fourth chapter. But behold that kindness protects the sinner from afflictions, since it also surely saves him from death, as it is written, (Proverbs 10:2) "but righteousness (tsedekah, which can also mean, charity) saves from death." However there is yet an iniquity - and that is the iniquity of the desecration of [God's] name - which repentance and afflictions suspend but death absolves, as it is stated, (Isaiah 22:14), "This iniquity shall never be forgiven you until you die." But behold when a person makes efforts to support the truth, follow it through, be aroused by its words, present its light in the eyes of people, strengthen the hands of the men of truth and uplift their heads and to denigrate the circles of falsehood and bring them to the dirt - behold, these are the ways of sanctification of [God's] name, of majesty and beauty to His faith and worship in the world and of strength and splendor to the holiness of his Torah. Therefore in the increase of his actions to sanctify God, to arouse the truth and to set it up and assist it, he is forgiven the iniquity of the desecration with his repentance - with his placement of the truth across from the sin of the desecration, the measure of his repentance corresponding to the measure of his sin. This is the explanation of, "Iniquity is atoned by kindness and truth."

The eighteenth principle is that the his sin always be in front of him. For it is fitting that the soul of the sinner always remember its content and not neglect (forget) them to the end of days. And he should not grab them away from his heart until his relief comes - like the matter that is stated (Psalms 51:5), "For I recognize my transgressions, and am ever conscious of my sin." And this principle will be explained in the third chapter (4:21).

The nineteenth principle is leaving the sin when it chances upon him and he is still at the height of his desire. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yoma 86b), "Who is the penitent whose repentance reaches the Throne of Glory? When he is tested and comes out clean at the same time in the same place and with the same woman." [This is] meaning to say, when the sin avails itself to him, he is at the height of his impulse and his might is in the muscles of his belly like the first moment when he sinned; but he conquered his impulse and escaped from the iniquity due to his fear of God and the greatness of his fright. But for the one to whom it has not availed itself in this manner, he should augment his fear of God on a daily basis all of his days. And when he has reinvigorated the strength of his fear enough to conquer his impulse with this strength and his power over the power of the desire - does not the Examiner of hearts understand and the Fashioner of his soul know that if a test would come to him and it be like the first [situation], that he would save himself from his impulse? So behold that in front of God he is on the highest level of repentance. And that which King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 16:6), "Iniquity is atoned by kindness and truth; and evil is shunned through fear of the Lord" - its explanation is, and with fear of the Lord, to shun evil if it should chance upon him. And the word, shun, is an infinitive [here]; and the confirmation of this explanation is that it does not say, and shun (which would make shun a command). And that which is stated (Psalms 34:15), "Shun evil and do good"; [and] (Job 1:8), "who fears God and shuns evil" - its sense is that he should shun evil if it should chance upon him. For they do not say, shun the deed, but rather [shun] that which he comes close to doing. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Kiddushin 39b), "If one sits and does not transgress, he receives a reward as one who performs a commandment [...] - it is speaking

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of a case where an opportunity to commit a sinful act presents itself to him and he is saved from it."

The twentieth principle is to cause the many to repent from iniquity to the extent of one's ability - as it is stated (Ezekiel 18:30), "Repent and make repent from all your transgressions." We learn [from this] that it is from the principles of repentance. And it is stated (Leviticus 19:17), "you shall surely reprimand your countryman and not bear sin because of him." We learn [from this] that if he does not rebuke him, he will be punished for [the other's] sins. And King David, peace be upon him, said in the psalm of repentance (Psalms 51:15), "I will teach transgressors Your ways, that sinners may return to You."

Behold we have completed the explanation of the principles of repentance. And now pay attention to the things that obstruct repentance. This means to say that the repentance is difficult for one who removes his yoke and stumbles constantly in one of them. If you have constantly stumbled in one of them, be strong and of good courage to pour out your speech [to God] and to augment [your] prayer and supplication; gird your strength to fulfill every matter of the principles of repentance; and increase [your] understanding about them from the paths that will be explained in the fourth chapter - and you will find grace and be given mercy.

I will mention what our Rabbis spoke about this. Our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said, "There are twenty-four things that obstruct repentance and these are them: Talebearing and evil speech; one who is an angry person; one who has thoughts of evil; one who befriends an evildoer; one accustomed to [eating from] a meal that is not sufficient for its owners; one who stares at those sexually forbidden; one who shares [stolen property] with a thief; one who says, 'I will sin and [then] I will repent' (and they accordingly said in the Mishnah [Yoma 85b], 'one who says, "I will sin and I will repent," [Heaven] does not provide him the opportunity to repent [...], "I will sin and Yom Kippur will atone for my sins," Yom Kippur does not atone.');

one who glorifies himself by the embarrassment of his neighbor; one who separates from the community; one who scorns his ancestors; one who scorns his teachers; one who curses the many; one who obstructs the many from doing good acts; one who sways his fellow from a proper path to an improper path; one who uses the pledge of a poor person; one who takes a bribe in order to sway judgement on others in court, one who finds a lost object but does not return it to its owner; one who sees his son [involved] in wayward conduct and does not reprove him; one who eats from the plunder of the poor, the orphans and the widows; one who opposes the words of the Sages; one who suspects proper people [of forbidden acts]; one who hates rebuke; and one who mocks the commandments."

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#### To instruct about the ways that arouse a person to repent to God

Know that the paths of the causes by which a person is aroused to repent from his evil ways are six. And with each one of them, we have taught man's intellect how it is dissected for his understanding; so let him give ear according to his preparation. And we will arouse the ear to understand them, to contemplate and know the precious principles - they are expounded and analyzed to all of their wants. But more than this, my son, be careful to repent and purify your soul each day - [even] without seeing a cause that arouses [it] or the events of the day striking your thoughts. For remember your Creator, and let the thought of Him be a restoration of the soul from the ways of the events of [those who are only] a clod of dirt. And so bare and prepare the bow of knowledge to straighten the refinements of your nature. And from the fear of God and love of Him, and from the shame [of being] before him, you will always increase virtue. [Also] be consistent in the purity of your hands, cut down the rebellious thoughts from your musings and feed the arms bearers of your soul - and with the remembrance of its Former, it will adorn its jewelry and be complete in its beauty, as it is written (Isaiah 45:25), "It is through the Lord that all the offspring of Israel Have vindication and praise." However add strength to arouse your soul with these six causes which will be explained. And the one who does not grasp this virtue will surrender his uncircumcised heart from the way of the causes and from much seeing. And according to the paucity of the recognition of the way of a cause that arouses the heart of a man to repent - and according to his veering to the path of his [own] will - is it made known and verified that repentance is from the important soul.

The first path is [that] when a man encounters troubles, he will consult his heart and say [that] it is only his ways and his plots that have caused this to him, and that his sins have caused [the pain] to his soul. So he repents to God; and He has mercy upon him, like the matter that is stated (Deuteronomy 31:17), "and many evils and troubles shall befall them; and they shall say on that day, 'Surely it is because our God is not in our midst that these evils have befallen us.'" But note that the custom among men is [that] if one sins to someone, and [later] at a time of trouble for him regrets it and submits to him because he needs him; such regret will be inferior in the eyes of his fellow - like the matter that Jephthah said (Judges 11:7), "How can you come to me now when you are in trouble?" However it is one of the kindnesses of God, may He be blessed, that He accepts repentance [motivated by] trouble and it is desirable in front of Him. And He will generously love the sinner when he returns to Him on the day of his rebuke and from amidst trouble, as it is stated (Hosea 14:2-5), "Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have fallen because of your sin. Take words with you, etc. I will heal their affliction, generously will I take them back in love." And it is stated (Proverbs 3:12), "For whom the Lord loves, He rebukes, as a father the son whom he favors." But if the man does not repent from his evil on the day of evil, and the rebuked does not repent to the Rebuker, his iniquity grows and his punishment will be doubled. Do you not see that if a king rebukes someone who has sinned to him and he has not become chastised, [the king] will make his punishment harsher and be very hard on him. And it is written (Leviticus 26:18), "And if, for all that, you do not obey Me, I will go on to discipline you." And it is [also] stated (Job 36:13), "But the impious in heart become enraged; they do not cry for help when He afflicts them." And if he does not know and does not contemplate that the events have found him because of sins, but rather says like the Philistines (I Samuel 6:9), "it was not His hand that struck us; it

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just happened to us by chance" - there will be fury in front of Him for this, and his iniquity will grow. And the iniquity of this group will be greater than the sin of the first group. Therefore it is written about the first group (Leviticus 26:18), "I will go on to discipline you." And it is written afterwards about the other group [we] mentioned (Leviticus 26:21), "And if you remain hostile toward Me and refuse to obey Me, etc." For every group that is later in the section is more problematic than the one [above it]. So it is written afterwards (Leviticus 26:23-24), "And if these things fail to discipline you for Me, and you remain hostile to Me, I too will remain hostile to you." And afterwards, it is written (Leviticus 26:27-28), "But if, despite this, you disobey Me and remain hostile to Me, I will act against you in wrathful hostility." Its explanation is "you remain hostile to Me," because you will say, "It was just chance that [it] happened to us." But when a man does not recognize his deeds and does not know that he has the iniquity in his hands from his sinning, he must examine his actions and search his ways, as the matter is stated (Lamentations 3:40), "Let us search and examine our ways." But if he surely ignores his eyes and his ideas become foolish and deluded (from the expression in Scripture [Isaiah 19:13], "The nobles of Tanis have been foolish, the nobles of Memphis deluded"), and he does not investigate his ways and does not know the acts of his hands and that which his fingers have done and says, "I have not sinned" - his sin is very weighty, as it is stated (Jeremiah 2:35), "lo, I will bring you to judgment for saying, 'I have not sinned.'" And it is stated (Isaiah 42:25), "it blazed upon them all about, but they heeded not; it burned among them, but they gave it no thought." And it is stated (Proverbs 19:3), "A man's folly subverts his way, and his heart rages against the Lord."

Know and understand that the reproof of God, may He be blessed, is for the good of man. For if a man sins in front of Him and does evil in His eyes, God's reproof is upon him for two purposes: One is to atone for his sins and to remove the iniquity, as it is stated (Psalms 25:18), "Look at my affliction and suffering, and forgive all my sins." So with the sicknesses of the body, with which God has made him sick, is the sickness of the soul healed. For iniquity is the sickness of the soul, as it is stated (Psalms 41:5), "heal me, for I have sinned against You." And it is [also] stated (Isaiah 33:24), "And none who lives there shall say, 'I am sick'; It shall be inhabited by folk whose sin has been forgiven." And the second is to remind him and have him repent from his evil ways, as it is written (Zephaniah 3:7), "she would fear Me, would take reproof." But if he does not receive the reproof and does not cease on account of the rebuke and does not circumcise the covering of his heart - woe is to him and woe to his soul. For he has suffered afflictions and bore his sin, but his iniquity was not atoned; but rather his punishment was doubled, as we explained.

But when a man accepts the reproof of God, improves his ways and his plans, it is fitting for him to rejoice about the afflictions - for they help him with lofty accomplishments. So he should thank God, may He be elevated, for them. As it is stated (Psalms 116:13), "I raise the cup of deliverance and invoke the name of the Lord"; and it is [also] stated (Psalms 116:3-4), "I came upon trouble and sorrow. And I invoked the name of the Lord." And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said in the Sifrei, "Rabbi Eliezer ben Ya'akov says, 'The whole time a person is dwelling in tranquility, his iniquities are not atoned at all for him; but through afflictions, he becomes acceptable to the Omnipresent.'" And it is stated (Proverbs 3:12), "For whom the Lord loves, He rebukes, as a father the son whom he favors." Its explanation is, like a father to a son, so too does God desire the one He rebukes and who accepts His reproof - in the same way a father desires his son after the rebukes. And it can also be explained, like a father rebukes the son that wants it; but he does not rebuke the sons about whom he has given up, and for which rebuke will not be

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effective. And it is stated about people that do not recognize the good of rebuke and its purpose (Hosea 7:13), "I was their Redeemer; yet they have plotted treason against Me." And it is [also] stated (Hosea 7:15), "I braced, I strengthened their arms; and they plot evil against Me!" And it is [further] stated (Hosea 11:3), "I have pampered Ephraim, taking them in My arms; but they have ignored My healing care."

And one who trusts God should hold on during the vision of his distress; for the darkness will be the cause for the light - as it is written (Micah 7:8), "Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy; since I have fallen, I rise again; since I sit in darkness, the Lord is my light." And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Midrash Tehillim 22), "If I had not fallen, I would not have risen; If I had not sat in darkness, the Lord would not have been my light." And every single person on the day of his trouble should put into his heart to understand and afflict himself, [together] with the repentance and prayer - just like the community is obligated to fast and afflict themselves at the time of their trouble, as the Sages, may their memory be blessed, ordained. And that fast day is chosen and is a day of acceptance. And when the rebuke of God, may He be blessed, comes to a man that is pure and straight, it becomes a test, and enhances his reward in the world to come - as it is stated (Deuteronomy 8:16), "in order to test you by hardships only to benefit you in the end." And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Berakhot 5a), "[If] one searched his deeds at the time of his trouble, sought out and investigated, but did not find a sin - these are certainly afflictions of love."

And included in this path that we mentioned is repentance on the day of death, when the sinner sees that his evil has finished him and hope is lost - as it is written (Proverbs 11:7), "At death the hopes of a wicked man are lost" - when he confesses at that time and repents to God with a full heart. And this repentance also is effective, even though it does not reach the repentance of one who repents with his full strength, as we have discussed in the first chapter.

The second path is when the days of old age come and the days of sagacity arrive - his strength fails and diminishes, his impulse bows and he also remembers that his end is near and understands his finish - so he repents to God, and God has mercy upon him. But if he does not repent when the days of old age come, his punishment is redoubled and the animosity towards him is increased - as our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Pesachim 113b), "There are three that the Holy One, blessed be He, hates: An arrogant pauper; a wealthy person who denies [monetary claims against him]; and a lecherous old man." And it is stated (Hosea 7:9), "Strangers have consumed his strength, but he has taken no notice; also, grey hair is scattered over him, but he has taken no notice." And it is a wonder and a surprise that a man stand at half of his days and see that the days are passing and lessening, that the destruction of the building has begun, that the state of his condition is dwindling and that he see himself drying up - as the matter is stated (Psalms 102:12), "My days are like a lengthening shadow; I dry up like grass" - how is it that he can seal his eyes from seeing and his heart from understanding, and not see that he is traveling to a place that is his permanent home, walking and going [to it] day and night?

But there are many people for which the light of repentance is obstructed. For since they are innocent and pure in their eyes, they do not avail themselves of the rectification of their actions - as it appears to them that they are [already] rectified, whereas they sin much to God. Is it not written (Ecclesiastes 7:20), "For there is no righteous man on earth who does what is best and doesn't sin?" But since these people belittle iniquities, they do not feel or understand it; or when

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they are made known of their sins, it is afterwards forgotten from their hearts. And behold they are like a sick person who does not feel his sickness, so he does not think of a cure. So his sickness constantly gets worse, until he is not able to be healed. And sometimes the reason for this is from their lack of understanding. For they do not go to seek God and do not want to know His ways. Therefore they do not regularly [visit] the doors of the sages and the [Torah] students, like the matter is stated (Proverbs 15:12), "The scoffer dislikes being reproved; he will not resort to the wise."

And behold [with] people who are righteous and straight of heart, what constantly roars like a lion in their thoughts and growls like the sea is their sins, and their hands falling short from the service of God. For about [the latter] - when a person transgresses, his guilt grows as with weighty sins, like the matter that our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yerushalmi Chagigah 1:7), "The Holy One, blessed be He, forwent about [prohibited] sexual relations, but did not forego about the nullification of Torah (wasting time that should be spent in Torah study). Especially since these people's main thoughts and actions are matters of their body and the vanities of their time, they have done much evil. But to the secret of fear, their souls should not come; and their glory should not be associated with the study of their consciences in the images of their hearts and chambers, and their images for fixed times within which they do not give a portion to Torah [study] among their occupations. And the calculation of their souls has been lost from within their hearts, for they are a nation that loses its counsel. And how much are they on the lowest level! And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Avot 5:21), "At sixty, old age; at seventy, fullness of years; at eighty, the age of strength; at ninety, a bent body; at one hundred, as good as dead and gone completely out of the world." And their intention, may their memory be blessed, with these words was to warn about repentance - that when a man reaches the days of old age, he should think about his end, if he did not merit to do so in the days of his youth. And since his time is close to coming, he should leave the matters of his body and his desires and rectify his soul. And when he reaches the days of fullness of years, he should add to the removal of [involvement with] the world from his heart. And according to the reduction of years [left], he should reduce his occupation in the world. And he should constantly seclude himself to meditate about fear of God, to think about his soul, to refine his traits and to seek Torah and [its] commandments. And that which they said, "at ninety, a bent (lasuach) body" is from the [same usage as in] (Psalms 102:1), "spill his prayer (sicho)" [and] (Genesis 24:63), "to pray (lasuach) in the field" - as our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Berakhot 26b), "Isaac established the afternoon prayers, as it is stated, "to pray (lasuach) in the field." For after one reaches ninety years, it is fitting for him that all of his occupation should be with prayer and praises of God, and to speak about His wonders. And King Solomon, peace be upon him, spoke about the matter of the days of old age - that a person should not then be lazy about service to God, may He be blessed. And he said (Ecclesiastes 11:6), "Sow your seed in the morning, and don't hold back your hand in the evening, since you don't know which is going to succeed, the one or the other, or if both are equally good." He compared the days of childhood and youth to the morning and the days of old age to evening. And seed is metaphoric for children and for students, as our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yevamot 62b), "If he married a woman in his youth, he should marry [another] one in his old age; if he established students in his youth, he should establish [other] students in his old age." For perhaps the children of old age will be more successful in Torah and in the commandments than the children of youth. And likewise the students that he establishes in his old age may be more successful than the first

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ones. Or they could both be equally good. Afterwards, he stated (Ecclesiastes 11:7), "How sweet is the light, what a delight for the eyes to behold the sun!" Its explanation is that he went back to speaking about the days of old age which he compared to the evening. And since an old man will not taste that which he eats and that which he drinks - like the words of Barzilai the Gileadite - he stated that the old man should enjoy the light of the sun and not be disgusted by it. As disgust obstructs a person from his service to the Heavens. So he should enjoy the light, when he compares it to the days of darkness that are coming - as it mentions in the verse below this (Ecclesiastes 11:8), "Even if a man lives many years, let him enjoy himself in all of them, remembering how many the days of darkness are going to be; the only future is nothingness!" The explanation is that even if a person get very old, let him not be a burden to himself. Rather he should rejoice in all of his years, so that he not lose one of his years and not rest from the service of the Creator. And he should remember the days of darkness, for they will be many. And then he will not be able to perform the service, like the matter that is stated (Psalms 6:6), "in the pit, who can acclaim You?" And the righteous ones overcome their old age, gird their power and renew their strength for the service of God. It is as our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Shabbat 152), "As Torah scholars grow older, wisdom is increased in them." And it is stated (Psalms 92:15), "In old age they still produce fruit; they are full of sap and freshness." And he mentioned above (Psalms 92:13-14), "The righteous bloom like a date-palm, etc. Planted in the house of the Lord, etc." For the righteous are planted in the house of the Lord from their youth, and grow in the house of study from their young adulthood - like a date-palm that blossoms and like a cedar that grows in the Lebanon. And as our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, likewise said, (Midrash Tehillim 92:14), "'The righteous bloom like a date-palm' - these are the infants, in the way that it was stated (Psalms 144:12), 'For our sons are like saplings, well-tended in their youth.'" And he stated after this about this thing, that they are not [completely] compared to trees. For trees will not give their strength when they age. But the righteous "in old age, they still produce fruit." And King David, peace be upon him, also stated (Psalms 71:18), "And even in hoary old age do not forsake me, God, until I proclaim Your strength to the next generation, Your mighty acts, to all who are to come."

The third path is [that] when he hears reproof from the sages that are reprimanding [him], he listens, submits, repents and accepts in his heart all the words of reprimand - and not subtract one thing from their words. And behold that man went out from darkness to a great light at that instant. For at the time that he listened and paid attention and his heart understood and repented and accepted the words of the rebuker on the day he heard them, and took upon himself to do like everything that the holders of Torah instructed him - from that day onward - to be careful as the knowers of understanding of the times instructed him: His repentance is effective and he is changed into a different person. And from the time that he accepted this in his heart, he acquired merit and reward for his soul for all of the commandments and ethical acts. And happy is he for justifying his soul in a short time. And so did our Rabbis, may their memory be well, say (Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael, 12:28), "And the Children of Israel went and did' - and did they do it right away? Did they not only do it on the fourteenth of the month? Rather since they accepted upon themselves to do it, [the verse] counts it for them as if they did it immediately." And he said in Avot of Rabbi Natan (Avot d'Rabbi Natan 22), "Anyone whose actions are greater than his wisdom - his wisdom will endure, as it is stated (Exodus 24:7), 'we shall do and we shall listen.'" The explanation of the thing is that when a man accepts upon himself with a faithful heart to keep and do according to the

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Torah that he was taught and about the law which those sitting upon judgement told him - from that day, he has the reward for all of the commandments that his ear heard and that he understood, [as well as] for all of the things which his ear has still not heard about. So he wore righteousness and acquired merit for all of what was revealed to him and for all that was hidden from his eyes. And after this, he should study from and regularly attend the doors of those that reprimanded him, and comprehend [the teachings] of all that teach him. And it comes out that the actions of this man are greater than his wisdom, since he did not know the thing, but behold its reward (for it) is with him. And it is like the matter that Israel said, "We shall do and we shall listen," at [Mount] Sinai - as they had the acceptance of the deed upon themselves, precede the listening. And in no other way it is possible for the actions of a man to be greater than what he knows.

But the one who does not get aroused by the voice of his rebukers will double his iniquities. For they reprimanded him and he hardened his heart - as it is stated (Proverbs 17:10-11), "A rebuke works on an intelligent man, more than one hundred blows on a fool. An evil man seeks only to rebel; a cruel messenger will be sent against him." The explanation is that the evil man will not submit to the voice of the rebukers. Rather he will seek to rebel. And since he did not stop from the words of the reprimanding angel, a cruel angel will be sent against him - measure for measure. For rebukers are called angels (malakhim, which literally means messengers), as it is stated (II Chronicles 36:16), "But they mocked the messengers of God and disdained His words and taunted His prophets." And King Solomon, peace be upon him, also said (Proverbs 15:10), "Discipline seems bad to him who forsakes the way; he who spurns rebuke will die." Its explanation is [that] it is true that harsh rebuke is appropriate for one who has forsaken the way and transgresses the words of the Torah. However there is hope that he will take the rebuke and repent from his evil way. But worse than him is one who hates rebuke. For he has no hope and rectification from harsh rebuke. Rather his one verdict is to die. For one who does a transgression - his desire overpowered him and the impulse pushed him. But it is likely that his soul is bitter about that which he was [not stronger] in the face of his impulse. And maybe he longs for reprimand and hopes for reproof. But one who hates reprimand has already abandoned his soul; and his hatred for reprimand will be a proof that he hates the words of God, may He be blessed.

King Solomon, peace be upon him, also said (Proverbs 15:30-31) "What brightens the eye gladdens the heart; good news puts fat on the bones. He whose ear heeds the reprimand of life lodges among the wise." And every wise-hearted person should know that it is not likely that King Solomon, peace be upon him, composed idle words like these [in the middle of] words of reproof and fear of God for nothing - since Scripture has already testified about him (I Kings 5:11), "He was the wisest of all men." Rather this is the understanding of the thing: "What brightens the eye gladdens the heart" - the eye is a very esteemed organ, for they will see all the events that gladden the heart with it. But more esteemed than it is the ear, for they will hear good news, that puts fat on the bones, through it. For [the ear] has no feeling and it will not be fattened from the light of the eyes, unless it is a special enjoyment. And so did our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, say (Bava Kamma 85b) that the ear is more esteemed than the other organs. For if one blinded his eye, he must pay for the value of his eye; but if he makes him deaf, he pays all of his value. And truly a person is obligated to serve, God, may He be blessed, with his limbs. And they were all formed for His service - as it is written, (Proverbs 16:4), "The Lord made everything for His sake." Even with the esteemed limbs that He formed in him, is he obligated to serve their Maker. And the great punishment is even much greater if he prevents them from doing His commandments, he

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does not do the service with them and he does not pay back the good that is done through them. For with his esteemed senses, God gave him a great kindness; and He crowned him with beauty and glory through them. Therefore he prefaced to mention one of the virtues of the ear in order for you to see the greatness of the obligation of its service. And afterwards, he explained that the service of the ear should be in listening to reprimand; and he said "He whose ear heeds the reprimand of life lodges among the wise." Its explanation is [that] it is fitting to dwell among the sages, since he can [then] listen to their reprimands. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Shemot Rabbah 27:9), If a man falls from a roof and all of his limbs are broken, he needs a bandage and a plaster for every one of his limbs and his bones. And a sinner who has sinned with all of his limbs is considered as if he received a great wound on all of his limbs - from the sole of his foot to his crown, as it is stated (Isaiah 1:6), 'From head to foot, no spot is sound.'" But behold the Holy One, blessed be He, heals all of his limbs with one bandage. And that is the listening of the ear, as it is stated (Isaiah 55:3), "Incline your ear and come to Me; hearken, and you shall be revived."

The fourth path is [that] when a man meditates upon the Torah of God and reads the words of the Prophets and the Writings and understands the pleasantness of the reprimands and sees the warnings and the punishments - he trembles and prepares his heart to improve his ways and his plans and become acceptable to God, as it is stated (Isaiah 66:2), "Yet to such a one I look - to the poor and brokenhearted, who trembles about My word." And likewise is it written about the matter of Yoshiyahu (II Kings 22:11), "And when the king heard the words of the scroll of the Torah, he rent his clothes." And about the matter of Ezra it is stated (Nehemiah 8:9), "for all the people were weeping as they listened to the words of the Torah." And the one that does not pay attention to the words of God will have his transgression become greater for him, like the matter that is stated (Jeremiah 36:24), "yet they showed no fear and did not tear their garments." And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yerushalmi Berakhot 1:1), "Anyone who studies but does not uphold [what he learned] - it would have been better that his placenta would have flipped itself on his face, and he had not come out to the light of the world." And it is stated (Hosea 8:12), "The many teachings I wrote for him have been treated as something alien." And it is [also] stated (Jeremiah 8:8), "How can you say, 'We are wise, and we possess the Torah of the Lord'; assuredly, for naught has the pen labored, for naught the scribe."

The fifth path is [that] on the ten days of repentance, the heart of one who fears the Lord will pine inside himself, knowing in his mind that all of his deeds are written in a book and that at that time, God brings all of His creation to judgement about all that is hidden - whether for the good or for the bad. For man is judged on Rosh Hashanah and his final verdict is sealed on Yom Kippur. And at a time that he knows that they will bring his case in front of a king of flesh and blood, does he not tremble greatly, seek counsel for himself and scurry industriously to find a way to escape? And it does not come to his spirit to turn to the right or to the left or to occupy himself with the rest of his business. And he will not break up and furrow his land nor turn through the vineyards. And on a day of distress, he will not falter from preparing his heart to escape like a deer from the hand [of the hunter]. Therefore how foolish are those who go out to their labors and their work until the evening on the Days of Awe - days of judgement and verdict - and do not know what their verdict will be. Is it not that their hearts are preoccupied [even] about their sister on the day when she will be spoken for - as it is stated (Song of Songs 8:8), "What shall we do for our sister when she is spoken for?" And it is fitting for anyone that fears God to reduce his affairs, so that his ideas are

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at ease; to fix times during the day and night to seclude himself in his rooms, search his ways and investigate; to be early to the watches and occupy himself with the ways of repentance and the refinement of action; and to pour out speech, raise prayer and song and to lay down supplication. And this time is a time of [good] will, and prayer will be heard on it - like the matter that is stated (Isaiah 49:8), "In an hour of favor I answer you, and on a day of salvation I help you." And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Rosh Hashanah 18a), "'Seek the Lord while He can be found' - these are the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur." And it is a positive commandment from the Torah for a man to arouse his spirit to repent on Yom Kippur, as it is stated (Leviticus 16:30), "of all your sins, you shall be pure before the Lord." Therefore Scripture warned us that we should purify ourselves before God with our repentance; and He will atone for us on that day to purify us.

The sixth path is that he should prepare to meet his God every instant. Therefore he should darken his conscience and prepare in righteousness to return his soul in purity to God who gave it [to him]. So he should search his ways and his plans every day - record them in the mornings and examine them all the time. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Shabbat 153a), "Rabbi Eliezer says, 'Repent one day before your death.' His students asked him, 'Our teacher, but does a person know the day on which he will die?' He said to them, 'All the more so should one repent today, lest he die tomorrow; and so one will spend his entire life in [a state of] repentance.'" And it states (Ecclesiastes 9:8), "Let your clothes always be white, and your head never lack oil." The whiteness of clothes is a metaphor for the cleanliness of the soul that has repented; and the oil is a metaphor for good deeds and a good name. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, also said about this matter (Kohelet Rabbah 9:6), "There is a [relevant] parable about the wife of a sailor who would adorn herself and paint her eyes while her husband was traveling on the seaways. So her neighbors said to her, 'Didn't your husband go on a faraway journey? So isn't this beautifying of yourself for naught?' She said to them, 'My husband is a sailor. Maybe the sea wind will change and ease it for him to come quickly and he will find me - and behold I [will be] adorned.'" And when a person is at ease and tranquil, he should assess in his soul how his heart will worry, fear and tremble when the day of death comes to him - that he should be prepared to rise and give an accounting; and how he will give a confession with a crushed heart at the time of his death. So the fear of heaven will be upon him.

And a person should always be performing new commandments - maybe the turn of his death has come, and he will [otherwise] not perform these commandments. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Kohelet Rabbah 1:28), "Anyone who performs a commandment close to his death is as if he performed the entire Torah and was only lacking this commandment. And anyone who performs a transgression close to his death is as if he negated the whole Torah."

But there are people that do not sense the matter of death, to make provisions for the road and to rectify their actions; and they do not pay attention to the day of their death until it comes. So they are compared to animals that do not sense the matter of death until the day of slaughter - as it is stated, (Psalms 49:15), "Sheeplike they head for the pit, with death as their shepherd; the upright shall rule over them in the morning, and their form - from above him - shall waste away in the pit." Its explanation is: They lead their souls to the pit, since they don't sense the matter of their death until its sudden arrival. "With death as their shepherd" - the death of evildoers is not like the death of animals; the death of animals is once, but the death of the evildoers will shepherd them every

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day. [That shepherd can be a verb in the continuous present is indicated] from the wording, "shepherd Bashan and Gilead" (Micah 7:14); and from the content of (Job 18:13), "death's first-born consumes his tendons." For destruction and deterioration will cling to the soul of the evildoers at every instant, until it is destroyed, ends and is gone. "The upright shall rule over them in the morning" - it compared the time of the resurrection of the dead to the morning, when a man wakes up from his sleep; and like the matter that is stated (Daniel 12:2), "Many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth will awake." For then the righteous will rule over the evildoers, as it is written (Malachi 3:21), "And you shall trample the wicked to a pulp, for they shall be dust beneath your feet." And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said about the matter of the day of judgement for the resurrection of the dead (Rosh Hashanah 17a), "After twelve months, their bodies end, and their souls are burnt and become ashes under the feet of the righteous - as it is stated, 'And you shall trample the wicked, etc.'" [And it is written (Psalms 49:15),] "And their form (tsuram) shall waste away in the pit" - tsuram is like tsuratam (the conventional way of writing, their form). Likewise, "idols, ketvunam" (Hosea 13:2), is understood as ketvunatam. And the soul is called the form of man. But there are some among those who speak about the soul that said, about the definition of the soul, that it is a (essential) [contingent] form. And the explanation of the matter is that the pit wears out the evildoer's soul. And it is "above (zevul) him" - for the soul is from the higher beings. [This is seen] from the wording (Isaiah 63:15), "from Your holy height (zevul)." And with his sins, the evildoer caused and brought about that his precious and elevated soul that is above him will be worn out by the pit below. And how difficult is death for the one who has not separated desires of the world from his soul until it is separated by death! And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said in Tractate Derekh Erets, "Is your will not to die? Die before you die." The explanation of the matter is [that] the one that wants that the day of his death be [a gateway] for him to eternal life should speak to his heart - since his end is to leave the ground and to leave the matters of the body, and in his end, he will despise them and abandon them; he should leave them when he is [still] alive, and only use the ground for service to the Creator, may He be blessed. And then the day of death will be [the beginning] of life without end for him.

And know that the soul of the evildoer whose entire desire while alive is for the things of the body - the desire of which is separated from service to the Creator and is removed from its roots - will in his death descend to the ground, to the place of its desire. And its destiny will be - like the nature of the ground - to descend and not to arise. However it will be brought up for justice and for trial and to see how it exchanged the above for the pit - like they bring up a stone to the hollow of a slingshot. But after they raise [the stone] up - by its nature - it comes down to the ground, when the stone comes back and falls down to the ground after [its] projection, as it is stated (I Samuel 25:29), "the life of my lord will be bound up in the bundle of life in the care of the Lord, your God; but He will fling away the lives of your enemies as from the hollow of a sling." And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said in Midrash Mishlei (Kohelet Rabbah 3:27), "Both the souls of the righteous and the souls of the evildoers [rise above and are judged there: The souls of the righteous are triumphant in their trial and hidden under the Throne of Glory, but the souls of evildoers] are eaten away to the ground, as it is stated, 'but He will fling away the lives of your enemies, etc.'" And it is stated (Proverbs 11:7), "At death the hopes of a wicked man are lost." For there is no hope for the soul of an evildoer to leave from the darkness to the light, as it is stated (Psalms 49:20), "yet he must join the company of his ancestors, who will never see daylight again."

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Behold it has been explained from the two verses that we mentioned - [as well as] from the words of the Sages, may their memory be blessed - that the soul of the evildoers goes down to the pit. And it has also been stated (Proverbs 15:24), "For an intelligent man the path of life leads upward, in order to avoid the pit below." And it has also been stated (Ecclesiastes 3:21), "Who knows if the spirit of men does rise upward and if a beast's spirit does sink down into the earth?" The explanation [of this] is who can recognize the righteous ones and the evildoers in this world? For there are evildoers whose actions are in the dark, and people will not know it about them; and there are righteous ones that fear the Heavens in private, like the matter that is stated (Micah 6:8), "and walk humbly." And he called the soul of an evildoer, the soul of a beast, because it follows its physical desire like a beast. And [this is] like the matter that is stated (Jonah 4:11), "who do not yet know their right hand from their left, and many beasts as well!" But he called the righteous ones, "the spirit of men" - like the matter that is stated (Ezekiel 34:31), "you are men." And the explanation of the wording of the verse is like this: Who knows the spirit of men - which are the righteous ones - which goes above; for there are many righteous people that a person cannot determine in this world that they are truly righteous, and that their souls will arise above, like the matter that is stated (I Samuel 16:7), "man sees only what is visible, but the Lord sees into the heart." And also since there are many righteous ones whose fear of the Heavens is secret, and their righteousness is not known, and like the matter that is stated, (Micah 6:8), "and walk humbly with your God." "And the beast's spirit, etc." is that there also many evildoers that a man would not recognize from their actions, like the matter that is stated (Isaiah 29:15), "who do their work in dark places and say, 'Who sees us, who takes note of us?'" And they, may their memory be blessed, likewise explained in Midrash Kohelet (Kohelet Rabbah 3:21) that the "spirit of men" is the righteous ones, "and the beast's spirit" is the evildoers. But a person cannot say that he is in doubt whether the soul of a man rise up; for behold it is written (Ecclesiastes 12:7), "and the spirit returns to God who bestowed it." And also how can he doubt whether the spirit of a beast descends below? Is the spirit of a beast not from the earth? So how could it rise? And it is explained in the Torah that the soul of man is supernal. As it is written about the spirit of an animal that it is from the ground, as it is stated (Genesis 1:24), "Let the earth bring forth living spirits according to their specie." But about the spirit of man, it is written (Genesis 2:7), "and He blew into his nostrils a living soul." Therefore the soul of man rises above with the death of the body; since all things return to their source, like the matter that is stated (Ecclesiastes 12:7), "And the dust returns to the ground as it was, and the spirit returns to God who bestowed it." And it is stated about the soul of the righteous one (Zechariah 3:7), "and I will permit you to move about among these ones standing." Its explanation is among the angels that are standing and enduring - as it is stated (Psalms 148:6), "And He made them stand forever." And it is [also] stated (Daniel 7:16), "approached one of the standing." And they, may their memory be blessed, said (Shabbat 152b), "The souls of the righteous are hidden under the Throne of Glory, as it is stated (I Samuel 25:29), "the life of my lord will be bound up in the bundle of life." And all men of heart will consider this world like a temporary dwelling; so they will only use it for the service of the Creator, may He be blessed, and prepare provisions for their souls. For if a man lives many years - even if he lived twice a thousand years - since there is a number to his years, the number will end, and his end will be as if they had not been. But the world of repayment has no end, like the matter that is stated (Job 16:22), "For a few more years will pass, and I shall go the way of no return." Even more so, since the days of man are like a passing shadow, like the matter that is stated (Psalms 90:10), "The span of our life is seventy years, etc." And it is [also] stated (Psalms 144:4), "his days are like a

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passing shadow." And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Kohelet Rabbah 1:3), "Not like the shadow of a tree or the shadow of a wall, but rather like the shadow of a flying and passing bird." It means to say a person is obligated to compare in his heart, this world to the shadow of a bird that if flying and passes over in a small instant - especially since a man does not know whether he is here today but in the grave tomorrow. And it would come out in his efforts today for tomorrow, that he has taken pains for a world that is not his. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Sanhedrin 100b), "Grieve not about tomorrow's trouble, because you know not what a day may bring."

And King Solomon, peace be upon him, essentially composed the book of Ecclesiastes in order that man put to his heart that the world is a vanity of vanities and [that] he only use it for the service of the Creator, may He be elevated. And he made his intention known in his introduction and his conclusion: For he opened and said, (Ecclesiastes 1:2), "Vanity of vanities, said Kohelet, vanity of vanities - everything is vanity." And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Kohelet Rabbah 3:13), "If another man had said this, we would have said, 'Maybe he has not gathered two small coins in his entire days; therefore the world is considered like vanity in his eyes.' However it is appropriate for King Solomon - about whom it is written (I Kings 1:27), 'The king made silver as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones' -to say that the world is vanity of vanities." And he concluded his book and said (Ecclesiastes 12:13), "The sum of the matter, when all is said and done; revere God and observe His commandments, for this is all of man."

And whoever God, may He blessed, has graced with intelligence should place into his heart that God, may He be blessed, has sent him into this world to keep His watch, His statutes and His commandments. And he should only open his eyes to do his mission. And at the end of days - if he did his mission trust-worthily - he comes back with joy and with eternal gladness upon his head; like a servant that the king has sent to cross the sea, whose eyes and heart are only upon the matter of his agency until he returns to his master. And likewise did King Solomon, peace be upon him, say (Proverbs 22:19-21), "That you may put your trust in the Lord, etc. To let you know truly reliable words, that you may give a faithful reply to him who sent you."

And among the things for which a person is obligated to remember the day of death is in order that he not waste [time] and his hands not falter from the service of God, may He be blessed; that he remove sleep from his eyes to toil in Torah [study] and to contemplate fear of God, to refine the traits of his soul [so as] to reach levels of fear and love; and to think thoughts of how to enhance and beatify the commandments such that his soul should be a charm and a treasure - like the matter that is stated (Proverbs 10:8), "He whose heart is wise accepts commandments." For he will know and remember that the days are short - as our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Avot 2:15), "The day is short, and the work is plentiful, and the laborers are indolent, and the reward is great, and the Master of the house is insistent."

But the one who does not always remember the day of his death is similar in his own eyes to one who has extra time and calm (mitun) to reach his goal. (It appears to me that it is from the usage [in Avot 1:1], "be patient [matunim] in judgement." And in Berkhhot 20a, [we read], matun [which can also mean two hundred] and matun is equal to four hundred zuz.) And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Avot 4:17), "more precious is one hour in repentance and good deeds in this world, than all the life of the world to come; and more precious is one hour of the tranquility of the world to come, than all the life of this world."

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And likewise did King Solomon, peace be upon him, say (Kohelet 9:4) "For he who is connected with the living has hope - even a live dog is better than a dead lion." Its explanation is that he praised life in this world with regards to repentance, performance of commandment[s] and attainment of spiritual virtues. And this is the hope that is found for those connected with the living. And the explanation of "even a live dog" is that even a lowly man that is alive can add to his spiritual virtues - which is not the case for a righteous sage that is dead. But in another place, he disgraced and condemned this world, regarding the attainment of pleasures and honor, and said (Kohelet 1:3) "What advantage is there for a man in all of his toil that he does beneath the sun?" And he also said (Kohelet 4:2), "Then I accounted those who died long since more fortunate than those who are still living."

And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Avot 3:1), "Keep your eye on three things, and you will not come to sin [...] From where did you come? From a putrid drop. And to where are you going? To a place of dust, worms, and maggots. And before whom are you destined to give an account and a reckoning? Before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He." The explanation of the content is [that] when you think of from where you came, your spirit will be humbled and you will hate pride. And when you remember where you are going, you will scorn the world, recognize that its superfluous luxuries are nothing and only be involved with it for the service of the Creator, may He be blessed. And when you put into your heart in front of whom you will be giving a reckoning, fear of the Heavens will be upon you. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Genesis Rabbah 9:5), "'And God saw all that He had made, and found it very good' (Genesis 1:31) - this ('very good') is death." For even death is good, so as to subdue spirits, that there be fear of God upon the hearts and that they not make this world into the main one. But there are people that do not give time to their souls to understand their ends, because of their preoccupation with acquisitions of the world - like the matter that is stated (Job 4:21), "Their cord is moved, and they die, and not with wisdom." Its explanation is, is not their cord (yeteram, which can also be understood as their excess or advantage) - their money - moved from them in their move; for behold they have no benefit from it [when they die], yet it lost much good for them. For it caused them to die without wisdom, as they did not show wisdom to understand their end, to rectify their souls and prepare provisions for their journey, - like the matter that is stated, (Deuteronomy 32:29), "Were they wise, they would think upon this, gain insight into their future."

And behold we shall conclude this topic with an esteemed statement of the Sages of Israel, may their memory be blessed: Hillel, peace be upon him, used to say (Avot 1:14), "If I am not for myself, who is for me? And if not now, when?" The explanation of the content is [that] if a person does not arouse his soul, what effect can reproof have? For even if they enter his heart on the day that he hears them, the impulse will forget them and drive them out of his heart, like the matter of that which was stated (Hosea 6:4) "when your goodness is like a morning cloud." And it is [also] stated (Proverbs 10:20), "The tongue of a righteous man is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little worth (kimeat)." Its explanation is that the reproof of a righteous man is pure without any dross, and his speech is chosen. But the heart of the evildoers that listen to his reproof is [only for] one instant. This is from the usage (Psalms 81:15), "then would I subdue their enemies instantly (kimeat)" - the meaning of which is, in an instant would I subdue their enemies. And [only] an understanding and refined heart is called a heart, as it is stated (Proverbs 15:32), "he who heeds reproof acquires heart"; and (Proverbs 17:16), "to purchase wisdom, when he has no heart?" Indeed, a man must arouse his heart when he hears reproof and place the things into his heart, to

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constantly think about them. And he should add teaching from his own heart and produce words. He should also meditate in the chambers of his spirit and repent, to turn the hand of the reproof upon himself and not just rely upon the rebuke of the rebuker. [Otherwise, that] rebuke will be like morning clouds, and for [fleeting] instants, until he takes the reproof upon himself and until he purifies himself. "But if I am for my own self [only], what am I?" Even when I am for myself and I reflect upon wisdom all the time, what am I? For the grasp of a man is short and weak. So [even] with the effort and the refinement, he will only attain a little of the virtues - see what I am and what my life is when I am not for myself, to make efforts to refine my soul. And the comparison here is to a field that is inferior. For with great toil and refinement, and with much work, it will bring out a small [amount of] seed. But if they do not toil in its refinement, it will not produce [anything] and no grass will grow in it besides thorns and brambles. However there is benefit in sowing a superior field - even if he does not toil in working it. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said about this matter (Avot D' Rabbi Natan 16), "That which it is written (Psalms 103:14), 'For He knows our formation' - there is a [relevant] metaphor of a king that gave a field to his servants and warned them to work it and guard it, and to bring him thirty kor from it each year. And they toiled on it and worked it well, but only brought five kor in front of the king. He said to them, 'What have you done?' They said to him, 'Our master, the king, the field that you gave us was inferior, and we worked it with all of our strength. But with all of the toil, it did not make more grain than this.'" "And if not now, when?" It is not appropriate for me to delay my efforts, a day or two, in refining my soul and fixing set times for Torah [study]. For if I say, "I shall hope for leisure time and until I have enough money in my hands for my needs" - behold the distractions of the world do not stop. As our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Avot 2:4), "Say not, 'When I shall have leisure I shall study,' lest you will not have leisure."

And the second [reason not to delay] is after he gathers and brings in [produce or other income], he will still long to gather. As our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Kohelet Rabbah 1:13), "A man does not depart the world with half of what he desires in his hands. If he has a hundred in his hands, he will desire to make two hundred; if his hands attained two hundred, he desires to make them four hundred." And so is it written (Ecclesiastes 5:9), "A lover of money never has his fill of money."

And the third [reason] is that the time decreases and the work is plentiful: The work of Torah [study], refinement of the soul and attainment of the virtues - such as love, fear and cleaving. As they, may their memory be blessed, said (Avot 2:15), "the day is short, and the work is plentiful."

The fourth [reason] is that when refinement of the soul is delayed, iniquity will happen and he will constantly stumble over transgressions.

The fifth [reason] is that with the delay of the refinement of the soul, the impulse continually strengthens. So it will be more difficult for him to refine his soul afterwards, as it is written (Proverbs 24:31), "It was all overgrown with thorns, etc." And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said that when the impulse is connected to transgression, it will become similar to the matter of heresy - and his hands will not attain his purification. And they said in the ethical teachings, "Habit about anything controls."

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The sixth [reason] is that maybe his days will not be long and he will die before he completes the measure of his repentance. Therefore, Solomon warned (Ecclesiastes 9:8), "Let your clothes always be white."

The seventh [reason] is that with his delay in repentance, his iniquities will be old, and he will forget their anguish. So he will not worry about them as [he would have] earlier.

The eighth [reason] is that in his getting on in days and the weakening of the strength of the impulse, he will not receive the [same] reward for the repentance as it would be for the refinement of his heart during the days of his youth. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Avodah Zarah 19a), "'Happy is the man who fears the Lord' (Psalms 112:1) - when he is still a man." And they [also] said (Sanhedrin 22a), "When the thief is lacking [what] to steal, he makes himself like a man of peace."

The ninth [reason] is that during the days of his old age - with the absence of the power of emotion - he does not have the reserve of strength to create new paths in his heart, to arrange thoughts with which to fight his impulse, to attain virtues and to toil and strive in Torah and in [his] actions (and in the worlds). As it is written (Ecclesiastes 12:1), "So remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before those days of sorrow come and those years arrive of which you will say, 'I have no pleasure in them.'" Therefore, it is appropriate for a person to rush to save his soul, like the matter that is stated (Psalms 119:60), "I have rushed and not delayed to keep Your commandments."

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#### **We shall explain the severity of the [positive] commandments and the warnings (negative commandments) and different punishments**

For the penitent is warned to search his ways, and [gauge] how many iniquities and sins [he has done]. And after his search is done, he is warned to examine the magnitude of each sin - as it is stated (Lamentations 3:40), "Let us search and examine our ways" - in order for him to know how much he is guilty for each sin that he sinned. For there is guilt that is big [enough] to reach the skies, and there is evil that corresponds to several big sins. For repentance is great according to investigations of the heart like these. As according to his knowledge of the greatness of the iniquity and its largeness will his heart trouble him. And he will then be able to subdue his uncircumcised heart, and his iniquities will then be atoned.

Moreover, the examination of the enormity of the iniquity will help to 'cover the mortification of his face' during his request for forgiveness, like the matter that is stated, (Ezra 9:6), "O my God, I am too ashamed and mortified to lift my face to You, O my God"; to wrap his soul in shame before God, may He be blessed, after the assurance of His forgiveness, like the matter that is stated, (Ezekiel 16:63), "In order that you shall remember and feel shame, and you shall be too abashed to open your mouth again when I have forgiven you for all that you did"; and that the greatness of the kindness of the atonement be in front of his eyes, like the matter that is stated (Psalms 26:3), "For Your kindness is in front of my eyes." And the parable for this is that if a slave sinned to his master and [then] comes to humble himself in front of him, [the master's] soul would not pay attention to him until after [the slave] knew of the weightiness of his sin. But if it appears to [the slave] like the sin is light, [the master's] rage against him would [only] grow. Therefore the sinner is obligated to recognize the enormity of his sin and its punishment, like the matter that is stated (I Samuel 26:21), "behold I have been a fool, and I have erred so very much." Therefore we need to teach the Children of Judah - for instruction and message - the weightiness of the punishments of each iniquity and of each sin. Hence [the need] for all these words of introduction. And another sublime, great and trenchant purpose is that I have surely seen most of the people thinking about several weighty transgressions that they are light; and about [sins that carry] the death penalty or excision, that concern about them is [just] greater refinement or a measure of piety. So they stumble without paying attention; and there is no rebuke, like the matter that is stated (Isaiah 48:8), "even from yore, your ears were not opened." Therefore we need to warn them and to have their ears revealed about the weightiness of many sins, and that there are [also] many ways and angles to the light commandments that [lead] to decreed destruction and loss of the soul. And many of the evildoers would leave their paths if they will know the loss and damage that [comes] with it, when they hear about the greatness of the sin and the [punishment] which is decreed about it. [This is] so those that stumble will gird their power to conquer their desire. For how could they see the destruction of their souls [and not react]?

And the parable for this is about a man that wants to go to a city. And he is told that the path is confounded with thorns, snares and stumbling blocks. But because of his need for the place, he is not prevented from going. But if they would tell him that there is a lion on the path and a leopard constantly on it, he would then stop his feet from this path. Therefore King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 1:2), "For learning wisdom and reproof; for understanding." Its

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explanation is [that] proper action and abandonment of sins is called wisdom, like the matter that is stated (Deuteronomy 4:6), “for that is your wisdom and your understanding.” But after he learns and know the commandments and what are the sins, he needs to study the disgrace of the sins, and the damage and the loss that comes with them - in order to distance his soul from them; to reprimand himself by remembering the punishments and to reprove others. And this knowledge is called reproof (mussar); and it is pleasant for those that give rebuke to study this.

Now we will explain the levels of the [positive and negative] commandments and the allotment of the punishments: The first level is the severity of the words of the Scribes: We were obligated by the Torah to accept the ordinances of the prophets and the judges, to obey the words of sages and to be careful with their fences, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 17:11), “you must not deviate from the thing that they tell you either to the right or to the left.” And even though we have also been warned by the Torah to be steadfast to do everything that they instructed us, nevertheless positive commandments [directly] from the Torah are more weighty than their words - since the essence of the thing is mentioned explicitly in the scroll of God’s Torah, and God, may He be blessed, commanded it specifically. But there are ways and angles in which words of the Scribes are more weighty than the words of the Torah - like our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Sanhedrin 88b), “(With regards to the rulings of the rebellious elder,) there is greater stringency to the words of the Scribes than to the words of the Torah. For one who states, ‘There is no commandment to don tefillin’ - to transgress the words of the Torah - is exempt. But [one who says,] ‘There are five compartments’ - to add to the words of the Scribes - is liable”; [and] (Berakhot 4b), “Anyone who transgresses the words of the Scribes is liable for the death penalty.”

And now, should you not know for what [reason] one who transgresses against the words of the Sages is liable for the death penalty, more than one who transgresses [most of the Torah’s] positive and negative commandments? And this is the understanding of the thing: [It is] because one who transgresses against the words of the Sages has had the temerity to do so since their commandments are light in his eyes; and not from his impulse overpowering him. Rather [it is] since his eyes have been dimmed from seeing the light of their words, so he does not follow the light of faith and does not pull the yoke of its decree [upon himself]. So he does not toil to keep their statement, since it was not written in the Torah scroll. And he did not act like the one who transgresses the words of the Torah, about which his soul is bitter and taken away in front of him, such that he is afraid and frightened that his impulse moved him to sin. Therefore there is a sentence of death for a person who knocked down something from all of (His good words) [their good words]. And it is like he is saying, “Let us remove their ropes.” And it is similar to that which is written concerning the matter of the elder who rebels against the words of the Sages (Deuteronomy 17:12), “Should a man act presumptuously and disregard the priest, etc.”

And the second [reason] is because this person is far from repentance. Since the thing is not weighty to him, he will constantly repeat it in his stupidity. And in the sinner’s stumbling upon it many times, this light sin will have a greater punishment than that which is heavy.

Our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, also said (Avodah Zarah 35a) that [the understanding of the verse] (Song of Songs 1:2), “For your love (dodekha) is better than wine” is [that] the statements of the Scribes are more beloved than the wine of the Torah. And we need to explain this also: You should surely know that the fear of God is the foundation of the commandments, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 10:12), “And now, O Israel, what does the Lord, your God, ask of you,

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other than to fear the Lord, your God.” And through this, God desires His creatures, as it is stated (Psalms 147:11), “The Lord desires those who fear Him.” And the ordinances of the Sages, and their decrees are the foundation of fear [of God]. For it makes a fence and a separation, lest the hand of a man [even] touch a Torah prohibition. [This is] like the owner of a field that makes a fence for his field since it is precious in his eyes. For he is afraid lest people enter it and it become a place to send oxen and for sheep to trample, like the matter that is stated (Leviticus 18:30), “You shall keep My guarding” - make a guarding for my guarding (Yevamot 21a). And is much carefulness, the fence and the separation from the prohibition not from the essence of fear? And one who augments his carefulness will reach great reward, like the matter that is stated, (Psalms 19:12), “Also Your servant pays them heed; in obeying them, there is much reward.” Therefore they said [that] the statements of the Scribes are more beloved than the wine of the Torah. For their fences and decrees are from the foundations of fear [of God]. And the reward for the commandment of fear is great in comparison to many [Torah] commandments, as it is the foundation for them. And the example for this thing is that one who is careful not to isolate himself with a woman, from his fear lest he stumble into iniquity - and like our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, decreed - is this not because the light of the fear of God, may He be blessed, shone upon his soul?

And behold we already introduced to you in the Chapter on Fear (commonly known as the Sefer HaYirah) that a person is obligated to examine children and understand them and differentiate between the stubborn and crooked and those that walk straight, for a sublime purpose that we have mentioned to you. And behold when you see gluttonous people belittling netilat yadayim (washing of the hands), when they come to eat bread, and they do not recite a blessing before they eat and after they eat, and [disregard] many like these of the words of the Sages and their ordinances, the fence of whom they breach - through this, you can distinguish; and through this, you can know and determine their ways; that they are evil and sinning greatly to God, and their end is to be permanently destroyed. And about them, they said (Eruvin 21b) that “One who transgresses the words of the Sages is liable for the death penalty.” For the impulse did not coerce these plotters to sin; nor did material forces and the desire for the physical coerce them to sin towards them. Rather this is nothing but a bad heart and the removal of the yoke of the Heavens from upon their necks. And behold they are like the masses from the group of criminals that say to God, “Go away from us,” and “We don’t want to know Your ways.” Both these and the group that is not careful about gentile cheese and gentile cooking - since the words of the Sages are light in their eyes - are far from the true path. Even though they are [also] sinning to fill their bellies, behold they have disparaged the words of the Sages and broken the yoke of the Torah (and the teacher) [and the fear]. Also about them is it said, “One who transgresses the words of the Sages is liable for the death penalty.” And the second [reason for this] is that since they know the holy people guards itself from all of these, they have separated themselves from our people and withdrawn from the ways of the community. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Rosh Hashanah 17a) that those that separate from the ways of the community go down to Gehinnom and are judged there for many generations. And know that the punishment of one who transgresses the words of the Sages was in the hands of the court to strike them with lashes of rebellion according to how the court saw fit to discipline them and punish them at that time - whether to have less than forty or to add to strike him more than that.

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The second level is the severity of positive commandments: The foundation of the reward and the root of the recompense resulting from the service is [found] in the performance of positive commandments, as it is stated (Proverbs 13:13), “He who respects a commandment will be rewarded.” And it is [also] stated (Malachi 3:18), “And you shall come to see the difference [...] between him who has served God and him who has not served Him.” And the service [to God] is with commandments that depend upon (involve) actions - whether there is nothing besides the positive commandment or whether there is [also] a negative commandment with them, such as (Deuteronomy 15:7), “do not harden your heart, etc.” (which accompanies the positive commandment of charity). And the commandment of the service will be explained in the Gate of the Service (no longer extant), with God’s help. Nevertheless, there is a manner of reward for the one who is careful not to transgress a negative commandment that reaches [that] of one who does a commandment - such as if the opportunity for a sin comes to a man and he had a desire for a sexual prohibition, but he overcame his impulse - for this is from the essence of the fear of God, may He be blessed. And likewise someone who had the opportunity to get rich by cheating and [charging] interest and there is no one to see and to know; yet he went with innocence and clean hands - his reward for this will be like one who plants righteousness and toils [to do a positive] commandment. And so it is written (Psalms 119:3) “They have done no wrong, but have followed His ways.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yerushalmi Kiddushin 1:9), “Since they did not do wickedness, they have ‘followed His ways.’” And we have already discussed the explanation of this verse for you. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, likewise said (Kiddushin 39b), “[If] one sits and does not transgress, he receives a reward as one who performs a commandment, [...] in a case where an opportunity to commit a sinful act presents itself to him and he is saved from it.” And they also said (Berakhot 6a), “‘Those who revere the Lord and esteem His name.’ - this is [a case] where an opportunity to commit a sinful act presents itself to him and he is saved from it.” Even [with] this reward [however], its essence and foundation is [based in] a positive commandment, since he suppressed his impulse with the fear of God, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 10:20), “You must fear the Lord, your God.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Avot 2:1), “Be careful with a light commandment as with a weighty one, for you do not know the reward for the fulfillment of the commandments.” Yet behold [that] what will be done to anyone who transgresses a negative commandment is explicit in the Torah; and it allocates punishments and statutes and a code for what to do to them. And the punishments are forty lashes, death and expiation at the hands of the Heavens and the four death penalties of the court. But the reward for the fulfillment of the commandments is not explicit in the Torah, so that [people] not prevent themselves from fulfilling the light commandments and involve themselves only in the weighty ones.

And they gave a parable about this matter of a king that said to his servants to plant every fine tree in his garden. And he said that he would give them payment; but he did inform them of the payment for each [type] of tree, because the king desired that there would be nothing lacking in his orchard. Therefore they planted many species of delightful saplings. But had the servants known the payment for the planting of each [type of] tree of the trees in the orchard, they would then have given all of their effort to the stems of the plantings for which the reward is greater than the other, in order to enhance their payment. The same is [true] with the matter of commandments. For God wanted to give merit to Israel with the fulfillment of all the commandments, to bequeath them eternal life and for all of the commandments together to be a charming wreath for their heads. For

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when they complete the measure of their work, their payment will be complete from Him. Did you not know that our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Avodah Zarah 17b), “Anyone who is only involved with Torah is similar to someone who has no God” - even though they said (Peah 1:1), “the [reward for the] study of Torah corresponds to all [the commandments].” And the reward of the light commandment is great and wondrous, such that it cannot be counted or measured. Do you not see with the commandment of sending away the [mother bird] - that has no toil and no large expenditure of money - it is stated about it (Deuteronomy 22:7), “that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Kiddushin 39b), “Rabbi Ya’akov says, ‘There is not a single [light] commandment written in the Torah that the [reward of] the resurrection of the dead is not dependent upon. [...] With the sending [of the mother bird from] the nest, it is [stated], ‘That it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days’ [...] ‘that it may be well with you’ for the world where all is well,’ and ‘that your days may be long’ for the world that is entirely long.’” And if that is what the Torah stated with a light commandment that [requires an expenditure of] like an issar (a small coin), all the more so with weighty commandments.

And now we will speak about the matter of punishment for the nullification of positive commandments: Our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Ketuvot 86b) [that] if [the court warned] someone to perform [the commandment of the] sukkah or [of the] palm branch (lulav) “and he does not do so, we strike, etc.” And they said (Rosh Hashanah 17a) that men who have never placed tefillin on their heads are called “rebellious Jews with their bodies,” and their punishment is more severe than one who transgresses once against a sin for which he is liable for excision. And they said [that] all whose sins are greater than his merits and among [his sins] is the sin of rebellious Jews with their bodies - for example, one who has never worn tefillin or one who was involved in transgressions such as forbidden sexual relations - descend and are judged in Gehinnom for twelve months. After twelve months, their body is finished; and their soul is burnt; and the wind spreads it under the soles of the feet of the righteous ones, as it is stated (Malachi 3:21), “And you shall trample the wicked to a pulp, for they shall be dust, etc.” And they said (Sanhedrin 99a), [that] one who is permissive (in his eyes) [regarding] positive commandments, such as one who belittles the intermediate days of the festival - which is from a positive commandment, as it is stated (Exodus 23:15), “You shall observe the Feast of Matsot” - has no portion in the world to come, even if possesses Torah and good deeds. And there is a general warning of a negative commandment, for all the positive commandments - as it is stated (Deuteronomy 13:1), “neither add to it nor take away from it.”

And the fulfillment of positive commandments is called, fear of Heaven; [just] like carefulness is [understood as] the negative commandments. For it is stated (Leviticus 19:32), “You shall rise before the aged and show deference to the old; you shall fear your God; I am the Lord.” And it is [also] stated (Psalms 34:12), “I will teach you fear of the Lord”; and after it is stated (Psalms 34:15), “Shun evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it.” We learn from this, that one who is not occupied with doing good and seeking peace annuls fear of Heaven. And he is from the evildoers, since he has no fear of God, as it is stated (Ecclesiastes 8:13), “And it will not be well with the evildoer, and he will not live long, because he does not fear God.”

Among the positive commandments in the Torah are some of the weighty ones that the masses are not careful about - for example the mention of [God’s] name in vain, as it is stated (Deuteronomy

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10:20), “You shall fear the Lord, your God.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Temurah 4:1), “We have been warned with this not to mention [God’s] name in vain.” And likewise acts of kindness, which is a positive commandment, as it is stated (Exodus 18:20), “and make known to them the way they are to go” - that is acts of kindness (Bava Metzia 30b). And they said (Sukkah 49b), “Acts of kindness are superior to charity, [since] charity is given to the poor, while acts of kindness are performed both for the poor and for the rich.” Therefore they said (Avot 1:2), “The world stands upon three things: On the Torah; on the service; and on acts of kindness.” And (Sukkah 49b) “charity can be performed only with one’s money, while acts of kindness can be performed both with his person and with his money.” For a person is obligated to exert himself in seeking good for his people and to dedicate himself to the betterment of his fellow - whether poor or rich. And this is one of the main weighty commandments required of a person, as it is stated (Micah 6:8), “He has told you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you - only to do justice, and to love kindness.” And likewise to go beyond the law, as it is stated (Exodus 18:20), “and the practices they are to follow.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Bava Metzia 30b), “This is going beyond the letter of the law.” And there are many ways in this matter, such that this commandment would be from the weighty ones. It is all according to the contents of the case - as our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Bava Metzia 30b), “Jerusalem was destroyed only because they established their rulings on the basis of Torah law and did not go beyond the letter of the law.”

And there are many people among the masses who think that the main loss and damage to the soul is only from sins that [involve] an action; and that there is no losing of the soul for a man that is pure from sinning actively and who did not walk in the way of transgressions, but rather [only] prevented himself from doing [positive] commandments and good deeds. Therefore, we are obligated to make discernment known to the ones of a mistaken spirit. For our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yerushalmi Chagigah 1:7), “The Holy One, blessed be He, forewent idolatry, etc., but He did not forego the sin of wasting [time available for] Torah [study].” And they said, (Sifre Devarim, Ekev), “Just like the reward for Torah study is greater than [that for] all of the commandments in the Torah, so too is the punishment for wasting [time for] it greater than [that for] all of the sins.” And they said (Sanhedrin 99a), “‘Because he has despised the word of the Lord and has breached His commandment’ (Numbers 15:31) - is stated about anyone for whom it is possible to engage in Torah [study] and does not engage [in it].” And we have already mentioned all of these to you in the Gate of the Torah (no longer extant).

And we find with the people of Sodom that they were very bad to God on several [plains] of corruption, such as theft, extortion, perversion of justice and forbidden sexual relations. Nevertheless, Scripture mentions that their souls were lost and destroyed by the sin of nullifying charity, as it is stated (Ezekiel 16:49), “Only this was the sin of your sister Sodom; arrogance - plenty of bread, etc.; yet she did not support the poor and the needy.” And it is stated about the people that do not arrange their thoughts to constantly reflect on the fear of God (Isaiah 29:13-14), “And its worship of Me has been a commandment of men, learned by rote. Truly, I shall further baffle that people with bafflement upon bafflement.” And it is stated (Jeremiah 12:1-2), “Why does the way of the wicked prosper, etc. [...] You are present in their mouths, but far from their thoughts.” And it is stated (Psalms 23:27), “Those who keep far from You perish.”

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And know that depending on the greatness of the commandment will the punishment be great for the one who prevents himself from doing it, even though he does not do an act in breaching it - as we find with the commandment of the Passover offering and the commandment of circumcision, which are positive commandments but have excision [as their punishment].

And know that there are sublime virtues given over in the positive commandments such as: The virtues of free choice, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 30:19), “and choose life”; and the virtues of Torah study, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 6:7), “and you shall speak about them;” and the virtues of walking in the ways of the Lord, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 28:9), “and you shall walk in His ways;” and the virtues of contemplation of the greatness of the Lord, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 4:39), “Know therefore this day and keep in mind that the Lord alone is God in heaven above and on earth below; there is no other,” and David said (Psalms 14:2), “The Lord looks down from heaven on mankind to find a man of understanding, a man who seeks God”; and the virtues of remembrance of His kindnesses,” as it is stated (Deuteronomy 8:2), “Remember the whole way,” and it is [also] stated (Deuteronomy 8:6), “And you shall know that the Lord your God disciplines you just as a man disciplines his son,” and David said (Psalms 107:43), “he will contemplate the kindnesses of the Lord,” and said (Psalms 26:3), “For Your kindness is across from my eyes”; and the virtues of holiness, as it is stated (Leviticus 11:44), “and you shall sanctify yourselves and you shall be holy”; and the virtues of worship, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 10:20), “and He shall you worship;” and the virtues of fear, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 10:20), “And you shall fear the Lord”; and the virtues of love, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 6:5), “And you shall love the Lord, your God;” and the virtues of clinging, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 10:20), “to Him shall you cling.” There are several levels to each of these, as will be explained, with God’s help. And man was created for the sake of these virtues, as it is stated (Isaiah 43:7), “All who are linked to My name, whom I have created for My glory.” And what is the hope of a creation if it does not make the things for which it was created, the toil of his soul and his main occupation?

And behold the punishment for the nullification of a commandment is explained in the Torah, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 27:26), “Cursed is the one who does not fulfill the words of this Torah, to do them.” It states, “to do them” - teaching that this is stated about the nullification of a commanded act.

And know that a creature is obligated to be a faithful agent and understanding servant in all of the craftful work of his Master. And a faithful worker will be quick at this craft and supervise the craft of his fellow workers. His eyes will be upon their ways, to see if they are faithful; and he will warn them and inform about the work they should do. For his desire and want is that the work of his Master be done without deceit. Therefore, he strengthens those doing the work [to do it right]. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said in the Sifrei (Yerushalmi Sotah 4:4), “‘Cursed is the one who does not fulfill’ (Deuteronomy 27:26), - a man who has studied, reviewed, taught others and fulfilled the Torah and the commandments, but has not strengthened [others to do so] is included in ‘who does not fulfill.’”

And among the weighty [positive] commandments is not to have a trial in the courts of the idolaters (gentiles), as it is stated (Exodus 21:1), “And these are the judgments that you shall place in front of them” - “in front of them,” and not in front of the Canaanites. But rebels stumble in them. And we have already spoken about this transgression before.

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And [there is also a curse] about the nullification of the fear of the father and the mother, which is a positive commandment - as it is stated (Deuteronomy 27:16), “Cursed be he who belittles his father or mother.” The content of belittling is to disparage their honor and abrogate fearing them. As our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Kiddushin 31b), ‘A man must fear his mother and father’ (Leviticus 19:3) - what is fear of the father? Not to sit in his place, not to contradict his words or determine [an argument] for him.

And the commandment of tefillin and the commandment of mezuzah are positive commandments - but behold they are included in accepting the kingdom of the Heavens. For thus were they written in the section of Shema Yisrael. And from this, you can contemplate the punishment of one who nullifies these commandments, as he is breaking the yoke and removing the cords [of God’s authority]. And we have already discussed these commandments. And about the commandment of fringes (tsitsit), our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, have said in the Sifrei (Sifrei Bemidbar, Shelach) that fringes adds to holiness, as it is stated (Numbers 15:40), “In order that you shall be reminded to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God.” And even though the commandment of fringes is only for a garment that has four corners - and if one does not have a garment like this, he is not obligated to acquire one - nevertheless, our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Menachot 41a) that he will surely be punished in times of trouble about the matter: That in his heart he did not desire the beauty of the commandment and its reward [enough], to cause the matter of the obligation to apply to him and to get himself a garment that has four corners to make fringes on its corners.

And know that one who fears the word of God will be stringent and exacting and take himself in hand for light commandments, as he will for weighty commandments. For they will not focus on that which a certain commandment is light compared to the weighty ones. Rather they will focus on the One who warns about it, may He be blessed. And open your eyes well to see that this principle has been explained in the Torah. For about rising in front of an elder - [just] like the commandment of fearing one’s father and one’s mother and the observance of Shabbat - it is written, “I am the Lord.” And we have brought to this place many of the commandments about which the people found in this generation are short-handed in doing - the principle of each one is in this book, please take it to yourself and place it upon the tablet of your heart.

The third level is the negative commandment that is rectified by a positive commandment: Our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Chullin 141a) [that] we do not give lashes for a negative commandment that is rectified by a positive commandment - for example (Deuteronomy 22:6), “you shall not take the mother from over the young,” is rectified by a positive commandment, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 22:7), “You shall surely send away.” But even though they would not give lashes through the court [in such a case], there were some with weighty punishments, such that it would reach the heavens and their judgement would be raised to the clouds. For example theft - as it is stated (Leviticus 19:13), “you shall not rob” (Leviticus 5:23) - is rectified by a positive commandment, as it is stated “and returned what he robbed.” Yet they said (Sanhedrin 108a), “The final judgement of the generation of the Flood was sealed only because of robbery, as it is stated (Genesis 6:13), ‘The end of all flesh has come in front of Me, for the earth is filled with extortion.’” And even though sexual immorality is weightier than robbery, it is the characteristic of the punishment of robbery to bring close its day and to quicken the future [consequences] to it. And they [also] said (Vayikra Rabbah 33:2), “[If you have] a seah

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full of iniquities, there is no prosecutor among all of them like robbery.” And King Solomon, peace be upon him, said about treasures [acquired] from dishonesty and fraud (Proverbs 21:6), “Treasures acquired by a lying tongue are like driven vapor, heading for death.” The explanation is [that] treasuries [acquired from] dishonesty and fraud are vanishing vapor, for their end is destruction. And while they are still in his possession, they are his enemies and seek the life of their master and cause his death - like the matter that is stated, (Habakkuk 2:9-11) “Ah, you who have acquired gains to the detriment of your own house, etc. For a stone shall cry out from the wall.” And in [the case of] robbing the poor, one is liable for death at the hands of the Heavens on account of it, as it is stated (Proverbs 22:22-23), “Do not rob the indigent for he is indigent; and do not crush the poor man in the gate. For the Lord will take up their cause and despoil those who despoil them of life.” Its explanation is, “do not rob from the indigent” because “he is indigent” and has no one to help him; “and do not crush the poor man in the gate,” with shame and disgrace. And “in the gate,” is to say, in public. And it is like the matter that is stated (Isaiah 3:15), “How dare you crush My people and grind the faces of the poor?” “For the Lord will take up their cause,” since they have no support, or someone to argue and take up their cause. “And despoil those who despoil them of life” - since the cry of the indigent has been brought to Him, He will not take money from you in place of the loot that you robbed, but rather God will remove your soul. And it is stated (Job 27:8), “For what hope has the impious man when he is cut down, when God takes away his life?” And it is also stated (Proverbs 1:19), “Such is the fate of all who pursue unjust gain; It takes the life of its possessor.” And one who torments and pains a widow or an orphan - whether with robbery, or fraud or shame or any type of pain - is liable for death at the hands of the Heavens. And likewise the judges who are able to rescue someone robbed from him who defrauded him, and do not judge [the case of an] orphan, have a death sentence upon them - as it is stated (Exodus 22:21-23), “You shall not ill-treat any widow or orphan. If you do oppress them, I will heed their outcry as soon as they cry out to Me. And My anger shall blaze forth and I will put you to the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children orphans.” Its explanation is, “and your wives shall become widows,” corresponding to the oppression of the widow; “and your children orphans,” corresponding to the oppression of the orphan - measure for measure. And even though these punishments are not written [about the following], one who pains any Israelite transgresses a negative commandment - as it is stated (Leviticus 25:17), “A man shall not oppress (tonu) his kinsman.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Bava Metzia 58b) the verse is speaking about verbal oppression. And that is from the contents of pain and torment, like the usage “(Isaiah 49:26), “I will make your oppressors (monayich) eat their own flesh.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, [also] said (Bava Metzia 59a), “All the gates [of prayer] have been closed, except for the gates of [one who is praying as a result of his] oppression.” And where Scripture was speaking about financial oppression, it mentioned buying and selling, as it is stated (Leviticus 25:14), “When you sell property to your kinsman.” And they said (Bava Metzia 58b) [that] verbal oppression is greater than financial oppression, for this is upon his body and that is upon his money - and about [the former] it stated (Leviticus 25:17), “but you shall fear your God,” but about [the latter (25:14)], “but you shall fear,” is not stated.

And with interest and usury, there is a negative commandment - as it is stated (Leviticus 25:36), “Do not exact from him usury or accrued interest, but fear your God” - and it is rectified by a positive commandment, as it is stated, (Leviticus 25:36) “let him live by your side as your kinsman.” Its explanation is, if you have taken interest or usury from him, surely return it to your

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brother, in order that he may live with you. And his punishment is very weighty - so long as he does not fix that which is crooked, he does not come to the resurrection of the dead, as it is stated (Ezekiel 18:13), "He has lent with usury, or exacted accrued interest - shall he live; he shall not live!" And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, explained (Pirkei De'Rabbi Natan 33), it [to be] about the matter of the resurrection of the dead. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Exodus Rabbah 31:6), "Anyone who has the iniquity of interest in his hands will not have an angel intervene (teach) merit on his behalf." And this is [the understanding] of that which, "shall he live," is stated as an expression of question and wonder - is there an intervener that will say that his case is to live? All of them will answer, "He shall not live."

The fourth level is a negative commandment that does not [involve] an action: Our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Sanhedrin 63a) that we do not give lashes for [violating] a negative commandment that does not [involve] an action. But it is explained in their words (Yoma 85b), may their memory be blessed, that a negative commandment that does not [involve] an action is more weighty than a negative commandment that is rectified by a positive commandment. And among the [negative commandments] that do not [involve] an action, some of [them] are dependent upon the heart, some on the tongue, some on the closing of the hand (not giving of one's money or possessions) and some on not doing an action. And there are likewise some transgressions that do not [involve] an action, but are dependent upon the sense of hearing or the sense of sight. And we have seen many people that have forgotten many of them. And there are some that know but are not careful about them, because they do not depend upon (involve) an action. For the transgressions that depend upon an action, such as the eating of forbidden fat, blood, a carcass or a torn animal (tereifah) are not as accessible to violate as the ones done with thought or the tongue, or by rest from an action. Therefore we have seen fit to mention some of them - to remind some of [the people], to remember; and those that do not know, to be forewarned. But we have not come to write about them at length, but rather only to hint to them, that they be a reminder for those repenting from rebellion.

Among the [negative commandments] that are dependent on the heart are: "Take care lest you forget the Lord, your God" (Deuteronomy 8:11). And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Sotah 5a), "Wherever it is stated in a verse, 'beware,' 'lest' or 'not,' this is [surely] a negative commandment." We are warned [then] with this to remember God, may He be blessed every instant. And a person is obligated to make efforts to always acquire for himself behaviors that are mandated by remembrance - such as fear, modesty, refinement of one's thoughts and strategies [to acquire] good traits - so that the holy seed will attain every fine behavior and be crowned through it from the remembrance of God, may He be blessed, just as it is stated (Isaiah 45:25), "It is through the Lord that all the offspring of Israel Have vindication and glory."

"Only observe for yourself, and guard your soul diligently, lest you forget the matters that your eyes saw" (Deuteronomy 4:9). And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Menachot 99b) [that] anyone who forgets [even] one matter from his studies violates two negative commandments. Is it possible even if his studies were too hard for him? Hence we are taught to say, "And lest they depart from your heart" (Deuteronomy 4:9). The verse is only speaking of one who causes them to depart from his heart, by being idle from Torah study and not constantly poring over it.

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“Say not to yourselves, when the Lord your God has thrust them from your path, saying, ‘The Lord has enabled us to possess this land because of our virtues, etc.’ It is not because of your virtues and your rectitude, etc.” (Deuteronomy 9:4-5). We are warned with this not to imagine to ourselves that our success is from our righteousness and the rectitude of our hearts, but rather that we believe and know in our hearts that our success is from the kindness of the Most High and His great goodness - and like the matter that was said by our father, Jacob (Genesis 32:11), “I am unworthy of all the kindness and all the truth.”

“Do not try the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 6:16). And we are warned with this that a man should not say, “I will make a trial with my service of charity [whether] the Lord will make my way successful; and I will test through the properness of my actions, whether my gold and silver will grow.” But the good man will not slacken from his toil in wisdom, knowledge and proper action when his path in the matter of his money and the rest of the goods of the body are not successful. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Taanit 9a) that only with tithes of the storehouse is testing [God] permitted, as it is stated (Malachi 3:10) “Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, and let there be food in My House, and thus put Me to the test.” King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 3:9-10), “Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first of all your produce. And your barns will be filled with grain, [etc.].” Its explanation is, if you do not have like this - to be filled with grain when you give from your wealth and from the first of all your produce - but you are rather seized by days of poverty, “Do not reject the discipline of the Lord” (Proverbs 3:11), and know that this is also for your good. “For whom the Lord loves, He rebukes” (Proverbs 3:12), to do good for him in his end; that the reward in this world and his honor be exchanged for the good that is hidden and continues forever.

“Should you say to yourselves, ‘These nations are more numerous than we; how can we dispossess them?’ You need have no fear of them” (Deuteronomy 7:17-18).

“When you go out to war, etc., and see horses and chariots - forces larger than yours - have no fear of them” (Deuteronomy 20:1). We were warned with this that if a person sees trouble nearby, the salvation of the Lord should be in his heart and he should trust in it - like the matter that is stated (Psalms 85:10), “His salvation is near those who fear Him”; and likewise is it written (Isaiah 51:12), “What ails you that you fear man who must die.”

“Fear no man, for judgment is God’s” (Deuteronomy 1:17). We were warned with this to believe that injury will not occur to us on account of righteous judgment, when we do not show favoritism. [It is] like our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Pesachim 5b), “Agents of a commandment will not be injured, not on their way [to do it] and not on their return.” And this is the explanation of, “for judgment is God’s” - that injury caused by Him will not happen to you.

“That he will not act haughtily toward his brothers” (Deuteronomy 17:20). We were warned with this to remove the trait of pride from our souls; and that the great not lord it over the small, but rather be of a lowly spirit. And pride is one of the weighty sins that lose and destroy the soul, as it is stated (Proverbs 16:5), “Every haughty person is an abomination to the Lord.” And of what help is the procurement of his money, his great wealth and his (lofty) treasures [in the heights]? Behold, since he is loathsome and foul, the heights of his great splendor are lower than the pit. And [even] a wise man should not glory in anything besides the service of God, may He be blessed, and fear of Him, trust in Him, love of Him and clinging to Him - as it is stated (Deuteronomy 10:21), “He

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is your Glory and He is your God.” And it is [also] stated (Jeremiah 9:22-23) “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, etc. But only in this should one glory: In his earnest knowledge of Me.”

“Give to him readily and have no regrets when you give to him” (Deuteronomy 15:10). We were warned with this to distance our souls from miserliness, but rather to be generous - like the matter that is stated (Proverbs 22:9), “The generous man is blessed.” And it is not enough with the gifts of our hands, but we must rather plant the trait of generosity into our souls. Therefore, it warned and said, “and have no regrets,” after it is stated, “Give to him readily.”

“Do not harden your heart and shut your hand” (Deuteronomy 15:7). We were warned with this to remove the trait of cruelty from our souls, and to plant delightful saplings in it - [namely] reliable mercy and kindnesses, as it is written (Deuteronomy 28:9), “and you shall walk in His ways.” And because it is possible not to shut his hand and to grace the poor person, but not in the way of mercy - like the matter that is written (Proverbs 12:10), “but the mercies of the wicked are cruelty” - therefore it is written, “Do not harden your heart.” And the punishment for cruelty is bad and bitter, as will be explained in the Gate of Cruelty (no longer extant), with God’s help. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Shabbat 151b), ““And He will show you mercy and have compassion on you and multiply you’ (Deuteronomy 13:18) - anyone who has compassion for the creatures will receive compassion from Heaven, and anyone who does not have compassion for the creatures will not receive compassion from Heaven.”

“Show him no pity or compassion, and do not shield him” (Deuteronomy 13:9). We were warned with this to not have compassion nor to have mercy on those that cause people to sin and stumble. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Midrash Tanchuma, Metzora 1), “Anyone who becomes merciful upon the cruel will end up being cruel to the merciful.”

“You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen.” (Leviticus 19:18). Our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yoma 23a), “What is revenge [... If] one said to [his fellow,] ‘Lend me your ax’; he said [back] to him, ‘I will not lend to you, just as you did not lend yours to me’ - that is revenge. And what is bearing a grudge? [...] he said [back] to him, ‘Here it is, as I am not like you, who would not lend it to me.’” And the punishment for this is not for speaking, but rather for the grudge in the heart. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yoma 23a) the [prohibition] on bearing a grudge is for monetary matters, but it is permissible to keep words of pride or disgrace or seeking evil [against him] upon his heart. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yoma 22b), “Any Torah scholar who [when insulted] does not avenge himself and bear a grudge like a snake is not considered a Torah scholar.” But if they request forgiveness from him, he should forego his reckonings.

“You shall not hate your brother in your heart” (Leviticus 19:17). We were warned with this to remove the trait of hatred from our souls. And it is a trait that brings many sins and causes several foul plots - such as evil speech which corresponds to several [sins which are punished with] a death penalty from the court, as will be explained; and like seeking the bad, and joy in calamity, causing injuries to one’s fellow, talebearing, revenge and bearing a grudge. And it destroys much good for the soul, as will be explained in the Gate of Hatred (no longer extant). And see how far the punishment of hatred reaches: For our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yoma 9b), “For what [reason] was the Second Temple destroyed, [even though] they were occupied with Torah [study] and good deeds? Because of the causeless hatred that was among them.”

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“Be on your guard against anything bad” (Deuteronomy 23:10). They, may their memory be blessed, explained (Ketuvot 46a), “A person should not think [impure] thoughts by day and thereby come to impurity by night” - and even though his thought is not to [follow it up with action]. And it is something learned from its [context]. As after it, it is written (Deuteronomy 23:11), “If anyone among you has been rendered unclean by a nocturnal emission.”

“So that you do not follow your heart and your eyes” (Numbers 15:39). We were warned with this not to think to do a transgression (or upon any) [or any] prohibition or sin - like the matter that is stated (Proverbs 24:8), “He who thinks to do evil” - and not to think about words of heresy, lest one stumble and be drawn after them. And when he places upon his heart that God, may He be blessed, examines the heart and investigates the kidneys (understood as the seat of wisdom), how can he dare to defile his heart and [have] a ruffian matter lodged upon it? And King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 24:9), “The schemes of folly are sin.” He also said (Proverbs 6:16-18), “Six things the Lord hates; seven are an abomination to His soul: [...] A mind that hatches evil plots.”

“Do not bear a vain report” (Exodus 23:1). We were warned with this not to accept evil speech. And [it is] like the Targum (translation of Onkelos) says, “Do not accept a false report.”

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house” (Exodus 20:17); “and you shall not desire your neighbor’s house” (Deuteronomy 5:18). We were warned with this not to make evil plots to take the field or vineyard or anything of (your) [our] fellow, even if one gives their price. And we were warned about the thought of this evil thing, that we should not resolve in our thoughts to do it, as it is stated, “You shall not covet.” And if a person longs for his fellow to sell him a field or a vineyard or [any] of his possessions and [the owner] does not want to sell it - but if he pleads with him with many supplications, he will be embarrassed to answer him - it is forbidden to plead with him, as it is like coercion or duress. And one who covets to take any object and is a respected person - such that if he asked the question, they would not let his eminence down - it is forbidden to ask for [any] purchase or grant, unless he knows that [the owner] would give it to him with [full agreement], and not regret giving it to him in his heart.

Among the [negative commandments] that are dependent on the (heart) [tongue] are: “Since the Lord, your God, moves about in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you, let your camp be holy; let not anything unseemly be seen among you” (Deuteronomy 23:15). They, may their memory be blessed, said (Berakhot 25b) that included in this [prohibition] is that when we speak words of the Torah of God, may He be blessed - and in our speaking in prayer in front of Him - our camp should be holy, and let not anything unseemly be seen among us. Therefore we were commanded about this, to mention [God’s] name in holiness and to engage in words of Torah and prayer in holiness; and not to mention [God’s] name or words of Torah if he is naked or if there is a naked man across from him. And likewise were we warned that the place be clean, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 23:14), “you shall dig a hole with it and cover up your excrement.” And all the more so is he warned not to mention [God’s] name if his hands are not clean. And if his hands touched something disgusting to him, he should wash them - like the matter that is stated (Psalms 26:6), “I wash my palms in cleanliness.” And when one is walking on the path and he is in doubt if the path is clean, he should not mention [God’s] name, and he should not say words of Torah. And if there is something that is not clean behind him - such as excrement or a carcass or water [used for] soaking [flax] - one must move a distance of four ells away from where the odor

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ends; but in front of him, [the distance] is [as far as] his eye can see. And carefulness about this is one of the ways of fearing God, as it is stated (Malachi 3:16), “concerning those who revere the Lord and esteem His name.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Berakhot 24b), “‘For he has shown contempt for the word of the Lord’ (Numbers 15:31) - this is [referring to] one who says words of Torah in filthy alleyways.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Kohelet Rabbah 1:17), “‘He gives wisdom to the wise’ (Daniel 2:21) because the wise honor the Torah and occupy themselves with it in holiness.” But if He had given it to the silly, they would have said words of Torah in filthy alleyways.

There are some [negative commandments] that are dependent upon the tongue, for which we give lashes. For so did our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, say (Makkot 16a), “All the warnings in the Torah - we do not give lashes for a negative commandment that does not [involve] an action, except for one who makes an oath or curses his fellow with [God’s] name.” And even though there is no death penalty from the court with a vain oath, its punishment at the hands of the Heavens is more weighty than many sins that do have a death penalty from the court. For making an oath in vain profanes [God’s] name - as it is stated (Leviticus 19:12), “You shall not swear falsely by My name, profaning the name of your God” - and the punishment for profaning the name is more elevated than [that of] all of the sins. And it is not written like this about any of the sins besides a false oath and idolatry, as it is stated (Leviticus 20:3), “because he gave of his offspring to Molech and so defiled My sanctuary and profaned My holy name.” And it is stated in the warning about idolatry (Exodus 20:5), “You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord, your God, am a jealous God.” [This] means to say, that He will not forgive the iniquity of idolatry in the way of forgiveness for other sins - like the matter that is written (Jeremiah 5:7), “Why should I forgive you; your children have forsaken Me and sworn by no-gods!” And likewise is it written in the warning for a false oath (Exodus 20:7), “for the Lord will not clear one who swears falsely by His name.” And the warning for a false oath is written (immediately) after the warning of idolatry, most certainly because the iniquity of profaning God, may He be blessed, is found under the wings of a false oath. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said regarding the matter of the verse (Proverbs 30:8-9), “Give me neither poverty nor riches, etc. Lest, being sated, I renounce, saying, ‘Who is the Lord,’ or, being impoverished (it is written fully with an aleph, but its meaning is, poor), I take to theft, and profane the name of my God,” that the latter is harsher than the former - as it is stated (Ezekiel 20:39), “As for you, O House of Israel, etc., go, every one of you, and worship his idols and continue, if you will not obey Me; but do not profane My holy name any more.” It is meaning to say that the iniquity of the one who swears falsely in a court is more weighty than the punishment of one who worships idolatry in private, due to the profaning of the name [involved in the former]. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Shevuot 39a), “For all of the other transgressions in the Torah, punishment is exacted only from the transgressor and his family; whereas here, punishment is exacted from him and from the entire world,” And if the court obligates a man to make an oath but he knows that his mouth speaks falsely (it would be a false oath), it is forbidden to [even] take the oath upon himself, saying, “I will swear” - in order to frighten his fellow - even though he does not plan to swear. For it is stated, (Exodus 20:7), “You shall not bear” - and included in its meaning is not to accept (agree) to swear falsely. And likewise did they, may their memory be blessed, say in our Mekhilta (Mekhilta d’Rabbi Yishmael, Yitro). And the Targum (translation of Onkelos) of, “Do not bear a vain report“ (Exodus 23:1), is “do not accept.” And it is forbidden to make a needless oath, even if he is swearing about the truth, as it is

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stated (Exodus 20:7), “Do not bear the name of God in vain” - and its Targum is, “for nothing.” And likewise is the iniquity of one who causes his fellow to swear for nothing, great - for example when his fellow owed him a hundred and he doubled it in his claim, in order that the law would come out that one who admits partially is obligated to make a Torah-based oath; or when he claims against his fellow for nothing and asks him for what he knows nothing about and makes him take a [rabbinic] oath of inducement. And our Rabbis said (Shevuot 39a) that this man is called a thief, as he is stealing his mind (deceiving him); and about him is it stated (Zechariah 5:4), “[But] I have sent it forth - declares the Lord of Hosts - and [the curse] shall enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My name, and it shall lodge inside their houses and shall consume them to the last timber and stone.” And one who knows that if he takes an oath, people will suspect him about [the truth of] the oath, should restrain himself from [taking] the oath for the honor of the Heavens - even though the truth is with him.

“You shall not curse powers, nor revile a chieftain among your people” (Exodus 22:27); “You shall not curse a deaf man” (Leviticus 19:14). And we were warned with this not to curse [any] man of Israel with [God’s] name or one of all of [His] appellations. And [the reason] the Torah mentions not to curse powers; a chieftain; and a deaf man, is to come to warn one not to curse a judge (the power mentioned here) when he finds him guilty in the trial, nor a chieftain when he punishes him, to dispatch him for his transgression. And it was necessary to mention a deaf man, lest you say, “There is no punishment for cursing him - since he does not hear, no pain will reach him from his curse.” And “You shall not curse powers” is written at the end of Parshat Mishpatim (Statutes) to say that you should not curse a judge that judges with these statutes. But you may curse a judge that is not proper. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Shevuot 36a), “One who curses his fellow or himself with [God’s] name is lashed.” And his punishment at the hand of the Heavens is very great, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 28:58-59), “If you fail to observe all the words of this Torah in the book, etc., to reverence this honored and awesome name, the Lord, your God; The Lord will inflict extraordinary plagues upon you, etc.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, explained (Temurah 3:2) the topic of this verse as one who curses his fellow or himself with [God’s] name.

And it is forbidden for a person to say that God should save him if the matter is true, when the thing is actually untrue. For he cursed himself with [God’s] name [by doing so] - as the negative can be inferred from the positive.

“Drink no wine or other intoxicant, etc. And to distinguish between the holy and the profane, etc. And you must teach the Israelites” (Leviticus 10:9-11). And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Eruvin 64a), “If one drank a quarter [log] of wine that was not mixed with water, he may not issue a ruling, but if he drink more than a quarter, he may not issue a ruling even though he mixed it [with water].

“A man shall not oppress his countryman” (Leviticus 25:17) - the verse is speaking about verbal oppression, like we discussed above. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Bava Metzia 58b), “[If] one is a penitent, [another] may not say to him, ‘Remember your earlier deeds.’ [If] one is the child of converts, [another] may not say to him, ‘Remember the deeds of your ancestors.’” And that which is stated (Exodus 22:20), “You shall not oppress a stranger or press him,” [is understood as] “You shall not oppress” him verbally; “or press him” with money. And the Torah warned in several places about oppression of the convert, for he forgot his [own] people

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and the house of his father, and came to seek refuge under the wings of the Divine Presence - like the matter that is stated (Ruth 2:11), “how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth and came to a people you had not known before”; and it is stated (Ruth 2:12), “May the Lord reward your deeds; may you have a full recompense from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have sought refuge!” And there is a [relevant] parable about a gazelle that comes to a flock, and crouches with the sheep there. So the owner of the flock had compassion on it - since it left a broad pasture to stand in a narrow place.

“You shall not follow the many to do bad.” (Exodus 23:2). We were warned with this not to verbally strengthen the hands of sinners, and not join with those that conspire to do injustice - like the matter that is stated (Isaiah 8:12) “You must not call conspiracy, all that people call conspiracy.”

And it is forbidden to make an association with an evildoer for matters of the world, as it is stated (II Chronicles 20:37), “As you have made an association with Ahaziah, the Lord will break up your work.” And it is [also] stated (Proverbs 3:31), “Do not envy a lawless man, or associate with any of his ways.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said in Avot DeRabbi Natan (Avot DeRabbi Natan 9:4), “Do not befriend an evildoer even for the matter of a commandment.” And there are many paths of death found in the association with evildoers; and we have already spoken about this iniquity and the severity of its punishment.

“You shall not place a stumbling block before the blind” (Leviticus 19:14). And we were warned with this not to give a ruling to the Israelites which is not like the doctrine and not like the law (halakha). And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Avot 1:1), “Be deliberate in judgement.” And the ones who are impatient to understand and give a ruling will not save their souls from putting a stumbling block before the blind; and their sin is very heavy, as it is written (Psalms 82:5), “They neither know nor understand, they go about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth totter.” And they also said (Avot 4:13), “Be careful in study, for an error in study counts as deliberate sin.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Sotah 22a), “‘For she has cast down many wounded’ (Proverbs 7:26); this is [referring to] a Torah scholar who has not yet attained the ability to issue rulings, and yet issues rulings. ‘And a mighty host are all her slain’; this is referring to a Torah scholar who has attained the ability to issue rulings, but does not issue rulings.”

We are also warned by this verse to give proper advice when we advise one of our people, and not to make him stumble with boorish advice; and not to advise one’s fellow for one’s [own advantage].

And a man is obligated to think thoughts that will bring up proper and coherent advice for this fellow. And this is one of the main types of acts of lovingkindness, as it is stated (Proverbs 27:9), “Oil and incense gladden the heart, and the sweetness of a friend is better than one’s own counsel.”

“Do not go talebearing among your people“ (Leviticus 19:16). And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Ketuvot 46a) that included in this [negative commandment] is not to put out a bad name for any of our people. And the punishment [for doing this] is very stringent, as will be explained in the level of those liable for the death penalty. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, also said (Ketuvot 46a) [that] “Do not go talebearing (rakhil)” is a [prohibition] to the judge, that he should not be soft to (rakh la) this one and harsh to that one.

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“Make no mention of the names of other gods” (Exodus 23:13) - a person should not say to his fellow, “Wait for me by idol x.”

“You shall not grant them grace” (Deuteronomy 7:2). Our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, explained [it] as do not give grace to the seven (Canaanite) nations.

“And not be like Korach and like his community” (Numbers 17:5). And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Sanhedrin 110a), “Anyone who perpetuates a dispute violates a negative commandment, as it is stated ‘and not be like Korach and like his community.’” But it is permissible to say evil speech about disputatious people, as it is stated (I Kings 1:26), “But he did not invite me your servant, or the priest Zadok, etc.”

One who does not perpetuate a dispute against those who stand on a path that is not good, and those that haul in iniquity, is surely punished for their transgressions in all their sins (of the actual sinners); and [also] transgresses a negative commandment - as it is stated (Leviticus 19:17), “and not bear sin because of him..” And it is stated (Hosea 10:9) “You have sinned more, O Israel, than in the days of Gibeah; there they stand; shall they not be overtaken [as] at Gibeah by a war upon scoundrels?” Its explanation is [that] if that generation (of Hosea) was standing there, they would not have overtaken those in Gibeah in war, to destroy the evil, as that generation had overcome [the evildoers of that time] in war. The understanding of “there they stand” is, if they stood there. And likewise “and leave his father” (Genesis 44:22) is, if he left. [This is] meaning to say, that their sin was of the type of sin of Gibeah. However [the earlier generation] was better than these, since they gathered and stood with their lives to destroy the evil. And it is stated (Judges 5:23), “‘Curse Meroz,’ said the angel of the Lord; ‘Bitterly curse its inhabitants, because they came not to the aid of the Lord, to the aid of the Lord among the warriors.’” And it is stated (Deuteronomy 1:17), “do not fear in front of a man.” And anyone who is for God, may He be blessed, should give over his life for the sanctification of God, as it is stated (Exodus 32:26), “‘Whoever is for the Lord, come to me’; and all the Levites gathered to him.” And it is [also] stated (Numbers 25:7), “And Phinneas saw, etc. and he took a spear in his hand.” And it is an obligation on all that fear [God] - even if he is one that loves pureness of heart - to arouse zealotry when he sees that behold, the officers and the prefects are in trespass, as it is stated (Ezra 9:2), “and it was the hand of the officers and prefects who were in this trespass first.”

“But as for your brothers of the Children of Israel, no one shall rule ruthlessly over the other” (Leviticus 25:46). A man may not subjugate his fellow. And if his fear is upon them or they are embarrassed to violate his word, he should not command them to do [anything at all], except from their [own] will and for their benefit - even to heat up a jug of water or to go on an errand to the town square to buy as much as a loaf of bread. But it is permitted to command anything he wants to a man who does not behave properly.

“You shall not profane My holy name” (Leviticus 22:32). This is among [the sins for which] one is liable for excision, as will be explained. And know that, is not the (greatest) damage and destruction found among the souls of the masses on the lips of the tongue? For they mention [God’s] name for nothing, and they also mention it without reverence. And about this matter did our Rabbis explain (Leviticus Rabbah 27) that which it is written (Isaiah 1:3), “Israel did not know.” And they are also not exacting about the cleanliness of the place and cleanliness of [their] palms.

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And when people are not careful with their tongues about the honor of Torah scholars - whether in front of them or not in front of them - they turn into [those categorized as] heretics (apikorsim), who do not have a share in the world to come. And likewise, is not the destruction of the four groups (see Sota 42a) from the sin of their mouth and the word of their lips? It is all like it will be explained in this chapter. Therefore it is written (Proverbs 18:21), “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.”

Observe and see the iniquity of the tongue and the severity of its transgression: For the punishment of one who curses his father and mother is more severe than one who strikes [them]. As the sentence of the one that curses is stoning - which is the most stringent of the court’s death penalties - whereas the sentence of the one who strikes [them] is strangulation.

And many are also ensnared and trapped in profaning their glorious senses - the sense of seeing and the sense of hearing. And it is stated about the sense of seeing (Numbers 15:39), “so that you do not follow your heart and eyes.” We were commanded with this that a man should not stare at a married woman or at other sexual prohibitions, lest he be ensnared by them.

And among the sins that are dependent on the sight of seeing is [that of] raised eyes. For it is caused by pride, as it is stated (Psalms 101:5), “I cannot endure one of raised eyes and a thick heart.”

And among the words of our Rabbis about the sense of hearing is, “A person should not allow his ears to hear idle matters, because they are the first of the limbs burned” (Ketuvot 5b). And about the one that audits a mouth that speaks vulgarity, it is stated (Proverbs 22:14), “The mouth of strange women is a deep pit.” One who is of the fearers of God and of the penitents should pay attention to all of this, in order to save his soul from the flame. And we have already written fine words about this matter in the Gates of Precautions of Caution (no longer extant).

Among the [negative commandments] dependent upon the shutting of the hand and the one who prevents himself from an act is “do not [...] shut your hand against your needy kinsman, [etc.] Beware lest you harbor the base thought, ‘The seventh year, the year of remission, is approaching,’ so that you are mean to your needy kinsman and give him nothing” Deuteronomy 15:7-9). We have learned from this that one who refrains from lending to a poor person violates two negative commandments. And they are “Beware,” and “lest.” So if at the time that the seventh year is approaching, we are warned not to prevent ourselves from loaning because of the fear of the matter of the year of remission, certainly [is it so at] a time when he will not lose [the loaner’s] debt - for the sin of one who shuts his hand from lending will become greater. And from the greatness of this iniquity, the verse called the thought of stinginess from lending, “base thought (devar belia’al).” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Ketuvot 68a), “[Regarding] anyone who averts his eyes from the obligation to give charity, it is as if he engages in idol worship. It is written here, ‘Beware lest you harbor the base thought in your heart...and you will not give him’ (Deuteronomy 15:9), and it is written there, ‘Certain base fellows from among you have gone out’ (Deuteronomy 13:14).” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yalkut Shmuel 28:134) that a miser is called base. And so is it written (I Samuel 25:25), “to that wretched fellow, Nabal” - because he was stingy, since he said to David’s servants (I Samuel 25:11), “Should I then take my bread and my water and the meat that I slaughtered, etc.?” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Shabbat 63a), “Greater is one who lends to a poor person than one who [gives] charity.”

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“You shall not abuse your neighbor” (Leviticus 19:13). (And the explanation is that this is also from the [negative commandments] that are dependent upon the shutting of the hand. For the verse is speaking about abusing the wage of a wage-worker, such that [the employer] prevents himself from paying him his wage. And likewise, that which [Rabbenu Yonah] brings the verse, “The wicked man,” after this is because it is from this type in which one prevents himself from paying the debt.) And King David, peace be upon him, said (Psalms 37:21), “The wicked man borrows and does not repay.” “You shall not leave over the wages of a laborer with you until morning” (Leviticus 19:13). “You must pay him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets” (Deuteronomy 24:15). It is the same for the rent of an animal, [the wage] of a person or of vessels - one transgresses, “You shall not leave over.” [Even with] contracting, one transgresses, “You shall not leave over” (Bava Metzia 101b).

“You must not leave over his corpse on the stake overnight” (Deuteronomy 21:23). One who leaves over his dead [relative] overnight transgresses a negative commandment, unless he leaves him over for [the sake of] his honor.”

“You may not be indifferent” (Deuteronomy 22:3). We were warned with this not to be negligent from saving the wealth of our fellows - whether movable property or lands - as our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Bava Metzia 31a), “‘And so too shall you do with anything that your brother loses’ - to include the loss of land.” For example, if there was water streaming and coming there, he is obligated to block it. And also were we warned [with this verse] to make efforts to rescue our neighbors, and to save our fellows at the time of their troubles. And it is likewise written (Leviticus 19:16), “you may not stand over your neighbor’s blood.” And Solomon said (Proverbs 24:10), “If you showed yourself slack in time of trouble; and wanting in strength.” Its explanation is [that] if you have the ability to save with counsel or with effort, but you show yourself [as if] you do not have the strength, your strength will be reduced - measure for measure. And it is stated afterwards (Proverbs 24:12), “If you say, ‘We knew nothing of it,’ surely He who fathoms hearts will discern [the truth], He who watches over your life will know it, and He will pay each man as he deserves.” Behold one who prevents himself from the salvation [of others] and from giving counsel to help, the Holy One, blessed be He, will consider it like his act. (It appears to me that his intention in explaining the verse is that even though the iniquity of preventing himself is passive, nevertheless it will be counted for him as if he had actively done evil to his fellow. For that evil that came to his fellow in a place where he could have been saved through [the sinner], is considered for the one that prevented himself from saving [the other] as if he was active and did [it]. And this is [the understanding of] its being considered like his act.)

And it is good and very correct that there be volunteers from the people in each and every city, to be ready and prepared for any matter of rescue, when an Israelite man or woman is found in trouble. And behold we became obligated to exert ourselves for his missing ox or sheep, to be with us - now what fineness and greatness to do for its owners - until our brother requests it; and it is written (Isaiah 58:7), “and take the wretched poor into your home.”

“You shall surely reprimand your countryman and not bear sin because of him.” (Leviticus 19:17). We were warned with this not to incur sin from the sin of our fellow, in our preventing ourselves from rebuking them. And if one man sins when his sin is completely revealed and they did not rebuke him with a rod of reprimands, the whole congregation is punished. And it is accordingly written (Joshua 22:20), “When Achan son of Zerah violated the proscription, anger struck the

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whole community of Israel; he was not the only one who perished for that sin.” And it is stated (Deuteronomy 29:28), “but with overt [acts], it is for us and our children forever.” And even the nations of the world said, (Jonah 1:7) “Let us cast lots and find out on whose account this misfortune has come upon us” - and certainly with Israel, who are responsible for one another.

And in order to be saved from this punishment, it is a proper thing to choose men of truth and to identify men of valor from all of the people; and to place them as the heads of supervision over every marketplace and lot of their dwelling places - in order to supervise their neighbors and to reprimand them for any matter of rebellion and destroy the evil [that they find].

“When you make a vow to the Lord, your God, do not delay fulfilling it” (Deuteronomy 23:22). Behold there is a punishment for the delay of vows and charity, even though one pays them later. And if someone vows to give charity to the poor, he is obligated to pay it immediately. And if by way of forgetfulness, a delay of the vow happens to him, this too will surely be punished. For since he knows that forgetfulness is found with people, he should have remembered his vows and constantly put them into his heart, so that he would not forget them - like the matter that is stated (Proverbs 20:25), “It is a snare for a man to pledge a sacred gift rashly, and to give thought to his vows only after they have been made.” Therefore, his punishment for his negligence is severe, as it is stated (Ecclesiastes 5:5), “Don’t let your mouth bring your flesh to sin, and don’t plead before the messenger that it was an error, but fear God; else God may be angered by your talk and destroy the work of your hands.” Its explanation is “Don’t let your mouth bring your flesh to sin, etc.” - why do you vow, if you are not careful with your vows and bring guilt upon yourself? And we have already explained this verse in the Gates of Precautions of Caution (no longer extant). And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, have said about the iniquity of [unfulfilled] vows (Shabbat 32b) that children die [as a result], as it is stated (Ecclesiastes 5:5), “and destroy the work of your hands.” The verse is also explained to be about the matter of evil speech, that one is punished for negligence with it - even if he does not intend to disgrace his fellow. (And likewise did our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, say in the Sifrei - and Rashi cites it in his commentary on the Torah concerning Miriam - and this is its language, “And with Miriam, she did not have in mind to to disgrace him [...]” And it concludes in the Sifrei, “But rather for praise, on account of the commandment of being fruitful and multiplying, etc.”) And behold we were commanded not to make vows, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 23:23) “Whereas you incur no guilt if you refrain from vowing.” And our Rabbis expounded from this (Nedarim 77b) that if one does vow, he incurs guilt. For a vow is a stumbling block for the one who vows, lest he profane his word or delay fulfilling it. Rather a righteous man is gracious and gives without his vowing. [It is hence forbidden to vow] except for when he calls out from distress. For then he should make a vow, like the matter that is written (Genesis 28:20), “And Jacob made a vow, saying, etc.” And likewise in the gathering together of the heads of the people - the Tribes of Israel: They should make vows to strengthen weakened hands. (It appears to me that his intention in that which he wrote, “to strengthen weakened hands,” is meaning to say that it energizes the rest of the people whose hands are weakened in the trait of volunteering, since they are not used to it. And through his vowing publicly in front of many people, their hearts are elevated to volunteer as well. And so is it written in I Chronicles 29:1-9, “King David said to the entire assemblage, etc. ‘I have prepared with all of my strength, etc. and who is going to make a freewill offering and devote himself today to the Lord?’ And the officers of the clans made freewill offerings, etc. The people rejoiced over

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the freewill offerings they made, for with a whole heart they made freewill offerings to the Lord; King David also rejoiced very much.”

The fifth level is a negative commandment that [involves] an action: Our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Makkot 13b), “We give lashes for a negative commandment that [involves] an action.” And the [number of] lashes is forty minus one. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Sanhedrin 10a) that lashes comes instead of the death penalty. And they said (Sanhedrin 81b), “Someone who was lashed and repeats [the sin], we put into jail (kippah). And it is an obligation upon the reprimanders to investigate the ways of the people and to know what they are stumbling in. Since there are many [negative commandments] - even though they observe many of the [negative commandments], they [also] negate many of them. For example, they keep most of the prohibitions of work on Shabbat - but there are types of work that part of the people are not careful about, since they are not known to them. And their mistakes are attributed to themselves, since they did not lodge among the sages and seek Torah from their mouths. Hence they transgressed the practices and will be punished, as it is stated (Isaiah 26:10), “But when the evildoer is spared, he learns not righteousness.” And there are rebels that stumble in them; for they did not become accustomed to them in their youth, in the houses of their fathers, to be careful about them. And they inherited [the ways of] the fathers, and did not listen to the voice of their teachers. [Hence] these are doing [these] sins wantonly.

And likewise all of the people are careful about the blood of the soul and the blood of exudate; but some of them are not careful about the preparation of salting, to remove the blood from the meat according to the law. And there are very many like these [examples], without knowledge and without reprimand. And it is like it is stated (Proverbs 29:18), “For lack of vision a people becomes wild.”

And there are some [negative commandments] that some of the masses do not keep the main [negative commandment], such as wounding and hitting. For one that hits his fellow violates two negative commandments, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 25:3), “You shall strike him forty; you shall not add, lest you add.” And many transgress these negative commandments by hitting their wives. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Sanhedrin 58b), “Anyone who raises his hand to strike another, even if he does not strike him, is called wicked - as it is stated (Exodus 2:13), ‘and he said to the wicked one, “Why should you strike your friend?”’ ‘Why did you strike,’ is not stated, but rather, ‘should you strike.’” And Job said (Job 31:21), “If I raised my hand against the fatherless.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Sanhedrin 58b) [that] Rav Huna would cut off the hand of the striker. He would say, “And the high arm shall be broken” (Job 38:15).

And likewise with destruction of the beard, as it is stated (Leviticus 19:27), “and you shall not destroy the side-growth of your beard.”

And there are people that do not refrain from [wearing] a garment that is of a forbidden mixture of fabrics. For they sew a wool garment with a linen thread or make a linen rim for the edge of a woolen garment.

“No man shall approach anyone of his own flesh” (Leviticus 18:6). Any approaching of the flesh is forbidden, such as touching the hands of a married woman. And its explanation [in the continuation of the verse], “to uncover nakedness,” is because approaching leads to nakedness

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(forbidden intercourse). And should you say in your heart, “Where is it found in Scripture that the Torah made a fence, that you should say that it forbade the touching of hands, that it should be a sin” - we will answer you [this] word: Behold the commandment of the nazirite in which one’s main separation is lest he forget the Lawmaker or be fooled by a spirit of licentiousness, [and yet] the Torah forbade him from [consuming] everything that is from the vine of wine. And all of that is as a fence to distance him from drinking wine. And likewise did our Rabbis say in the Midrash (Exodus Rabbah 16:2).

“And do not place a stumbling block in front of the blind” (Leviticus 19:14). Our Rabbis said (Moed Katan 17a) that we were warned with this that a man should not strike his grown son, lest it be a snare and a stumbling block for [the son’s] tongue and to hit his father. And likewise were we warned with this not to bring about any stumbling block for the iniquity of an Israelite or even a gentile, such that he not give a cup of wine to a nazirite or a limb from a living animal [also] to a Noahide, and also not extend to him that which is forbidden to him, nor to cause him to stumble upon one of the things about which the Noahides were [forbidden].

“You must not destroy its trees, wielding the ax against them” (Deuteronomy 20:19). For we were warned with this not to cut down any fruit tree - even to build fortifications with it, so long as one finds enough fruitless trees for his needs. And we were also warned with this not to throw money around for no reason - even the value of a perutah (a small coin). And our Rabbis said (Bava Kamma 91b), “One who rends his garments excessively over his dead [relative] is lashed.” And all the more so, one who breaks vessels in his anger, as he has done two evils - destroying his wealth; and letting his anger be in control, to make him transgress matters of the Torah. As from now on, he will have a struggle with the impulse of anger, to make him transgress his religion - like the matter that is written (Proverbs 29:22), “a hot-tempered man commits many offenses.” And we have already let you know that which our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Shabbat 105b), “One who breaks his vessels in his anger [...] should be like an idol worshiper in your eyes, as that is the way of the evil impulse. Today it tells him, ‘Do this,’ and tomorrow it tells him, ‘[...] worship idols.’” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yevamot 44a), “A man should not pour out water from his well when others need it.” We were even warned not to waste the body, by giving it over to dangers or torturing the body to consume it needlessly with fasts from his distress and anger, and not to mourn [more than is necessary] for his dead [relative]. But [regarding] one who grieves and mourns over his iniquities - about him is it stated (Isaiah 57:18), “I note how they fare and will heal them; I will guide them and mete out solace to them, and to the mourners among them.” And it is stated (Genesis 9:5) “But for your souls’ blood, I will require a reckoning.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Bava Kamma 91b), “From the hand of your souls (i.e., from yourself), will I require your blood.”

“Three years it shall be forbidden (arelim) for you, not to be eaten” (Leviticus 19:23). Orlah is applicable outside of the Land [of Israel] and it is forbidden in benefit. And anything that is forbidden in benefit is forbidden to give to a [gentile]. And the fourth year vineyard is forbidden in benefit, when not redeemed. And we may not redeem it until its fruits have reached the season of the tithes. So when is the season of the tithes? From the time that the fruits have been completed, like the matter that our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, learned (Maasrot 1:2), “From when are the fruits obligated in tithes?”

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“Therefore the Children of Israel do not eat the sciatic tendon” (Genesis 32:33). The sciatic tendon is forbidden in benefit, so it is forbidden to give it to one’s Canaanite slave or maidservant. And it is forbidden to send a thigh (as a gift) to a Canaanite with the sciatic tendon inside it. (And likewise does Rosh bring in the name of [Rabbeinu Yonah] at the beginning of the chapter [entitled] *Gid HaNashei* in the discussion of a man sending a thigh to a Canaanite. But we do not establish [the law to be] like him in this, but rather like the opinion of Rambam - that the sciatic tendon is permissible in benefit, so one may send a thigh to a Canaanite with the sciatic tendon inside it. And it is explained in *Tur* and *Shulchan Arukh*, *Yoreh Deah* 65.)

“You shall not steal; you shall not deal deceitfully or falsely” (Leviticus 19:11). Our Rabbis said (*Bava Metzia* 61b), “‘You shall not steal’ in order to aggravate” - that one should not say, “I will steal vessel x, in order that he will be pained and I will make him aggravated (*nakot*, [like] the usage, ‘and you shall aggravate yourselves’ [in] *Ezekiel* 36:31), be careful in watching his vessels and give it back to him afterwards.” And it is likewise forbidden to take vessels from the house of one’s fellow in the way of theft, to use them and [then] return them to him. And one may not steal what is his from behind the thief - so that he will not appear to be a thief (*Sifra*, *Kedoshim*, Section 2:2).

“You shall not practice divination or soothsaying” (Leviticus 19:26). “You shall not practice divination” - such as those that divine with weasels and birds. [It is if] his bread fell from his mouth or a gazelle crossed his path, and he said it is a sign that his journey will not be successful - so he leaves his journey because of this. And that which is similar to this, such that he follow the augurs, whether to do something or to refrain from the action. “You shall not practice soothsaying (*teonenu*)” is an expression of times (*onot*) and hours: That he says, “Day x is good to begin work, hour y is bad for leaving.” And one should [also] not listen to the astrologers. But rather one’s heart should trust in the Lord, the God of the heavens and the God of the earth. Therefore it is written about this matter (*Deuteronomy* 18:13), “You must be wholehearted with the Lord, your God.” We have learned from this that the diviners and the augurs are lacking trust. And these plots and divinings are the acts of the Land of Canaan, as it is stated (*Deuteronomy* 18:14), “For those nations that you are about to dispossess do indeed resort to soothsayers and augurs; to you, however, the Lord, your God has not assigned the like.”

“You shall do no unrighteousness in judgment” (Leviticus 19:15). Behold, afterward it states, “you shall not favor the poor or show deference to the rich; judge your countryman fairly.” So what is, “judgement” stated at the beginning of the verse? Our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (*Sifra*, *Kedoshim*, Chapter 8:5) [that] this is [referring to] length, weight and capacity: “It is to teach us that a measurer is called a judge, and if he falsifies in measurement (it is as if the perverts justice); and he is called wrong, [...], revolting, rejected and abominable, and he brings about five things (like one who perverts justice): He defiles the (Land), he profanes the Name, he drives out the Divine Presence, he causes Israel to fall by the sword, and he exiles them from their land.” (And it appears to me that there is a lacuna here - and it is accordingly found below - “You shall not falsify measures of length, weight, or capacity. You shall have an honest balance, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin; I am the Lord, your God, who freed you, etc.” [*Leviticus* 19:35-36]). “Measures of length” - that is measuring of land; “weight” - like its meaning; “or capacity” - that is a liquid and a dry measure; “honest weights” - masses to weigh across from them; “an ephah” is a dry measure; “a hin” is a liquid measure; “I am the Lord, your

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God, who freed you, etc.” - in Egypt, I distinguished between the drop of a firstborn and the drop that was not a firstborn, so I am credible to punish the one who hides his weights in salt, in order to fool the creatures who are not aware of them.

“You shall not act towards him as a creditor” (Exodus 22:24). We were warned with this not to distress the borrower. And the creditor may not pass in front of him when he knows that the borrower does not have with what to pay him back. For he torments him and weakens his spirit with this. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Bava Metzia 78b), “Behold, it is as if he is judging him with two [punishments], as it is stated (Psalms 66:12), ‘You have let men ride over us; we have endured fire and water.’”

“You shall not put usury upon him” (Exodus 22:24) - [this is a negative commandment] for the witnesses - as the creditor, the borrower and the witnesses [all] transgress a negative commandment. Therefore, it states, “you shall not put (tasimun),” in plural, after it stated, “you shall not act (singular) towards him as a creditor” - since it is a warning to the witnesses.

“There must be no blemish in it” (Leviticus 22:21). We were warned with this not to introduce a blemish into a firstborn - even in our times.

“You shall not plow with an ox and an ass together” (Deuteronomy 22:21). We were warned with this not to plow - nor to tread - with two species, when they are joined with a yoke or with a rope. And the law is the same for driving them when they are joined. And [the reason] that it (only) spoke about plowing is [that] the verse mentioned the common [case]. And it is even forbidden to drive them with [one’s] voice. And it is forbidden to drive together two mules, [if] one is the daughter of a female horse and one is the daughter of a female donkey. And it is forbidden to drive a mule with [either] a horse or a donkey.

“And a figured stone you shall not set in your land” (Leviticus 26:1). We were warned with this not to bow down on a floor of stones in the synagogue or in any other place, except for the Temple.

“You shall not make yourselves abominable” (Leviticus 11:43). We were warned with this not to eat fish or a grasshopper until they die. And likewise should one not drink from the horn of a bloodletter (that he uses for his craft). One who delays his [bodily needs also] transgresses on account of “You shall not make yourselves abominable” (Makkot 16b).

“Do not degrade your daughter and make her a harlot, lest the land fall into harlotry and the land be filled with depravity” (Leviticus 19:29). Our Rabbis explained (Sanhedrin 76a) that this verse comes to warn that a man not give over his single daughter for intercourse that is not for the sake of marriage (kiddushin). “Lest the land fall into harlotry” - for if you do this, the land will be untrue and give its fruit elsewhere, and not in your land. And likewise does it state (Jeremiah 3:3), “And when showers were withheld and the late rains did not come, your face had the brazenness of a harlot.”

And behold you have seen the greatness of the punishment of one who designates a single woman as a harlot for himself. For it is stated about this (Leviticus 19:29), “lest the land fall into harlotry and the land be filled with depravity.” [That is] besides the great evil stumbling block that is found for those having intercourse with a single woman - for she is ashamed to immerse in the waters of a river or a mikveh [to purify herself] from the impurity of her menstruation, lest a rumor of her harlotry become public. Therefore she will [usually remain] in menstruation; her impurity in the

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bottom of her skirts, she does not think of her end. Our Rabbis also said (Sanhedrin 76a), “‘Do not degrade your daughter and make her a harlot’ - behold this is a [negative commandment] that a man not marry off his daughter to an old man.”

“You shall not eat any corpse” (Deuteronomy 14:21). Our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Chullin 32a), “Anything that is disqualified during slaughter is a corpse (neveilah).” And it is goodly for the reprimanders to warn the people, so that they should be careful about the law of slaughtering and all of its details, to fulfill its dictates. And for all of its laws, they should choose a slaughterer (schochet) who fears sin, since a large number of Israelites are dependent upon him for the [proper execution] of the commandments of slaughter and examination. And though it is true that our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Chullin 3b), “Most of those found around slaughter are experts” - there are places without concern and without reprimand. There, most of the people found around slaughter are not understanding experts. And we have also seen scandal in some of them. For many of the experts have distanced themselves [from these places] out of fear of sin; and the heart of those that do not not fear, does not understand how to be exacting in the examination of the knife. For one has to focus his heart very, very much in its examination. Do you not see that a man may check two or three times and not feel a small nick (that would render the knife improper), but find it afterwards when he set his heart to it in the end? So [this shows] that the sense of touch is according to the focus of the heart. [This is] besides that a man that has no fear will err in the examination of the marks and the rest of the ways and angles that are clearly revealed to anyone who knows the doctrine and the law.

“And you shall not take a bribe” (Exodus 23:8) - even on condition to have the innocent be innocent and the guilty be guilty, and even if the two parties to the argument have agreed to give him a wage together. Thus did our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, say (Ketuvot 105a): “[Regarding] one who takes a wage to judge, his decisions are null.” But they are permitted to give him the wage of the loss he incurred, in that they disturbed him from his [regular] activities - if the loss is recognizable and fixed, and it is known to people. And [this is] so long as one of them does not give more than his fellow towards the wage of the loss.

Our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Ketuvot 105b), “‘And you shall not take a bribe’ - even a bribe of words. As if one of them said words of a flatterer to him, he must withdraw himself from that case. And if he brings him a present when he comes to be judged in front of him, he should not take it from his hand. And even if he preceded and gave him a gift in front of him to take from him (before he received his summons), this judge has already been disqualified from judging him.

“No work at all shall be done on them; only what every person is to eat, etc.” (Exodus 12:16). Our Rabbis said (Beitzah 12a), “From transporting being permitted for the sake of food for people, it was also permitted not for its sake - so long as it is for the sake of the day.” And it is like the matter that they said, “We transport a Torah scroll on a holiday to read it on that day.” But it is forbidden to transport for the needs of weekdays - only for the needs of the holiday. And many of the people sin by transporting a key for their containers into the public domain on the holiday, even though there is no food that can be eaten on the holiday in the container.

“A man shall not wear a woman’s clothing” (Deuteronomy 22:5). [This is a negative commandment against] removing underarm and pubic hairs.

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“So that you do not bring bloodguilt in your house” (Deuteronomy 22:8). [This is a negative commandment against] placing a bad dog or a rickety ladder inside one’s home.

“You must not work your firstling ox or shear your firstling sheep” (Deuteronomy 15:19). [The law of] the firstborn is practiced both in the Land [of Israel] and outside the Land. And a firstling that is mixed in a hundred or [even] a thousand (other animals) renders all of them prohibited in benefit.

“You shall not do like this to the Lord, your God “(Deuteronomy 12:4). [This is a negative commandment against] erasing [God’s] name.

“And you shall not follow their practices” (Leviticus 18:3). And we were warned with this to distance ourselves from all the ways of the Emorites. And among them are incantations, and amulets that are not from an expert for healing.

“And you shall eat no bread or parched grain or fresh ears until that very day” (Leviticus 23:14). And [until the day it becomes permitted], the new grain is forbidden by the Torah also outside of the Land.

We have written some of the things about which many people err unknowingly, for their ears had not been exposed to them; and some of the things they knew were forbidden, but did know the severity of the prohibition. And we mentioned some of these [things] so that the people will not err in them laying down. The wise man will hear [this] and add [more] teaching, to warn the people about the things like this that happen to them. And the understanding ones will note their mention, and so, shine with the shine of heaven.

And the sixth level is [the sins that come with] a death penalty at the hands of the Heavens: The difference between [this] death penalty and excision (karet) is that the liability for the death penalty is upon him, but not upon his progeny; whereas with the punishment of excision, he and his progeny are excised. Nevertheless our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, have said (Pesachim 32b) that regarding one matter, in one aspect, death at the hands of the Heavens exceeds the severity of excision. For the one who is liable for [death] at the hands of the Heavens has death in his apertures, and the animals of his livestock die: His cow eats dust and dies; his chicken eats from the dungheap and dies. And [so] death clings to him until it finishes him off.

(Perhaps Section 108 is missing, or a mistake happened in the ordering of the sections.)

And some of those liable for a death penalty at the hands of the Heavens were enumerated in the Mishnah, such as one who eats untithed foods - and that is grain that was not prepared by the separation of the priestly tithe and the tithe from it. And this commandment is practiced [only] in the Land of Israel. And [another] example is an impure priest that eats pure priestly tithe or a non-priest that ate the priestly tithe.

And there are some of them that our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, explained in the Talmud and in the Midrash, and most of them can be learned from the verse [itself]. For example, one who afflicts a widow or an orphan, as it is stated (Exodus 22:21-23), “you shall not afflict a widow or orphan. If you do mistreat them, etc., My anger shall blaze forth.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Mekhilta D’Rabbi Yishmael, Mishpatim 18), “It is one if they cry out or they do not cry out.” [This is] meaning to say that when one who afflicts the widow or orphan is

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punished, it is the same doctrine whether the afflicted surely cries out under his hand or is surely silent. But when the orphan cries out to God, may He be blessed, the punishment comes quickly.

[Likewise,] stealing from the poor person, as it is stated (Proverbs 22:22-23), “Do not rob the indigent for he is indigent; and do not crush the poor man in the gate. For the Lord will take up their cause and despoil those who despoil them of life.” And we have already explained this in the third level. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Bava Kamma 119a) that one who steals from a poor person is as if he takes his life, as it is stated (Proverbs 1:19), “Such is the fate of all who pursue unjust gain; it takes the life of its possessor.” Sometimes it deprives him of his livelihood - even with the theft of less than the value of a perutah (a very small coin). Therefore it is considered like bloodguilt for that person: If he stole the value of a perutah, he has spilled blood.

[Likewise] one who put out a bad name (on someone else), as it is stated (Numbers 14:37), “And those who spread such calumnies about the land died of plague in front of the Lord.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Arakhin 15a) [that] if the punishment for one who puts out a bad name on the land is death, all the more so for one who puts out a bad name on a fellow Israelite - who is obligated in Torah and the commandments. And it is stated (Deuteronomy 22:19), “And they shall fine him a hundred [shekels of] silver and give it to the girl’s father; for the man has put out a bad name, etc.” Behold, the verse did not mention his sin about having tried to take the life of the woman, and causing her to be killed in court with false witnesses that he brought about her [fabricated] harlotry; yet it mentioned the iniquity of putting out a bad name! For it is a greater iniquity than one seeking to squelch a life, as the pain of the shame is more bitter than death. And so did our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, say that he is liable lashes and [a fine] for putting out a bad name, not for having sought to kill her. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yerushalmi Bava Kamma 8:7) that one who puts out a bad name with words about a blemish in the family is never able to atone. For it is not enough for him to get pardoned by those still alive, as he caused the shame and disgrace of their forebears that gave him birth. And we will still add more to its explanation [when we explain] the severity of the four death penalties [of the court].

And one who plays with children and [masturbates] whether with the hand or the foot is liable. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Niddah 13b) that his punishment is like the punishment of the generation of the flood, that had corrupted their ways. And likewise one who does like the act of Er and Onan - to thresh (the penis) inside (the vagina) and winnow outside, to destroy the seed - is liable, as it is stated (Genesis 38:10), “And what he did was displeasing to the Lord, and He killed him as well.” And it is stated about those that waste seed (Isaiah 57:5), “You who inflame yourselves among the terebinths, under every verdant tree; who slaughter children, etc.”

And a Torah scholar that does not act modestly is liable, because he distances the Torah from the love of the creatures. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Shabbat 114a), “About this is it stated (Proverbs 8:36), ‘all who hate me love death.’” The explanation of haters is, those that cause hate - as they cause the creatures to hate the Torah. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yoma 86a), “[When a man] reads [Torah], studies [Mishnah, ...]; and he speaks pleasantly with other people, is pleasant with [them] in his business transactions in the marketplace and gives and takes faithfully - what do people say about him? Fortunate is his father [and his mother] who taught him Torah, [...], woe to the people who have not studied Torah. So-and-so

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who was taught Torah - see how [beautiful] are his ways, how proper are his deeds. About him does the verse state (Isaiah 49:3), 'You are My servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.' [But when a man] reads [Torah], studies [Mishnah, ...]; but he does not speak pleasantly with other people, is not pleasant with [them] in his business transactions in the marketplace and does not give and take faithfully - what do people say about him? Woe to so-and-so who studied Torah, woe to his teacher and to his father who taught him Torah. So-and-so who studied Torah - see how [ugly] are his deeds, and how [corrupted] are his ways. About him, the verse states (Ezekiel 36:20), 'they caused My holy name to be profaned, in that it was said of them, "These are the people of the Lord, yet they had to leave His land."'"

Our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Derekh Eretz Rabbah 11:13), "Anyone who has a study hall (beit midrash) in his city but does not go there is liable."

And one who rivals his rabbi's yeshiva is liable.

And one who issues a legal ruling in front of his teacher is liable. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Eruvin 63a) [that] when Nadav and Abihou brought a foreign fire, they did not die for the sin of bringing [it], since their intention was for the sake of a commandment: They said, "Behold it is written in the Torah (Leviticus 1:7), 'And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar' - although fire descends from Heaven, it is [nonetheless] a commandment to [also] bring ordinary fire." Rather their punishment was because they issued a legal ruling in front of Moses, their teacher.

Our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Avot 5:8), "Pestilence comes to the world for sins punishable by death according to the Torah, but which have not been referred to the court, and for [neglect of the law regarding] the fruits of the sabbatical year." And they also said (Avot 5:9), "At four times pestilence increases: In the fourth year, in the seventh year, at the conclusion of the seventh year and at the conclusion of the Feast [of Tabernacles (Sukkot)] in every year. In the fourth year, on account of the tithe of the poor [which is due in] the third year; in the seventh year, on account of the tithe of the poor [which is due] in the sixth year; at the conclusion of the seventh year, on account of the produce of the seventh year; and at the conclusion of the Feast in every year, for robbing the gifts to the poor." We have seen from this that there is death at the hands of the Heavens for robbing the gifts of the poor. And from this, know and examine the severity of one who makes vows of charity but does not fulfill [them]. Also one who shuts his hand from his poor brother and turns away from his flesh is similar to these - for since he has already been obligated to give [these sums by the Torah], behold he is like someone robbing the gifts [of the poor].

The seventh level is the severity of excision: The punishment that one is liable [when the consequence of the sin's] wanton [transgression] is excision; when inadvertent, is for one to bring a sin-offering. And so did our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, say (Keritot 2a) - that a person is only liable to bring a sin-offering for something the punishment of which, when done wantonly, is excision. [This is] like the matter that is stated (Leviticus 20:20), "they shall bear their guilt; they shall die childless." And there are two categories of those liable for excision:

The first category is [composed of] the ones excised [only] from this world: For example, one who has sexual relations with his sister, the sister of his father, the sister of his mother, the sister of his wife or the sister of his brother after he [divorces] her or after the death of her husband. And

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likewise one who has sexual relations with the wife of his father's brother or with the wife of the mother's brother; one who eats forbidden fat or blood; who eats chamets at Passover; one who does (forbidden) work on Yom Kippur; one who did not [eat from] a Passover [offering]; and one who has sexual relations with a menstruant.

The second category is [composed of] the ones excised from this world and from the next world: For example, one who worships idolatry; one who sins publicly; one who disgraces Torah, such as if he disgraces its students or those that love God, may He be blessed; and those that rescind the covenant on their flesh (circumcision). And we will explain the content of these groups more fully in the eleventh level.

And there are times when the merit of someone who is liable for excision lasts him two or three generations. And the delay in the death of evildoers is to pay their reward in this world, and so to destroy them in the world to come. For it is stated (Deuteronomy 7:10) "But who instantly repays with destruction those who hate Him - never slow with those who hate Him, but repaying them instantly." And the thing is explained in the words of King David, peace be upon him (Psalms 92:7-8), "A brutish man cannot know, a fool cannot understand this: Though the wicked sprout like grass, though all evildoers blossom, it is only that they may be destroyed forever." And likewise did Asaf, peace be upon him, say (Psalms 73:3-17), "For I envied the wanton; I saw the wicked at ease. Death has no pangs for them, etc. Until I entered God's sanctuary and reflected on their fate." Its explanation is that vengeance upon the evildoers is at their end, as it is stated (Proverbs 24:20), "For there is no future for the evil man; the lamp of the wicked goes out."

And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Kohelet Rabbah 7:32), "Rabbi Yoshiyahu said, 'For three things does the Holy One, blessed be He, delay punishment of evildoers in this world: Lest they repent; [because] they have done a commandment, such that the Holy One, blessed be, will pay them back in this world; or lest righteous children will come out from them - like we have found [when] He showed favor to Achaz, such that Hezekiah came out of him; as well as Amon, from whom Yoshiyahu came out; as well as Shimi, from whom Mordechai came.'"

And [part of] the content of excision is the shortening of years; like the matter that is stated (Proverbs 10:27), "but the years of the wicked will be shortened." But there is a difference in the matter of the shortening of the years between death [at the hands of the Heavens] and excision. For [in the case of] excision, the death of the person is before fifty years, whereas [in the case of] death, [it] is before sixty - like those that died in the desert. This is meaning to say, that one about whom it was decreed to live for seventy or eighty years, but became liable for death [at the hands of the Heavens], will die at less than sixty years. However there are righteous ones the [decree for which] is to have less days than sixty [years] - as they said (Taanit 5b), "One [who dies] at fifty-two years, this is the death of Samuel of Rama." And it is stated (Numbers 4:18), "Do not let the group of Kohathite clans be cut off from the Levites." And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, expounded (Yerushalmi Bikkurim 2:1) from this that excision is before fifty years. Its explanation is, let not an accident be how you cause the tribe of the Kohathites to be cut off from the service of the Levites. For if you do not guard them - that they should not come to see when the holy [vessels] are covered - they shall be excised from the service of the Levites, and will die before they are fifty years; as it is stated (Numbers 8:25), "But at the age of fifty they shall retire from the workforce, etc."

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And among those liable for excision are those that cause a bad trap and corruption for one's offspring, besides that the end of the offspring is to be excised. And that is one who has sexual relations with a menstruant. Such a one is tearing up evil seed; for there will be a strip of brazenness upon [the child's] forehead while he is still alive. [It is] as our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Kallah Rabbati 2), "Brazen faced - is that not the son of a menstruant woman?" And the iniquities of the son will be upon the bones of the father. For he caused his soul to be a sinner from the womb. And woe is the evil of the evildoer, for it corrupts him; and his soul and his wife's soul will surely be excised. And his ruffian seed will be completely cut off. And behold that the woman is in menstrual impurity even if she is pure from [having] her flow and counted seven [clean] days - as is her statute - so long as she has not immersed in a source of water, a river or a spring that has forty seah. And the numerical equivalent (gematria) of the thing is walking slowly (le'at).

And the eighth level is the four death penalties of the court: And they are stoning, burning, killing and strangulation. Stoning is more severe than burning; burning than killing, which is with a sword (decapitation); and killing than strangulation. And from the sins [punished by] stoning: [A man] who has sexual relations with the wife of his father, with his daughter-in-law or with a male; a baal ov or yidaoni (types of fortune tellers); one who profanes the Shabbat; one who curses his father or mother; a man who has sexual relations with a betrothed maiden; one who entices others to idolatry; a sorcerer; a rebellious son; and - more severe than all of them - one who blasphemes or worships idolatry (Sanhedrin 53a).

By burning: [A man] who has sexual relations with a woman and her daughter, with the daughter of his wife, with the daughter of his son, with the daughter of his daughter, with his mother-in-law, with the mother of his mother-in-law and with the mother of his father-in-law (Sanhedrin 75a).

By the sword: A murderer and the people of a condemned city (Sanhedrin 76b).

By strangulation: One who strikes his father or his mother; one who abducts an Israelite; a rebellious elder according to the court; a false prophet; one who prophesies in the name of idol worship; and one who has sexual relations with a married woman (Sanhedrin 84b).

Our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Sanhedrin 37b), "From the day that the Temple was destroyed, although the [four death penalties of the court] have ceased, [...] the principle of the four death penalties of the court has not ceased: One who is liable for stoning, either he falls from a roof or an animal tramples him. One who is liable for burning, either he falls into a fire or a snake bites him (as a snakebite causes a burning sensation). One who is liable for killing, robbers come upon him (and execute him). One who is liable for strangling either drowns in a river or dies of diphtheria (bisonekhhi)."

And [the law of a man] who has sexual relations with a maidservant is similar to those liable for the death penalties of the court in two ways. For our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Sanhedrin 81b), "One who has intercourse with an Egyptian woman, zealots may accost him," like the matter which is written (Numbers 25:8). And this matter is more severe than the death penalties of the court, for they do not put to death, except with witnesses and a warning and by the decision of a Sanhedrin, which is not the case here.

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And besides these, the evildoer discussed profaned the holy ones of God, whom He loved, and had intercourse with the daughter of a foreign god. And every foreign son he fathers will be a snare and a trap and a reminder of the iniquity - the father will carry the iniquity of the son. And he betrayed God, for he bore foreign children.

And secondly, the Heavens will reveal his iniquity and the earth will oppose him. For his sin will maintain his decline. And behold he will be similar to those liable for the death penalties of the court after the destruction of the Temple, such that they are judged from the Heavens - that they will die in their rebellion and not die like every other person, as we have explained. And it is stated (Malachi 2:12), "May the Lord leave he who does this without anyone awake or coherent in the tents of Jacob." And our Rabbis explained (Shabbat 55b), "'Awake' among the Sages, or 'coherent' among the disciples."

And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Avot 5:8-9), "The sword comes to the world for the delay of judgment, for the perversion of judgment, and because of those who teach the Torah not in accordance with the accepted law. Wild beasts come to the world for swearing in vain, and for the profaning of [God's] name."

And among the things that are pleasant for the reprimanders to watch and testify about the people, are to keep in view the fate of the lawless concerning the laws of the Shabbat - regarding the main and derivative categories of forbidden work. For many of them have vanished from the eyes of the masses. And there is no one speaking up and no one making [it] heard.

And the ninth level is the severity of the sins for which one is killed rather than transgressing them: Our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Sanhedrin 74a), "[With regard to] all transgressions in the Torah, if a person [is told], 'Transgress and you will not be killed,' he may transgress and not be killed, [...] as it is stated (Leviticus 18:5), '[You shall keep My statutes and My judgments,] which a person shall do, and he shall live by them' - 'and live by them,' and not to die by them," except for idol worship, forbidden sexual relations, and bloodshed. For if a person tells him about one of these three, "Transgress and you will not be killed," he must [let himself] be killed and not transgress - even when they tell him to do the transgression in private; [whereas with other sins, such a law would only apply in public,] as it is stated (Leviticus 22:32), "that I may be sanctified in the midst of the Israelite people."

And [regarding] these three transgressions, [even] the punishment for their lighter side is more stringent than several weighty transgressions. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, called the lighter side of a transgression, the dust of the transgression. And they said (Pesachim 25a), "One may heal oneself [from a disease that brings a mortal danger] with anything except for wood of an asheira (a tree designated for idolatry)" - such that if they say to him, "bring leaves from an asheira and you will be healed by them," he should [allow himself to] die and not be healed by them. And even though one who benefits from the wood of an asheira is not worshiping idolatry - since it is the dust of idolatry, he should [let himself] die and not be healed by it. For he would be strengthening the hands of the worshipers of the asheira, lest they would say, "The asheira saved him."

And likewise with forbidden sexual relations - for example, if [a man] desired a married woman and they said to him, "Your healing will not be accomplished until she stands in front of you naked" - or that she should talk with him - he should [let himself] die and not breach the fence

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[around] the prohibition of a married woman. And from this, you can recognize the weightiness of touching the hand of a married woman.

And behold the dust of murder is whitening [someone else's] face (embarrassing someone). Since his face turns white and the ruddy appearance leaves [it], it is similar to [the draining of blood] caused by murder. And so did our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, say (Bava Metzia 58b). And secondly because the pain of the [embarrassment] is more bitter than death. Therefore our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Ketuvot 67b), Really "it is preferable for a person to make himself fall into a fiery furnace, and not whiten the face of his fellow in public" - but they did not say this about other weighty transgressions. Indeed, they compared the dust of murder to [actual] murder: And just like they said that he must [let himself] be killed and not murder; they likewise said that he should make himself fall into a fiery furnace, and not whiten the face of his fellow in public. And they learned this from the matter of Tamar, as it is stated (Bereishit 48:25), "As she was being brought out, she sent to her father-in-law, etc." Behold even though she was being taken out to be burned [to death], she did not reveal that she was pregnant from Yehudah, so as not to whiten his face.

And they also said (Bava Metzia 58b), "Anyone who descends to Gehinnom [eventually] ascends, except for three [who] descend and do not ascend [...]: One who whitens the face of his fellow in public; one who calls his fellow a derogatory name; and one who has sexual relations with a married woman." Behold that they compared one who whitens the face of his fellow in public and one who calls his fellow a derogatory name - in that he also whitens his face - to one who has sexual relations with a married woman, which is from the transgressions for which one should die and not transgress.

And they also said (Bava Metzia 59a), "One who whitens the face of his fellow in public has no share in the world to come." And that which they did not say this about a murderer - that he has no share in the world to come (the explanation is that since whitening [the face] is a derivative of murder, - as he said above, that it is the dust of murder - murder should be no worse than whitening [the face, in this context]; yet they did not say that he has no share in the world to come) - it is because one who whitens the face of his fellow does not recognize the greatness of the sin. So his soul is not bitter towards himself about this iniquity, as is a murderer. Therefore he is far from repentance.

And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said about Shabbat (Yerushalmi Nedarim 3:14) that it corresponds to all of the [other] commandments. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, [also] said (Chullin 5a) that one who worships idolatry or publicly profanes Shabbat is one who denies the whole entire Torah; so his slaughter [renders an animal] a carcass, and he makes wine forbidden by touching [it].

The tenth level is the severity of the transgressions for which those who do them have no share in the world to come: All creatures are created for God's glory, as it is stated (Isaiah 43:7), "All who are linked to My name, whom I have created, formed, and made for My glory." Hence it is logically understood that one who profanes [God's] name and disgraces His word will lose his hope. For it is not enough that he does not fulfill that which is expected from him from the essence of his creation - to glorify God and to sanctify Him - but he rather puts out his hands to do the inverse and the opposite, and to profane His holy name. And so is it written (Numbers 15:30-31), "But the

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person [...] who acts defiantly is blaspheming the Lord; that person shall be excised from among his people. Because he has spurned the word of the Lord and violated His commandment, that person shall be excised - he bears his iniquity.” For death does not atone for him, and he has no share in the world to come. Therefore it mentions, “he bears his iniquity” in this matter - for it does not mention this in other excisions.

And the explanation of “who acts defiantly (literally, with a high hand),” is such that he publicly does sins known to people. And likewise one who removes the yoke of the kingdom of the Heavens - and even privately, because he too is doing it defiantly. And the content of one who removes the yoke is, for example, one who is [defiant] in eating carcasses or forbidden fat or blood, or to profane holidays - even though he does not transgress the other commandments. Since he removed the yoke of one [negative commandment] from upon himself, he has already rebelled against God, may He be blessed. It is true that sometimes righteous people also stumble in a sin - but this is only incidental, when his impulse overpowers him. [Moreover, the righteous person’s] soul is bitter with him about the matter, and he will be careful about it afterwards. However the person who thinks in his heart to remove the yoke of one [negative commandment] from upon him anytime he wants to transgress it, is called a heretic for one thing. And we have already explained this earlier in the first section of the Gates of Repentance. And they, may their memory be blessed, said (Avodah Zarah 26a), “[Regarding] all shepherds, we do not [save them], etc. (as they engage in such behavior).” And the notion of the shepherds is [about] people that would graze their animals in the fields of others, removing the yoke of the prohibition of theft from upon themselves. And their category is the category of the heretic to eat carcasses, or one of the other transgressions, out of desire. But one who is a heretic to eat carcasses in order to anger [God] is a [full-fledged] heretic (apikoros). And the content of angering, is that he does not sin out of a desire for desirable food. Rather even if there is [also] slaughtered meat in front of him, he will take from the carcass. For he is rebelling, and does not accept upon himself to beware of the prohibition of carcasses [at all].

Behold we have explained the matter of “the person who acts defiantly. Now we will explain the [content of] “because he has spurned the word of the Lord.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Sanhedrin 99a) that ““Because he has spurned the word of the Lord and has breached His commandment,’ this is [a reference to] one who says: The Torah is not from Heaven; [...] one who reveals the Torah [inappropriately]”; one who spurns Torah scholars; and one who spurns the festivals. For even though he has Torah and good deeds in his hands, he has no share in the world to come.

And the explanation of one who reveals the Torah [inappropriately], is a man who has the temerity to say things about the Torah which are not so: And he says that some of the verses or some of the recounting of things were written for nothing. And from his arrogance and his pride, he says in his heart that since he does not grasp [how] to get to the nature of the explanation of the things, [thinking] that there is nothing hidden to it. And it is stated (Deuteronomy 32:47), “For it is not an empty thing from you.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yerushalmi Ketubot 51a), “If it is empty, it is from you” - for you do not know to explain the reason for the thing. And likewise one who leaves one of the words of the Torah and does not concede to it - this is certainly revealing the face of the Torah - for example one who says, “Of what benefit are the Torah scholars for us? If they become wise, they become wise for themselves, and do not bequeath anything to

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us.” And behold they have contradicted that which is written in the Torah (Genesis 18:26), “and I will raise (spare) the whole place for their sake.”

And the content of one who spurns the festivals, is that he does work on the intermediate days of the festival and spurns the punishment, because the prohibition of work on the intermediate days of the festival is not explicit in the Torah. And this is in the way of one who is a heretic for one thing, to anger - as we have explained, such that he has no share in the world to come. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Bekhorot 30b) [that] one who comes to convert and says, “Behold, I accept all of the Torah except for one matter from the words of the Sages” - we do not accept him. And they, may their memory be blessed, said (Makkot 23a), “One who spurns the holidays is like one who worships idolatry, as it is stated (Exodus 34:18), ‘You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread’; and adjacent to it is ‘You shall not make molten gods for yourselves’ (Exodus 34:17).” And they, may their memory be blessed, explained (Chagigah 18a), “‘You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread’ - observe it to not do work all of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.” And we were warned with this about work on the intermediate days of the festival. And that which it is written (Leviticus 23:39), “a complete rest (shabbaton) on the first day, and a complete rest on the eighth day” is because there are many types of work that are permitted on the intermediate days of the festival, as is explained in their words, may they be blessed.

And that which they, may their memory be blessed, said that one who spurns Torah scholars, spurns the word of God and does not have a share in the world to come - this is something with a root in logic and a basis in analysis. And behold we find good reason and knowledge about this matter: King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 3:38), “The wise shall obtain honor, but disgrace uplifts dullards.” And likewise (Psalms 109:4), “and I am prayer,” [means] a man of prayer; [and] (Jeremiah 9:5), “You dwell in the midst of deceit,” [means] in the midst of people of deceit. [Hence] its explanation is that a lowly and disgraceful person uplifts dullards; and he honors and praises them. For there are great benefits in the honoring of the wise and upright; and many large snares in the honoring of the dullards and evildoers, and in putting them [on a pedestal]. For when the wise are lauded and put [on a pedestal], their words are heard [more], the whole nation accompanies them and their counsel appears right to them. Secondly, when people see their honor, they will learn a teaching, to offer honor and amplify knowledge. And they, may their memory be blessed, said (Pesachim 50b), “A person should always engage in Torah [study ...], even if not for its [own] sake; as through [Torah study] not for its sake, he will come to [doing it] for its sake.” Thirdly, many of those asleep at heart will be aroused from their sleep, when they see the splendid honor of the Torah, will recognize its sublimity and the desire for it will enter their hearts. So their involvement with it will be for God, may He be blessed, and to serve Him with a complete heart.

Behold these are honorable reasons - strong as a mirror of cast metal. But there is another honorable reason above them all - and we hinted to it in the introduction to our words about the matters of the evil groups mentioned: As it is known that among the ways to sanctify His name, may He be blessed, is to make known - with every expression of the lips, with every hint of the eyes and with every practice and movement of the hands - that the foundation of man’s soul and his glorious adornment, and the good and the essence, and the purpose and the preciousness in it, is the service of God, may He be blessed, and fear of Him; as it is written (Ecclesiastes 12:13), “for this is all of

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man.” And this thing is the glory of God, may He be blessed. And the ones that spurn Torah scholars and fear of Him are nullifying this knowledge and showing the opposite with their behavior. And it is as if they are saying, the service of [God] is not the essence; and the root of the matter is found somewhere besides the service of God, may He be blessed. So they are profaning the Torah - therefore they shall be lost from among the congregation. And it will cease (vayikhlu) in their mouths. (It appears to me that it should say, vayiratsu with their mouths - like the usage [in Psalms 49:14], “the end of those pleased yirtsu with their mouths,” which according to some commentators is an expression of speaking. Or maybe it should say, “and they will be able to say [vayokhlu leimor] with their mouths” - meaning to say that they will be able to say, by way of an excuse) [On my opinion, it should say, express (vayibateu) with their mouths - Y. B.] As they are serving God without involvement in Torah study.

Is it not a well known thing that the service does not survive without those that study Torah, who meditate upon it day and night? For they instruct knowledge and bear understanding of the times, to know what the Israelites should do. And they hold up [the Torah] in Israel, so that it will not be forgotten from the mouth of their seed. And in a place where there is no one involved with Torah, the snares grow and there is no upright person. Therefore the servants of God, may He be blessed, honor the sages of the Torah for [the sake of] God’s honor; and to make known that only His service is the essence of existence.

And since it has been clarified that God, may He be blessed, created everything for His glory - a man is obligated to pay attention at all times, to honor God and sanctify Him with all of his words; to exult Him, to praise Him and to always bless Him, as it is stated (Psalms 34:2), “I bless the Lord at all times; praise of Him is ever in my mouth.” And whenever he stands among the people and speaks with his friends, he should reflect with understanding, be exacting and supervise everything that comes out of his mouth; to sanctify God with his words; to speak in praise of His service and in glorification of His fear; and to praise His (works) [servants] and those that fear Him. And through this, he will merit - with the meditation of his heart and with the expression of his lips, [and] without exertion or the actions of his hands - great merit [that reach] to the heavens. For this is from the essence of man’s creation. And it is stated, (Proverbs 27:21), “For silver, the crucible; for gold, the furnace; and a man is tested by his praise.” And its explanation is that the virtues of a man are according to what he praises: If he praises good deeds, the sages and the righteous ones - know that you have tested that he is a good man and the root of justice is found within him. For he would not find it in his heart to praise the good and good people with all of his words - and to detest sins and spurn their masters - without being disgusted by evil and choosing the good. And even if it is possible that he has some hidden iniquities in his hand, he is nevertheless among the lovers of justice. So his root is from [the right] choice and he is from the congregation of those that honor God. But one who praises detestable acts or praises evildoers is a complete evildoer and profanes the service of God.

King Solomon, peace be upon him, also said (Proverbs 25:26-27), “Like a muddied spring, a ruined fountain, is a righteous man fallen before an evildoer. It is not good to eat much honey, but it is honorable to peruse honor.” For when a man muddies a spring with his foot, its waters are temporarily moved; afterwards the water is still and becomes clear, like at the beginning. So is the righteous person: When he is fallen before an evildoer, his level is not lowered and he is not diminished because of it. And if he is temporarily murky - a righteous man falls seven times and

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risers and [then] returns to his strength and his glory. “It is not good to eat much honey,” but much perusing of the honor of the righteous is an honor for the peruser. For righteous ones are mentioned in the verse above; and the word, “much,” [also] refers to “peruse honor” - as is its function in many places (to refer to two phrases). But the snares found in the honor of evildoers are many and well known. For with their honor, there is a profanation of the Torah and the service [of God]; and it is a sin that destroys from the soul to the flesh.

Secondly, [it is] because many are pulled behind them and take hold of their actions.

And thirdly, because those that associate with them - even if they do not do their deeds - receive punishment like them, as we have already mentioned.

And fourthly, because they are bringing down the honor of people of truth, and nullifying their service. And there is no success in the honor of the righteous, except after the lowering of the [evildoers'] honor - as it is stated (Proverbs 14:11), “The house of the evildoers will be demolished, and the tent of the upright will flourish.” And it is [also] stated (Proverbs 11:11), “A city is built up by the blessing of the upright, but it is torn down by the speech of the evildoers.”

And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, also said (Berakhot 24b) that included in that which is written (Numbers 15:31), “he spurned the word of the Lord,” is one that speaks words of Torah in filthy alleys, anyone who has the possibility of being involved with Torah and is not [so] involved and one who reads the books of heretics; and that, that which it is written, “and he rescinds His commandment” - is [regarding] one who rescinds the covenant of the flesh (circumcision).

And we also learned (Sanhedrin 90a), “All of the Jewish people have a share in the world to come, as it is stated (Isaiah 60:21), ‘And your people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land forever [...].’ And these are the ones who have no share in the world to come: One who says [that] there is no resurrection of the dead [derived] from the Torah, and that the Torah is not from the Heavens, and an apikoros. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, warned us in this statement to believe that faith in the resurrection of the dead is [to be found] in the Torah, and that it is one of its principles. And one of the places that resurrection of the dead is made explicit in the Torah is as it is stated (Deuteronomy 32:39), “I deal death and give life; I wounded and I will heal.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Pesachim 68a), “It might be, death is with one [person] and bringing to life with [another] - hence we learn, ‘I wounded and I will heal’: In the same way that the wounding and the healing are with one [person], so too is the death and the giving life with one [person].”

And they, may their memory be blessed, explained about the matter of the apikoros (Sanhedrin 99b), that he is a man who does not act in a manner of awe and exaltation towards Torah scholars, even though he does not spurn them. For example, he spurns his fellow in front of a Torah scholar, and he does not pay attention to the honor of the sage's Torah status. For since the Torah is not exalted in his eyes - to act with honor towards it - he has no share in the world to come. For this one too will be considered as one of those that profane the Torah. Therefore, our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Pesachim 22b), “‘Fear the Lord, your God’ (Deuteronomy 6:13) - [this is] to include Torah scholars.”

And secondly, because awe of them contributes to fear of the Heavens. For when their words are obeyed by way of their awe, will they not teach and guide the people to fear the glorious and

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awesome God? And it is stated (I Samuel 12:18), “and the people stood in fear of the Lord and of Samuel.” And also in the category of apikoros is one who says, “What have those studying benefited us with their study? Is there anything [about which] he can say, ‘See, this is new?’ He has never permitted us any crow; and he has never forbidden us the young pigeons.” And these people have also never heard or opened their ears to the benefits found in the occupation with Torah. And we have written some of [these benefits] in the Gate of the Torah (no longer extant), with God’s help. [That is] so that the hearts will yearn for the Torah. And those that do not have the ability to study, will know the exalted honor of occupation with Torah, such that they will merit its knowledge and not lose their souls from the world to come.

And also in the category of apikoros is one who calls his teacher by his name. And they said (Sanhedrin 100a) that the reason for which Gehazi was punished was because he called his teacher by his name, as it is stated (II Kings 8:5), “this is the woman and this is her son whom Elisha revived.”

And behold that the principle behind all of the punishments mentioned in this level is because of profaning the Torah. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yerushalmi Nedarim 3:14), that the sin of profanation is bigger than all of the transgressions. And it is not possible to atone [for it] with repentance and afflictions, as will be explained in the Gate of the Parts of Atonement (no longer extant). And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Kiddushin 40a), “There is no [deferral] with [the punishment] for profaning [God’s] name - whether one is inadvertent or volitional.” And now stand and reflect upon our great obligation to sanctify His name: As the essence of that which God, may He be blessed, sanctified us with His Torah and His commandments and separated us to be [a people] for Him was to sanctify Him and to fear Him. [Hence] it is fit from the ones he sanctified to be holy - in that even the vessels [used to] serve in front of God, may He be blessed, need to be sanctified; as it is stated (Leviticus 22:32), “You shall not profane My holy name, that I may be sanctified in the midst of the Israelite people; I am the Lord who sanctified you,” Note and understand that the matter that we said can be found explicitly in this verse: It is stated (Psalms 111:9), “He ordered His covenant for all time; His name is holy and awesome.” Its explanation is, because “His name is holy and awesome,” “He ordered His Covenant for all time” and commanded us with His commandments - to sanctify Him and to fear Him. Hence, it is written after it (Psalms 111:10), “The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord; sound understanding, etc.” And through the holiness of the commandments - when we sanctify God, may He be blessed, we are associated with the supernal holy ones that sanctify and venerate Him, as it is stated (Psalms 89:8), “A God venerated in the great council of holy beings, etc.”

There are other groups that do not have a share in the world to come: And they are the group of the enemies of the Lord, may He be blessed; the group of the destroyers of the vineyard of the Lord; and the group of the ones inflicting fear in the land of the living. Behold we will present their content and the proof of their punishment explicit in the Torah:

For the group of the enemies of Lord will be lost from the world to come, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 7:10), “But who requites with destruction those who hate Him to his face - never slow with those who hate Him, but requiting them to his face.” Its explanation is that he repays the reward of the commandments fulfilled by those that hate Him, in this world - in order to destroy them from [getting to] the world to come. And its Targum (translation by Onkelos) is, “And He

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repays those that hate Him the good that they do in front of Him, in their lives, to destroy them. And David said (Psalms 37:20), “But the evildoers shall be lost, and the enemies of the Lord shall be like heavy sheep, completely consumed in smoke.” And he mentioned the expression, “loss,” with the evildoers, as it is [used] for distress and exile - as the matter that is stated (Isaiah 27:13), “the lost who are in the land of Assyria and the expelled, etc.”; (Jeremiah 50:6), “My people were lost sheep”; [and] (Psalms 119:176), “I have strayed like a lost sheep” - and it is also [used] for death, as the matter that is stated (Psalms 119:92), “I would have been lost in my affliction”; (Esther 8:6) “at the loss of my kindred”; [and] (Leviticus 23:30) “and I will cause that soul to be lost” - meaning excision from this world. For evildoers are punished with difficulties and afflictions or with death, and they are also punished with the judgement for their deeds in the world to come. But [David] compared the enemies of the Lord to the meat of sheep, as it will become coals. Therefore, it will be “completely consumed in smoke.” Just like the fat of sheep is consumed in smoke, so too will the enemies of the Lord be consumed. For their souls will be consumed and lost from the world to come. And it is stated (Exodus 20:5), “visiting the guilt of the parents upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who hate Me.”

And the matter of those that hate the Lord is sometimes found also among those that fulfill the commandments and are careful [not to commit] any transgression - in deed or in speech - if their soul is upset and it is difficult in their hearts when their fellows are involved in Torah. And it is bad in their eyes when people serve God and fear Him. [It is] like you say about a man who does not want people to honor the king and serve him, since he hates the king; all the more so if they carry their thoughts into action. As they dissuade people’s hearts from occupation in Torah and from the commandments, for they hate the Lord. And likewise people who are miserly about the honor of righteous and upright Torah students, and hate the glory of their crown; or if it is bad in their hearts when they come to them and become the leaders of the generation. And so is it written (I Samuel 8:7), “for it is not you that they have rejected; it is Me they have rejected as their king.” And all the more so, if they seek to embarrass their honor or to humiliate them. And likewise if they love the honor of the evildoers and compare them to [the proliferation of] the dust - for these really hate the Lord and they do not want His pure service. Nor do they want the elevation of His holy fear, or that His servants and those that fear Him greatly proliferate.

And likewise the group of destroyers of the vineyard of the Lord - such as those that cause the masses to sin - are haters of the Lord. As you would say that people that destroy the cities of the king or his vineyards and orchards are haters of the king. And it is stated (Isaiah 5:7), “For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts Is the House of Israel, and the seedlings he lovingly tended are the men of Judah.” And it is stated (Psalms 83:4), “They plot craftily against Your people, take counsel against Your treasured ones.” And it is stated (Psalms 83:6), “Unanimous in their counsel they have made an alliance against You.” And it is stated (Psalms 2:2), “and regents intrigue together against the Lord and against His anointed.” Therefore our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Rosh Hashanah 17a) that those that sinned and cause the masses to sin descend to Gehinnom, and are judged there for generations and generations.

And Ezekiel, peace be upon him, spoke about the group of those inflicting fear in the land of the living - “who inflicted fear in the land of the living, etc. and their iniquities are upon their bones” (Ezekiel 32:24-27). We learned from this that death does not atone for them. Indeed, their iniquities are upon their bones forever. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Rosh Hashanah

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17a), “The heretics; [...]; and the apikorsim; and those who denied the Torah; and those who denied the resurrection of the dead; and those who separated from the ways of the community; and those who inflicted their fear in the land of the living” - like those community leaders that put too much dread on the public, not for the sake of the Heavens; “and those who sinned and caused the masses to sin - for example, Jeroboam, son of Nebat, and his company - descend to Gehinnom and are judged there for generations and generations, as it is stated (Isaiah 66:24), ‘And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have rebelled against Me; [their worms shall not die, etc.]’”

And the punishment of those that inflict their fear in the land of the living is from five aspects - two are from himself and three are from the people:

The two that are from the angle of himself: The first is that man is maggots and worms; and he is called this even when he is alive. Yet it is not enough for him that he does not bow and does not lower himself, but he also lords it over [others], not for the sake of the Heavens? And even the thought of pride - without lording it - is destructive to a man, as it is stated (Proverbs 16:5), “every haughty person is an abomination to the Lord.”

And the second is that a man is obligated to always set up frameworks of the heart to enshrine dread and fear in his heart in front of God, may He be blessed. But it is stated about the evildoers (Jeremiah 5:24), “They have not said in their hearts, ‘Let us revere the Lord, our God.’” But the man who inflicts his fear in the land of the living, not for the sake of the Heavens, does not have dread in his heart in front of God and wants to impose his [own] fear upon His creatures. And instead of his having to set up thoughts to enshrine the dread of God in his heart, he designs them to impose his own fear on the people of God, may He be blessed. And it is stated (II Samuel 23:3), “He who rules men justly, He who rules in awe of God.” The explanation [of this] is that it is fit for a righteous man who fears God to be a ruler of men. Since once he fears God, may He be blessed, it is fitting for people to fear him.

And the three that are from the aspect of the people:

The first is that he distresses the public when he instills his fear upon them. And it is stated (Leviticus 25:17), “Do not wrong one another.” And that is with regards to distress about things that we have already explained.

And the second is that several stumbling blocks come as a result of his instilling his fear - as our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Gittin 6b), “A person should never impose excessive fear within his household; as the husband of the concubine of Gibeah imposed excessive fear upon her and this caused the downfall of many tens of thousands of Jews [in the resulting war (see Judges 19–20)].”

And the third is that the holy people who are servants of God, may He be blessed, should not humble themselves to flesh and blood. So it is not fitting that the fear of flesh and blood be upon them except for the sake of the Heavens. As it is stated (Leviticus 25:55), “For it is to Me that the Israelites are servants” - [they are] My servants, and not the servants of servants. And it is stated (Exodus 19:6), “But you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” The expression, priests, is [to mean] masters and officers; and like this [usage] is (II Samuel 8:18) “and David’s sons were priests.” And the whole nation is called a kingdom, from [the usage] (I Kings 18:10),

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“there is no nation or kingdom”; (Isaiah 60:12), “For the nation or the kingdom.” The explanation [of Exodus 19:6] is that you shall be a kingdom that is all officers, such that the yoke of flesh and blood shall not be upon you. And it is stated (Isaiah 51:12), “What ails you that you fear man who must die”; and it is [also] stated (Isaiah 51:7), “Fear not the insults of men.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Sotah 47b), “From the time when those who say to evil, good; and to good, evil,” proliferated, [they removed the yoke of the Heavens from upon themselves, and the yoke of flesh and blood was thrown upon them].” And King David, peace be upon him, said (Psalms 9:20-21). “Rise, O Lord; let not men have power; let the nations be judged in Your presence. Strike fear into them, O Lord; let the nations know they are only men. Selah.” We have learned from this that at a time when a man has power, he does not recognize that he is [only] a man. For dominion is not fitting for man, except for the sake of the Heavens.

And now we will explain the matter of the punishment of those that separate from the ways of the community, and that he is included in the punishments of the groups that we mentioned above: When the heads of the people and the holy communities gather to serve God, may He be blessed, and make agreements to place commandments upon themselves - they are surely sanctifying God, may He be magnified and sanctified, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 33:5), “Then He became King in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people assembled, the tribes of Israel together.” And it is [also] stated (Psalms 47:10), “The great of the peoples are gathered together, the people of Abraham’s God; for the shields of the earth belong to God; He is greatly exalted.” Israel is called, “peoples,” because they are twelve tribes, like the matter that is stated (Deuteronomy 33:19), “They invite the peoples to the mountain.” But they are one people to serve God; therefore is it stated, “the people of Abraham’s God.” And the kings and the officers are called, “shields,” from the usage (Isaiah 21:5), “grease the shields.” The explanation of [Psalms 47:10] is, the great of the peoples gathered together to serve God, may He be exalted, because their kings and their officers are for God - as they are His servants and His faithful, like the matter that is stated (Psalms 89:19), “Truly our shield is of the Lord, our King, of the Holy One of Israel.” “He is greatly exalted,” since the Holy One, blessed be He, is exalted and glorified in His world in their gathering together and in their service. And the man that separates from the ways of the community is like an opponent of the agreement about the service of God; and like one who exits from the aggregate that is sanctifying God. So he shows himself to not want to be in their council, nor be written in their writings. Behold he is [thus] among those that profane the service and is included in the groups that we mentioned - that are scorning the word of God, and do not have a share in the world to come. And secondly, they dissuade the heart of the weak-minded by their separating from the ways of the community, and so are among those that cause the many to sin.

Now we will explain the matter of those that forsake God; and we shall say that they are people that do not have the yoke of the fear of the Heavens, so they fulfill the commandments in a rote fashion. So when the impulse overpowers this man and the spirit [to sin] passes over him, and he transgresses and will be guilty - he does not sigh and he does not worry about his sin. He ate and wiped his mouth; but in his eyes, he is like one that did not do [evil]. It is like the matter that is stated (Psalms 36:2), “What transgression says to the wicked is within my heart; the dread of God is not in front of his eyes.”

And there are some from this evil group for which it is not enough that they do not wear trembling when they bypass the law and the testimonies, but they praise and bless themselves when they

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fulfill their desires. So they bring anger and scorn before God, as it is stated (Psalms 10:3), “The wicked crows about his unbridled lusts; the grasping man reviles and scorns the Lord.” And Isaiah, peace be upon him, spoke about the destruction of this group - as it is stated (Isaiah 1:28), “But rebels and sinners shall all be crushed, and those who forsake the Lord shall perish.” And he compared the rebels and the sinners to a broken vessel that has a remnant; but he said that “those that forsake God shall perish.” For they have no share in the world to come, as the matter is stated (Malachi 3:19), “and leave of them neither stock nor boughs.”

And the destruction of the groups mentioned is at a time when they have not repented. But if they repented from their evil ways, their souls escape destruction - like the matter that is stated (Jeremiah 3:22), “Repent, O rebellious children, I will heal your afflictions!”

Explanation of the words of iniquity of four groups:

Our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Sotah 42a), “Four groups will not greet the Divine Presence: The group of scoffers, the group of liars, the group of flatterers, and the group of slanderers. The group of cynics, as it is written (Hosea 7:5), ‘He draws His hand from cynics’; the group of liars, as it is written (Psalms 101:7), ‘he who speaks falsehood shall not dwell before My eyes’; the group of flatterers, as it is written (Job 13:16), ‘that a flatterer cannot come before Him’; the group of slanderers, as it is written (Psalms 5:5), ‘For You are not a God who has pleasure in wickedness, evil shall not sojourn with You.’”

Now we will speak about the nature of their contents and the nature of their aspects, so as to enlighten you with understanding about some of their depths; and we will divide them into sections. We will reveal the end of the weighty punishments of disgusting deeds, and acquire much benefit through the analyses of the sections. For perhaps you have never stood over our words, you have not properly examined the weightiness of the transgression of each part of the sections. So maybe you have never seen the sight of the weightiness of the punishment that is [found] in each one of them. And maybe you have seen its edge, but you have not seen all of it. And [with] each section that we organize, the first is worse than the second (they will be in descending order). And from our words - even from the light parts - that we will mention, you will recognize the terror of darkness, and know that their ends are the ways of death. And maybe you have not yet opened your ears, and it [appeared] like a straight path in front of you. But now that we will write about their bitterness, their fear will come into your thoughts. Also the correct teachings will come into the chambers of your spirit when you see that I will have trusted witnesses testify: intellect, verses, the words of the Sages and their wonderful riddles. And they will be for a witness and a sign, and the truth will thus be revealed to you; and a spirit of grace will pour itself upon you from above. And you will destroy the bad traits from within you, and pure things will support your heart (from the usage, “With the pure, you act in purity” [II Samuel 22:27]).

And this is the thing about the group of scoffers - scoffing is divided into four sections:

And the first section is the man of the tongue that spreads the infamy of people, like the matter that is stated (Psalms 50:20), “You are busy maligning your brother, defaming the son of your mother.” And he is called a scoffer, as it is stated (Proverbs 21:24), “The proud, insolent man, scoffer is his name, acts in a frenzy of insolence.” Its explanation is that] two bad traits - which are insolence and pride - gathered and joined in the scoffing man. For without having a benefit from the thing, he causes great damage to his fellows, whose reputations he sullies in the eyes of people. And this

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is the goal of the scoffer, more than the thief or the extortionist - who does [it] to increase his money. And he is also arrogant - for when one who is lowly and submissive recognizes his own deficiencies and blemishes, he will not scoff at people. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Taanit 8a), "In the future, all the animals will gather together by the snake and say to him, 'A lion mauls [its prey] and eats; a wolf tears [it] and eats; [but] you, what pleasure do you have [when you bite a person]?' He will say to them, 'If the snake bites because no spell was uttered, no advantage is gained by the master of the tongue!' (Ecclesiastes 10:11)." And this section is also from the sections of the group of the slanderers.

The second section: The one who mocks people because he disdains them in his heart for their lack of reaching virtues or temporal successes regarding honor or power; or he disdains them for their poverty or indigence. And it is pride that brought him to this trait; or much tranquility and pampering, like the matter that is stated (Psalms 123:4), "Long enough have we endured the scorn of the complacent, the contempt of the haughty." And sometimes the scoffer will mock holy ones and prophets, like the matter that is stated (Jeremiah 20:7), "everyone jeers at me." And King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 14:21), "He who disdains his fellow is a sinner." It was also stated (Proverbs 11:12), "He who disdains his fellowman is devoid of sense." And it was stated (Proverbs 17:5), "He who mocks the poor affronts his Maker; and he who rejoices over another's misfortune will not go unpunished." One who mocks the poor shows about himself that he imagines that successes are in the hands of people to surely achieve them with their wisdom - like the matter that is stated (Deuteronomy 8:17), "My own power and the might of my own hand have won this wealth for me." And it is stated (Isaiah 10:13), "For he thought, 'By the might of my hand have I wrought it, by my skill.'" And because of this, he mocks the poor; for he says in his heart that he did not reach wealth from lack of intellect and from the lowliness of his [work]. And behold he affronts the One who makes the poor and the rich, because it is all from God, may He be blessed - like the matter that is stated (Proverbs 22:2) "Rich man and poor man meet; the Lord made them both." And about "he who rejoices over another's misfortune," he said, "He will not go unpunished" - for even though he did not injure with an action or with speech, "he will not go unpunished." However the evil of the one that rejoices is not as great as the evil of the one who mocks. And because scoffing is caused by pride - which is the opposite of humility - King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 3:34), "If at scoffers, He scoffs; but to the lowly He shows grace." Its explanation: "If at scoffers" - truly, God mocks scoffers who mock people, like the matter that is stated (Psalms 2:4), "He who is enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord mocks at them." And the expression, "if," is to confirm the matter. And so [is such a usage found] (in Numbers 24:22) "Yet if Kain be consumed"; (Proverbs 23:18) "For if you will have a future."

The third section: One who always mocks things and actions, but he does not intend to disgrace those associated with them. Rather he pushes off things that should not be pushed off and pushes off the [possibility of] results from actions that have hope for results. And about this is it stated (Proverbs 13:13), "He who disdains a thing will be injured thereby." And they said (Avot 4:3), "Do not disdain any man, and do not discriminate against anything; for there is no man that has not his hour, and there is no thing that has not its place." And what brought this scoffer to this bad trait is his being wise in his [own] eyes. And sometimes this trait brings a person to heresy, to mock the commandments - like the matter that is stated (Psalms 119:51), "Though the arrogant have cruelly mocked me, I have not swerved from Your teaching." And this third section is a group that does not accept reprimand, as it is stated (Proverbs 9:8), "Do not reprimand a scoffer, for he

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will hate you.” And it is [also] stated (Proverbs 9:7), “To rebuke a scoffer is to call down abuse on oneself.” And it is [further] stated (Proverbs 19:25), “Beat the scoffer and the simple will become clever.” And that which causes this group not to listen to reproof is that the trait that leads to this [type of scoffing] is that a person is wise in his [own] eyes. And this trait controls him so much until he scorns the intellect of anyone besides himself. And it is a trait that has no hope, as it is stated (Proverbs 26:12), “If you see a man who thinks himself wise, there is more hope for a dullard than for him.”

And the fourth section: One who always makes a habit for himself to engage in idle talk, and idle matters, like those who sit in the street corners. And there are two evils in the matter: The first is because all who proliferate words bring sin. And the second is that he is idle from [speaking] words of Torah. And the ways of death [are found] in this. For he does not remember or pay attention, that the time periods that he is wasting, he could [use] to reach pleasantness, to acquire eternal life - if he were to set these available times for Torah when he is free, for the work of the Heavens which is upon him. Therefore he will be punished to carry the yoke of afflictions - measure for measure - as it is stated (Isaiah 28:22), “Now therefore do not be scoffers, lest your suffering be made strong.” And they, may their memory be blessed, said (Avodah Zarah 18b), “Anyone who scoffs, suffering will befall him, as it is stated, ‘lest your suffering be made strong.’” And the Sages would warn their students against scoffing even occasionally and by chance. And about this section they had to warn, since many have stumbled on it in an occasional way.

And this is the thing about the group of liars - the content of this group is divided into nine sections:

The first section: The lying man that left the Torah and does evil and destroys with the response of his mouth - like one who contradicts his countryman about a deposit or a transfer or the wage of a wage-worker, as it is stated (Leviticus 19:11), “you shall not deal deceitfully or falsely, a man towards his countryman.” And likewise, one who bears false witness against his neighbor; and it is said (Exodus 20:13), “you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” And included in this section is deception and fraud in commerce and in partnerships; and it is stated (Leviticus 25:14), “you shall not cheat, one man, his brother.” And it is [also] stated (Psalms 55:12), “fraud and deceit never leave its square.” And he is called a man of iniquity and a ruffian; and he is the heaviest with iniquity from the groups of the evildoers, as we have discussed in the Gates of Fear of Sin (no longer extant). And the characteristics of this man of iniquity are that he winks his eyes and rolls his fingers, as it is written (Proverbs 6:12-13), “A ruffian individual, a man of iniquity, etc. Winking his eyes, etc.”

The second section: One who lies, but there is no damage or loss to his fellow from the actual lie; however he plans it in order to do the damage or the evil - like one who deceives his fellow to believe that he is his friend and trusted companion; and he plans that [the other] will trust him through this and not be on guard against him, so that he will be able to lead him to evil; like the matter that is stated (Jeremiah 9:7), “One speaks peace to his fellow, but lays an ambush for him in his heart.” And it is stated after it (Jeremiah 9:8), “‘Shall I not punish them for such deeds,’ says the Lord; ‘shall I not bring retribution on such a nation as this?’” And the punishment of these two sections is for two things: For the lie and for the damage that [comes with it]. For falsehood [even] without the angle of damage is an abomination to God, as it is stated (Proverbs 6:16-18), “Six things the Lord hates, etc: A haughty bearing; a lying tongue; etc. A mind that hatches plots of iniquity.” [And it is stated] (Proverbs 8:13), “I have hated duplicity in speech.” And it is stated

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(Job 15:16), “What then of one loathsome and foul, man, who drinks wrongdoing like water!” And to flesh and blood also is falsehood loathsome, as it is stated (Proverbs 12:22), “Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.” (It appears to me that there is a printing error here, and it is supposed to say: And it is stated [Proverbs 8:13], “I have hated duplicity in speech”; and it is stated [Proverbs 12:22], “Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.” And to flesh and blood also is falsehood loathsome, as it is stated [Job 15:16], “What then of one loathsome and foul, etc.” And it means to say that the understanding of the language of the verse is that a man who drinks wrongdoing like water, is essentially loathsome and foul - for he is even loathsome and foul to flesh and blood.)

And the third section: One that comes with deception and deceptive words to prevent good from someone and to bring the good to himself. It is not to rob his fellow of something that is his nor to extort him. Rather he puts his eye upon a good that will be coming to his fellow in the future, and ambushes it to bring it to himself by the falsehood of his words; or his lying words cause his fellow to give it to him as a gift. And the main punishment is for the lie. Indeed, the punishment of the lie is enlarged if it causes a loss to someone besides himself, even though the main part of the punishment is not for the loss [here] - for he did not cause him to lose something that he had acquired. It is like the matter that our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Sanhedrin 92a), “Anyone who alters [the truth in] his speech, it is as though he worships idols. As, it is stated (Genesis 27:12), ‘Maybe my father will feel me, and I shall seem to him a deceiver (metate’a)’; and it is written there (Jeremiah 10:15) [regarding idolatry], ‘They are vanity, the work of deception [tatuim].’” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said that it was as if he worshipped idolatry [here] - they brought it to the extreme and other (and it appears to me that it needs to say, to the final extreme). For he is (traded) (it needs to say, hidden - and it is from the usage of the verse [Isaiah 28:15], “We have hidden in falsehood” - and so is it found in the Chapter on Falsehood in the Paths of the Righteous, the chapters of which are built upon the pearls of this holy book Y. B.) in falsehood and girded in vanity.

The fourth section: One who lies in recounting things that he heard and alters some of them on purpose, yet he does not have any benefit from his lies, nor does he cause a loss to anyone else. Rather his characterization is that [it is] from his love of falsehood over just words, forever. And sometimes he will invent a whole story of words from his heart. And the punishment of this person will be lighter from one angle, since there was no loss to [another] person from his lies and from his wantonness. But his punishment will be very big due to his brazenness and his love of falsehood. And his punishment will be weighty, for he loved it without a benefit. And King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 6:19), “He breathes lies, a false witness.” Its explanation is [that] if you see a man that breathes lies in his speech and in recounting his words - know that this trait will bring him to testify falsely against his brothers and testify that which is wrong against him, from his love of falsehood. And they permitted this section in order to fulfill a commandment and to seek good and peace. And they said (Ketuvot 17a) that it is permissible to praise the bride in front of the groom and to say that she is fair and attractive, even though it is not so. And they said (Yevamot 65b) [that] it is permissible to alter [the truth] for matters of peace, as it is stated, “Your father commanded before he died, saying, ‘So you shall say to Joseph, “Please pardon, etc.””” And there are some people that change some of the things they have heard unintentionally, as they did not place it into their hearts to analyze it when they heard it. This too is a bad trait. And King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 22:28), “But one who really heard will speak forever.” Its explanation is that a man who puts into his heart to listen and audit

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to the essence of the words that they speak into his ears - in order that he can tell them correctly to others, and not have a treacherous tongue in his mouth - "will speak forever." For people will love to hear his words, and they will not say, "Why are you still speaking your words?"

The fifth section: One who says to his fellow that he will benefit him and give him a gift; but as he is still speaking, he tells his heart that he will not give [it]. And it is stated (Psalms 34:14), "Guard your tongue from evil, your lips from deceitful speech." And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, explained it (Bava Metzia 49a) [as saying that] one should not speak one way with the mouth and [another way] with the heart. And they also said (Yerushalmi Bava Metzia 4:2) [that] there are words that, if he goes back on them, are considered bad faith - but only if he says it with the mouth, and decides upon it with the mind. (It appears [correct] to me to explain the words, "and only (oubilvad)," as being in the place of the word, "rather." And he means to say that the word of a man should only be in such a way that he says it with the mouth and decides upon it with the mind, which is the opposite of, one thing with the mouth and [another] with the heart.

The sixth section: One who promises his fellow to benefit him, but falsifies his speech and makes his word worthless. Since after he said to benefit him (upon) [with an expression of] a promise, and his fellow's heart depended on it, he should not profane his promise - as this is the way of falsehood. And it is like a man who broke a covenant, as it is stated (Zephaniah 3:13), "The remnant of Israel shall do no wrong, and speak no falsehood; a deceitful tongue shall not be in their mouths." And likewise one who says that he will give his fellow a small gift, even though he does not mention any expression of promise. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Bava Metzia 49a) it is because [there is] bad faith with this. As since the gift is small, his fellow counts on it; that he will surely give it. And if it is to a poor person, his evil is great even if the gift was large - for he surely vowed it (since charity is like a vow); and it is stated (Numbers 30:3), "he shall not profane his word." And likewise one who glorifies himself in public by [announcing that] he will give a gift to someone. And see that he is like one who praises himself about his generosity with this. And this is surely like a promise, so it is not proper that he should go back on his words once he honored himself and boasted about the thing; like the matter that is stated (Proverbs 25:14), "Like clouds and wind - but no rain - is one who boasts of gifts not given." Its explanation is, just like people are distressed after signs of rain come, but rain does not come; so too is the matter of the man who boasts about a false gift. For that which he boasted about the thing is a sign about the fulfillment of the thing. Hence the man to whom he promised the gift will be distressed when his expectation is disappointed.

The seventh aspect - one who misleads his fellow, saying that he did something good for him, or spoke well of him, and didn't do it. Our sages of blessed memory said that it is forbidden to lie to [lit. steal the awareness of] people. And behold this sin is even more serious according to the sages of Israel than robbery, since lying lips are a grievous guilt. And we are obligated [to stay within] the parameters of truth, since truth is one of the foundations of the soul.

The eighth section: One who praises himself about virtues that are not found in him. King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 17:7), "Lofty words are not fitting for a villain; much less lying words for a great man." Its explanation is [that] a villain should not act proudly and raise himself up due to the virtues of his ancestors. For he said in the verse above this (Proverbs 17:6), "and the glory of children is their parents." Much less should a great man honor himself with lies

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and say, “I did so, and spread and gave [gifts],” when he did not do so. And this is a disgrace for any person, but all the more so, a great man. And he disgraces the generosity that he has done; for he profaned his soul with what he did not do. For this will testify that all of the righteous deeds that he did were [only] for fame and praise. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yerushalmi Shevi’t 10:3 at the end) that one who is honored according to the level of one who knows two tractates, but knows only one, must tell them - “I know only one.” All the more so is it forbidden to lie and boast, saying, “I have learned many like these.”

The ninth section: Children who do not lie in recounting things that they heard and telling over events, but switch the words according to the circumstances of their wishes, [yet it is] without hurting any person through it. However they find a little benefit with their lies, even though they do not make money from it. And our Rabbis said (Yevamot 63a) that this is also forbidden, as it is stated (Jeremiah 9:4), “they have trained their tongues to speak falsely.” However their punishment is not like those that lie about something that [did not happen], the nature of which we discussed in the fifth (it should say fourth) section. Behold these are the sections of the group of liars; and we have already mentioned their centrality to you for the ways of faithful people, and that they are fundamental for the soul.

And this is the thing about the group of flatterers - the content of this group is divided into nine sections:

The first section: The flatterer who recognizes or sees or knows that there is injustice in the hand of his fellow, and that he is holding fast to deception; or that he sinned to another person with evil speech or verbal abuse - and he blandishes him [with] improper speech, saying, “You did not do evil.” The sin of one who refrains from reprimand - as it is stated (Leviticus 19:17), “you shall surely reprimand your countryman and not bear sin because of him” - is too small for him; so he increased the sin by saying, “You did not sin.” It is like the matter that is stated (Jeremiah 23:14), “they encourage evildoers.” And behold this is a criminal offense in the hand of the foolish flatterer, for he was not zealous against falsehood, but rather assisted the falsehood, and said about the bad, “Good,” and made darkness, light. He also placed a stumbling block in front of the sinner in two aspects. The first one is that he will not regret his evil. And the second is that he will repeat his evil on the next day. For the one who flatters the other one about his desire praises [that] evildoer. Besides that he will carry the punishment for the damage that he caused to the one towards whom the sinner was guilty, by justifying [the sinner]; he will [also] be punished for the false words, as it is stated (Psalms 5:7), “You doom those who speak lies.” And it is stated (Proverbs 17:15), “To acquit the guilty and convict the innocent; both are an abomination to the Lord.” All the more so if the injustice in the hand of his fellow, the evildoer, is revealed to the public. For when he, the flatterer, said to him in front of people, “You are pure, without transgression” - he has profaned and disgraced the religion and the law.

And a person is obligated to give himself over to danger, and not to place guilt like this upon his soul. And our Rabbis said about the matter of Agrippa (Sotah 41a-b) that when he read from the Torah [and] “arrived at [the verse], ‘You may not appoint a foreigner over you’ (Deuteronomy 17:15), tears flowed from his eyes. And they said to him, ‘You are our brother.’ [...] At that moment the enemies of the Jewish people (a euphemism for the Jewish people) were sentenced to destruction for flattering Agrippa.” Especially should one who sits in judgement not fear mortal men, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 1:17), “Fear no man.” And among the sections of the group of

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flatterers, there are some in which the flatterer is destroyed and lost just for the iniquity of flattery, as will be explained.

The second section: The flatterer who praises the evildoer in front of people - whether in front of him or not in front of him - even though he does not justify him for his extortion or lie about his trial, but says about him that he is a good man. About this is it stated (Proverbs 28:4), "Those who forsake Torah praise the wicked." For had he not forsaken the Torah, he would not have praised one who transgressed its words and breached its commandments. Even if he only praises the evildoer for that which he finds that is good about him and he defends him to people to tell them of his righteousness, but he does not mention the bad - this too is a sore evil. For in his mentioning the good and not mentioning the bad and covering up all of his transgression, he will be thought of as a righteous man by those listening and they will give him honor and elevate him. And we have already mentioned [and] let you know the stumbling blocks and the destruction that is found in honoring evildoers. Hence it is incorrect to mention their righteousness without mentioning their evil and foolishness as well, as it is stated (Proverbs 10:7), "But the fame of the wicked rots." And it is [also] stated (Isaiah 57:12), "I hereby pronounce judgment upon your deeds; your deeds shall not help you." The explanation is [that] your good deeds will not help to save you from your evil when you will come to judgement and in My evaluation for eternity - since the matters of your iniquities finished off [their merit]. And it is like our Rabbis said (Rosh Hashanah 16b), "One whose iniquities are greater than his merits is written and sealed for death." And evildoers are recognizable by their speech and behavior, as we discussed earlier with you, in the Gates of the Fear of Sin (no longer extant).

And behold the righteous abominate the evildoer, as it is stated (Proverbs 29:26), "The unjust man is an abomination to the righteous." And with one who is not in the counsel of the sages - if he does not surely abominate him, nor surely curse him; he should also surely not bless him.

And it is likely that the case of the one praising the evildoers is from foolishness. For the fool (he) intends to praise the good - whether it is about the truth, or whether it is the opposite. And without knowing, he is praising the dead. For our Rabbis said (Berakhot 18b), [that] evildoers are considered like wraiths, as it is stated (Ecclesiastes 9:5). "But the dead know nothing." But this unintentional sin is considered wanton. For a master would not love a slave, if [the slave] loves [the master's] enemies and brings close those who he has distanced. Should they not know this from the intellect, that this is so? And it is stated (Proverbs 3:35), "disgrace uplifts dullards."

The third section: The flatterer who praises the evildoer to his face, yet his wisdom restrains him - for he does not praise him in front of [other] people, lest he be a stumbling block for them. The sin of this flatterer is also great, as he blandished him in his eyes; such that he will not repent from his evil path and not worry about his iniquities - for he is righteous in his eyes. And when they praise anyone who is not from the congregation of the righteous - he will say in his heart, "Indeed, I knew that it was like this"; like the matter that is stated (Proverbs 11:9), "The flatterer destroys his neighbor through speech; but through knowledge, the righteous is rescued." The explanation is that the flatterer destroys his neighbor with his mouth, because he will praise him and [the neighbor] will believe [his] words. So he will harden his spirit and he will see himself with honor, and not understand that his soul is murky. And with this stumbling block in his hand, he will fall into the trap of his pride. So behold, he surely destroyed him with his flattering lips. "But through knowledge, the righteous is rescued": The righteous are saved from the damage of the flatterer

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through their knowledge. For if he flatters him, his heart will not be elevated as a result, like our Rabbis said (Niddah 30b), “Even [if] all of the world says about you, ‘You are righteous’ - be like an evildoer in your [own] eyes.” And they [also] said (Avot D’Rabbi Natan 29), “If you have companions, some of whom praise [you], and some of whom reprimand [you] - love the ones that reprimand you, and hate the ones that praise [you]. For these are bringing you to life eternal, and those, when they praise you, are gladdening you to your [own] detriment.” And it is also possible to explain [it as]: “Through knowledge, the righteous rescue” their neighbors - as they will not flatter them; but will rather reprimand them and show them the path, when they err in the chaos that is not a path. And it is stated (Proverbs 26:28), “and a flattering mouth throws one down.” This compares a flattering mouth with a crooked path; and it says that just like a man falls and is thrown down by walking on a crooked path - like the matter that is stated (Psalms 35:5-6), “Let them be as chaff, etc., the Lord’s angel throwing them down. Let their path be dark and slippery” - so too does a man fall and get thrown down by a flattering mouth. And that is the mouth of the flatterer. And about the matter that we are discussing, King David, peace be upon him, said (Psalms 12:4), “May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, every tongue that speaks arrogance.” He cursed a flattering mouth, since he destroys his neighbor with it; and a harsh tongue - which is the opposite of the smooth [one], and that is evil speech. And among the flatterers, there are those that intend to flatter intimidating people, in order that they should honor them and promote them. And our Rabbis said (Avot D’Rabbi Natan 29), “Anyone that flatters his fellow for the sake of honor will in the end be removed from it in shame.”

The fourth section: One who attaches himself to an evildoer. It is not enough for him that he does not reprimand him with the rod of his mouth and surely distance him; but he rather brings him close like a friend. And it is stated (II Chronicles 20:37), “As you have made a partnership, etc., the Lord will break up your work.” Whereas the righteous are surely disgusted by the evildoer, as it is stated (Psalms 15:4), “A contemptible man is disgusting in his eyes.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Bava Kamma 92b), “Not for naught did the starling go to the raven, but because it is its kind. And it stated, ‘All fowl will live with its kind, and men with those like him’ (Book of Ben Sira 13:17).” And they said (Megillah 28a), “It is prohibited for a person to gaze at the likeness of a wicked man, as it is stated (II Kings 3:14), ‘Were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judea, I would not look toward you, nor see you.’” And they [continued], “[Any one who gazes at the likeness of an evil man,] his eyes become dim [at the time of his old age], as it is stated (Genesis 27:1), ‘And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim so that he could not see’ - because he gazed at the wicked Esau.” And we have already discussed very well that there are many ways of death found by one who attaches himself to an evildoer.

And the fifth section: A man whose words people trust, and everyone relies on his words; and he intends to boost one of the people or his redeeming relative, out of his love for him - and he says about him that he is wise, whereas he is not wise. And this will be [a cause] for faltering and a stone for stumbling; for they will rely upon his rulings: Every dispute will go according to his [decision], he will twist every case and he will destroy the world. And likewise, if he says about a man, that he is trustworthy, but he does not know whether he is trustworthy or someone who cannot be trusted. So perhaps a listener will hear and appoint him over his house and give him everything that he has into his hand (to watch); and he will deny it, saying, “I [never] saw you.” And the Rabbis said (Sanhedrin 7b), “Anyone who appoints a judge who is not fit over the community is

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as though he plants a tree-idol (ashera); and in a place where there are Torah scholars, it is as though he planted the tree next to the altar.” And in the early days, there was someone who appointed someone who was not fit to make rulings, as the head. And they read this verse about him (Habakkuk 2:19), “Ah, you who say, ‘Wake up’ to wood, ‘Awaken,’ to inert stone; can that give an oracle; why, it is encased in gold and silver, but there is no breath inside it.” And in the future, the Holy One, blessed be He, will repay the ones that appointed him, as it is stated (Habakkuk 2:20), “But the Lord is in His holy Sanctuary; let all the earth be silent before Him.”

The sixth section: One who has the ability to protest, but does not protest and has no words of reprimand in his mouth; and does not use the swords of his eyes and does not take responsibility for the deeds of sinners. So he will not be a man of reprimand, whereas we were commanded to destroy the evil from within our nation - as it is stated (Deuteronomy 13:6), “and you shall destroy the evil within you.” And our Rabbis said (Shabbat 54b), “Anyone who is in a position to protest against the members of his household and does not protest, is apprehended for the members of his household; if he is in a position to protest against the people of his city, and does not protest, he is apprehended for the people of his city; if he is in a position to protest the whole world, and does not protest, he is apprehended for the whole world.” And it is stated (Leviticus 26:37), “A man shall stumble over his brother.” And they, may their memory be blessed, expounded (Sanhedrin 27b), “‘A man over’ the iniquity of ‘his brother.’” And they said that all of Israel is responsible for one another.

The seventh section: One who sees the people of his place [being] a stiff-necked people, and says in his heart, “Perhaps they will not listen if I speak [words of] integrity with them and fill my mouth with reprimands.” Hence he saves his mouth [from speaking]. Yet he surely bears his sin, for he did not try to reprimand and warn [them] - (indeed) [maybe] if the city is pitied, they will awake from the slumber of their stupidity and their error will not [continue to] lay with them. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Shabbat 55a) about that which is written (Ezekiel 9:4), “and set a mark (tav) upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry, etc.”: The attribute of justice said, “[Even though these are full-fledged righteous people and keep the Torah,] it was in their hands to protest, and they did not protest. [The Holy One, blessed be He,] said, “It is revealed and known before Me that had they protested, they would not have accepted [it] from them.” [The attribute of justice] said, “Master of the Universe, if it is revealed before You, [they did not know if the people would listen to their voice or ignore them].” So afterwards God, may He be blessed, commanded (Ezekiel 9:4), “and begin from My Temple (Mikdash)” - and that is the dedicated (mekudash) righteous ones. And it is stated (Leviticus 19:17), “you shall surely reprimand your countryman and not bear sin because of him.” But if the matter is revealed to all, known, tested and analyzed that the sinner hates rebuke and will not listen to the voice of his teachers and will not bend his ear to his instructors - about this is it stated (Proverbs 9:8), “Do not rebuke a scoffer, for he will hate you.” And they said (Yevamot 55b), “Just as it is a commandment to say something that will be heard, so is it a commandment to not say something that will not be heard.” And they said (Beitzah 30a), “It is better that they be inadvertent, and not be intentional.”

And the eighth section: Someone who hears the words of the people saying evil speech, or hears every mouth speaking foully or sits among a group of jokers disgracing the Torah and the commandments - and he knows that they are stubborn and [like] thorns. So if he would reprimand them, they will not listen to his words - hence he puts his hand to his mouth (does not speak). This

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one will also be punished, since he did not answer fools about their foolishness - lest they say that he is like them and that he concedes to their words. Rather, he becomes obligated to answer and scold them, to give greatness to the Torah and the commandments which they disgraced and made light of. He should be zealous for the honor of the Clean and Righteous One about whom they are speaking.

This is one of the things for which a person becomes obligated to leave the group of evildoers. For he will be punished for hearing their evil words and being too listless to answer them. And this is something explicit in the words of Solomon, as it is stated (Proverbs 24:1-2), “Do not envy evil men; do not desire to be with them. For their hearts talk violence, and their lips speak mischief.” And he meant to say [it is] because you will bear the iniquity when they sin. For you will constantly hear their evil words and you will be silent.

The ninth section: One who honors evildoers in a way of peace. However he does not speak well about the evildoer and does not act to honor him in a way in which people will think that he is honoring him because he is honorable and precious in his eyes. Rather he only shows him respect in the way that people honor the rich, in the way of dignification; and with the hope of benefit, since their path has been successful - and not because of the grace of his arrangement. Nevertheless there is a sin and guilt in this thing. If it is permitted to honor the rich, it is not so with the evildoers - as it is stated (Job 40:11-12), “see every proud man and bring him low. See every proud man and humble him, and bring down the evildoers where they stand.” Nevertheless this section is permitted in the case of worry about something - lest the evildoer injure him and cause him a loss, at the time when the evildoer is strong and his time is brazen; and we do not have the ability to humble him, and to put him down [with our soldiers]. Hence it is permitted to honor him in the way we honor very intimidating people out of fear and terror, by rising for them, noting them and that which is similar to these. However, one should not praise him, nor speak well about him to people. And likewise did our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, say (Sotah 41b), “It is permissible to flatter evildoers in this world.”

And this is the thing about the group of slanderers:

Our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Arakhin 15b), “Anyone who speaks evil speech is as though he denied a fundamental principle [of faith] - as it is stated (Psalms 12:5), ‘Who have said, “we will make our tongue mighty; our lips are with us; who is lord over us?”’” Therefore, they considered him as if he denied a fundamental principle. For he causes and brings about great damage and much evil to his fellows by making them foul in the eyes of people or by other ways of [causing them] loss. And it is not likely that a man would prepare a mechanism of destruction and damage that is more bitter than death without it benefitting himself monetarily, unless it is to have his [evil] impulse honor himself and remove the yoke of the Heavens from upon him - to remove ethical constraints - as it is stated in the Psalm, “when the Ziphites came and told Saul, etc., O God, arrogant men have risen against me; a band of ruthless men seek my life; they are not mindful of You.” (This is a scribal error, as there is some difference between the verse brought down by the author, may his memory be blessed, [and his source]. As [in the source], it is written, “For strangers have risen against me, etc.” And the verse that he wrote here is found in Psalms 86:14; but it needs to be corrected and replaced with the verse as it is written there in Psalms 54:5.) And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, explained (Midrash Tehillim 54) that they intended that Saul would bless them, as he said to them (I Samuel 23:21), “May you be blessed of the Lord

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for the compassion you have shown me!” But they did not place God in front of them - as it is written in His Torah (Deuteronomy 27:24), “Cursed be he who strikes down his neighbor in secret.” And it is written (Ecclesiastes 10:11), “no advantage is gained by the master of the tongue!” And it is stated about Doeg (Psalms 52:4-5), “Your tongue devises mischief... You prefer evil to good; the lie, to speaking truthfully. Selah.” And they explained in Midrash Tehillim 52, “What do you benefit and what do you gain when you say evil speech? Is it not that you did not need money, for you had [already] become wealthy - as it is stated about him (I Samuel 21:8), ‘Saul’s chief herdsman.’ It was only because you preferred the evil to the good, and ‘the lie, to speaking truthfully’ - as you have removed His yoke.” And it is stated (Proverbs 6:30), “A thief is not held in contempt for stealing [to fill his hunger]; and it is written after it (Proverbs 6:32), “He who commits adultery is devoid of sense, etc.” This is meaning to say that he is worse than a thief, for [the former] needs to “fill his hunger.” Our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Midrash Tehillim 120) that one involved in evil speech is worse than both of them. For he does a great sin without benefit, as it is stated (Psalms 120:3), “What can you profit, what can you gain, O deceitful tongue?”

And secondly, for this [too] is one who speaks evil speech considered as if he denied a fundamental principle: For he says in his heart that his lips are in his [own] control; and because they do not do an action and he is in charge of his tongue, he determined in his heart that he should not restrain the spirit of his lips from saying that which comes to his spirit; and that only all the other limbs are not in his control to sin with them - like the matter that is stated (Psalms 12:5), “They say, “with lips such as ours, who can be our master?” And they do not say, “Where is the God that made me, to whom all the movements of His creations are given - not one is lacking. They are all subjected to doing His will. Rather, it is no matter - the petitions about the lips are in our control.” The evildoers that sin with other sins are not like this. For they know that their leaving God is bad and bitter, however they were pulled after their desire and their overpowering [evil] impulse; yet they are pained by this. And our Rabbis said (Arakhin 15b), “Evil speech [...] corresponds to three transgressions [and these are them]: Idol worship, forbidden sexual relations and bloodshed. [...] With regard to idol worship, it is stated (Exodus 32:31), ‘Oh, this people have sinned a great sin.’ With regard to forbidden sexual relations, it is stated (Genesis 39:9), ‘How can I do this great wickedness.’ With regard to bloodshed it is stated (Genesis 4:13), ‘My punishment is greater than I can bear.’ [And with regard to evil speech,] it is stated (Psalms 12:4), “May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that speaks great things.”

And behold we must explain to you how it is possible that the iniquity of evil speech can be more than these three. Did our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, not say about each one of them (Sanhedrin 74a), “Let a man be killed and not transgress them?” And they said [that] idolatry is weighty, for anyone that concedes to it is like one who denies all of the Torah. And they [also] said (Chullin 5a) that one who is an apostate [only] for idolatry is like one who is an apostate for all of the entire Torah. And when you put your heart to these statements of theirs, may their memory be blessed, you will find several roots [to them] and several aspects.

The first is because the one involved in evil speech repeats his stupidity - he will embarrass, sully and shame ten times a day. He will speak superfluously and strike in secret. So who can measure his punishment? For one involved in evil speech does not put an end to [his] words. And even a light sin is very weighty when the stupidity is repeated many times - as we discussed earlier - all

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the more so, when it is a big sin and a grievous evil. And when our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said, “Evil speech [...] corresponds to three transgressions,” they meant to say, corresponding to one who transgresses them at a time when his impulse attacks him - not corresponding to an habitual sinner or one who has left the congregation to transgress them all the time.

The second is because the repentance of one involved in evil speech is difficult, since he has taught his tongue to speak falsehood, and sent his mouth to evil. From so much habit, he does not control his spirit, and it is as if his mouth causes the thought - like the matter that is stated (Psalms 52:4), “Your tongue devises mischief”; and it is stated (Ecclesiastes 10:12), “but a fool’s lips will swallow him up”; and it is stated (Proverbs 18:7), “The fool’s speech is his ruin (mechitah).” And mechitah is an expression of fear and trepidation. It means to say that the fool is afraid and in trepidation from the rage of his tongue, lest he be ensnared - like he fears from his enemy - as his lips are not in his control.

And the third is because the sin of the one involved in evil speech is light in his eyes - as he says it is only something of the lips, and he does not pay attention to its damaging the many. Hence he does not repent from his evil path. And if he does repent, his repentance will not be complete - as he will not recognize the greatness of his sin. For complete repentance to be cleansed from [such a] great transgression is when a fire of anguish is surely lit and there is like a fire burning inside his soul.

King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 21:24), “The violent, proud man, scoffer is his name, acts in a frenzy of violence.” The explanation is that the scoffer whose violence is great to strike with his tongue in his pride and his loftiness, his anger and his rage - do not say [about him] that he only strikes with his tongue, and not with a deed. For you should surely know that he “acts in a frenzy of violence.” He means to say that if he could not strike his enemies with his tongue and he could strike them with a deed, he would strike them with a frenzy and have no pity. [It is] like our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said regarding Doeg (Yerushalmi Sanhedrin 10:2) that when Saul commanded that the priests be smitten but his people refused to strike them, he said to Doeg, “You struck them with the tongue, you strike them with the sword,” as it is stated (I Samuel 22:18), “You, go and strike down the priests.”

And the fourth is that if the one involved in evil speech does repent, he will need to request forgiveness from those upon whom he poured the fury of his tongue, but he will not remember all of them. As he generated much pain and saddened many souls - also more than he remembered that he sullied. And they did not know that he sent the evil to them, [so] he will be ashamed to inform them and open their ears to that which he did evil to them. For he strikes, but his strike is not known, like the matter that is stated (Psalms 120:3-4), “What can you profit, what can you gain, O deceitful tongue? A warrior’s sharp arrows.” Therefore evil speech is compared to an arrow - for many times, one who pulls the bow sends forth his arrows but does not know who he struck.

And it was also compared to an arrow for another reason. For one who draws his sword can put it back in its sheath if he has mercy on someone who pleads with him. Not so is one who sends forth an arrow - he is not able to bring it back. Such is one involved in evil speech - once the word came out of his mouth, he is not able to repair [it]. And sometimes he will speak about a family blemish and injure all of the generations that come after [the one he insults]; and he cannot get forgiveness

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for this. Therefore our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yerushalmi Bava Kamma 8) that one who speaks about a family blemish does not ever have atonement. And behold one who sends out his tongue, also speaks about the holy ones in the land. For upon whom has his constant evil not expressed itself? And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, already said (Sanhedrin 90a) that [one who disgraces the Torah scholars] has no share in the world to come.

And the fifth is that evil speech brings one involved with it to put his mouth to speaking wrongly about God - and as it is stated (Psalms 73:9), “They set their mouths against Heaven, and their tongues range over the earth.” And there is none among all of the sins the punishment for which reaches the punishment for flinging [accusations at God]. And our Rabbis said (Arakhin 15a), “Our ancestors tried the Holy One, Blessed be He with ten trials, but their sentence was sealed only due to the evil speech.” For it is stated (Numbers 14:28), “I will do to you just as you have urged Me, etc.”; and it is stated (Deuteronomy 1:34), “When the Lord heard your loud complaint, He was angry; and He vowed”; and it is stated (Malachi 2:17), “You have wearied the Lord with your talk.” And King David, peace be upon him, said (Psalms 50:16-20), “And to the wicked, God said, ‘Who are you to recite My laws, and mouth the terms of My covenant. [...] When you see a thief, you fall in with him, etc. You devote your mouth to evil, and yoke your tongue to deceit. You are busy maligning your brother.’” Behold you have learned from this that Torah [study] does not protect those involved with evil speech or one accustomed to steal or to engage in forbidden sexual relations; and that they are not fit to be involved with Torah. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Sotah 21a) [that] because Doeg spoke evil speech, his wisdom did not stand him in. And that which our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said - “Sin extinguishes a commandment, but sin does not extinguish Torah, as it is stated (Proverbs 6:23), ‘For the commandment is a lamp, and the Torah is a light’” - they said about someone who sins by chance, and not about one who removes the yoke of the warning of a sin from upon him.

And consider how great is the sin of a man who speaks evil speech: Is their sin that they have sealed their lips and quieted their tongues from speaking words of Torah not big enough for them; that they surely [use them to] destroy with evil speech? And King David, peace be upon him, said (Psalms 119:23), “Though princes meet and speak against me, Your servant speaks out Your laws.” The explanation is that they are still from speaking out Your laws and speak evil speech and speak against me, while I am still speaking out Your laws. And our Rabbis said (Arakhin 15a) [that] the cure for evil speech - to save oneself from it - is to be involved with the Torah; as it is stated (Proverbs 15:4), “A healing tongue is a tree of life,” And this is [the meaning of] what is stated (Psalms 39:2), “I would keep my mouth muzzled, etc.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, explained (Midrash Tehillim 39) that the muzzle is involvement with Torah. And our Rabbis said (Yalkut Shimoni on Nach 721), “The Congregation of Israel is beloved by her voice and hated by her voice: She is beloved by her voice, as it is stated (Song of Songs 2:14), ‘let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet.’ And she is hated by her voice, as it is stated (Jeremiah 12:8), ‘she raised her voice against Me; therefore I have hated her.’” And this is [the meaning of] what is stated (Proverbs 18:21), “Death and life are in the power of the tongue; those who love it will eat its fruit.” And its explanation is: “Those who love it will eat its fruit” - and one who loves the tongue, and that is a man that always wants to talk, for him the proper counsel is that he should, “eat its fruit.” That is, he should not speak idle words but rather words of Torah, wisdom and ethics and the bringing of peace between a man and his fellow; justify the [actions of] the masses; praise the good; disparage the evil; and be zealous about the truth. For there is no end to the merits that

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he can acquire for himself with his tongue. And [it is] as we discussed earlier, that life is in the tongue.

And behold this group of slanderers is divided into six sections:

And the first section: When he attributes a blemish to a person and [that person] does not have the blemish. There are times that he will lie against beauty. And behold the heart of this one (has his mouth jump the trait of) [gathers the evil of the traits of] two bad groups - which are the group of the liars and the group of the slanderers. And behold we have been warned by the Torah not to accept evil speech - perhaps it is empty or a false matter - as it is stated (Exodus 23:1), "You must not carry false rumors." And King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 17:4), "An evildoer listens to bad talk; a lie gives ear to malicious words." Its explanation is - two groups accept evil speech: The first is a violent evildoing man - from the usage [in] (Isaiah 9:16), "for all are ungodly and doing evil" - for he suspects the innocent, and loves to find a blemish and guilt about his fellow and a disgrace to his honor. And it will be that when he hears someone saying evil speech about his companion, the violence in his heart brings him to believe that the things are true. And the second group is [that of] the lying man. He also listens and believes malicious talk. Since he does not distance himself from false words, he will not be concerned if he accepts a lie, or if he listens to a false rumor. Hence he will be quick to accept evil speech. [The meaning of] "a lie gives ear," is like a man of lies. And likewise (Jeremiah 9:5), "You dwell in the midst of deceit," [means] in the midst of people of deceit; [and also] (Psalms 109:4), "and I am prayer," [means] a man of prayer.

And know that when the listener concedes to the evil speech, his lot and measured portion (a scriptural expression [in Jeremiah 13:25], "This shall be your lot, your measured portion") is with the one who speaks evil speech. For they will surely say, "See, the listeners accepted the thing, and that is a sign that the thing is really true. Even if the listener tilted [his] ear and made himself appear to be listening and believing these words in front of people, this also helps the evil, causes a disgrace to [the subject of the talk], and strengthens the hands of the one who brings his evil speech against people. And King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 25:23), "A north wind tehollel rain, and a raging face, a hidden tongue." Its explanation is, just like a north wind scatters the clouds and prevents the rain, so does a raging face stop evil speech. For when the speaker sees the face of the listener enraged, he will stop the voice of his raining words. But if he sees that the listener is listening to him, he will not stop his mouth from his lies; and tomorrow will be like today. For he will repeat his stupidity, to always speak false speech; and his tongue will follow the rain of his falsehoods. Tehollel is from the expression challilah (forbid or prevent). And likewise (Numbers 30:3), "he shall not annul (yechal) his word"; and also (Genesis 4:26), "it was then huchal to call," [which means] it was then prevented.

King Solomon, peace be upon him, also said (Proverbs 26:28), "A lying tongue does a dakav hate." The explanation is that a humble, contrite and lowly person hates a lying tongue - he will not seek it nor listen to it. For a humble person desires people's worth, and is pained by their embarrassment and disgrace. The [letter,] vav, is in place of a hay in the root, like the vav, in [the word,] anav. And some explain [the verse as,] someone with a lying tongue will hate those who make him contrite and reprimand him, so he will not bring them more evil slander against people. And behold we have been warned by that which is written (Exodus 23:1), "You must not carry false rumors,"

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not to believe in our hearts the telling of evil speech - to hold in our thoughts that the things are true, such as to demean in our eyes the one about whom it is spoken.

The second section: The one who speaks evil speech, but distances himself from a false matter. And this is what they meant when they spoke of the group of slanderers, even though they are not from the group of liars. And behold, if someone mentions to his fellow - between the two of them - the bad deeds of his ancestors, he transgresses that which is written in the Torah (Leviticus 25:17), "A man may not abuse his countryman." [For] the verse is speaking about verbal abuse, as we mentioned earlier. And it is stated (Ezekiel 18:20), "a child shall not bear the iniquity of a parent." And if he embarrasses him in front of others about the deeds of his ancestors - about this our Rabbis said (Bava Metzia 58b) that one who whitens the face of his fellow in public is from those that descend to Gehinnom and never ascend [from it]. And if he speaks about and makes known the abominations of his forefathers in front of people - but not in front of him - about this they said, this is the group of slanderers that does not receive the Divine Presence. And likewise if [the one he spoke about] was a penitent, and he speaks about his earlier deeds.

And know that if a man sees that his fellow has transgressed against an item in the Torah privately, and [the former] reveals his sins at the public gate, he will surely be guilty about this. For maybe that sinner repented from his evil way and his anguish [about it] is in his thoughts. And the heart knows the bitterness of his soul. So it is incorrect to reveal them, except to a discreet sage, who will not tell the rest of the masses. He will only distance himself from [the sinner's] company until he knows that he has repented from his evil way. And if the sinner is a Torah scholar and a man who fears sin, it is fitting to think that he has [already] truly repented. And if his [evil] impulse attacked him once, his soul causes him bitterness [about it] afterwards.

There are two things that the speaker of evil speech brings about: The damage and embarrassment that he causes his fellow; and his [own] decision to condemn and prosecute his fellows and his joy at their calamity. And from one angle, the iniquity of the one who speaks evil speech about something true is greater than one who speaks about something false. For the people will believe his saying true things about his fellow, and [that fellow] will go up in flames in front of them. So he will be disgraced in their eyes [even] after he regrets his evil and is forgiven for his sins.

And King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 14:9-10), "Fools will advocate guilt; among the upright, good will. The heart knows its own bitterness, and no outsider can share in its joy." Its explanation is - the fool advocates guilt, since he searches for the blemishes of people and their guilt. So he will attribute defects to them and never speak about their praise or about something good that is found with them. And the analogy for this is that flies always all land on dirty places. And his saying, "fools will advocate (literally, fools advocates)," in the singular is [to address] each and every one of the fools, like (in Genesis 49:22), "(literally) daughters treads on the wall." And our Rabbis said (Kiddushin 70a), "Anyone who is of flawed lineage never speaks in praise of [others]. And [his way is to] disqualify them with his own flaw." "Among the upright, good will" - for it is the way of the just to cover over transgressions, and to praise a man when a good thing is found with him. And they spoke in ethics about a [simple] man and a sage who were walking past a carcass. The [former] said, "That carcass is so rotten!" The sage said, "How white are its teeth!" And [Solomon] said after this, "The heart knows its own bitterness." And every sage knows that Solomon did not bring words that are not useful among his chosen teachings (Proverbs). Rather the matter is coming with regard to the first verse - to say that the evil of the

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fool that advocates guilt is because it is probable that the sinner has repented from his way. And no one knows the bitterness of the soul of a person, and its joy, besides him. And that lifts up the sin, for the essentials of repentance are according to the bitterness of his soul. Therefore the fool that mentions his iniquity sins and is guilty.

And you must know that the punishment of the fool that advocates guilt is only when he attributes a defect in a man who fears sin, [and] whose [evil] impulse seized him and he sinned and was guilty - as his practice and way is to regret his sins. And all the more so if the matter that he repented is known. But [regarding] the man whose path you have examined and he has no fear of God in front of his eyes and is also stationed on the bad path - it is a commandment to speak in his disgrace and to reveal his sins, and to make the ones involved with sin foul in the eyes of people, so that the souls of the ones listening will be revolted from bad deeds. And it is stated (Proverbs 29:27), "The unjust man is an abomination to the righteous." And it is [also] stated (Proverbs 8:13), "To fear the Lord is to hate evil." And they said (Sanhedrin 52a), "It is permissible to call an evildoer who is the son of a righteous man, 'an evildoer, son of an evildoer'; and it is permitted to call a righteous man who is the son of an evildoer, 'a righteous man, son of a righteous man.'"

And behold when you see a man who is saying something or performing an act, and one can judge the thing as him being guilty or being innocent: If the man is one that fears God, you have been obligated to judge him favorably in truth - even if the thing is closer to, and makes more sense to be, understood unfavorably. And if he is from the [group] in-between, that are careful about sin, but sometimes stumble over it - you must incline the doubt towards judging favorably, as our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Shabbat 127b), "One who judges another favorably is himself judged favorably." And it is a positive commandment from the Torah, as it is stated (Leviticus 19:15), "you shall judge your countryman justly (betsedek, which can also be understood as, favorably)." And if the matter leans towards guilt - let the matter be a doubt to you, and do not decide it unfavorably. But if most of that man's actions are evil, or you have examined that he has no fear of God in his heart - judge his actions or his words unfavorably, as it is stated (Proverbs 21:12), "The Righteous One observes the house of the wicked man; he subverts the wicked to their ruin." And we have already discussed its explanation.

And King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 24:29-30), "Do not be a vain witness against your companion; would you mislead with your speech? Do not say, 'I will do to him what he did to me; I will pay the man like what he did.'" Its explanation is: It is not necessary to warn, saying, "Do not be a false witness"; but do say, "Do not be a vain witness." For if your companion stumbles upon a sin, do not testify about it and do not reveal it in vain, without punishment. For while it is true that if a man stole or extorted his countryman, [a witness] is obligated to testify so that [if] there are two witnesses he will return the theft that he stole; and if there is only one witness, there will be an oath between them; but if he saw his fellow stumble in a matter of a sexual prohibition or one of the sins [that do not involve payment], it is not fitting that he should testify about this in vain - meaning to say without punishment - even if there is another witness with him to authenticate the matter. And if the sinner was someone who fears sin, it is fitting to speak to one's heart, [to say] that he truly [already] repented. And also because he should fear to himself and say in his heart, "Since this man fears the Heavens, maybe His merits are more numerous than his iniquities; and our Rabbis said (Kiddushin 39a) that a man whose merits are more numerous than his iniquities is surely from the congregation of the righteous." However if the sinner is from

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the fools - the way of which is to repeat their foolishness - it is good that they tell the judges, in order to chastise him and separate him from sin. However if he is one witness, it is not good for a man to be alone, testifying about his fellow. For his testimony is vain, since they cannot rely upon it, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 19:15), "A single witness may not validate against a person any guilt or sin." And therefore he is considered a defamer. And the word, "mislead (fitita) is [in] a causative structure - it means to say that through your lips, you are grinding his face (from the usage [Leviticus 2:6], "You shall break it into bits.") when you reveal his hidden iniquity. And after this, he said, "Do not say, 'I will do to him what he did to me.'" For if he revealed your sins, do not take vengeance or bear a grudge to do to him like what he did to you. [And this is a glorious teaching and from the essence of fear [of God].

But if the sinner is a man that does not fear in front of God - like someone who removes the yoke of the Heavenly kingdom, and is not careful about a commandment which all the rest of his people know is a sin - it is permissible to embarrass him and to speak about his disgrace. Thus did our Rabbis say (Baba Metzia 59a), "'A man shall not oppress his countryman (amito)' (Leviticus 25:17). [Meaning, from] his nation (amo) - one that is with you in [observance of] Torah and commandments - he shall you not mistreat. But [regarding] one who did not put his heart to the word of the Lord, it is permissible to embarrass him with his actions, make his abominations known and pour forth disgrace upon him. And they also said (Yoma 86b), "We publicize the hypocrites due to the desecration of [God's] name."

But if he stumbled on a sin by chance and it is his habit most of his days to be careful about iniquity, we should not reveal his sin - as we have explained. So it would [then] be possible to explain, "Do not be a vain witness against your companion" - to testify about sins with which you have also fallen sick, like him. Hence he is called his companion. And this is shown by its stating afterwards, "Do not say, 'I will do to him what he did to me.'" For even though it is a commandment to publicize the ones that sin to their core and the hypocrites; [in the case of] a sinner - if it is a man like him in his evil and [like other] people with his sins, we should not publicize [his sin]. For [the first one's] intention to reveal his secrets will not be for the good, but rather to rejoice in his calamity. Secondly, how will he not be embarrassed to mention the defect of these actions in someone else, when he holds on to them [himself]? And it is stated (Hosea 1:4), "I will punish the House of Jehu for the bloody deeds at Jezreel": Behold even though he did a commandment in cutting off the House of Ahab, [Jehu] bore his sin. For he was also full of transgression.

And our Rabbis said (Pesachim 113b) that we give lashes for rebellion to the one who testifies by himself against his fellow about the matter of a sin. However he may reveal the matter privately to his teacher or to a man who keeps his secret, if he knows that they will believe his words like the words of two witnesses. And if there is a second witness with him, they should have the judges hear their words - in order to discipline the sinner privately, and not to whiten his face in public, as it is stated (Leviticus 19:17), "you shall surely reprimand your countryman and not bear sin because of him."

And know that regarding things between a man and his fellow - such as robbery, extortion, injury, pain, embarrassment and verbal abuse - one can tell the things to people. Even a single individual who saw [it] may speak, so as to help the person who was mistreated and to be zealous for the

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truth. And behold the Torah stated that a single witness should testify in court for a monetary claim, to obligate the defendant [to take] an oath. However he should first reprimand the man.

The third section: One who goes talebearing. And we were warned about this in the Torah, as it is stated (Leviticus 19:16), “You shall not go talebearing among your people.” And this is also called evil speech. And he is included in the group of slanderers - as our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, mentioned about Doeg the Edomite that he was involved in evil speech because he told Saul, and said to him that David came to the house of Ahimelech. And there is no counting the damage of talebearing: For it increases hatred in the world and makes people stumble on that which is written in the Torah (Leviticus 19:17), “You shall not hate your brother in your heart.” And behold the world stands upon peace (Avot 1:18) - so due to hatred, the world deteriorates, as we have discussed earlier. And many times, the talebearer puts a sword in the hand of his fellow to kill his companion, as it is written (Ezekiel 22:9), “Talebearing men were in your midst, intent on shedding blood.” And it is [also] stated (Jeremiah 6:28), “They are copper and iron - they are all stubbornly defiant; they go talebearing; all of them act corruptly.” And our Rabbis (Arakhin 15b) called talebearing, “Third speech, because it kills three: The one who speaks it, the one who accepts it; and the one about whom it is said” - as you know from the matter of Doeg, such that he was banished [from the world to come] on account of the talebearing; the priests were killed; and Saul was punished for accepting the talebearing.

And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said about the matter of talebearing (Niddah 61a) [that] even though it is forbidden to accept it and hate one’s fellow as a result, yet one should not belittle the matter. Rather he should guard himself and be concerned about the matter. They, may their memory be blessed, said (Yerushalmi Peah 1:1) [that] the generation of Saul had informers like Doeg and the Ziphites. And as a result, they went to war and fell. [But] the generation of Ahab did not have informers - as you know from the matter of the prophets that hid from Jezebel, as it is written (I Kings 18:22), “I am the only prophet of the Lord left.” Yet Obadiah hid a hundred prophets, but no one revealed that there was a prophet besides Elijah. And as a result of this, they would go to war and be victorious - even though Ahab worshipped idolatry.

And one who causes disputes between brothers and friends and brings hatred between them is the most severe of all the sections of slander, as it is stated (Proverbs 6:19), “and one who incites brothers to quarrel.” And our Rabbis said (Vayikra Rabbah 17:1), “The seventh is the most severe of all” (meaning the trait of inciting, etc. - which is the seventh of what it says above (Proverbs 6:16), “Six things the Lord hates; the seventh is an abomination to Him.”) - as we have mentioned to you before in the Gates of the Fear of Sin (no longer extant).

A man is obligated to hide a secret that is revealed to him confidentially by his fellow, even though there is no matter of talebearing involved in revealing that secret. For there is damage to the holder of the secret [simply] by its being revealed, and it [can cause him] to abort his plan - as it is stated (Proverbs 15:22), “Plans are aborted without a secret.” Secondly - because revealing a secret is even an aberration of the ways of modesty, as he surely violates the will of the holder of the secret. And King Solomon said (Proverbs 20:19), “He who gives away secrets is a talebearer.” He means to say, if you see a man who does not control his spirit, to guard his tongue from revealing a secret - even though there is no issue of talebearing between a man and his friend in revealing that secret - this trait will bring him to go talebearing, which is from the four bad groups, given that his lips are not in his control to guard. He also said (Proverbs 11:13), “A talebearer will reveal secrets.”

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He means to say, do not confide a secret to someone who goes talebearing. For since he does not guard his lips from talebearing, do not trust him to hide your secret, even though you have given your words over to him in private and in confidentiality. And we have been warned by the Torah not to accept evil speech, as it is stated, (Exodus 23:1), “Do not accept a vain report.” And it is stated (Proverbs 29:12), “A ruler who listens to lies, all his ministers will be evildoers.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, explained (Midrash Tehillim 54) that when a ruler accepts evil speech and words of talebearing, his ministers will become evildoers and talebearers to find favor in the eyes of their master. And behold it is these three groups that we mentioned that they, may their memory be blessed, had in mind when they referred to the group of slanderers.

And the fourth section: The dust of evil speech. Our Rabbis said (Bava Batra 165a), “Most of the world stumbles upon theft and a minority upon sexual prohibitions, but all of them [stumble upon] the dust of evil speech.” And they said that the content of the dust of evil speech is when a person causes people to speak evil speech due to his words. And they said (Bava Batra 164b), “A person should never speak favorably of his fellow, as out of his [praise] comes his disgrace.” And behold we need to explain this statement - for it is known that speaking the praises of the sages and the righteous is from the proper traits, as it is stated (Proverbs 25:27), “but it is honorable to peruse honor.” And it is said about a fool that he does not speak the praises of the world. Rather this is the nature of this matter, that one should only speak favorably of a man face to face. That is to say, when a man speaks to his companion - and not to the larger community and in an audience of the masses, unless he knows that there is no one in that grouping who is an enemy of that man whom he wants to praise or one who is jealous of him. And if he wants to praise a man who is already assumed by the people of his nation to be a proper man and no evil or guilt is found about him, he should be praised even in front of his enemy or one jealous - for they will not be able to disgrace him. And [even] if they do disgrace him, everyone will know that [such a man’s] mouth spoke in vain, such that his mouth will be a trap for himself.

They, may their memory be blessed, also mentioned and said about the content of the dust of evil speech (Arakhin 15b) [that] if a woman asked her neighbor to [light a fire] from the hearth, and she answers and says, “Where else is a fire of coals except at so-and-so’s home, who is always roasting meat and eating” - this and what is similar to it is the dust of evil speech. And it is stated (Proverbs 27:14), “He who greets his fellow loudly early in the morning shall have it reckoned to him as a curse.” And our Rabbis explained (Arakhin 16a) this verse about someone who praises his fellow with a praise that brings a loss, to be about a guest who goes out to the town square and calls out in a loud voice and recounts how the householder did him good - since he [prepared] meat and made it for the guest that came to him. But it would be that when they hear the words of the guests, worthless people will assemble and turn aside to the home of the householder. And a person is obligated to guard his mouth and his tongue, such that he not be suspected about his words and that they not account him to be one involved in evil speech. And if he does bring such a suspicion about himself with this, he has surely destroyed his ethical [standing], and it will be considered the dust of evil speech for him.

And contemplate this well to understand the principle of this matter: Behold we mentioned earlier that it is permissible to speak in disgrace of the sinner about the theft that is in his hands, if it is known that he has not left his path. For example, the robber and the extortionist, the damager and the harasser, the one who whitens the face [of another], the one who makes [others] fowl and

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shameful and the one who speaks evil speech - [if] he has not returned the theft, or payed for his damage or requested from his fellow to remove his iniquity (to forgive him). However those that see their ways must surely first speak to the sinner - perhaps they will be able to help by way of a reprimand to have him repent from his evil way. And if he surely refuses, they may then inform the public about his ways and deeds.

However a person can be blamed from the deed of his fellow that was wanton against his fellow, when he recounts his deeds to people and reveals the obligations of the sinner and disgraces his acts with various claims: Behold, the recounter will be suspected about this and they will think him one engaged in evil speech. And they will surely say, "Even if the thing was true, it would have been fitting to reveal it to the ear of the sinner as a reprimand first." And his listeners will suspect him about his not giving him a reprimand first, saying that he would not have said all of this in front of [the sinner] and he is flattering him - like the matter that is stated (Hosea 4:4), "Let no man rebuke, let no man protest!" And [they will further say that] he enjoys speaking about the guilt of the people, the iniquity of which brings him joy and the disgrace of which brings him honor when it is not front of them; and he is similar to someone involved in evil speech and is clinging to its dust. And people will also say, "The things are not true and he made them up from his heart. And, however if not, why did he not reveal his iniquity in front of him first, but rather ignore him?" Hence our Rabbis said (Arakhin 15b), "Any statement that is said in the presence of its master (i.e., the subject of the statement) is not in the way of evil speech. It means to say that if he previously gave an open reprimand to his fellow about his deed, and [the latter] did not pay attention to his words - he may afterwards inform people of that man's guilt and the evil of his conduct. And he will not be suspected of wanting to give his fellow a defect. And likewise if the teller is assumed by the public not to seek the favor of any man and not to bend to a man; and everything he would say not in front of his fellow, he would [also] say in front of him and not be frightened by any man; and he also be assumed among his people to only speak the truth - he is not to be suspected when he speaks about the guilt of his fellow not in front of him. And so did they mention in their words, may their memory be blessed, about this matter and say, "Rabbi Yose says, 'From [all of] my days, I have never said a word and turned around behind me.'" He meant to say, "I have never said something about a person not in front of him, but suppressed it when I was in front of him." They also said, "Anything that is said in front of three is not in the way of evil speech." It means to say - since there were many [people] with him at the time that he told the thing, hence the thing will be known to his fellow. And behold it is as if he said the words in front of him.

And the fifth section: Vulgar speech. Our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Shabbat 33a), "Anyone who speaks vulgarly - even if he was sealed for a decree of seventy years of good, it will be reversed to bad." And Isaiah said (Isaiah 9:16), "That is why my Lord will not spare their youths, nor show compassion to their orphans and widows; for all are ungodly and wicked, and every mouth speaks vulgarity." And on account of this, one who speaks vulgarly has a heavy iniquity and is ungodly and wicked. For he has abandoned and left shame and modesty, which are the famous traits of the holy seed (of Israel); and went to the paths of brazenness - which is the trait of the evil boors. Secondly - because he has profaned the Holy One of Israel, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 4:6), "and they will say, 'Surely, that great nation is a wise and discerning people.'" But this one acted like the disgusting foolish ones that are distanced from the ways of the intellect, which is completely beautiful and also pleasant. And their foulness rises and their stink goes up,

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so every sage and understanding person surely despises and surely abominates them. And behold, he is profaning the tool of the intellect which is more precious than any beloved tool - as it is stated (Proverbs 20:15), “but wise speech is a precious tool.” And the punishment of one who listens to vulgar speech is great, since he does not seal his ear and does not separate from the words of vulgarity. And about him is it said (Proverbs 22:14), “The mouth of a forbidden woman is a deep pit; [He who is doomed by the Lord falls into it].”

And our Rabbis said (Pesachim 3a), “A person should never put out a disgraceful matter from his mouth; as a verse was distorted by eight letters rather than have it put out a disgraceful matter, as it is stated (Genesis 7:8), ‘From the pure animals and from the animals that are not pure.’” For at that time, the impure animals were permissible to eat but not pure for a sacrifice. Hence it is considered a disgraceful expression if one disgraces things that are for human food. And see that a man must be careful not to put out a disgraceful matter from his mouth - even if by his leaving it, it will bring him to speak at length and add to his statements. And it is like a fence to be careful from vulgar speech - which is one of the weighty sins. And [it is] also a fence from speaking evil speech and the placing of defects upon the creatures - as our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, have said about the distancing of [disgraceful] speech (Bava Batra 123a), “The verse did not even speak in disgrace of impure animals.” And our Rabbis said (Pesachim 3b) that one of the priests said in front of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai, “I received [for] my portion, the size of a lizard’s tail.” They investigated his background, and they found a trace of disqualification about him.

And our Rabbis also said (Pesachim 3a) that a person must choose an honorable phrase [instead of using] a dishonorable phrase - even if it is not disgraceful - whether it is in words of Torah or in speaking about matters of the world. And this is so long as he does not speak at length for its sake when speaking words of Torah. For a person is obligated to teach his students in a terse fashion. And the matter of honorable phrases is the path of words and speech that was tread upon by those of clean intellect and those that speak with clarity. And they weigh and know which phrase is honorable and which is its opposite, as it is stated (Job 15:5), “And you choose the language of the crafty.” And it is stated (Job 33:3), “and that which my lips know they shall speak sincerely.” And it is stated (Proverbs 1:20), “The tongue of a righteous man is choice silver.”

And the sixth section: The complainer - King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 18:8), “The words of the complainer are like mitlahamim; and they enter the innards of one’s belly.” Its explanation is that a complainer is a man whose way and whose nature is to always complain, get angry and find (movements) [pretexts] about this fellow, regarding his actions and his words - even though his fellow is innocent towards him, and did him no harm in anything. And he judges everything unfavorably, and not favorably; and anything inadvertent he makes volitional. And he surely makes himself like the oppressed and beaten, and as if the sin of his fellow is heavy upon him; whereas he is the hitter and the beater, as his words “enter the innards of one’s belly.” For the one who places complaints in front of his fellow when he did not touch him and only did good to him brings a storm to the heart. And behold he is like one who throws darts that “enter the innards of one’s belly.” The word mitlahamim is [spelled] inverted, [and is as if it were] mithalmim (they are beating); [and like the inversion of] simlah [and] salmah. And it is like the usage (in Proverbs 23:35), “they beat me (halamuni), but I was unaware.” And it is as if he was saying, “It is like the words of the complainer, they are beating me.” And his saying, “They are beating,” in the plural, is because the complainer includes [all] complainers - like (in Jeremiah 11:15), “the

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sacral flesh will pass away from you” (which is in singular, but refers to the many); [and] (Isaiah 45:8), “triumph sprout.”

King Solomon, peace be upon him, also said (Proverbs 16:28), “and a complainer separates his friend.” He means to say that he separates his friend and his companion from himself, as they cannot endure his friendship. And our Rabbis said (Derekh Eretz Zuta 9), “Do not proliferate complaints, so that you will not come to sin.” And many times, the complainer will be ungrateful for the good and will even consider it bad, so he will return the good with bad. And it is stated (Proverbs 17:13), “He who repays good with evil will not have evil leave his home.” And sometimes he will think about God’s kindnesses, that they are for vengeance and retribution - like that matter that is stated, (Deuteronomy 1:27), “You sulked in your tents and said, ‘It is because the Lord hates us that He brought us out, etc.’” Hence, distance yourself from the path of the complainers, for they have twisted their paths - anyone who walks in it will not know peace. Rather teach your tongue to judge favorably, and justice will be the girdle of your loins.

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#### The differences in atonement

In the same way as the body has sicknesses and ailments, so too does the soul. And the ailments of the soul and its diseases are its evil traits and its sins. But when an evildoer repents from his evil path, God, may He be blessed, heals the soul of the sinner - as it is stated (Psalms 41:5), "O Lord, have mercy on me, heal my soul, for I have sinned against You." And it is [also] stated (Isaiah 6:10), "and repent and save itself." And in the way that it is sometimes found with the sicknesses of the body that the sickness lightens itself from upon one, as does the length of most of the ailments, but the body is not cleansed of it without drinking a bitter drink and suffering further by afflicting his soul from [eating] all desirable food; so too is it with the soul sick from great iniquity: And even though most of the sickness is healed, and most parts of the punishment are removed after the repentance - and God, may He be blessed, has gone away from His anger - the soul will not yet be cleansed from the sickness and its sin will not be atoned until the sinner is made to suffer with afflictions, purified with pain and with bad and difficult things that happen to him. [This is] like the matter that is stated (Genesis 4:13-14), "My punishment is too great to bear! Since You have banished me this day from the soil, and I must avoid Your presence; and I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer in the earth; and it will come to pass, that whoever finds me will kill me." However through repentance, most of his iniquity was forgiven, the main part of his punishment was removed and he was rescued from death - as it is stated (Genesis 4:15), "and the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest anyone who met him should kill him." But the punishment of exile remained for him, as it is stated (Genesis 4:12), "and I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer in the earth." Yet he had mentioned [his] migration with a double expression (fugitive and wanderer); whereas after the repentance, it is [only] stated (Genesis 4:16), "and he dwelt in the land of wandering."

And this matter is further clarified from that which is written in the Torah (Leviticus 4:27-28), "If any person from among the populace unwittingly incurs guilt by doing any of the things which by the Lord's commandments ought not to be done, and he realizes his guilt. Or the sin of which he is guilty is brought to his knowledge, etc." And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said that a sin offering comes for being inadvertent about something for which volition [would bring] excision. And on account of a sin that [brings] excision - due to its significance - the atonement of the sinner will not be complete until he brings a sin-offering, even though he confessed his sin. For without the confession and repentance, his iniquity will not be atoned by the sin-offering, as it is stated (Proverbs 21:27), "The sacrifice of the wicked man is an abomination." But after the confession and the sacrifice, his iniquity is atoned, as it is stated (Leviticus 4:20), "the priest shall make expiation for them, and they shall be forgiven." And you [should] understand from this how strong the punishment of the volitional one [must be], if the inadvertent one is not pure after repentance until he brings a sacrifice. Indeed, his iniquity is atoned with afflictions, as it is stated (Job 33:19-26), "He is reproved by pains on his bed, etc. He prays to God and is accepted by Him." And it is stated (Proverbs 3:12), "For whom the Lord loves, He rebukes, as a father the son whom he favors." But there is [also] advice and rectification for the sinner to protect himself from [such] pains - with good deeds, as will be explained.

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And this matter is yet further clarified in the Torah, as it is stated (Leviticus 16:30), “For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to purify you, etc.” Behold that Yom Kippur is required after the repentance - for the essence of Yom Kippur is [that it be] with repentance.

And there is an iniquity for which the soul cannot be cleansed; and it will not be accepted until death separates it from the body with which it sinned - just as there is a sickness from which the body will not be cleansed all of [its] days: And that is the sin of profaning [God’s] name, as it is stated (Isaiah 22:13), “And behold, there was rejoicing and merriment, killing of cattle and slaughtering of sheep, etc.” For they were not heeding the words of the prophets, nor trembling about them. Rather they were gathering with their friends with all types of mirth. And it is stated about this (Isaiah 22:14), “this iniquity shall not be atoned for until you die.” And it is stated (II Chronicles 36:16), “But they mocked the messengers of God and disdained His words and taunted His prophets until the wrath of the Lord against His people grew beyond remedy.”

But even for this sickness - even though it does not have a remedy in the way of other iniquities - there is a remedy if God, may He be blessed, assists one to sanctify His Torah in front of people and to inform people of God’s power and the glory of His majestic Kingship. And his iniquity is removed according to the greatness of the action’s effect, which is the opposite of [the effect of] the action with which he was foolish and with which he sinned. [This is] like the statement of the physicians about the sickness of the body - that it is cured with its opposite, and its resuscitation comes about with its replacement. And King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 16:6), “Iniquity is atoned by kindness and truth.” And we have explained this in the first Gate (1:47) about repentance. And the explanation of the matter of truth that he mentioned is that the sinner should prepare his heart to strengthen the truth, help those seeking faith and remove falsehood and error. For making the truth known and turning it back into a fortress is [an aspect of] the glorification of God - like the matter that is stated (Jeremiah 22:16), “He upheld the rights of the poor and needy; then all was well - was not this to know Me?” And it is stated (Jeremiah 9:5), “through deceit they refuse to know Me.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said about the matter of Herod - who killed the sages - asking (Bava Batra 4a) Bava ben Buta advice if he could heal him or cure him of his wound. And he said to him, “You have extinguished the light of the world. Go and involve yourself in the light of the world and make efforts for the building of the Temple.”

Our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yoma 86a), “Rabbi Matya ben Charash asked Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah in Rome, ‘Have you heard the four distinctions of atonement that Rabbi Yishmael would expound?’ He said to him, ‘They are three, and repentance is [necessary] with each and every one: [If] one violates a positive commandment and repents, he is forgiven even before he moves, as it is stated (Jeremiah 3:22), “Return, you backsliding children [I will heal your backsliding].” [If] one violates a negative commandment and repents, repentance suspends [his punishment] and Yom Kippur atones, as it is stated (Leviticus 16:30), “For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to purify you of all your sins; [you shall be pure before the Lord].” [If] one transgresses [a sin that warrants] excision or a death penalty from the court and then repents, repentance and Yom Kippur suspend [his punishment], and afflictions absolve, as it is stated (Psalms 89:33), “Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with plagues.” But [regarding] one who has [the iniquity of the] profanation of [God’s] name in his hands - his repentance has no power to suspend, nor does Yom Kippur have power to atone, nor

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do afflictions have the power to absolve. Rather, all these [together] suspend [punishment], and death absolves - as it is stated (Isaiah 22:14), “this iniquity shall not be atoned for until you die.”” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yoma 36a; Sifra, Vayikra) [that] a burnt-offering atones - after the repentance - for one who transgressed a positive commandment. For while his iniquity was atoned by the repentance [alone], the burnt-offering adds to his atonement and adds to his being accepted by God, may He be blessed.

They also said (Yerushalmi Yoma 5:7), “A burnt-offering atones for the meditations of the heart that come up in peoples’ souls and the thought of sins.” And likewise is it written (Job 1:5), “When a round of feast days was over, Job would send word to them to sanctify themselves, and, rising early in the morning, he would make burnt-offerings, one for each of them; for Job thought, ‘Perhaps my children have sinned and blasphemed God in their thoughts.’”

And now [that] - due to our sins and due to the sins of our ancestors - we do not have sacrifices: If one sinned with the meditations of the heart or transgressed a positive commandment, he should read the section of the burnt-offering at the beginning of Parshat Vayikra and at the beginning of Parshat Tsav et Aharon. For the reading of the section of the sacrifice is in place of the bringing of a sacrifice for us - whether we read it from the written text or whether we read it by heart. [It is] like our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Menachot 110a), “Anyone involved with the section of the burnt-offering is as if he brought a burnt-offering; with the section of the sin-offering is as if he brought a sin-offering; with the section of the guilt-offering is as if he brought a guilt-offering.” And if a person transgressed a negative commandment and repented, he should worry about his iniquity and long for and anticipate getting to Yom Kippur in order that he will be accepted by God, may He be blessed. For His desire is for the life of the soul and the body, and the life of all that has been created - as it is stated (Psalms 30:6), “life is in His will.” And therefore, our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Rosh Hashanah 9a), “Anyone who fixes his meal on the eve of Yom Kippur is as if he had been commanded to fast on the ninth and the tenth [of Tishrei], and fasted on them.” For he has shown joy at the arrival of the time of his atonement; and it will be testimony for him, about his worry about his guilt and about his despondence about his iniquities.

Secondly - because on other holidays, we establish a meal for the joy of the commandment. For the reward for joy over the commandment increases and grows, as it is stated (I Chronicles 29:17), “now Your people, who are present here - I saw them joyously making freewill offerings.” And it is stated (Deuteronomy 28:47), “Because you would not serve the Lord your God in joy and gladness.” But since the fast is on Yom Kippur, they were obligated to fix the meal over the joy of the commandment, on the eve of Yom Kippur.

Thirdly - in order that we be strengthened to increase our prayer and supplications on Yom Kippur and think of strategies for ourselves regarding repentance and its main principles.

And if a person transgressed [a sin that warrants] excision or a death penalty from the court and he repents: Since his iniquity is not absolved without afflictions - given that repentance suspends [the punishment], but afflictions absolve - he should prepare his heart to do the commandments that protect [him] from the afflictions, such as the commandment of charity. For it also saves from death, as it is stated (Proverbs 10:2), “but righteousness (tsedekah, which can also mean, charity) saves from death.” And one who does not have money to give charity, should speak well about the

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poor person, so that he will be a [spokesman] for him, such that others do well by him. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Bava Batra 9a), “Greater is the one who causes [a commandment] to be done than one who does it.” And likewise should he involve himself with deeds of loving-kindness, to help his fellow with his counsel and his efforts. And [it is] like our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Sukkah 49b), “Acts of kindness are superior to charity [...]: Charity can be performed only with one’s money, while acts of kindness can be performed both with his person and with his money. Charity is given to the poor, while acts of kindness are performed both for the poor and for the rich.” And likewise should he speak to the heart of the poor person and honor him and console him from his distress, like the matter that is stated (Isaiah 58:10), “And you offer your compassion to the hungry.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Bava Batra 9b) that one who appeases his fellow with words is greater than one who gives [him] charity. And likewise should he be involved in the commandments of visiting the sick, burying the dead, consoling the mourners and rejoicing the groom and bride. For all of these are from the ways of kindness.

And corresponding to all of them is the commandment of Torah study for the sake of the Heavens. And all of the counsel that we have mentioned is included in that which King Solomon, peace be upon him, said (Proverbs 16:6), “Iniquity is atoned by kindness and truth.” For the acquisition of Torah [knowledge] is called the acquisition of truth, as it is stated (Proverbs 23:23), “Acquire the truth and do not sell it.” And it is stated (Psalms 119:142), “and Your Torah is truth.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Vayikra Rabbah 25:1), “‘It is a tree of life to those who grasp it’ (Proverbs 3:18) - [if] a person transgressed [a sin that warrants] excision or a death penalty from the court: If he was accustomed to reading one chapter [of Mishnah] a day, he should read two chapters; if he was accustomed to reading one section [of Torah], he should read two sections.” And Torah [study] protects him from afflictions from two angles: The first is because our Sages, may their memory be blessed, said (Shabbat 127b), “Torah study corresponds to all of [the other commandments combined].” And the second is that when he toils in Torah, exerts himself upon it and pushes away the sleep from his eyes - it is counted in place of afflictions. [It is] as our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Sanhedrin 99b), “All bodies are born for toil. Happy is one whose exertion is for Torah.” And they said (Sanhedrin 26b), “Why is the Torah called wisdom (tushiyya)? Because it weakens (mateshet) the strength of a person.”

And likewise should he put fasts, tears and abstaining himself from delights in the place of afflictions - as it is stated (Psalms 109:24), “My knees give way from fasting; my flesh is lean, has lost its fat.” And it is stated (Joel 2:12), “Turn back to Me with all your hearts, and with fasting, weeping, and lamenting.” And he should always sigh from the bitterness of his heart, as we mentioned in the first Gate about repentance. And he will place the abundance of bitterness in the place of afflictions, as it is stated (Proverbs 18:14), “A man’s spirit can sustain (yekhalkel) him through illness; but low spirits - who can bear them?” The explanation is that when the body becomes sick, the soul will sustain it [during ] its sickness - from the usage (in Malachi 3:2), “But who can bear (mekhalkel) the day of his coming?” [Here] it means to say - help the body and sustain it by speaking to its heart and comforting it to accept [difficulties] and to carry [them]. But when the soul is sick and low from grief and worry, who will console the soul, and who will hold it up and sustain it? Behold, worry and bitterness of the heart are heavier than sickness of the body - for the soul sustains the body in its sickness; whereas when the soul is sick and low from its grief, the body will not sustain it.

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So if you find the sinner suffering, [with] troubles happening to him, justifying his judgement and accepting the rebuke with love - this will be a shield for him from the many afflictions that would be fit to come upon him. [It is] as it is stated (Psalms 76:11), “The rage of men shall acknowledge You, when You gird on the remnant of fury.” Its explanation is, when the pain of a man acknowledges You - meaning that a man acknowledges You at the time of his pain. It is from the usage (Job 6:2), “If my anger were surely weighed” - the meaning [of anger, like rage in Psalms 76:11,] is pain. “The remnant of fury” that had been opened to come upon the man - like the content of (I Kings 20:11), “Let not him who girds on his sword boast like him who opens it!” - gird and hold them back and do not bring them upon him. And this is by way of a comparison to one who opens his sword, but [then] returns it to its sheath. And it is stated (Isaiah 12:1), “Although You were wroth with me, Your wrath has turned back and You comfort me.” And likewise about the matter of acknowledgement for the good, it is stated (Psalms 52:11), “I praise You forever, for You have acted; I will hope in Your name, for it is good, in the presence of Your faithful ones.” Its explanation is - I will praise You for the good that You have done with me; and because of this, I will hope for the constancy of Your goodness. And it is stated (Psalms 116:13), “I will raise the cup of slavations and call out in the name of the Lord”; (Psalms 116:3-4) “I came upon trouble and sorrow. And I invoked the name of the Lord.”

And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Midrash Tehillim 79) about the matter of that which is written (Psalms 3:1), “A song of David, when he fled,” “Justice done is a joy to the righteous’ (Proverbs 21:15) - the trait of the righteous is to pay their debts and to sing to the Holy One, blessed be He. [There is a relevant] parable about a housholder that had a sharecropper, and that sharecropper was in debt to him. That sharecropper [then] made a threshing floor [from his produce], gathered it together and made a pile. The householder came and took the pile, and the sharecropper entered his house empty-handed. But he was happy that he entered empty-handed. They said to him, ‘You left your threshing floor with your hands on your head (empty), and you are happy?’ He said to them, ‘Even so, the bill is [now] cancelled; I have paid my debt.’”

And a person is obligated to reflect and know that the troubles that find him and the afflictions that come upon him are not according to the greatness of his iniquity and the multitude of his sins. Rather God, may He be blessed - in His pity upon him - afflicts him in the way of the rebuke of a father upon his son, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 8:5), “And you shall know in your heart, that, as a man chastens his son, so the Lord, your God, chastens you.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, explained (Yalkut Shimoni on Torah 350), “Your heart knows the deeds you have done and the afflictions I have brought upon you; that it is not according to your deeds that I have afflicted you.” And it is stated (Job 11:6), “and know that God has overlooked for you some of your iniquity.” And it is stated (Ezra 9:13), “though You, our God, have been forbearing, [punishing us] less than our iniquity.”

But when reproof comes upon the enemies of the Lord, may He be blessed, they are finished with one iniquity - for the punishment comes all at once, as it is stated (Psalms 34:22), “One misfortune is the deathblow of the wicked.” So the rest of their iniquities remain upon their souls, as it is stated (Ezekiel 32:27), “and their iniquities shall be upon their bones.” However when reproof comes to the righteous, it comes little by little, until the termination of their iniquities, as it is stated (Amos 3:2), “You alone have I known from all the families of the earth; that is why I will call you to account for all your iniquities.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, explained (Avodah

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Zarah 4a), “It is comparable to a person who lends money to two people, one of whom is his friend, and the other one is his enemy. [In the case of] his friend, he collects from him little by little; [whereas in the case of] his enemy, he collects from him all at once.” And it is stated (Proverbs 24:16), “Seven times the righteous man falls and gets up, while the wicked are tripped by one misfortune.” Its explanation is that they stumble upon one misfortune and are finished. And it is stated (Jeremiah 10:24), “Chastise me, O Lord, but only in judgement; not in Your wrath, lest You reduce me to naught.” Its explanation is, “but only in judgement” - with the trait of mercy and the property of Your kindness. [This is] from the usage (in Numbers 29:18), “in their count according to [their] judgement,” [which means] according to [their] property; [and in] (Psalms 112:5), “who conducts his affairs in justice,” [means] with measure. And they compared it to another parable regarding this matter and said (Midrash Tehillim 18), “One who does not know [how] to hit will hit his son in his eyes and in his face; whereas one who knows [how] to hit will hit his son in such a way that it will not cause him damage.” And likewise is it written (Psalms 118:18), “The Lord surely chastised me, but He did not give me over to death.” And it is stated (Job 2:6), “but only spare his life.”

And He only brings vengeful afflictions upon the evildoers. But probing afflictions only come upon the righteous; for they accept them with love and they increase the refinement of their actions. So [these] afflictions are for their good and their benefit, and the increase of their reward - as it is stated (Psalms 11:5), “The Lord probes the righteous one.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, compared it to a parable regarding this and said (Bereishit Rabbah 58:32), “When the owner of the flax knows that the flax is strong, he hits it much in order to make it soft and good.”

And behold we are going back to the matter about which we were talking regarding the order of atonements; and we shall say that if a person unintentionally transgressed [a sin that warrants] excision or a death penalty from the court, he is obligated to confess, to seek supplications for his forgiveness, to sigh bitter-heartedly, to worry and be afraid. For these are the main [catalysts] of the [various] atonements. And he should constantly be involved with the [Torah] section about the sin-offering - and it will be considered as if he brought a sin-offering. I mean to say, it will be very effective in the matter and atone for him, similar to the sin-offering.

And know that the inadvertent sinner will certainly be punished, as we have already explained; and all the more so, the transgressor - meaning one who is inadvertent about something that most people are careful about - so he should worry and be afraid because of his sin. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Midrash Tehillim 48) in explanation of that which is written (Psalms 48:3), “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth: Mount Zion, the sides of the north, the city of the great King” - that at a time when a person was an inadvertent sinner, his heart would be worried and he would tremble with fear about his sin until he would go up to Jerusalem and offer his sin-offering. And [then] he was completely happy. About this was it stated, “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.” And that which it states, “the sides of the north,” is speaking about the altar. As “the sides of the north” were “the joy of the whole world,” since the sin-offering was slaughtered on the northern side. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Midrash Tehillim 51), “When a person commits a transgression and constantly goes back and forth in his heart concerning the matter of his sin that he sinned, and trembles and fears about it - the Holy One, blessed be He, forgives him. But when he removes the transgression from in front of his eyes and it is little and light in his eyes, his case is similar to one who is bitten by a

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scorpion, but makes light of the bite. So he presses his foot on the ground to remove the poison. But those who see him say to him, 'Do you not know that it will go up from the sole of your foot, [even] up to your skull?'"

Now let us speak about one who has the sin of the profaning of [God's] name in his hands, the iniquity of which is not atoned by afflictions. And behold we have mentioned above that he has a healing cure if he constantly sanctifies [God's] name, may He be blessed. You can find another atonement in his constantly meditating upon the Torah and his efforts in [its study]. [This is] as our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Rosh Hashanah 18a), "'It will not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever' (I Samuel 3:14): With sacrifice or offering it is not atoned, but it can be atoned through Torah study"; and even though the sin of Eli's house was with the profanation of the commandment of sanctified foods - as it is stated (I Samuel 3:13), "in that he knew that his sons brought a curse upon themselves." And see [that it is] because Torah [study] is a cure for every very painful wound. Therefore is it written (Proverbs 15:4), "A healing tongue is a tree of life."

And about that which they, may their memory be blessed, said (Yoma 86a) about [sins that warrant] excision or a death penalty from the court, "repentance and Yom Kippur suspend [the punishment], and afflictions absolve" - there is a question: And is it not written (Leviticus 16:30), "of all your sins; you shall be pure before the Lord?" And the answer to this is that, that which is stated, "you shall be pure before the Lord," is a positive commandment to repent - that we search our ways and investigate [them] and return to the Lord on Yom Kippur. And even though we have been obligated about this at all times, this obligation is added on Yom Kippur. And the purification that is in our hands is repentance and refinement of [our] deeds. But that which is written (earlier in Leviticus 16:30), "For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to purify you" - which is written about the purification that God, may He be blessed, is to purify us from iniquity and atone for us [with] a complete atonement on Yom Kippur without afflictions - is stated about [simple] negative commandments. But regarding [sins that warrant] excision or a death penalty from the court, repentance and Yom Kippur [only] suspend [the punishment], and afflictions absolve.

And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yoma 85b), "'Of all your sins; you shall be pure before the Lord' - Yom Kippur atones for transgressions between a person and the Omnipresent. Yom Kippur does not atone for transgressions between a person and his fellow until he appeases his fellow." Hence one who has robbed his fellow must return the theft and confess afterwards. But if he confesses first, his confession is ineffective. [This is] as our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Bava Kamma 110a) concerning a robber or one who swears falsely [about his debt] who is obligated to pay the principal and a fifth, and to bring a guilt-offering - that one who brings his theft before he has brought his guilt-offering has fulfilled [his obligation]; his guilt-offering before he has brought his theft has not fulfilled [his obligation]. For it is stated concerning the robber of a convert that has no heirs, such that [the robber] must give the repayments to a priest, (Numbers 5:8) "then the guilt shall be to the Lord for the priest; besides the ram of atonement with which atonement is made on his behalf." Its explanation: The guilt that is mentioned in this verse is referring to the repayment - from the usage (Numbers 5:7), "and he shall give it to whom he is guilty." And he brings the repayment [first], "besides the ram of atonement with which atonement is made on his behalf" afterwards.

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And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yoma 87a), “One who angers his friend, verbally must appease him.” And it is not [even] necessary to say [this] if he spoke evil speech about him, for that is from the [more] severe transgressions. And if his fellow does not forgive him, he is obligated to come to him with a group of three people. And if he does not forgive him [again], he comes in front of him a second time with a different group. And so must he do a third time. And Elihu said (Job 33:27), “He should then assemble (yashor) a row of men, and say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right (yashar), and it was not fitting (shavah) for me.” The explanation is, I have perverted a just man - from the usage (Job 1:1), “blameless and just man (yashar)” - for I did not see the merit of the just man, but rather made him into one crooked and twisted. But it was not level (shavah) and just for me, from the usage (in Isaiah 28:25), “Is it not if he leveled (shivah) its surface”; [and in] (Genesis 14:17), “to the level (shavah) valley” - [meaning] straight and level. And since he disparaged just ones in front of people, he must humble himself and confess in front of the many. Hence Elihu spoke about this sin in particular, for it is one of the weighty sins that destroys the soul. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Shabbat 119b), “Anyone who disparages Torah scholars cannot be healed from his wound” - for they profaned the Torah - as it is stated (II Chronicles 36:16), “And they mocked the messengers of God, etc., it could not be healed.”

And that which our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yoma 86b) [regarding] one who has [the iniquity of the] profanation of [God’s] name in his hands, “Repentance, Yom Kippur and afflictions suspend [the punishment], but death absolves” - it is because death absolves any sin for which repentance is effective. And if he is killed - but confessed before his death when the fear of death fell upon him - he receives atonement; and [his] killer is considered like someone who spills the blood of someone pure and pious - as it is stated (Psalms 79:2), “the flesh of Your faithful for the wild beasts.” And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Midrash Tehillim 32; Shemot Rabbah 53:2) that this is also stated about the evildoers among them; as it is stated about them (Jeremiah 5:8), “They were well-fed, lusty stallions.” For they were considered like pious ones, because the judgement was meted out upon them. As it is written (Deuteronomy 25:3), “and your brother be degraded before your eyes” - once he was lashed, he is certainly like your brother.

And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Yoma 86b, though our version of the Talmud has the opinions inverted), “Transgressions that one confessed on this Yom Kippur, he should repeat and confess on another Yom Kippur, as it is stated (Psalms 51:5), ‘and my sin is ever before me.’ Rabbi Eliezer ben Ya’akov says, ‘He should not confess them on another Yom Kippur.’” But in the Midrash (Midrash Tehillim 32; Shemot Rabbah 53:2), they warned a great deal not to repeat and confess them on another Yom Kippur. And they warned about this from (two) [three] angles: The first is that he shows himself to be from those with little trust and as if he does not trust the greatness of God’s forgiveness, may He be blessed - that He lifts off the iniquity and passes over the transgression. And they mentioned about this, “Let lying lips be stilled” (Psalms 31:19). And the second is because if he only mentions the earlier iniquities, he will appear like one whose only worry is about the earlier ones. And has he not sinned afterwards? And if so, he appears as one who does not search and examine his ways; and this is a very bad sickness. For those that supervise their souls always see matters of iniquity in it or its ailments; or that it is falling short in attaining levels of fear [of God]; or that it is falling short in [divine] service and involvement in Torah [study] - as there are great punishments for these. And also since transgressions of the tongue are common. And our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said (Bava Batra 164b), “[There are]

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three things from which a person is not spared each day: Sinful thoughts, the dust of evil speech and [that they are not focusing their hearts] in prayer [many times].” And the third is because it appears as if he is boasting through his confession [that is] only upon the earlier ones, as he did not sin afterwards. And in the Midrash, they said, “Is it because you do not have from the new, that you are confessing about the earlier ones?” And they explained in the Midrash that, that which it is written “and my sin is ever before me,” is [to mean] that they should be in front of his eyes and remembered in his heart, but not that he should mention them with his mouth. They also explained in the Talmud Yerushalmi Yoma 8:7 that they should not be in your eyes as if you did not do them; but rather as if you did them and they were forgiven. And we have already mentioned this in the Gates of the Fundamentals of Repentance (1:48). Nevertheless, he should seek mercy all the days of his life for forgiveness of his iniquities, both old and new; and be afraid and scared [that] maybe he has not completed the measure of the fundamentals of repentance. Secondly - because the sins that [warrant] excision are absolved by afflictions, as we mentioned. King David, peace be upon him, also said (Psalms 25:7), “Do not remember my youthful sins and transgressions.” However he did not mention the earlier ones individually, since he already repented for them and confessed them on Yom Kippur. So he already fulfilled the commandment of confession and can trust that his confession was already accepted for that which confession is fitting to atone. However he should pray for the forgiveness of his iniquities all of his days, as we mentioned. Yet it is not from the obligation of prayer to specify his sins; only from the obligation of confession. And there is yet another reason to pray about the iniquities of earlier days - because maybe he has iniquities and sins that he did not contemplate; and did not remember and confess, like the matter that is stated (Psalms 19:13), “Clear me of unperceived guilt.”

And the order of the confession is - “We have sinned, we have been iniquitous, we have transgressed (chatanu, avinu, pashanu).” And sin includes inadvertent sin and peshiyah. And the meaning of peshiyah, according to the Sages of Israel, is when one is not careful about a matter about which it is the way of most people to be careful, as we have already mentioned. And iniquities (avonot) are volitional sins. And transgressions (peshayim) are acts of rebellion, from the usage (in II Kings 3:7), “The king of Moab has rebelled (pasha) against me. And - according to His great Kindness, God, may He be blessed, forgives even those who rebel against Him, when they repent to Him with all of their hearts. And it is stated (Daniel 9:9), “To the Lord, our God, belong mercy and forgiveness; for we rebelled (pashanu) against Him.” And it is stated (Psalms 25:11), “For the sake of Your name, O Lord, pardon my iniquity (avoni) though it be great.” And it is stated (Psalms 65:4), “All manner of iniquities overwhelms me, it is You who forgives our transgressions (peshaeinu).”