

THE BOOK
OF
ALLEGORIES

A Translation and adaptation
into English of

Sefer HaMashalim

By

Our Master and Teacher
The Holy and Godly Tzaddik

Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, Peace be upon him

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The Author's Introduction

May the name of *HaShem* be blessed now and forever. *HaShem* formed man with wisdom and endowed him with two forms, the form of the body and the form of the soul. He gave man bodily form so that he could contemplate the sensually perceivable and He gave him the form of the soul so that he could contemplate intellectual concepts, which, in and of themselves, are beyond sensual perception.

Now, in His great kindness, *HaShem* gave man an avenue by which to contemplate the conceptual through drawing analogous comparisons from the realm of the perceivable. The relationship between the body and the soul is similar to the relationship between the physical and the sensual, which in turn, is similar to the two elements, earth and water. These elements are thick and gross and can therefore be transported from place to place manually, without the use of any intermediary instrument.

On the other hand, the hidden wisdom and the intellectually perceivable are similar to the two refined and ethereal elements, fire and air. These elements cannot be transported except through the use of an intermediary instrument. For example, air may be transported in a balloon and fire may be transported by placing hot coals in a metal censer. The same is true of intellectual wisdom, that is, the hidden wisdom and the intellectually perceivable. They cannot

be grasped except through the use of analogous comparisons from the realm of the perceivable.

Therefore, I have resolved to compose this book, which is small in quantity but great in quality, to enlighten mankind concerning matters that are generally hidden, so that they should contemplate the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked and thereby awaken to correcting their ways and balancing their accounts before being summoned to stand and testify before the King, King of kings, the Holy One, blessed is He.

Now, though King Solomon desired to teach his wisdom to the masses, they were incapable of grasping it except through the analogies that he composed, as scripture states, “More than Kohelet (Solomon) was wise, he also taught the people knowledge; he listened, investigated and composed many analogies.” The purpose of these analogies was to give them understanding into deep and refined matters, that they themselves were incapable of comprehending, because of their great depth.

As it states at the beginning of the Book of Proverbs, “The analogies of Solomon the son of David, King of Israel. To know wisdom and discipline, to comprehend words of understanding. To acquire wise discipline, righteousness, justice and uprightness. To provide simpletons with cleverness and give knowledge and discretion to the youth.” With this statement Solomon, peace be upon him, informed us of the incredible power and quality of analogies and how wondrously

beneficial they can be. We now will explain, with *HaShem's* help.

There are two kinds of analogies. The first is an analogy that parallels its analogue completely, in all its parts, from beginning to end. This is similar to how every detail in the form of a seal is stamped into the wax, thus creating a true and exact reflection of it. This is a true and complete analogy.

The second kind of analogy only partially parallels its analogue. This is similar to an artist who paints a picture of a centaur, which is half human and half horse. Its human characteristics parallel some of the form of a human being and its equine characteristics are only for the purpose of fantasy or artistic expression. Similarly, this second kind of analogy only partially parallels reality and cannot be considered to be a true and complete analogy. Nonetheless, to the degree that it parallels the analogue it can be useful in understanding the analogue, whereas the remainder is discarded as inapplicable.

This knowledge has been given over into the hands of the sages of Truth, for in the times of Rabbi Yehudah the Prince, the Oral Torah began to be forgotten. The great sages, the pillars of the world, were thus worried that the wisdom of analogies, through which they entered into the hidden chambers of Torah and understood its deep, inner mysteries, would be altogether forgotten.

Now, with the passing of Rabbi Meir the wisdom of analogies passed from the world, as our sages stated,¹ “When

¹ Talmud Bavli, Sota 49a

Rabbi Meir died, the art of analogies passed from the world.” It further states,² “Rabbi Yochanan said, ‘Rabbi Meir possessed three hundred parables involving foxes, but only one has passed into our hands.’”

Many deep Torah matters are specifically explained through the use of analogies, as we find that the sages often used the expression, “Let me give you an analogy, to what can this be compared etc.” For it is through analogies that the depth of Torah is plumbed, as stated,³ “Rav Huna said in the name of Rav Hamnuna, ‘What is the meaning of the verse,⁴ “And he (Solomon) related three thousand analogies? This teaches that for each Torah concept he would relate three thousand analogies.”

See now, how great is the power of analogies to delve into the understanding of Torah concepts and laws. This being the case, consider the tremendous loss of Torah wisdom and insight that occurred with the passing of Rabbi Meir. When Rabbi Yehudah the Prince beheld the many decrees that prevented the Jewish people from diligently studying Torah and the resulting lack of practice and comprehension, he redacted the Mishnah for publication and arranged it with a deep and precise order. Because of the greatness of Rabbi Meir and his student, Rabbi Akiva, who taught many deep matters and mounds upon mounds of Torah laws, he included the teachings of Rabbi Meir as the core of the Mishnah, to such a degree, that

² Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 38b

³ Talmud Bavli, Eruvin 21b

⁴ Kings I 5:12

any Mishnah that is not attributed to a specific author is attributed to Rabbi Meir, as stated,⁵ “Every plain Mishnah is attributed to Rabbi Meir.”

Now, since the intention in writing this book is to reveal Torah insights and concepts to the public, do not be perturbed if you find that in some places, it is like the second kind of analogy in which the analogy does not fully parallel the analogue in all its details. Rather, in such a case, you should accept that which is pertinent and disregard that which is not. This can be compared to eating a pomegranate. We eat the fruit and discard the peel.

⁵ Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 86a

1

The creation of *Adam HaRishon*, the first man, is compared to a king who wished to show his servants his great wealth and the glory of his kingdom.

The explanation is that when the Holy One, blessed is He, created the world, He created many wondrous and astonishing things in it. That is, He created many different forms, some concealed and some revealed. He saw, however, that none of these forms could fathom His greatness and magnificence, nor could they appreciate the great wondrousness of His acts, both revealed and concealed. He therefore created man and formed within him signs and parallels to all the forms He created, both in the supernal realms and in the lower world.

This is analogous to a king who had many treasuries and vaults filled with every kind of wealth, such as gold, silver, precious ornaments and vessels, precious stones and pearls. The king, in his wisdom, said to himself, “How will my subjects know of my great wealth, magnificence and greatness?” He thus made a single crown studded with every kind of precious stone, one stone from each of his vast treasuries. He displayed it before his servants and told them, “Know, that for each stone that you see affixed to this crown, I have many many more in my numerous treasuries, each of which is overflowing with precious treasures. Through this, contemplate and fathom my great wealth and power.”

So likewise, the Holy One, blessed is He, created numerous worlds, each different from the other. In each world He created numerous forms, each different from the other. This is as stated in Scriptures,⁶ “How abundant are Your works, *HaShem*; You have made them all with wisdom.” He saw, however, that His creatures did not have the capacity to fathom or understand the incredible greatness of His works and wonders. He thus formed man and drew all the numerous forms in the world into him. He created his head and included in it the forms of the worlds of angelic beings, along with all their many wondrous, glorious and hidden matters. He blew into him a living soul, emanated from His Godly spirit. He created his torso, with all its inner and outer organs, corresponding to the world of the celestial spheres of the stars and planets, including all their wondrous and glorious forms. He created the kidneys and everything below them and embedded them with the forms of the lower world. Thus, in each and every organ and limb of man, He embedded their forms corresponding to the forms of all the worlds, both of the upper worlds and the lower worlds, the concealed worlds and the revealed worlds.

Now, when *HaShem* completed embedding everything into the form of the body of man, he appointed man to reign over all the hosts of the world. This is as stated,⁷ “You have given him dominion over the works of Your hands, you have placed all things under his feet.” So it was, until man sinned and ruined the proper order of the world. Therefore, his reign

⁶ Psalms 104:24

⁷ Psalms 8:7

was removed from him and his form was diminished to be similar to the animals. This is as stated,⁸ “But as for man: he shall not repose in glory, he is likened to the silenced animals.”

2

The sin of Adam, the first man, is compared to a king who placed his servant as the overseer of his land, but the supervision over the fortresses and citadels remained in the king’s hands. The servant subsequently rebelled against the king and was removed from his position.

The explanation is that when the Holy One, blessed is He, created man, he was created in a perfected state and his form was complete, including all the worlds within it. The Holy One, blessed is He, showed man His supernal treasures and gave him the keys to the storehouses of wisdom, so that he may contemplate the acts of the Holy One, blessed is He, and fulfill His will and desire, serving before Him as a servant who serves his master.

Now, although He gave over the keys to His treasures of wisdom to man, in reality, man does not have the capacity to plumb the full depth of the wonders of the Creator, for His wisdom is without limit or end. Nonetheless, when man beheld the wondrousness of the many levels of the world and the functions of the many forms and powers therein, his heart

⁸ Psalms 49:13

became haughty and he rebelled against the King, thinking that he could rule over them by himself, through the power of the keys given to him by the Holy One, blessed is He.

However, man's thoughts were unsuccessful, because the depth and inner thought of the Holy One, blessed is He, far exceeds the thoughts of man. For the keys to the fortresses and citadels remain in the hands of the Holy One, blessed is He, and thus man was unable to fulfill his rebellious thoughts. Instead, because of his rebelliousness, the Holy One, blessed is He, banished man from the Garden of Eden. This is as stated,⁹ “So *HaShem* God banished him from the Garden of Eden.”

3

Good and evil in the hands of man, are compared to a servant who was appointed by the king to be responsible for his treasuries, but the servant subsequently stole two ornaments from them. The king punished him by commanding that he be executed with the two ornaments hanging from his neck. However, the king decreed that the ornaments would remain in the hands of his descendants.

The explanation is that the Holy One, blessed is He, created Adam, the first man, and placed him in charge of the Garden of Eden. He told him, “I have placed all the delights of the world at your disposal to do with as you wish. However, do

⁹ Genesis 3:23

not take acts of good and evil into your domain.” This is as stated,¹⁰ “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, do not eat from it.”

Nevertheless, man transgressed His command and placed his hand upon them. Thus, the Holy One, blessed is He, told him, “You have stolen these two ornaments; because of this you shall die, but they will remain in the hands of your children.” This is as stated,¹¹ “Behold, man has become like the Unique One among us, knowing good and evil,” and it states,¹² “For you are dust and to dust shall you return.” Subsequently, they remained in the hands of his descendants, as it states,¹³ “See, I have placed before you today life and good, death and evil.”

4

The sin of Adam, the first man, is compared to a person who blemished the works of the Creator, blessed is He.

The explanation is that the Holy One, blessed is He, created man in an ultimate state of perfection and incorporated the forms of all the worlds within him. He thus is likened to the forms of all the worlds. Therefore, gazing upon the form of

¹⁰ Genesis 2:17

¹¹ Genesis 3:22

¹² Genesis 3:19

¹³ Deuteronomy 30:15

Adam, the first man, is like gazing upon the totality of creation and all the worlds. Thus, the perfection or blemish in all the worlds is connected and dependent upon the form of man, for the form of man reflects them all. If the form of man is delightful and praiseworthy, this reflects upon the form of all the worlds, and they too are all praiseworthy, but if the opposite is true, this too reflects upon all the worlds.

Thus, when man sinned, he blemished his form, and in doing so, he blemished the Creator and everything He created. He blemished his Creator because now the works of the Creator were no longer perfect and orderly. Moreover, he blemished all of creation, because now, all those who gaze upon him and compare his form to the form of the worlds, see the blemish in his form as a reflection upon all creation. We thus find that the sin of a single man caused blemish to the Creator and the totality of creation.

That the image of man reflects upon the Creator and His creation, is conveyed through something that happened to one of the sages, of righteous memory, who happened to be very ugly. A certain person once saw him and commented on his ugliness.¹⁴ The sage retorted, “Go tell the Craftsman Who made me: ‘How ugly is the vessel You made.’”

¹⁴ Talmud Bavli, Ta’anit 20a-b

5

What is a righteous *Tzaddik* compared to relative to an angel? They are compared to two knights who are in the service of the king. One of them always stands and serves in the presence of the king and never witnesses battle during his lifetime. The other goes out into battle and wages the wars of the king, achieving victory over his enemies.

The explanation is that both man and angel were created to serve the Holy One, blessed is He. One serves in the interior, whereas the other serves in the field. The angel serves in the interior and does not possess an evil inclination that battles him throughout the day. In contrast, man serves in the exterior and possesses an evil inclination who wages war against him all day long. However, he battles and wages war against the evil inclination whenever it attempts to cause him to sin. If he is righteous and victorious in the war, he is far greater than an angel who has never had to battle against the evil inclination.

Now then, consider which of these two is more praiseworthy before the king, the mighty warrior who goes out and vanquishes the king's enemies and wins the war, or the angel, who serves the king in the peace and tranquility of the palace and never experiences the difficulties and challenges of battle?

Surely, the mighty warrior who is victorious in battle is more praiseworthy, as stated,¹⁵ “Let one who girds his sword not boast like one who unfastens it!”¹⁶ Similarly, the sages of blessed memory related¹⁷ a story of a person who was gathering figs. He left the ones that were ripe and only took the ones that were not yet ripe. They asked him, “What are you doing? Are not the ripe ones much better?” He answered, “I need the figs for my travels and the unripe ones will keep better than the ripe ones.”

6

The soul in the body is compared to a minister who was sent by the king to govern the people of the country.

The explanation is that the body of man is composed of many different forms and forces, including those that oppose one another, for it contains all the forms of all the worlds within it. Thus, the organs of man are all founded upon opposites, in that what is necessary and desirable for one is undesirable for the other. They are therefore similar to the people of a city, each of whom endeavors to succeed in his own interests and property.

¹⁵ Kings I 20:11

¹⁶ In other words, a warrior may boast of his prowess once he removes his sword belt after victory in battle, but not when he is just beginning to arm himself to go out to the battlefield.

¹⁷ Talmud Bavli, Chagigah 5a

Likewise, the organs of the body are like litigants who contest and fight each other. This is the battle of the various elements of which the body of man is composed. All this is certainly true when we also consider the battle between the evil inclination and the good inclination. They are compared to two enemies at war with each other. However, the Holy One, blessed is He, sent the soul from the court of the King, and the soul acts as the mediator and true judge between them. She brings accord between them and quiets their quarrels and arguments, bringing them both close to the service of the King and thus ensuring the success of their occupations and deeds.

7

During childhood, the soul is compared to a pearl covered in mud.

The explanation is that during childhood, the soul is extremely preoccupied with enlivening and growing the body. It thus is compared to a pearl that is covered in mud, for it is not under its own dominion and is not reflective of its true level. It is for this reason that during childhood, one is not held responsible or punished for his actions. For, it is like one who is captured and forced to act against his will and is not in control of himself. Rather, the soul is imprisoned and is like a pearl covered in mud. It is for this reason that a youngster is not

punished or held accountable until he displays the known signs of maturity.

8

During adolescence, the soul is compared to a king who is cornered and surrounded on all sides.

The explanation is that during adolescence, the composition of one's nature is that he is drawn into the vanities of the world. Thus, he is drawn after the lusts of food, drink, sexual relations, coarseness of spirit and all other sensory pursuits. The evil inclination causes the body to tremble and be involved in all kinds of evil, drawing the various organs of the body into conflict with all manner of schemes and tactics. During this period, the soul is in a state of great anguish because of all the various obstacles, accusers, and adversaries that the evil inclination inflicts against her, to the extent that it is not known whether she will prevail or whether she will be prevailed upon.

9

During old age, the soul is compared to a king who has fought many battles. In some battles he was victorious and in others he was not. During this period, all the borders of his kingdom are quiet and there no longer is a destroyer or inflictor of evil. Nevertheless, he cannot be at peace and forsake war altogether, for it is quite possible that he might be attacked again from distant lands.

The explanation is that during its youth, the soul was subjected to many difficult battles by the evil inclination. At times she was saved from sin and vanquished the enemy. At other times, however, she was ruled by the enemy, which is the evil inclination. Now, during old age, the raging battles of the evil inclination have quieted, because his warriors – the limbs and organs of the body - have become weakened and tired. Nevertheless, although it is not as common as during youth, it still is possible for the evil inclination to wage additional battles against him, for various reasons.

For example, he may be compelled to sin due to certain temptations that he does not have the fortitude to overcome. For example, he may fall to anger due to insults that he cannot bear, he may fall to drunkenness or may fall into lust because of the sight of his eyes. Moreover, it may be that he became so accustomed to satisfying his lusts during his youth, when his lusts were naturally boiling, that now he continues to pursue

them out of habit. This is because the evil inclination does not truly separate from a person until the day of death. About this the sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹⁸ “Do not trust yourself until the day of your death.”

10

The soul of a righteous *Tzaddik* is compared to a conquering king, who vanquishes all his enemies and prevails in all his wars. He thus inspires fear and awe upon all the kingdoms.

The explanation is that the righteous *Tzaddik* has lived through difficult times and has seen many wars and travails. The evil inclination has waged war against him every day in an effort to cause him to sin, become wicked and ruin his ways. Nevertheless, he opposes the evil inclination like a mighty warrior in battle and prevails over him with each challenge.

Thus, the evil inclination and all the limbs and organs of his body are stricken with fear and trembling before his soul. They say to themselves, “Who dares rise up against her, for she always prevails, conquers us and imposes her dominion upon us! Clearly, we are enslaved by her and are her servants.” Still and all, the evil inclination never despairs of sinning or comes to the conclusion that it is impossible to continue to sin. Instead, like an ambusher, he lays in wait for an opening, when one’s

¹⁸ Mishnah Avot 2:4

guard is down, to tempt him and wage war against him until the day of death. Therefore, the sages said,¹⁹ “Do not trust yourself until the day of your death.”

11

The soul of a wicked person, *Rasha*, is compared to a person who was given many troops and military assets by the king, with which to wage war against the king’s enemies. However, not only did he not wage war against the king’s enemies, but he deserted and become a traitor, joining the king’s enemy and waging war against his master, the king.

The explanation is as follows: When the Holy One, blessed is He, sent the soul to the body, he gave her the power and strength to govern and direct the body on the straight path and the power to save it from the stumbling blocks of the evil inclination. He vested her with the power to battle and overcome the evil inclination, to lower it and frustrate it. When she descended into the body and realized that the limbs of the body were sinning and causing wrath and all manner of transgression at the advice of the evil inclination, she was meant to wage war against them, admonish them, and overcome them.

However, not only did she not do this, but instead, she took the wisdom and understanding that was granted to her by the Holy One, blessed is He, to be used in the service and fear

¹⁹ Pirkei Avoth 2:4

of Him, and instead used them for all manner of conniving and evil. That is, she educated the body to perform all manner of transgressions with cunning and guile, rather than like a bumbling fool.

She thus educated the foolish evil inclination and taught him how to cheat, steal, rob, murder and commit all manner of evil deeds. Thus, rather than using the troops and military assets that were consigned to her by the Holy One, blessed is He, to go in the straight path, she instead wasted her wealth on all manner of evil schemes of destruction.

12

The soul of the righteous Tzaddik, when it departs from his body, is likened to a fish that is removed from swampy waters and put into a great river.

The explanation is that even while vested within the body, the soul of the righteous is not fully integrated with the body. Rather, it is like a fish that swims in the water. Now, although it is straight, pure, and righteous, it nevertheless is manifest within the course and fickle substance of the body, whose occupations are not in true equilibrium. Thus, although the soul of the righteous *Tzaddik* is itself in a state of tranquility, the evil inclination may suddenly awaken all manner of destruction and travails against him.

This is compared to swampy or muddied waters, wherein the waters are so muddy and coarse that even if a minimal amount of water is removed or if human beings trample through it with their feet, all that remains is mud and slime. The fish that inhabit this swamp are therefore repressed and suffer. In the same manner, when the occupations of the body overpower the soul and the evil inclination renews its battles against her, they coarsen and muddy the body like sludge and refuse, and thus cause the soul to suffer.

However, at the time that the soul of the righteous *Tzaddik* departs from his body to go to her eternal life, after having gone through numerous battles and travails, she is compared to a fish that was temporarily confined to a stagnant swamp muddied by the feet of man, from which it is now removed and placed into a great flowing river. The feet of man and animal are unable to trample and muddy the waters of the great and deep river, and she thus dwells there in peace and tranquility.

13

The soul of the wicked, when it departs from his body, is compared to a stone being hewn from a mountain.

The explanation is that because the soul of the wicked *Rasha* sticks to the body with such great adhesion to his rebellion, both his soul and his body delight in the sin to such

an extent that they have become like one entity. Thus, when the time arrives for his soul to depart from this world, and to leave the body, to which she became bonded and enmeshed, she is compared to wool being pulled from a thorn bush. His soul is enmeshed to such an extent that she is like a boulder stuck in the side of a mountain that cannot be moved or uprooted from the mountain unless it is stricken many times with sledgehammers, axes and other iron tools. This process is the beginning of the punishment of the wicked.

14

One who is meritorious and influences others to be meritorious is compared to a cavalryman who the king hired and paid. The king paid him for the service of one horseman, but he went and succeeded in serving the king with fifty horsemen.

The explanation is that the soul was primarily sent to the body to correct the ways of the body and its deeds, turning them toward the service of *HaShem*, blessed is He. In this way it serves *HaShem* completely and with all of its strengths. Now, if the soul succeeded in overpowering the body with good deeds, and moreover, brought many other souls into the service of *HaShem*, blessed is He, thus saving the many from sin and guiding the multitudes toward good deeds, then when the soul departs from this world to stand before *HaShem*, blessed is He,

she is accompanied by many troops and multitudes of souls that were made meritorious by that soul.

Many angels of peace and mercy come from above to greet and rejoice with her, and accompany her to stand before the King, King of kings, the Holy One, blessed is He. The Holy One, blessed is He, rejoices tremendously in her and commands that abundant gifts be granted to all the souls that were caused to merit by her hand, each according to what is appropriate, and He commands that the soul that caused the merit be granted gifts commensurate to all of them. For she was the one who caused them all to merit and come close to the service of the Holy One, blessed is He.

This is compared to an infantryman who was sent by the king to fight his wars. He was given the wages of a single horseman, and yet, was so successful in his service of the king that he was able to serve him with fifty horsemen. He thus waged battle against the enemies of the king and conquered them. Now, upon his return to the king with all of the horsemen that he acquired on his own, the king rejoices tremendously and commands that all the multitudes go out to greet him and bring him to the palace of the king.

The king bestows lavish gifts upon all the new horsemen that were recruited by this soldier. To one he gives silver and gold, to another he gives precious stones and gems, to another he gives horses and beautiful ornaments and to another he bestows gardens and orchards. However, to this one horseman who succeeded in recruiting all the other horsemen to the service of king, the king commands that he be granted gifts in

equal measure to all the other horsemen combined. For it was he who caused them all to join in the service of the king.

This is all analogous to a soul who was meritorious and caused the multitudes to be meritorious. About this the sages, of blessed memory, stated,²⁰ “Whosoever causes the multitudes to be righteous, the righteousness of the multitudes depends on him, as it states,²¹ ‘He fulfilled the righteousness of *HaShem*, and His ordinances with Israel.’”

15

One who sins and causes others to sin is compared to a servant who has rebelled against the king and has convinced others to join in his rebellion.

The explanation is that the soul that sins and causes the multitudes to sin is like a person who rebels and causes others to rebel as well. What then is the punishment of this sinner and those he caused to sin and rebel against the king? Some sinners who rebelled on his council, will have their hands and legs cut off, others will be given heavy burdens, some will die by strangulation, others by stoning and others will be burned at the stake.

What does the king do to the sinner who convinced all the others to sin? He heaps all the punishments of those who

²⁰ Mishnah Avot 5:18

²¹ Deuteronomy 33:21

followed in his footsteps, upon him. He cuts off his hands and feet, places great burdens upon him, strangles him, hangs him from a tree, stones and burns him. In other words, the sinner who caused others to sin is punished commensurate to all their punishments.

This is how all those who sin and cause others to sin are judged. Now, although in reality, the punishments of all these sinners occurs in purgatory, each one according to his sins, nonetheless, the one who sinned and caused others to sin is subjected to all their punishments. Regarding this, the sages, of blessed memory, stated,²² “Whosoever causes the multitudes to sin, the sins of the multitudes are hung upon him.” We find this regarding Korach and his followers, who rebelled against Moshe. They were all destroyed, however, there were those who were burned and there were those who were swallowed by the earth. Korach however, received both punishments, and was both burned and swallowed by the earth.

16

The soul of a wise man is compared to a coal that is fanned and illuminated.

The explanation is that the initial state of the soul of all people is like a coal that is fanned and illuminated, and from it, many candles are lit, thus illuminating the entire surroundings.

²² Pirke Avot 5:18

Thus, when a person learns wisdom from a teacher, the teacher who taught him the wisdom is compared to a coal that is fanned and from which a flame has been lit. In other words, the wise sage illuminates the world with his wisdom, just as a candle illuminates the home for all its inhabitants. However, if one does not learn wisdom, then he is compared to a dim coal that has not been fanned and which does not illuminate.

17

The soul of a fool is compared to a coal that has not been fanned, and is thus called “darkness.”

The explanation is that a hot coal is capable of being the source of fire and light for many candles, and is thus capable of illuminating the surroundings. However, it only illuminates if it is fanned, whereas, if it is not fanned, it remains dark and dim. In the same manner, the soul of a person who has studied wisdom illuminates his surroundings, whereas if he does not learn wisdom, it remains dark. We find that an unfanned coal is called “darkness-*Choshech*,” as it states,²³ “Total darkness lies in wait for his hidden treasures; an unfanned fire will consume him.” About this, king Solomon, peace be upon him, cried out and said,²⁴ “And I perceived that the benefit of wisdom over foolishness is like the benefit of light over darkness.”

²³ Job 20:26

²⁴ Ecclesiastes 2:13

18

Wisdom in man is compared to form in a vessel.

The explanation is that when the soul enters the body of a person, it is compared to an unformed nugget of silver that is ready to be shaped into any vessel one desires. It may be made into a ring, a seal, an earring, a goblet or any other vessel. Thus, when the soul is fanned and illuminated with wisdom, it could become wise in good deeds or cunning in evil deeds. It could become wise in various crafts, such as the craftsmanship of a silversmith or other skills. Alternatively, he could become wise in the emotional arts or wise in intellectual matters. The soul receives its form according to the wisdom that settles into it, and brings its skills into action according to the wisdom it possesses.

This is like a vessel of silver or iron that is called by the name of the form it is made into. That is, it is called a ring, a goblet or an earring. In the same manner, a person is called by the form of the wisdom he has acquired. He may be a craftsman, a smith, a weaver or a doctor. In the same manner, our sages called a person who has not acquired wisdom by the term, “*Golem*-an unformed mass,” indicating that he has not yet acquired the form of wisdom. Our sages, of blessed memory, stated,²⁵ “There are seven characteristics of a clod-*Golem* and seven characteristics of a wise man-*Chacham*.” In other words,

²⁵ Avot 5:7

they used the term *Golem*-an unformed mass, to describe the opposite of a wise man-*Chacham*. Thus, man acquires form through the acquisition of wisdom, whether emotional or intellectual wisdom, whether for good or for evil.

19

Understanding-*Tevunah* in a person is compared to a wellspring flowing with living waters.

The explanation is that with the acquisition of wisdom, there are three paths upon which man may tread. If he forgets the wisdom he has learned, he is compared to a person who filled an earthen pit with water. The water is absorbed and swallowed by the walls of the pit until no water is left at all. If he does not forget his wisdom, he is compared to a plastered cistern that does not lose a drop. Although it is not a flowing spring, nevertheless, it does not lack anything of whatever was placed into it. However, a person who understands through the use of the knowledge he possesses, is compared to a spring of living waters that are always overflowing and are never lacking. One who understands through the wisdom he has learned and continues to add to his wisdom, is compared to a person who digs and finds hidden treasure. Such a person will have no limit or end to his wisdom. He is like a spring of living waters that all people draw from, and no matter how much they take, he lacks nothing and has more to give.

20

Knowledge-*Da'at* in man is compared to salt in a cooked dish.

The explanation is that the faculty of *Da'at*-knowledge rectifies a person, ensuring the success of his body and soul. However, compared to his wisdom-*Chochmah* and his understanding-*Tevunah*, it is like salt in a cooked dish. In other words, just as salt completes and rectifies all foods, so likewise, the faculty of *Da'at*-knowledge rectifies the wisdom, understanding and deeds of man. Likewise, just as a dish that lacks salt is not accepted by the palate, so likewise, the words of a person who lacks knowledge-*Da'at* are unacceptable and his deeds are improper.

Now, the opposite is also true, that if too much salt is added to a dish, it also is unacceptable and disgusting to the palate. Similarly, a person whose conduct with other people is through knowledge that is beyond their measure, will not be accepted by others. They will be unable to tolerate him and his words will not be well received. Instead, they will distance themselves from him. The solution is that although his knowledge may be very great indeed, he should conduct himself with others in a manner that they will be able to tolerate, and not beyond that. This is the middle path of the intermediary-*Beinoni*, about which King Solomon stated in his

great wisdom,²⁶ “Do not be overly righteous or excessively wise. Why be left desolate?” He also stated,²⁷ “A little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.” Regarding this, our sages, of blessed memory, stated,²⁸ “A person’s knowledge-*Da’at* [disposition] should always be empathetic towards mankind.”

21

One who is understanding but has not acquired wisdom is compared to a large tree that has no roots.

The explanation is that a tree with many large branches but without deep roots in the ground will easily become uprooted and overturned by even the slightest wind. Likewise, a person who has understanding without acquiring wisdom, may speak before those greater than him. However, if anyone who has indeed acquired wisdom questions and overturns his words, he who has understanding without acquiring wisdom will be unable to defend and sustain his own opinions.

For wisdom is the primary foundation of all things, whereas understanding (*Tevunah*) is compared to the branches of a tree in relation to wisdom (*Chochmah*), which is compared to the roots. Thus, because he has not acquired wisdom, but relies solely on his own understanding, when challenged, he

²⁶ Ecclesiastes 7:16

²⁷ Ecclesiastes 10:1

²⁸ Talmud Bavli, Ketubot 17a.

will be unable to support his opinion with sound reason and logic. His words thus become completely uprooted and overturned, because they have no firm foundation upon which to stand.

22

A wise man amongst fools is compared to a river that runs through a desert.

The explanation is that the waters of a river are very useful to man in many different ways. They provide water to drink, cook, wash, cleanse, and irrigation for the fields, gardens and orchards. So likewise, mankind derives great benefit from a wise sage. Some may learn wisdom from him, others may take council, others may learn proper conduct, and yet others may learn to correct their behavior and return to *HaShem* in true repentance.

However, if the wise man lives amongst fools who do not heed his words, he is compared to the waters of a river that traverses the desert. In other words, it is in a desolate place where mankind cannot derive benefit from its waters. It is not a fertile land of figs, grapes or pomegranates that grow from its waters. Rather, by happenstance a passerby may drink of its waters and derive benefit from them. The same is true of the sage who lives amongst fools. Only if another wise person

happens to pass through, will he temporarily derive benefit from him.

23

Wisdom and fear of sin are compared to great and turbulent waters that flow between high and great mountains.

The explanation is that even though wisdom (*Chochmah*) is the primary root and aspect of all things, nonetheless, it may or may not be accompanied by fear of sin. If a person possesses both wisdom and fear of sin, then although the evil inclination may suddenly come upon him with full force, like turbulent waters that entice him to sin, nevertheless, it will not have the power to cause him to stumble and sin, nor carry him outside of his boundaries. For his wisdom will stand on one side, like a great mountain, and his fear of sin will stand on the other side, like a steep mountain cliff.

He thus is strengthened both to his right and to his left by the strength of these mountains. As a result, the evil inclination will pass through them and will be unable to overpower and inflict damage to such a person. That is, it is like a rushing river that passes between two great and mountains, and although its waters may sometimes flood and overflow, they will never go out of their boundaries and overcome the mountains, that are much higher than them.

24

Wisdom without fear of sin is compared to a great river that traverses flatlands near a great mountain.

The explanation is that a person may learn and acquire wisdom and be quite thoughtful in the ways of Torah and its commandments, both the positive and negative ones. He may become very wise in the knowledge of the service of the Creator, blessed is He, and may indeed be joyous in his grasp of these matters. However, if sin comes upon him and he is unable to restrain himself and resist it, he is compared to a river that flows through flatlands.

As long as it does not overflow and cause flooding, all the people who surround it will derive their needs from it, such as irrigating their gardens, orchards and fields. However, if its waters overflow and flood the surrounding areas, they wash away all of the plants in the fields and uproot the trees in the orchards. This analogous to a wise person who is overpowered by the evil inclination when the temptation to sin comes upon him. If he does not withstand the evil inclination, then all his good thoughts and deeds are washed away, like plants and trees that are washed away in a flood.

25

A teacher in relation to his students is compared to a candle.

The explanation is that just as a candle illuminates the eyes of mankind in a sensory way, so likewise, the teacher illuminates the eyes of his students intellectually. In addition, a candle may be used to kindle many other candles, but its own flame is not diminished. On the contrary, the more it kindles other candles, the brighter the light. So likewise, the wisdom of a wise person who teaches many students is not diminished at all. On the contrary, his own wisdom grows and grows through his involvement with his students. For the more questions they ask him, the more he must respond with satisfactory answers and he therefore derives new insight and wisdom through their abundant questions.

26

Students in relation to their teacher are compared to small sticks that are used to kindle a log of wood.

The explanation is that when the students learn from their teacher, they come up with many novel questions and difficulties, not previously explored by the teacher. The teacher

is thus forced to delve into these matters to a greater extent, in order to properly answer their questions. Through this, the teacher delves into the very depths of the matter to a much greater extent than he would have done otherwise, without being challenged by his students. We thus find the students kindle the fires of wisdom in the heart of their teacher, through their abundant questions and inquiries.

27

A solitary person engaged in the pursuit of wisdom is compared to burning a single log.

The explanation is that a single log will not catch fire easily without great difficulty and toil, such as turning it over on all its sides. In the same manner, wisdom does not take hold in a solitary person except through great difficulty and toil. This is because wisdom is only truly grasped through the give and take of many students and scholars, through many questions and answers and through the scrupulous dissection of ideas, when wise men challenge one another. Such is not the case with a solitary individual, who cannot do this on his own.

28

Many friends engaged in the pursuit of wisdom are compared to a roaring bonfire consisting of many branches.

The explanation is that a bonfire consisting of many branches will easily kindle and produce a great fire and heat, because each branch kindles the other branches. Friends that are jointly engaged in pursuit of wisdom are the same, in that one will question his fellow, another will respond and yet a third will challenge and take apart the solution. Another will delve deeply into the subject and yet another will construct an intricate explanation. We thus find that many friends engaged together in the pursuit of wisdom are like a roaring bonfire, in which all the branches kindle each other, so that together they grasp abundant wisdom.

29

A judge is compared to a partner. If he is honest, then he is honest, but if he is a liar, then he is a liar.

The explanation is as follows: There may be two partners, one in France and the other in Spain. One purchases merchandise in his location and sends them to be sold by his partner in the other location. In the same manner, the Holy One,

blessed is He, is the Creator who bestows sustenance upon all His creatures and arranges that all their needs are met from Above. It is the judge, however, who judges man below, bringing peace between two parties, so that they do not end up murdering or stealing from each other. We therefore find that the Holy One, blessed is He, Creates, and the judge sustains. They thus are compared to two partners. Now, if the judge is truthful and honest in his judgments, then he is like a faithful partner. However, if he is a liar, then he is a liar.

30

A judge sitting in judgment is compared to the fulcrum of a scale.

The explanation is as follows: If a judge is truthful and honest, then his position must be completely objective and balanced between the two parties of the case, not leaning to one side or the other. This is like the fulcrum of a scale, which is positioned exactly in the middle between the two sides of the scale, not leaning to either side. However, if the judge has received some form of bribery, he is compared to the fulcrum of a scale that leans to one side, even when the scales are empty. It is impossible to obtain a true measurement from such a scale, since it always leans to one side. It is impossible to ever obtain a true measure on any scale that is not equally balanced when empty.

31

Jealousy amongst the righteous is compared to vinegar that is placed in a silver vessel.

The explanation is that the Holy One, blessed is He, created jealousy in the world so that man should be jealous of the good deeds and positive qualities of his fellow. Through such jealousy he will endeavor to better himself, so that he may grow in his good deeds and fear of *HaShem*, perhaps achieving even more than his fellow. This is as stated in Scriptures,²⁹ “Let your heart not envy sinners, rather those who revere *HaShem* all day long.” Similarly, our sages of blessed memory stated,³⁰ “Jealousy amongst teachers increases wisdom.”

There is an additional type of jealousy amongst the righteous, which rouses them to take vengeance upon the wicked for their evil deeds. This is like the jealousy of Pinchas, who rendered vengeance upon Zimri ben Salu. Thus, we find that jealousy amongst the righteous polishes them and corrects their behaviors and deeds. It is thus compared to vinegar that when placed within a silver vessel, causes it to become clean and polished.

²⁹ Proverbs 23:17

³⁰ Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 21a

32

Jealousy amongst the wicked is compared to vinegar that is placed in a copper vessel.

The explanation is that vinegar and copper are two enemies. If vinegar is put into a copper vessel and left there for some time, the vinegar will corrode and destroy it and the vessel will be ruined. Thus, vinegar is like poison that eats away at the copper. In the same manner, jealousy amongst the wicked consumes and destroys them. This is because their jealousy is not roused against the wickedness of their fellow in order to stop them from their own wickedness. Rather, they are jealous of the wealth, honor and glory of others. This kind of jealousy rots them from the inside out, from their very bones, as King Solomon said in his great wisdom,³¹ “Envy is the rottenness of the bones.”

33

Jealousy of man to his wife is compared to a fly in a glass of wine.

The explanation is as follows: One kind of person who finds a fly in his glass of wine, will remove it and drink the

³¹ Proverbs 14:30

wine. This is analogous to someone who sees his wife talking with other men in a respectful manner and has no reason to suspect or become jealous of her. This is the intermediate quality. There is another kind of person who finds a fly in his glass of wine, but does not remove it or throw it out. This is analogous to a person who sees his wife behaving immodestly with other men, but is not jealous of her. This is the behavior of the licentious. There is another who finds a fly in his glass of wine and pours out the whole glass. This is analogous to person who sees his wife speaking with other men in a respectful manner but is nevertheless jealous of her. This is the behavior of a person who overreacts beyond the appropriate measure.

34

Good deeds in the face of challenges and suffering are compared to a shield against an arrow.

The explanation is as follows: If a person does a good deed in a limp and weak way without much effort, then it will protect him from weak challenges and small sufferings. This is like a flimsy shield that only guards against arrows shot without much force, but not against arrows shot with force. If a person does an act of goodness with greater effort, it will protect him from greater sufferings. Thus, if a person performs acts of goodness with great effort, fully and completely investing

himself in them, then his good act is like a powerful shield that cannot be penetrated by any weapons, even weapons of iron. That is, his good deed will protect him from even the greatest of challenges and difficulties. It is in regard to this that it states,³² “From six travails He will save you, and in the seventh no harm will reach you; in famine He will deliver you from death, and in war, from the power of the sword. You will be concealed from the prowling tongue, and you will have no need to be frightened by destruction when it comes etc.” Similarly, our sages, of blessed memory, stated,³³ “Repentance and good deeds are a shield against punishment.”

35

Wicked deeds in the face of challenges and suffering are compared to straw that has caught on fire adjacent to a storehouse.

The explanation is that the evil deeds perpetrated by the wicked are compared to straw. The body and property of the wicked are compared to the storehouse. Sufferings and challenges are compared to fire. When the fires of challenges and suffering come, they take hold and ignite the straw, which are the evil deeds of the wicked sinner. Once the fire has taken hold of the straw, it spreads to the storehouses, which are the

³² Job 5:19-21

³³ Mishnah Avot 4:11

body and property of the wicked. We thus find that the fire burns and consumes the storehouse because it is adjacent to the straw.

36

The righteous *Tzaddik* in relation to challenges and difficulties, is compared to a wide river that separates and stops the spread of a great wildfire.

The explanation is that when suffering and calamity comes to the world, the righteous stand in good stead, protecting the people of their generation, like a wide river that stops a wildfire, stopping calamity from coming about. This is as stated regarding Sodom,³⁴ “And *HaShem* said, ‘If I find in Sodom fifty righteous men within the city, I will forgive the entire place for their sake.’” Similarly, regarding Aharon it states,³⁵ “And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed.” It likewise states regarding Pinchas,³⁶ “Then Pinchas stood up and executed judgment, and the plague was stayed.”

³⁴ Genesis 18:26

³⁵ Numbers 17:13

³⁶ Psalms 106:30

37

The wicked *Rasha* in relation to challenges and suffering is compared to dry thorn bushes and brush before a great wildfire.

The explanation is that when suffering and calamity come to the world, they immediately inflict the wicked and take hold of them like fire takes hold of brush and dry thorn bushes. Moreover, because of the wicked, even *Tzaddikim* who are not perfectly righteous will also be inflicted. This is like dry thorn bushes and brush that easily catch fire and are carried off by the wind until they reach and burn the stacks of grains and crops in the field. This is as stated,³⁷ “If a fire shall go forth and find thorns and a stack of grain or a standing crop or field is consumed.”

38

The good inclination and the evil inclination are compared to two jealous wives.

The explanation of this is that if the husband desires one of them, the other becomes angered. In the same manner, if a person fulfills the desires of the good inclination, this will be

³⁷ Exodus 22:5

undesirable to the evil inclination and the same is true of the opposite. Thus, until one of the two inclinations overpowers its fellow, they fight with each other and are compared to two jealous wives, neither of which has yet given birth to any offspring.

However, if one of them overpowers its fellow and gives birth to offspring according to its kind, then it is compared to one of the jealous wives giving birth to a child, wherein the inheritance and properties of the husband are appropriated to that child. In the same manner, when the good inclination is strengthened in man, giving birth to good deeds and rectifying society and the like, then he is compared to person who has given birth to good offspring.

Such a person is thus a righteous individual, a *Tzaddik*, whose properties are all appropriated to the good inclination and the progeny of his deeds. If, however, the evil inclination gives birth, then the progeny of his deeds is in the domain of the evil inclination. Each is governed by the majority of deeds.

39

In its initial state, the good inclination in relation to the evil inclination is compared to a wise man who is a pauper and lives under the rule of a wealthy man who is wicked.

The explanation is as follows: From the moment that the fetus is formed, the evil inclination has dominance over its formation and as the fetus grows, the evil inclination grows with it. During this phase, the good inclination is not yet recognizable and makes no impression. When the infant is born, the evil inclination and its forces are born with it. This refers to the physical needs of the body, such as suckling, excreting, sleeping, crying, and all other physical needs such as these. The characteristics of the good inclination, which are wisdom, understanding, knowledge and good deeds, are not yet apparent, nor are they even considered in the heart of the child, as of yet.

Thus, the evil inclination is compared to a ruler who has dominion over the body of the infant. This continues until the child reaches the age of thirteen and develops the recognizable signs of the beginning of maturation, which is the sprouting of two hairs in the lower parts. At this point, the good inclination is compared to a small sprout that has begun to grow, prior to which it was buried beneath the earth.

Once the signs of the good inclination have become apparent in his lower parts, he is liable to punishment by the earthly court. Likewise, once the signs of the good inclination have become apparent in his upper parts, that is, his beard, he is liable to punishment by the heavenly court. This occurs when he reaches twenty years of age. The sign for this is that when he develops the lower signs, he is liable in the lower court, and when he develops the upper signs, he is liable in the upper court.

Now, at the point that the signs of the good inclination have begun to sprout and develop, the evil inclination is already compared to a large and mighty tree, with many roots and branches. Thus, at this point the good inclination compared to the evil inclination is like a small child standing before an old, wild and cruel king, who begins to implement wily and devious schemes to prevent anyone from saving the youth from the tyranny of the evil inclination. It is in this regard that King Solomon, peace be upon him, stated,³⁸ “Better is a poor wise youth than an old and foolish king who no longer knows how to guard himself.”

³⁸ Ecclesiastes 4:13

40

The purpose of the evil inclination in man is compared to the chaff in relation to the grain that is within it.

The explanation of this is as follows: Just as grain only grows by means of the stalk that it grows on and the chaff that it grows in, so likewise, the limbs of the body that carry and contain the soul cannot grow except by means of the evil inclination. For it is the evil inclination that rouses the body to eat, drink, excrete, sleep and do all its other bodily functions. We thus find that it is the evil inclination that grows the limbs of the body that are designed to be the home and sanctuary of the soul. This is similar to how the stalk and chaff grow and house the grain.

Once the grain has grown and ripened, the stalk is reaped and threshed and the grain is separated from the stalk and chaff. In the same manner, once a person has grown and his limbs have reached the age of strength and power, it is fitting and appropriate for a person to thresh his evil inclination and separate, lower, and humble it before the good inclination, for he then is able to distinguish between good and evil, just like a person who discards the chaff and retains the grain.

Now, the grain is not separated from the stalk and chaff except through great effort and labor. That is, it must be threshed with a threshing sledge and strong iron rods that break

up the straw and chaff, turning it to dust. In the same manner, the evil inclination cannot be separated from a person except through great effort and labor, after having threshed it with great strength and with the power of good thoughts and deeds. This is compared to the threshing of the grain with threshing flails and rods. It is through this that the evil inclination is lowered, humbled, and separated from him.

After having threshed the stalks and breaking off the grain from the chaff, they still are not fully separated until they are sifted and winnowed, by pouring them into the wind so that the chaff is blown away. In the same manner, the evil inclination cannot be fully separated from man except through thought and desire. Thought is compared to the winnowing basket that pours the grains and chaff on the threshing floor, while desire is compared to the gusts of wind that blow away and separate the chaff from the grain. Thus, even if thought pours out the mixture, if a person does not desire to separate himself from the evil inclination, it is compared to a person who pours the grain and chaff when the wind is not blowing. In this case, it does not help him whatsoever that he has poured the grain, for if the wind is not blowing, the chaff will remain intermingled with the grain.

Now, after having separated the grain, the stalks and chaff are taken to the outer storehouses and are kept as fodder for the animals, whereas the grain is taken to the inner storehouses, storing it in a protected location. In the same manner, after the evil inclination is separated from a person, he must set aside a place for it in the outer limbs of the body, so

that the bodily powers will be sustained by it. The soul and its powers, however, must be brought into the inner chambers of the limbs, so that through them he is able to serve *HaShem*, blessed is He, in a complete and perfect manner, without any admixture of anything else.

41

The evil inclination of an infant is compared to a nursemaid.

The explanation is that were it not for the evil inclination, the nature of the infant would not be roused. Thus, it is the evil inclination who carries the infant “as a nursemaid carries a suckling infant.”³⁹ This is so until the infant has developed and grown. Thus, the evil inclination causes the nature of the infant to “boil,” and it “turns over” the vitality of the body, similar to how the ploughman tills the earth. It is through this that the infant derives vitality and strength from the food and that his body is caused to grow and develop according to the proper order of things. This matter is known to those who are versed in the natural sciences.

³⁹ Numbers 11:12

42

The intention of the evil inclination in the development and growth of a person is compared to the intention of a clever thief who works for a merchant.

The explanation is as follows: When one is still a child, the evil inclination endeavors to grow and develop his limbs, fattening him and making him healthy. However, this is only so that he may cast his net upon him later, ensnaring him when he becomes a strong and powerful adolescent, for then he will be a greater catch.

This is analogous to a thief who comes to work for a merchant. He sees that the merchant is just starting out in his business ventures and only beginning to succeed. However, the merchant is still not wealthy. What does the clever thief do? He serves the merchant, working for him with all his strength and with great alacrity. If the merchant sends him somewhere to deliver his merchandise, he guards it carefully and brings back the profits untouched. He does this until he sees that the merchant has become quite wealthy. However, once the merchant is wealthy, the thief comes up with a wily scheme. He tells the merchant that when he traveled to a distant land on his behalf, he saw that the price of a certain commodity had skyrocketed greatly in that land.

He thus advises the merchant to sell off all his merchandise and belongings and to borrow additional funds to

buy up as much of this commodity as possible, to be sold in that distant land at great profit. He further advises him to keep the secret about this commodity, so that he will reap the greatest profit from it. The merchant rejoices in the opportunity and buys as much of the commodity as possible and accompanies the thief on the journey. However, while they are alone on the road, the thief murders the merchant, takes all the merchandise and money and disappears.

This is analogous to the evil inclination when he is engaged in the growth and development of a person, working toward the success of his body, property, and business, but all with evil intent. What then is the solution? One must accept his servitude, but must be wary of him, just as one is wary of a thief. Moreover, as soon as he has acquired adequate property that rouses the thief to thievery and murder, he must rise up and kill him first, before the thief kills him. It is regarding this that the sages stated,⁴⁰ “If someone comes to kill you, rise up and kill him first.”

43

During adolescence, the evil inclination is compared to a wandering wayfarer.

The explanation is that when a child has not yet reached the age of thirteen, the evil inclination has dominion over his

⁴⁰ Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 72a

body, for the purpose of its growth and development. A child therefore does not yet have the knowledge to enact either good or evil with wisdom, because he has not at all beheld the wonders of wisdom.

As of yet, the good inclination has no value to him. This is because the strength and guile of the good inclination is only perfected through wisdom, and the child has not yet beheld the wonders of wisdom. It is only when he reaches the age of thirteen and develops the signs of maturity, which are the two hairs in the lower parts, that he begins to show signs of wisdom and knowledge and the wonders of the good inclination begin to become apparent to him.

Now, in truth, the evil inclination does not have any weapons of its own through which to enact its schemes. It only possesses the weapons that it stole from the good inclination, which are the faculties of wisdom and knowledge. It is for this reason that a child is not punished by the court when he is younger than the age of thirteen, for he has not yet developed the faculties of the good inclination, which are wisdom and knowledge. However, once the signs of maturity of the good inclination become apparent, the evil inclination is also roused and attempts to steal the weapons and faculties of the good inclination.

Thus, the evil inclination is compared to a wayfaring bandit who positions himself for ambush outside the house, in order to steal the weapons of the good inclination, which are wisdom and knowledge. For he knows that if he were to possess them, he would be assured of success in carrying out

his wicked schemes and evil machinations and all his lusts would be fulfilled. During this period, the good inclination must be alert to guard the weapons. If the good inclination prevails, then he repels the evil inclination, causing him to flee. If, however, the good inclination is weakened, then the evil inclination enters into the house and takes control of all the weapons.

44

In a person who has begun to sin, the evil inclination is compared to a wandering wayfarer who has become a comfortable guest.

The explanation is as follows: During the period that a person was just a lad, the evil inclination was lying in wait, like a wayfaring bandit waiting in ambush. He waits for him to reach the age of thirteen, hoping that he might steal the weapons of the good inclination, which are wisdom and knowledge, so that he might then fulfill his evil lusts and wicked desires. During that period, he is only like a wayfaring bandit lying in wait at the entrance of the heart, hoping for the moment that he might enter and steal the weapons.

If, however, the youth begins to sin and transgress, even a single sin, then it is clear that the evil inclination has already found a weak point of entry. Although previously he was lying in wait on the outside, like a wayfarer, now he has already

entered the house. Thus, he is now compared to a guest, who although is not the master of the house, has nevertheless found a place of peace and quiet, where he can make himself at home.

45

In one who sins repeatedly, the evil inclination is compared to the master of the house.

The explanation is that when the evil inclination enters into the chambers of the heart and moves a person to transgress even a single sin, he has given him the taste of sin. He thus repeats his attempts, moving him to transgress the sin yet again, for a second time. Once the person has sinned a second time, the evil inclination has already become the master of the house, for it is by his word that all come and go. The evil inclination thus strengthens itself even further in his heart, ruling over it like the master of the house, with no one to protest. It is in regard to this that our sages, of blessed memory, stated,⁴¹ “When a person commits a transgression and repeats it, it becomes permitted to him. Can it enter your mind that it is permitted to him? Rather, what is meant is that in his mind it becomes as if it were permitted.”

⁴¹ Talmud Bavli, Yoma 86b

46

In the wicked, the evil inclination is compared to a nut.

The explanation is as follows: Just as the shell of a nut surrounds the fruit that is within it, so likewise, the evil inclination surrounds the wicked, and they have no means by which to do any deed at all except through the medium of the evil inclination. For, after all, they are ruled by the evil inclination and he surrounds them on all sides. What is the solution for such a person? He must break the evil inclination and break free of servitude to him, just as one must break the shell of the nut to derive benefit from the fruit within.

47

In the righteous, the evil inclination is compared to a date.

The explanation is as follows: The edible part of a date is on its exterior, whereas the pit is in its interior. This is comparable to the righteous who surround their evil inclination from all sides, capturing him, ruling over him and imprisoning him. This is like the pit of the date, which is surrounded on all sides by its fruit. Likewise, the body of the righteous is

compared to the body of the date, in which the fruit is on the outside and there is no external shell or hard element that stands in his way.

Thus, when the righteous comes to fulfill the commandments and perform good deeds, there is nothing that acts as a buffer to stop him or restrain him from his virtuous deeds. This is because the evil inclination is conquered and imprisoned by the righteous, like the pit of the date which is surrounded on all sides in the center of the date.

Now, you might ask, did we not already say that at first the evil inclination is positioned on the outside and it is only when he is strengthened that he enters into the interior? How then do we now say that in the wicked he is compared to a nut, in that the evil inclination surrounds him from the outside, whereas in the righteous he is compared to a date, in that his evil inclination is on the interior? Know, then, that we are now discussing his dominion and it is to his dominion that our analogy now speaks. That is, when he rules over the whole house and the entire house is under his control, he is compared to the shell of a nut. However, when he is in a state of servitude and imprisonment, he is compared to a date. Thus, this is a true and correct analogy and because the righteous are compared to the date, the Psalmist stated,⁴² “The righteous shall flourish like the date palm.”

⁴² Psalms 92:13

48

In the intermediate – *Beinoni* – the evil inclination is compared to a pomegranate.

That is, just as an intermediate is not as severe in his wickedness as the completely wicked, so likewise, although the peel of the pomegranate surrounds the entire fruit, nevertheless, it is not hard or strong like the shell of the nut, which is likened to the wicked. Similarly, just as you find that the intermediate, *Beinoni*, is close to correcting his wicked deeds, so likewise, the peel of the pomegranate is broken with relative ease. Nevertheless, it restrains the intermediate and acts as a buffer, preventing him from good deeds. Thus, he cannot be compared to the righteous *Tzaddikim* who are like the date and have no barrier obstructing them.

49

In the righteous, as they come close to the time of death, the evil inclination is compared to an apple.

We have already explained that the evil inclination is conquered and imprisoned by the hand of the righteous. This was compared to the pit of the date, which is surrounded on all sides. Nevertheless, the inclination of the righteous is very hard

and formidable, like the hardness of the pit of the date, which is much harder than the peels or shells of other fruits. It is for this reason that the righteous are praised for their strength, and are called “mighty.” For, their evil inclination is very formidable and mighty, and yet, they have the power and strength to conquer him and place him under their control. It is in regard to this that our sages, of blessed memory, stated,⁴³ “Whoever is greater than another, his inclination is also greater.” They likewise stated,⁴⁴ “Who is mighty? He who conquers his inclination.” In other words, during their lifetime, the evil inclination of the righteous is very strong in them, but they nevertheless conquer it and exert dominion over it. This is analogous to the pit of the date, as we explained before.

Now, as the righteous come close to their passing, and the evil inclination beholds the many camps of angels of peace and mercy and the abundant rewards and pleasures that await the righteous *Tzaddik*, the evil inclination stands up and makes peace with him before his passing. Thus, at such a time, the righteous is compared to an apple whose fruit is on the outside and whose seeds are on the inside, but are edible, soft, delightful and delicious, for there is nothing hard about them.

This is analogous to a person who is at war with his enemy and sees many regiments coming to his aid from outside the kingdom. When the enemy realizes that he will be completely outnumbered by the many troops and will be unable to withstand them, he surrenders, makes peace and becomes

⁴³ Talmud Bavli, Sukkah 52a

⁴⁴ Mishnah Avot 4:1

completely subservient to him. It is in this respect that the righteous are guaranteed to make peace with their inclination before their passing. This is as stated,⁴⁵ “But you shall go to your fathers in peace,” and similarly,⁴⁶ “In peace I will lay down and sleep,” and,⁴⁷ “You shall die in peace.” It is in regard to this that our sages, of blessed memory, stated,⁴⁸ “Do not trust in yourself until the day of your death.”

50

In the wicked, as they are close to the time of their death, the evil inclination is compared to a nut that has rotted and crumbled.

As we said before, during their lifetimes, the evil inclination of the wicked is compared to the shell of a nut that surrounds it from all sides. Their evil inclination is compared to a wealthy master of the house, who rules over the entire body. When the day of death of the wicked arrives, the evil inclination beholds many angels of destruction and suffering who come to uproot the soul of that wicked man. They come with fire, brimstone and howling winds, consuming the soul of that wicked man, until it is as if he has become completely rotted. Thus, when the time of his death arrives, his evil inclination has

⁴⁵ Genesis 15:15

⁴⁶ Psalms 4:9

⁴⁷ Jeremiah 34:5

⁴⁸ Mishnah Avot 2:4

completely crumbled and the soul and body of the wicked are rotted, so that the wicked man and his evil inclination are both destroyed and decomposed, one crumbled and the other rotted. It is regarding this that it states,⁴⁹ “The name of the wicked shall rot.”

51

A sin in the soul is compared to a stain on a garment.

The explanation is that sins are not equal to each other, just as stains on garments are not equal to each other. Moreover, a specific sin of one person is not equal to the same sin in another person, just as a stain on one garment is not equal to the same stain on a different garment.

We see that sins are not equal to each other, for one who lusts is not the same as one who steals, one who steals is not the same as one who commits adultery and one who commits adultery is not the same as one who commits murder. Each kind of sin comes with a distinct punishment and cleansing process that is unique to it, different from other sins, for sins are not equal to each other. This is similar to how a white stain is different from a red or black stain on a garment.

Moreover, the same sin is not equal in different people. For example, if ten people transgress the same sin, the punishment is not necessarily equal for them all. For example,

⁴⁹ Proverbs 10:7

if a perfectly righteous person commits a single non-severe sin, it is comparable to a small stain on a white garment. Now, although it is a small stain, everyone notices it and it therefore is more disgraceful than the same stain on a colored garment.

This is analogous to a righteous Tzaddik who has transgressed a single non-severe sin. His judgment is more exacting from Above, in that his sin is like a stain on a white garment. In contrast, if other people, who are not as wise or righteous as him, transgress the same sin, it is like a stain on a red or black garment. That is, the stain is not as noticeable, except through much scrutiny.

Furthermore, some stains are embedded more deeply in a garment and cannot be removed except through much scrubbing with abrasive chemicals, such as niter, borax and the like. In the same way, some sins are so grave that they are not forgiven except through great suffering and anguish, that is, through tears of repentance, fasting and charity, as stated,⁵⁰ “Suffering cleanses a person of his sins.”

Now, just as some stains can never be fully removed from a garment, in the same manner, some transgressions are not forgiven during one’s lifetime, until he passes away and suffers the taste purgatory. In contrast, there are other stains that are very light and easily removed, even if laundered in water. Similarly, some sins are forgiven immediately upon repentance, through prayer and supplication for mercy, forgiveness and atonement.

⁵⁰ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 5a

52

A non-severe sin that has become habitual is compared to a silk string.

The explanation is as follows: When a person first transgresses a non-severe sin, it is compared to the discharge of the silkworm which is very weak and flimsy. However, as the sin becomes settled in him, it dries and turns into a thread. If he continues to transgress a second and third time, it becomes as strong as a silk string. If he transgresses ten or twenty times, it becomes consecutively stronger and stronger, until it is like a heavy rope. That is, although it originally was as weak as a thread, because he repeated it again and again, it became as strong as the heavy ropes on a ship's mast. It is regarding this that it states,⁵¹ "Woe to those who pull iniquity upon themselves with cords of falsehood and sin like the ropes of a wagon." Likewise, our sages of blessed memory stated,⁵² "When a person commits a transgression and repeats it, it becomes permitted to him. Can it enter your mind that it becomes permitted to him? Rather, the meaning is that, in his mind, it becomes as if it is permitted."

⁵¹ Isaiah 5:18

⁵² Talmud Bavli, Yoma 86b

53

Repentance for a severe sin is compared to the rope of a bucket.

The explanation is as follows: If a person transgresses a very grave and severe sin, but has repented for it; regretting it, distancing himself from it and always begging *HaShem* for forgiveness, then because of his constant supplication for forgiveness, he is compared to the rope of a bucket that is used for drawing water from a well. Although the rope is very thick and strong, nonetheless, because of constant use it becomes weak and frayed until it breaks. So likewise, if a person repents and constantly begs *HaShem* for forgiveness, it is as if he is constantly handling and weakening his sin little by little. Thus, in time, its effect becomes weakened until it is finally wiped away, nullified and forgotten.

Regarding this scripture states,⁵³ “I have wiped away your transgressions like a fog and your sins like a cloud.” Our sages, of blessed memory, taught that there is no sin so great that it cannot be forgiven through repentance and supplication for atonement.

⁵³ Isaiah 44:22

54

The punishment of the wicked for his sin is compared to a person who digs holes, pits and ditches in a place where he is surely destined to walk in the darkness of night.

The explanation of is that when the wicked commits a transgression, it is like digging a pit that he will surely fall into when his soul departs in darkness from this world. Regarding this King Solomon cried and said,⁵⁴ “The path of the wicked is like darkness, they know not on what they stumble.” He also stated,⁵⁵ “He who digs a pit shall fall into it.”

Besides being compared to pits and ditches, sins are also compared to snakes and scorpions. When the soul of the sinner leaves his body at death, he stumbles in darkness into those pits and finds them filled with snakes and scorpions. This one bites him and that one stings him; this one breaks him and that one eats him. The soul of the wicked descends into every hole he dug during his lifetime and receives retribution for all the sins he transgressed. Regarding this it states,⁵⁶ “Woe to the wicked evildoer, for what is done with him is the reward for the deeds of his hands.” Similarly, it states,⁵⁷ “They will eat the fruit of their way and will be fed their own schemes.” Likewise, our

⁵⁴ Proverbs 4:19

⁵⁵ Proverbs 26:27

⁵⁶ Isaiah 3:11

⁵⁷ Proverbs 1:31

sages, of blessed memory, stated,⁵⁸ “According to how a man measures others, so will he be measured.”

55

Afflictions in this world are compared to a person who is guilty of death by burning and is given a taste of the heat.

The explanation is as follows: In His abundant compassion and kindness upon mankind, the Holy One, blessed is He, prepared remedies for all their illnesses and afflictions. That is, when person transgresses grave sins, it is appropriate that he be punished in the fires of purgatory that scorch his soul. However, the Holy One, blessed is He, arranged that he be afflicted in this world, because the suffering of this world is miniscule in comparison to the agony of purgatory. The suffering of this world is like hot water compared to the suffering of purgatory, which is like the intense heat of the fire itself. The Holy One, blessed is He, does this so that man should get a small taste of the great pain and suffering that awaits him in purgatory if he does not mend his ways. If he is wise, he will be roused to repent in this world and not have to suffer the punishments of purgatory. That is, because of the little pain he suffers here, in this world, he will take care to avoid the greater suffering of purgatory.

⁵⁸ Talmud Bavli, Sotah 8b

56

One who was healthy and became sick with a serious illness is compared to a person whose accounts are being audited by the king.

The explanation is as follows: Man was created to serve the Holy One, blessed is He, to fulfill His commandments and to desist from transgressing His will. When it comes time for him to pass from this world, he is compared to a person who must give an accounting before the king. Now, illness that infects the body of man, is like an emissary sent by the king to demand an audit of all his accounts. This is because illness is the emissary of the angel of death. Thus, when a person becomes seriously ill, he must examine himself and repent and confess all his misdeeds before the king.

Now, sometimes a person becomes sick and then regains his health. This is analogous to a person whose accounts were audited by the king and came out clean. However, other times a person dies of his illness. This is analogous to a person whose accounts were audited by the king and was found to be guilty.

57

The day of the death of the righteous is compared to a person who is owed money and the day of payment has arrived.

The explanation is that even in this world, the righteous Tzaddikim are entirely involved in the service of the Holy One, blessed is He. As a result of their war against the evil inclination and various other trials and tribulations, their lives are filled with many difficulties. They are compared to a person who has loaned out his belongings, but who is destined to get them back. Thus, the day of their death is compared to a person who is owed money and the time to collect the loan arrives. Therefore, they are joyous and rejoice with great gladness.

58

The day of the death of the wicked is compared to a person who owes a great deal of money to others and because the time has come for his debt to be repaid, he is saddened and moans in distress.

The explanation is that when the wicked are in this world, they have no good deeds to sustain them. Instead, they pursue their lusts and desires and do not restrain themselves

from all transgressions. Thus, every day they get deeper and deeper into debt before the Holy One, blessed is He. They are compared to a person who constantly borrows money from others and uses it for food, drink and every kind of debauchery, without ever paying it back until the day of death. About such a person, the Psalmist said,⁵⁹ “The wicked borrows and does not repay.” However, when the payment of his debt comes due, he sighs and moan in distress.

The same is true of the wicked. Every day of his life he gets deeper and deeper into debt to his Creator, and when the day of his death arrives, he sighs and moans in distress, for he knows that his debt is due and that everything he borrowed will now be extracted from him by force. About this Rabbi Akiva, of blessed memory, stated,⁶⁰ “Everything is foreseen, yet freedom of choice is granted; the world is judged according to goodness and it all is according to the preponderance of one’s deeds.” He further said, “Everything is given against collateral and a net is spread over all the living; the shop is open, the Shopkeeper extends credit, the ledger is open; the hand writes and whoever wishes to borrow can come and borrow; the collectors make their rounds regularly, each day, and exact payment from a person, with or without his consent and they have on what to rely, for the judgment is a true judgment and everything is prepared for the feast.”

⁵⁹ Psalms 37:21

⁶⁰ Mishnah Avot 3:15-16

59

When the wicked are punished in purgatory they are compared to a metal vessel that is melted in fire. (That is, he is judged numerous times, but is given the strength to withstand the punishment.)

The explanation is as follows: When a wicked person transgresses a specific sin many times, he could think to himself that since he already transgressed this sin once and will be punished for it, he may as well transgress it many more times. He thinks that he will receive one form of punishment for that sin and will thus receive only one punishment for the many times he transgressed it. However, such is not the case.

Rather, it is analogous to a metal vessel that became ruined and broken. It then is placed into the fire of the crucible and made into a new vessel, similar to the first vessel. However, it is not actually the first vessel, but is only called by the same name. For example, if it was a metal skewer, then it is melted and formed into a new skewer. In the same manner, a person who has transgressed the same sin many times is judged for each and every occasion that he transgressed it, just like a skewer that is melted and remade a second, third and fourth time.

This is also the case if a person transgressed many different sins. His punishment in purgatory is compared to an iron vessel that broke. If it is a skewer, it is placed into the fire

and turned into a shovel. If it breaks again, it is returned to the fire and turned into a grill, if it breaks again, it is turned into a knife and if it breaks yet again, it is turned back into a skewer.

The same applies to this sinner. He is punished in purgatory for each and every sin he transgressed. That is, he is melted in the fires of purgatory until he suffers the punishment for every particular transgression he has committed and is given the form of punishment corresponding to the form of every different sin he transgressed. This happens for all the different sins he has transgressed. He must stand in judgment and receive punishment for every form of sin individually, as explained.

60

Repentance is compared to a broken bone that has healed.

The explanation is as follows: As long as a person's soul is connected to the supernal world, it is like a branch that grows from the tree. However, if grave sins are transgressed and he becomes liable for the punishment of severance-*Kareth*, then his soul is cut off from its connection to the Tree of Life (*Etz HaChayim*) and is like a branch that has been severed from the tree. About this Torah states,⁶¹ "That soul shall be cut off from his people."

⁶¹ Genesis 17:14

This is analogous to a bone that broke and became severed from the body. If, however, the soul repents and mends her ways, she returns and reconnects to her original place before she was cut off. This is like a broken bone that is reconnected and healed through medical procedures and remedies. Likewise, repentance is compared to medicinal healing, as it states,⁶² “I will heal them from their backsliding,” and similarly,⁶³ “So that his heart will understand and repent and be healed.”

61

Repentance in youth is compared to a borrower who repays his debt of his own accord.

The explanation is as follows: During one’s youth, the evil inclination is extremely powerful and strong, causing him to commit all sorts of grave sins. However, if he repents and mends his wicked ways during his youth, though the evil inclination is very strong in him, there is no greater repentance than this, for it is complete repentance.

This is compared to a good borrower who comes to repay his debt of his own accord, without being forced by the lender. Because of the great difficulty he faces in his

⁶² Hosea 14:5

⁶³ Isaiah 6:10

repentance, in that the heat of his evil inclination is still very hot within him, this kind of repentance is very precious and desirable before the Holy One, blessed is He, more than any other form of repentance.

62

Repentance in old age is compared to a borrower whose collateral is collected and is forced to repay his debt.

The explanation is as follows: When a person sins in his youth, his evil inclination is at the prime of its strength and the thought of repentance never enters his mind. However, when he becomes old, his evil inclination wanes and weakens, for at this point, most of his legions and soldiers have already been destroyed. When the old man realizes his weakened state and that death is near, he thinks to himself, “Why should I continue to side with the evil inclination? My body is weary and its powers are diminished. How much longer can I continue to rebel and sin?” We therefore see that he repents because the evil inclination and its forces have already become weakened and the powers of his body have diminished. Therefore, he is compared to a borrower whose collateral is collected and is forced to repay his debt.

63

The pain of repentance in one's youth is compared to cutting flesh from a living body.

The explanation is as follows: Because the evil inclination is at the prime of its strength during one's youth, it bonds and cleaves to all of the limbs of the body with great strength and adhesion. Thus, when he comes to repent in his youth, separating the evil inclination from his body is compared to cutting out some of his own living flesh. This is because the evil inclination is so strongly bonded to him, as if it is part of him. Therefore, repentance in youth is an excellent and elevated form of repentance, because it comes through great pain and difficulty. About this our sages, of blessed memory, stated,⁶⁴ "According to the difficulty is the reward."

64

The pain of repentance in old age is compared to a person who cuts his nails or hair.

The explanation is as follows: When person becomes old, the strength of his evil inclination is weakened and its burning coals of desire have dimmed. Thus, the evil inclination

⁶⁴ Mishnah Avot 5:23

is not as bound to his body as in his youth. For the body has weakened and no longer has the strength to wield the weapons of the evil inclination. Thus, in old age, the connection of the evil inclination to his body is compared to the connection of his nails and hair to his body. Thus, if he wishes to return to *HaShem* and repent, it is easy and painless for him to humble himself and break away from the evil inclination, like cutting his nails or hair.

65

In the eyes of the Holy One, blessed is He, repentance in youth relative to repentance in old age, is like a person who brings a gift of ripe figs to the king. During youth it is compared to bringing a gift of ripe figs to the king in the month of *Teveth* and during old age it is compared to bringing a gift of ripe figs to the king in the month of *Tammuz*.

The explanation is as follows: If a person repents in youth, when his evil inclination is in the prime of its strength, it is a very wondrous thing. For to do so, he must humble and break his inclination, when all the while, he sees his peers running after the desires of their evil inclination, pursuing reckless thoughts of lust, sin and gaiety.

However, since he acknowledges that these are wrong behaviors and that if he were to continue treading on this path,

he would be judged unfavorably and punished for it, and he completely separates and desists from these behaviors in spite of the temptation to follow his peers, he will find great favor and be beloved before the Holy One, blessed is He. This is compared to a person who brings a gift of ripe figs to the king, in the winter, when they are not in season.

However, if a person repents in old age, once his strength has diminished and the flames of lust have died down, this is not at all uncommon. On the contrary, it is common that people repent in old age, when their strength has diminished and death is near. This is compared to a person who brings a gift of ripe figs to the king in the summer, when they are abundant and are sold in the market place by the bushel for a pittance.

66

This world is compared to the dry land.

The explanation is that as long as a person in this world, he is capable of fulfilling his will and desires. This is compared to a person who is traveling by foot on dry land and can go wherever he wants. In contrast, if he travels by sea, he cannot do this, but is confined to the area of the ship. Moreover, just as one ploughs and sows on dry land, and all kinds of sustenance will sprout, so likewise, when one does good deeds and fulfills *HaShem's* commandments in this world, it is as

though he is sowing seeds of success and reward for the future to come.

Now, just as when a person ploughs and sows his field he still requires assistance from above, through winds and rains of blessing, so likewise, even when he does good deeds in this world, he nevertheless needs assistance from Above, as our sages, of blessed memory, stated,⁶⁵ “One who comes to purify himself receives assistance from Above.” In the same way, although man is involved with matters of this world, ultimately its purpose is for the eternal life of the future to come.

67

The world to come is compared to the sea.

The explanation is that just as when one travels by sea, if he did not prepare provisions for the way, before setting sail, he will not have what to eat on his voyage, so is it regarding the world to come. If one does not prepare his soul in this world, by doing good deeds and performing *HaShem's* commandments, he will lack sustenance in the world to come.

Just as the sea is not a place for ploughing, sowing and reaping, so likewise, the world to come is not a place of deeds where one can labor, profit and find sustenance. For in the world to come there is no ploughing, sowing and reaping and

⁶⁵ Talmud Bavli, Yoma 38b

the only sustenance a person has is what he gathered through the labor of this world.

Now, the sea has many creatures, pearls and precious stones. However, they all are hidden from the eyes of man, for they are covered by deep waters. The reward and abundant goodness, wealth and delights of the world to come are hidden from our eyes and no creature can behold them. This is as stated,⁶⁶ “How abundant is Your goodness that You have hidden for those who fear You.” Similarly, it states,⁶⁷ “Except for You, O’ God, no eye has seen what You shall do for those who await You.”

Now, man is incapable of traveling in the sea except by ship and not everyone is skilled at sailing or knows its paths and byways. So likewise, a person does not travel in the world to come of his own accord, but is rather conducted there by Heaven.

Moreover, sometimes the sea is calm and the ship travels smoothly and calmly. However, sometimes the sea is stormy, sinks the ship and causes loss of life and wealth. In the same manner, for the righteous, the world to come is compared to calm seas, whereas for the wicked, it is compared to stormy seas, destroying the ships, the passengers and their evil belongings.

Furthermore, the souls of the wicked are judged for death, evicted from the world to come and sent to purgatory. This is like the sea that ejects the dead and casts them out. Other

⁶⁶ Psalms 31:20

⁶⁷ Isaiah 64:3

times, they are judged by flames of burning fire that burst forth from the world to come and consume them. This is comparable to the corpses of the dead that are eaten by sea creatures.

Now, a person who knows how to dive into the depths of the sea can discover and bring up many pearls and precious stones. This is analogous to the righteous who sail upon the waters of the world to come, each traveling to his reward. Those who are fitting, can dive into its waters and derive all kinds of pleasures and delights, which are analogous to precious pearls and stones. These are the rewards of the righteous on account of their merits in this world.

68

One who places his trust in *HaShem*, blessed is He, is compared to one who draws water from the ocean.

The explanation is that trust in *HaShem*, blessed is He, will never disappoint. For *HaShem*, blessed is He, created His world and He creates all kinds of sustenance and livelihood for its inhabitants every day. He renews the act of creation every day, providing all His creatures with sustenance and livelihood, as scripture states,⁶⁸ “He nourishes all flesh, for His kindness endures forever.”

Now, the abundance of the nourishment He creates every day to sustain His creatures is compared to the sea, for

⁶⁸ Psalms 136:25

every minute of every day countless springs and rivers flow into it, as stated,⁶⁹ “All the rivers flow into the sea.” Thus, whoever trusts in *HaShem* draws *HaShem*’s kindness, as stated,⁷⁰ “Whoever trusts in *HaShem* is surrounded by kindness.” He therefore never lacks *HaShem*’s kindness. This is like a person who draws water from the sea and does so with the certainty that its waters will never run out. For no matter how much water he draws out is like a drop of the ocean compared to the countless rivers that pour into it.

69

A person who places his trust in man is compared to a creek whose waters are fed by the rains.

The explanation is as follows: Putting one’s trust in man, even if he is very generous, is a trust that will eventually disappoint and deceive. For it is quite possible that the funds of even the most generous donor will run out, and though he may wish to fulfill his pledge, he may no longer be in the financial position to do so. For wealth is granted by *HaShem* rather than by the power of man. Thus, this is compared to a creek whose waters depend on the rain. As long as there are rains, the creek flows and its waters are beneficial to man and beast.

⁶⁹ Ecclesiastes 1:7

⁷⁰ Psalms 32:10

However, in a dry season its waters dry up and it ceases to flow. One who relies on drawing water from such a stream, will find that at such times, the source of his trust has dried up. This is analogous to the wealth of the generous. If *HaShem*, blessed is He, desires their ventures to succeed, it is like rain that feeds the creek. However, if *HaShem*'s blessings cease, the success of their ventures ceases as well, and they can no longer provide sustenance to those who depend on them. About this the Psalmist said,⁷¹ "It is better to trust in *HaShem* than to rely on generous benefactors."

70

The wealthy are compared to a person who sows and harvests.

The explanation is that when a person sees that his ventures are successful and that he is becoming wealthy, he should contemplate this, and mix a measure of sadness and worry into his joy. For, perhaps, he is receiving the reward for his good deeds in this world and nothing will remain for the world to come. He thus is compared to a person who sowed and reaped. If he does not continue sowing and reaping, his field will stop producing grain as it was accustomed to do. Thus, if he sees that he is successful in his ventures and that his wealth is increasing, he should regard it as if he has harvested

⁷¹ Psalms 118:9

his field and received his reward. What should he do? He should replant his field and tend to it as before. In other words, he should increase in charity and good deeds, so that he can reap again and increase his wealth. The wealthy person must always remember this, and should never remove this thought from his mind if he wishes to reap any reward in the world to come. About this, King Solomon, peace be upon him, stated in his great wisdom,⁷² “In the morning sow your seed and in the evening do not withhold your hand.”

Every intelligent person should contemplate this well and understand why *HaShem*, blessed is He, made the world with sowing and harvesting. This was done to rouse the hearts of His creatures, so that they should always sow and reap, by fulfilling His commandments and doing acts of kindness and goodness.

71

A righteous *Tzaddik* who is wealthy is compared to a person who has planted a tree and gathers its fruits.

The explanation is as follows: A righteous *Tzaddik*, who is wealthy, does many acts of kindness and constantly increases in fulfilling *HaShem*'s commandments, is compared to a person who plants many fruit trees. He gathers the abundant fruits of the trees, but the trees remain intact.

⁷² Ecclesiastes 11:6

In the same manner, the merits of the righteous remain intact and do not run out. Thus, although they experience success in their physical endeavors and derive pleasure from this world, they are compared to a person who planted an orchard and gathers its fruits. Though the fruits are picked and enjoyed, the trees remain intact. About this our sages, of blessed memory, stated,⁷³ “These are the things, the fruits of which, a person enjoys in this world, while the principle remains for him for the world to come.”

One who understands the two above analogies will understand the difference between strong and weak merits and the difference between sowing and reaping versus planting a tree and gathering its fruits.

72

A poor person is compared to a person who sows and hopes for the time of harvest.

The explanation is that there is no creature in the world whose sustenance is not provided by the Creator, blessed is He and blessed is His name. This is as stated,⁷⁴ “The eyes of all look to You with hope and You give them their food in its proper time. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of

⁷³ Mishnah Pe’ah 1:1

⁷⁴ Psalms 145:15-16

every living being.” It likewise states,⁷⁵ “He gives the animal its food, to the young ravens when they cry out.” Thus, even a pauper who has no merits to sustain him, is sustained by *HaShem*, blessed is He, no less than the animals.

Our sages, of blessed memory, taught this through the following story:⁷⁶ Once, during a year of drought, Rabbi Yehudah the Prince opened his storehouses to distribute food. He said, “Masters of Torah, Mishnah, Talmud, *Halachah* and *Aggadah* may enter and receive food, but the unlearned may not enter.” Rabbi Yonatan ben Amram (with whom Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi was unacquainted) pushed in and entered. He said, “Rabbi, sustain me.” Rabbi Yehudah responded, “My son, have you studied Torah?” to which he responded “No.” “Have you studied Mishnah?” to which he responded “No.” Rabbi Yehudah said, “If so, by what merit should I sustain you?” Rabbi Yonatan responded, “Sustain me like a dog or a raven.” Rabbi Yehudah accepted his words and fed him.

The same is true of every person who does not possess good deeds. The Holy One, blessed is He, sustains him no less than one of the animals. Thus, when a poor person sees that he has no sustenance to survive, but puts his trust in *HaShem*, blessed is He, the trust itself is his merit. He thus is compared to a person who has sown and hopes for the time of harvest. About this it states,⁷⁷ “Blessed is the man who places his trust in *HaShem*; *HaShem* will be his security.” We thus learn that

⁷⁵ Psalms 147:9

⁷⁶ Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 8a

⁷⁷ Jeremiah 17:7

there is no man in the world who does not have his time of sowing and reaping.

73

A righteous *Tzaddik* who is poor is compared to a wealthy man who is traveling, stops at an inn along the way, but is unable to procure any food or sustenance there.

The explanation is that there are righteous *Tzaddikim* who do not merit deriving pleasure from this world. Thus, all their merits and good deeds are saved up for the world to come. As long as they are in this world, they are compared to a wealthy man whose house is filled with every kind delight, but who is currently traveling far from home. In the course of his travels he comes upon an inn and spends the night there, but finds nothing to eat. In the morning, he wakes up and returns home. When he returns, he delights in the pleasures of home and recalls the suffering he endured at the inn, which he relates to his household. He tells them, “Were it not for all the pain and suffering I endured at the inn, I would not appreciate the pleasure and delight of being at home. Because of that suffering the pleasures of home are all the sweeter to me.”

The same is true of the righteous who suffer hardship and poverty in this world. When they arrive at the world to come, they find all manner of delight there. Their table is set and their bed is made. Thus, their joy is doubled and their

pleasure is greater than the righteous who derived pleasure from this world. For the pain and poverty they suffered in this world, is similar to someone who drank a concoction of bitter herbs and then drank a sweet nectar to wash the taste away. The sweetness of the nectar is appreciated all the more.

On the other hand, the righteous *Tzaddikim* who derive pleasure from this world are compared to a person who tasted sweetness all the days of his life and never knew the taste of bitterness. He cannot appreciate the pleasure of sweetness to the same extent. In contrast, the righteous *Tzaddikim* who drank from the cup of bitterness in this world, derive much greater pleasure and truly appreciate the sweetness of the world to come. Moreover, they derive even greater joy when they recall the suffering they endured in this world. About this it states,⁷⁸ “I will turn their mourning into joy and will comfort them and make them rejoice from their sorrow.” Thus, when they arrive at the world to come, all the suffering of this world will seem as if it was a single night.

74

Wicked speech – *Lashon Hara* – is compared to a snake.

The explanation is that just as a snake strikes and kills with its tongue, so likewise, a person who speaks wickedly

⁷⁸ Jeremiah 31:12

strikes and kills with his tongue. Just as a snake strikes and bites from its hiding place, so likewise, a person who speaks wickedly, hides and speaks evil against his fellow behind his back. Just as a snake crawls on his belly and bites, so likewise, a person who speaks evil lies in his place and speaks badly of others. Just as a snake can kill the living, so likewise, the evil tongue can kill the living.

75

Anger in relation to the intellect is compared to a cloud in relation to the sun.

The explanation is that just as a cloud blocks the light of the sun from shining upon the earth, so likewise, anger blocks the light of the intellect from illuminating the body. If a wise person is angry, the anger causes his wisdom to cease and puts him into the category of a fool who does foolish things. About this King Solomon stated in his wisdom,⁷⁹ “Do not become upset quickly, for anger lingers in the bosom of fools.” Our sages, of blessed memory, similarly stated,⁸⁰ “Any person who becomes angry, if he is a scholar, his wisdom will depart from him and if he is a prophet, his prophecy will depart from him.” Thus, anger is analogous to a thick cloud that blocks the light of the sun. Even our teacher Moshe, peace be upon him, did

⁷⁹ Ecclesiastes 7:9

⁸⁰ Talmud Bavli, Pesachim 66b

not escape this, as the sages stated⁸¹ regarding the incident of the “waters of strife,”⁸² that because he was brought to a state of anger, he was brought to err.⁸³

76

Anger in relation to the evil inclination is compared to a breach before a thief.

The explanation is as follows: As long as the light of wisdom illuminates the body, the body in relation to the evil inclination is compared to a house with sturdy walls and strong locks, that prevent a thief from entering. However, if even one wall is breached, he has easy access through which to enter into the house. Likewise, as long as one’s state of mind is settled and balanced and he does not allow himself to get angered by anything, the evil inclination has no avenue to enter and rule over him. If, however, he becomes angered, the evil inclination will find the breach through which to enter and dominate him, and will then lure him into transgression. For anger is the cause of all conflict, violence, and murder, completely removing a person from the true faith. About this, our sages, of blessed memory, stated,⁸⁴ “Whoever is angry, is as if he is worshipping false gods.”

⁸¹ Sifri Matot

⁸² Mei Merivah – Numbers 20:11-13

⁸³ He therefore hit the rock.

⁸⁴ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 105b.

Lewdness is compared to the digging of a pit.

The explanation is as follows: There are activities that are limited, such as building a house or weaving and sewing garments. The more a person is occupied in them, the more complete they become. Such is not the case with someone who digs a hole in the earth, for the more he digs, the greater the cavity. Lewdness is likened to this, because the more a person increases in lewdness, lust and licentiousness, the more he yearns and feels deprived of it. The more he increases in lewdness, the bigger the hole and his eye is never satisfied. What then is the solution for such a person? He must minimize lewdness and to the degree that he minimizes it, to that degree, his mind becomes settled and satisfied. About this our sages, of blessed memory, stated,⁸⁵ “There is a small organ in man; the more he feeds it, the hungrier it is, the more he starves it, the more satisfied it is.”

⁸⁵ Talmud Bavli, Sukkah 52b

78

Controversy amongst the masses is compared to a hole in a vessel.

The explanation is as follows: When *HaShem*, blessed is He, wishes to bestow goodness to His world and sends His blessings and goodness upon it, but there is controversy, competition and strife amongst His creatures, they are then compared to a vessel with a hole in it. Although liquid may be poured into it, it will all leak out through the hole. In the same manner, although the blessings of *HaShem* are bestowed upon His creatures, if there is contention and controversy between them, the blessings leak out and are lost. Controversy is therefore compared to a vessel with a hole in it. About this the prophet Hosea stated,⁸⁶ “Their hearts have become divided; now they will become desolate.” The same principle applies to a nation or a family that is divided and rife with controversy and divisiveness. In either case, blessings will not be found amongst them.

⁸⁶ Hosea 10:2

79

Peace is compared to a perfect vessel.

The explanation is as follows: A vessel that is complete and perfect contains and protects the liquids that are in it. In the same manner, a nation, family or household that has peace and tranquility between its members is a fitting receptacle for *HaShem's* blessings, which will be retained and sustained amongst them. About this, our sages, of blessed memory, stated,⁸⁷ “The Holy One, blessed is He, did not find a vessel that could contain blessings for Israel, except for peace, as it states,⁸⁸ ‘*HaShem* will bless His nation with peace.’”

The explanation is that when a nation is at peace, and their hearts are in agreement and of one mind, they unite in many ways and come up with much council for the success of their needs and endeavors. Moreover, the blessings of *HaShem* will be found amongst them. However, if there is no peace between them and each one harbors hatred for the other, not only will they not join in council to better the world and address the needs and endeavors of the nation, but on the contrary, they will contrive evil council against their fellow man, to lower and humble him, until each one destroys the other.

⁸⁷ Mishnah, Otkzin 3:12

⁸⁸ Psalms 29:11

80

Pleasuring of the body is compared to one who prepares food and sustenance for a thief.

The explanation is as follows: The desire and occupation of the evil inclination is the pursuit of food, drink, and every other kind of physical pleasure. When a person pursues pleasure, the evil inclination is delighted and becomes accustomed to consuming fats and oils, growing ever bigger and stronger. He is thus strengthened to do all manner of evil, sin and transgression, and is compared to an armed bandit who finds food and sustenance in a safe haven and establishes his home base there.

From there, he lays his ambushes, thieving others, by killing and pillaging. The same applies to the evil inclination. When he finds a comfortable safe haven in a person's body, he establishes his home there and lays his ambushes from there, engaging in dishonesty, theft, adultery, murder and every other kind of lust and transgression.

However, if a person abstains and limits the pleasures and delights of his body, and instead toils to do good deeds in this world, he is like a person who intercepted the delivery of food and sustenance to the lair of the armed bandit. Thus, the bandit cannot establish his base of operations there and departs, for he finds no food, sustenance or safe haven there.

81

A person who rushes his business dealings out of greed is compared to a cook who makes the fire too hot and ruins the food.

The explanation is as follows: A greedy person will often rush his business dealings and overstep his demands. This results in delays or the deal may fall through altogether. Thus, he finds failure instead of success. This is analogous to a chef cooking a stew, who in his rush, increases the fire beyond the proper measure. Because of this, the pot boils over and puts out the fire. About this our sages, of blessed memory, stated,⁸⁹ “There is a path that is short and long and there is a path that is long and short.”

82

A person who is patient in his business dealings is compared to a tree that blossoms in the summertime.

The explanation is as follows: Whoever conducts his business dealings with patience and tranquility, will find stability and success in his business enterprises and endeavors. This is compared to a tree that does not blossom in the winter,

⁸⁹ Talmud Bavli, Eruvin 53b

but only in the summer. Because it is patient, the ice and cold do not damage and obstruct the production of its fruit. Thus, such a tree will produce abundant and ripe fruit.

83

Food to the body is like oil to a lamp.

The explanation is as follows: When a person eats too much food, it is compared to putting too much oil into a lamp. This causes the flame of the wick to be drowned out. Conversely, a person who does not eat enough is like one who does not put enough oil into the lamp, in which case the flame of the wick does not properly illuminate. Furthermore, if a person eats foods that are gross and coarse, this causes his body to become gross and coarse and he will be subject to various kinds of ailments, weaknesses and an overall loss of strength. This is compared to a person who puts coarse, low quality oil into his lamp. Its output of light will be dim and uneven. In contrast, a person who consumes a proper measure of refined and healthy foods is compared to one who puts pure and refined oil into his lamp. His flame will burn evenly and brightly, and all his surroundings will benefit from the rays of his light.

84

A person who eats before emptying his bowels is compared to someone who bakes his bread in an oven before cleaning out the coals and ashes of the previous baking.

The explanation is as follows: The food that a person consumes divides into three parts. The first part turns into lifegiving blood and the like, and sustains the limbs and organs of the body. The second part is like the fluid of whey that separates from cheese, and comes out in the urine. The third part is compared to the sediment and dregs and of wine, and comes out as excrement.

Once the limbs and organs have received the portion that converts to blood, a person should check himself and excrete the waste that remains in his body before eating another meal. If he does not do so, and eats first, the new food he ingests becomes tainted by the fumes of the excrement that remains in his body. This causes many kinds of terrible illnesses. His meal is thus compared to baking bread in an oven that has not been cleared of the old coals and ashes, in which case, the bread does not properly bake and comes out tainted and ruined. In contrast, a person who checks himself and removes the waste before the next meal, is compared to one who bakes his bread in an oven that has been cleared of the old coals and ashes. His bread will bake properly, as is fitting.

85

The effect on the brain by the consumption of a little wine is compared to a spy who has come to the city, but the people of the city are alerted to him and are wary and cautious of him. The consumption much wine is compared to an enemy who has come into the city and has conquered it.

The explanation is as follows: Wine ascends to the brain, which is the seat of the soul. Thus, it is compared to one who comes to wage war upon the king himself. Now, if a person drinks a little wine, this is good for the body and even assists it. This is compared to a spy who comes to a city. The people of the city do not fear the spy himself. Rather, they fear that the spy will summon the enemy army to conquer the city. Thus, when they realize that a spy is in their midst, they rally to strengthen the walls and defenses of the city and to store arms and provisions in its storehouses and fortresses. In the same way, when person drinks a little wine, his soul senses that a spy is in its midst, and it rushes to protect the organs from any damage the wine may cause. The organs are thus properly guarded by the soul and derive their sustenance without damage.

However, if a person drinks too much and becomes drunk, the brain cannot come to the defense of the body, for the wine has already conquered the soul. Instead, the proper order

and functioning of the body has been overturned, and he becomes animalistic, until he descends to the level of a wild boar. This is analogous to a city whose citizens were cautious when the spy first appeared. However, though they rushed to secure the walls and defenses of the city and secured provisions in their fortresses and storehouses, it all was in vain since the enemy army already overran and conquered the city. This is the effect on the brain when a person becomes drunk with wine and hard liquor.

86

The consumption of wine on an empty stomach is compared to a city that was conquered by the enemy forces because they did not have enough food and provisions.

The explanation is as follows: Food and water sustain the body. Thus, if there are adequate stores of food and water, the people of the city can be saved from the enemy forces that besiege them. However, if they lack provisions, they have no choice but to surrender to the enemy. In the same manner, if a person drinks wine on an empty stomach, it will scramble his mind and confuse his thoughts. This is compared to an enemy that has conquered the city because the people did not have adequate supplies of food and drink and were too weak to resist the enemy onslaught. About this our sages, of blessed memory,

stated,⁹⁰ “Drinking wine at midday removes a person from the world.”

87

Sexual relations are compared to a person who carries garbage on his shoulders.

The explanation is as follows: Once Adam, the first man, ruined his original form by engaging in sexual relations out of lust, since then, whenever a person engages in sexual relations, it is compared to carrying the garbage out on his shoulders. This is analogous to a king who was angry with his servants and decreed that they must all take out their garbage over their shoulders.

What do wise people do? They take out their garbage under the cover of night. What do fools do? They take out their garbage in the light of day. What do vile people do? They declare, “How delightful this is. We will even pay for the privilege to do so.” In the same way, the wise engage in sexual relations under the cover of night, when there is complete privacy. Fools engage in sexual relations in the light of day, when they can be exposed. On the other hand, the vile seek out every opportunity to engage in sexual relations with lust and licentiousness, and if they cannot find a willing woman, they seek out prostitutes and pay them handsomely.

⁹⁰ Mishnah Avot 3:10

Engaging in sexual relations immediately after eating is compared to a person who kneads his dough with flour that has not been properly sifted, thus kneading the coarse grain and bran along with the fine flour.

The explanation is as follows: The seed of a person who engages in sexual relations before allowing his food to digest, will be extremely coarse. Thus, the child formed from such an issuance will be foolish and impulsive and will not have the presence of mind or understanding to distinguish between good and evil. He will be ill mannered, because good and bad conduct will be confused and indistinguishable from each other in his mind. This is because the seed he was born from arose while the food and dross were still intermingled. This is compared to bread that is baked from dough that was not properly prepared and contained a mixture of fine flour along with coarse grain and bran. Such bread will come out dark and unsightly and will not be well received. This is comparable to a child that is born of such relations.

89

Engaging in sexual relations after having properly digested one's food is compared to one who kneads his dough with fine flour that has been properly sifted, removing all the coarse grain and bran.

The explanation is as follows: When one allows his food to digest, the sustenance in the food separates from the dregs. Thus, the issuance of seed that follows proper digestion is compared to flour that has been properly sifted, removing all the coarse grain and bran from the fine flour. The bread baked with such flour will be delightful and well received by all who consume it.

In the same manner, the child born of such an issuance will be well-balanced and pleasing and will be well received by others. He will be wise, smart and able to distinguish between good and bad conduct. For he was formed from a clean and refined issuance that had no dross and coarse bran. He is thus compared to refined flour. Therefore, such a child will be pleasing and well received by others. Thus, the best time to engage in sexual relations is after having properly digested one's food and at midnight, as mentioned before.

90

For the body, sleep is compared to yeast fermenting in a dough, allowing it to rise.

The explanation is as follows: If the proper amount of yeast is mixed into dough to allow it to properly rise, the bread baked from this dough will be tasty, easy to digest and healthy for the body. However, if too much yeast is added, the dough ferments too much, and ruins the dough, making it as sour as vinegar and causing indigestion and illness to the body.

This is analogous to sleep. If a person sleeps for the appropriate period of time, it revitalizes the body and keeps it healthy. However, oversleeping affects the body negatively, because once the body processes and digests the food, it begins to consume the powers of the body itself, like processing wheat in a grindstone. Sleep is like a grindstone and as long as it has food to process, it does so. However, when there is no food left to process, it begins to process the fluids of the body itself that give it vitality and strength. Thus, the powers of the body begin to weaken and the organs become feeble. This is like dough that sours and deteriorates because of over-fermentation.

Thus, instead of revitalizing and refreshing the body, oversleeping causes the opposite. It makes a person feel tired and weak, which leads to slothfulness. About this, King Solomon, peace be upon him, cried out and said,⁹¹ “How long

⁹¹ Proverbs 6:9

will you slumber, O' sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?" He then advises,⁹² "A little sleep, a little slumber."

91

The faculty of speech in man is compared to a wine merchant who advertises his wine by giving out samples for people to taste.

The explanation is as follows: A person's wisdom and knowledge dwell in his brain, which is compared to a sealed wine barrel. As long as the barrel is sealed and the wine has not been tasted, it is unknown whether the wine is good or bad. In the same way, as long as a person has not spoken, it is not known whether he is wise or foolish. However, just as once wine is tasted it becomes known whether it is good or bad, so likewise, once a person has spoken, it becomes known whether he is wise or foolish.

Now, a person who speaks is compared to a merchant who advertises his wine by giving out tastings. If the wine is good and delightful, its good reputation will spread by word of mouth. Each person will tell his friends how tasty and delightful it is and many people will come to buy it. However, if the wine is spoiled, word of mouth will spread of that too. Each person will advise his friend not to buy it and people will avoid it. Know, then, that all things in the world require announcement

⁹² Proverbs 6:10

to be known, except for the wise man and the fool, because, in their case, they are known by their own words.

92

A person who speaks in the presence of those who are greater than him is compared to a wine merchant who advertises his mediocre wine in a place where fine wine is readily available.

The explanation is as follows: As long as a person is silent, he is compared to a wine merchant who has a sealed wine barrel and it is unknown whether it is good or bad. If a person speaks pearls of wisdom and understanding, it becomes known that his wine is delightful and sweet to the palate. However, if a fool speaks, it becomes apparent that his wine is spoiled.

Now, even if a person is wise, nonetheless, if he speaks in the presence of sages whose wisdom is far greater than his, his words will carry no weight. This is compared to a wine merchant who tries to sell his mediocre wine in a place where fine, quality wines are readily available. Even though his wine is not bad, nonetheless, since it is mediocre, he will find no buyers. About this, King Solomon, peace be upon him, stated,⁹³ “Do not stand in the place of great men.”

⁹³ Proverbs 25:6

93

The speech of a wise man is compared to a spring of living waters that satisfies the needs of an entire city.

The explanation is as follows: A spring of living waters can provide for the needs of an entire city, providing the people with waters to drink, cook, bathe, launder and other important needs. As long as the spring flows, the people of the city can dwell and be sustained there. However, if the spring dries up, the entire city will be destroyed and abandoned, because a source of water is what allows people to dwell there.

So also, as long as the wise man speaks to the people of his city, they derive wisdom, good council, fine traits and good deeds. If, however, the wise man ceases to provide wisdom and council to the people, it is as if he destroys them. This is comparable to a spring that has dried up, resulting in the destruction of an entire city. About this, King Solomon, peace be upon him, stated in his great wisdom,⁹⁴ “The source of wisdom is like a flowing stream.”

⁹⁴ Proverbs 18:4

94

Excessive speech is compared to a dream.

The explanation is as follows: Just as it is impossible to have a dream that does not also contain foolishness and empty chatter, so likewise, it is impossible to speak abundantly without stumbling into error. About this, King Solomon cried out and stated,⁹⁵ “Dreams come from much concern and foolish talk from many words.” Do not think that this verse is only speaking about fools, rather than the wise, for elsewhere he explained and stated,⁹⁶ “Excessive words will not lack intentional offense.” Similarly, our sages, of blessed memory, stated the following important principle that applies to all men,⁹⁷ “Whoever indulges in many words brings about sin.”

95

Silence for a fool is like a person who conceals his defect.

The explanation is that if a person is a fool, it is impossible that the words he speaks will be spoken properly, without error. Thus, when he speaks, he reveals his deficiency,

⁹⁵ Ecclesiastes 5:2

⁹⁶ Proverbs 10:19

⁹⁷ Mishnah Avot 1:17

that is, his lack of knowledge, which was previously concealed. On the other hand, if he is silent, his defect remains concealed and will not be publicized. About this King Solomon, peace be upon him, stated,⁹⁸ “A fool who is silent will also be thought of as wise.” Similarly, our sages, of blessed memory, stated,⁹⁹ “I have found nothing better for a person than silence.”

96

The silence of the wise is compared to a person who has a well of living waters but lets the people of his city die of thirst.

The explanation is as follows: The words of the wise give life, perfection and success to all those who listen to his words. They are compared to waters that are necessary for many needs, such as drinking, bathing, laundering and so on. Likewise, the words of the wise are lifegiving to mankind, rectifying both their bodily traits and providing their souls with nourishment of wisdom and success. However, if out of false humility, a wise man abstains from advising the people, and as a consequence they come to destruction and loss, the guilt is hung on his neck, and it is regarded as if he caused the loss and damage. It thus comparable to a person who has a spring of living waters on his property, but lets his neighbors die of thirst.

⁹⁸ Proverbs 17:28

⁹⁹ Mishnah Avot 1:17

It is as if he killed them with his own hands. About this, King Solomon, peace be upon him, stated,¹⁰⁰ “One who withholds produce will be cursed by the nation, but blessings will be upon the head of the provider.”

97

Joy and sadness are compared to day and night.

The explanation is as follows: Just as day illuminates the eyes, so likewise, joy illuminates the body. Just as night darkens the eyes, so likewise, sadness darkens the body. Now, just as it is impossible for there to be day without night, so likewise, it is impossible for there to be joy without sadness. Just as day follows night and night follows day, so likewise, sadness follows joy and joy follows sadness.

Thus, if a person receives a joyous tiding, he should know that sadness is close at hand. So likewise, if a person is sad, he should know that joy is close at hand. About this King Solomon, peace be upon him, stated in his great wisdom,¹⁰¹ “Even in laughter the heart aches, and the end of gladness is sorrow.” He similarly stated,¹⁰² “In all sadness there will be gain.”

¹⁰⁰ Proverbs 11:26

¹⁰¹ Proverbs 14:13

¹⁰² Proverbs 14:23

Charity is compared to the suckling of milk.

The explanation is that when an infant suckles, he draws milk to the breasts and increases the production of milk. However, when the child is weaned and no longer suckles, the milk ceases flowing from the breasts. In the same manner, when a person gives charity to the poor, he causes more blessings to flow upon him from Above. About this, King Solomon, peace be upon him, stated,¹⁰³ “There is such a one who scatters but gathers more.” Similarly, the Torah states,¹⁰⁴ “You shall surely give to him, and let not your heart be troubled when you give him, for in return for this matter, *HaShem*, your God, will bless you in all your deeds and in your every undertaking.” If, however, a person stops giving charity and gifts to the poor, blessings cease to flow upon him from Above. About this, King Solomon continued and said,¹⁰⁵ “And one who refrains from giving what is proper, only for a loss.”

Our sages of blessed memory related a story¹⁰⁶ of a man who had a field that produced one thousand *kor* of grain per year. Thus, every year he would tithe one hundred *kor*. Before he passed away, he commanded his son not to diminish from the yearly tithe, by even an iota. The son, however, said to

¹⁰³ Proverbs 11:24

¹⁰⁴ Deuteronomy 15:10

¹⁰⁵ Proverbs 11:24

¹⁰⁶ Midrash Tanchumah, Re'eh; Tosefot to Taanit 9a

himself, “It is enough that I give only ninety *kor*.” The next year, his field produced only nine-hundred *kor*. However, because he was miserly, he again said to himself, “It is enough that I give only eighty *kor*.” The next year his field produced only eight-hundred *kor*. He persisted in this manner each year and corresponding to the diminishment of his tithe and charitable giving, the production of his field continued to diminish, until, at last, his field produced only one-hundred *kor*, exactly the amount that his father originally tithed.

99

Miserliness is compared to the earth.

The explanation is as follows. A person who is miserly, whose eyes look ill upon giving any charity or gifts to the poor, is, by nature, dominated by the element of earth. When someone takes any amount of earth from the soil, it inevitably leaves a depression in the soil, where the earth is missing. In the same manner, whenever a miser is compelled to give away any of his wealth to charity, it immediately creates a sense of loss in his heart. This attitude prevents him from any kind of charitable giving. Our sages, of blessed memory, spoke of a certain kind of worm that derives all its sustenance from eating earth, but is afraid to eat too much, lest all the earth in the world will be consumed and it will die of hunger. This happens

because whenever it eats, it notices that a depression is formed in the earth.

When a miser gives charity, he experiences the same sense of loss in his heart. Even if he has immense wealth, he is incapable of eating and drinking to his satisfaction, let alone give away any of his wealth. However, in death, all the wealth he has hoarded will eventually go to others. About this, King Solomon cried out and said,¹⁰⁷ “A man to whom God has given riches, wealth and honor and lacks nothing that his heart desires, but God has not given him the ability to enjoy any of it; instead a stranger will enjoy it. This a futile and evil disease.” Such a person is compared to a snake, about which it states,¹⁰⁸ “You shall eat dust all the days of your life.” A person such as this never wants to give any kind of gift or charity to any creature in the world.

100

One who gives charity and then regrets having given it is compared to water.

The explanation is as follows: The nature of a person who gives charity when asked, but then regrets and is pained over it, is dominated by the element of water. That is, he did not feel a sense of loss when he gave it, but only afterwards. This

¹⁰⁷ Ecclesiastes 6:2

¹⁰⁸ Genesis 3:14

is compared to a person who has a barrel of water and draws it out with a pitcher. The loss is not immediately apparent in the water and the barrel has no leak, but when he steps back, he notices the loss because the water level has gone down. The same is true of a person who gives charity and then regrets it. At the moment he gives he does not feel the loss, but afterwards he regrets it.

101

A person who is generous is compared to the air.

The explanation is as follows: When a generous person is asked to give charity, though there is an immediate loss when he gives, it does not at all stop him from giving. The desire of his heart remains the same after he has given, just as it was when he gave. Moreover, he does not feel a great loss, but only a slight one that he can withstand. This is compared to someone who fills an inflatable float with air. If a small amount of air is released, the loss is not felt in any specific spot on the float. Rather, the float remains equally inflated throughout. Such is not the case when there is a loss of water or earth, which becomes immediately apparent.

102

The quality of governance is compared to fire.

The explanation is as follows: Fire by nature ascends and dominates all things. In the same manner, rulers ascend over the nation they rule over. Just as fire must take hold of wood or other fuel and only then can be useful, so too, rulers require taxes and tributes from their subjects to establish the kingdom and maintain a military for the security of its subjects and when the people fear the government the kingdom is established. Now, just as when the fuel is consumed the fire is extinguished, so too, if the government lacks money and assets, it becomes weak and can be easily overthrown. About this, King Solomon stated in his great wisdom,¹⁰⁹ “Without a regime, rulership is broken.”

Furthermore, just as fire flares up and illuminates when it is fanned, so likewise with rulership. As long as it is fed taxes and tariffs it is strong and influential. Just as fire may be useful or destructive, so likewise, government is sometimes benevolent and supports the people, but sometimes it destroys and punishes those who oppose it.

In addition, just as fire cannot be handled except with strong tools of brass or iron, so too with rulership. Not everyone is fit to serve in government; only honest, talented and accomplished men who possess wisdom and can give sound

¹⁰⁹ Proverbs 14:28

council can properly serve the king and toil in the needs of the nation. Moreover, their hearts must be strong to withstand the challenges of governance and to stand and give an accounting before the king.

Also, just as fire quickly consumes straw and chaff, so likewise, if unscrupulous villains misuse the power of their office their power will not last for long and they will quickly be removed and ousted for their scheming and treachery.

Moreover, just as fire takes hold of dry brush and bursts into great overwhelming flames, but quickly dissipates and dies out, so too, if the kingdom enters into battle with undisciplined soldiers, though at first they will make a great noise, nonetheless, when they are in the thick of battle they will quickly abandon their posts and flee from the onslaught of the enemy.

In contrast, just as when a fire is lit with large wooden logs it burns steadily and at length, so too, when the kingdom engages in war with mighty and disciplined warriors, they overcome the enemy and withstand all the difficulties of battle until they conquer and are victorious in war.

103

Whoever asks for charity from a miser is compared to a person who bites on a flint stone.

The explanation is that anyone who asks for charity from a miser will only receive shame, embarrassment and humiliation. This is compared to a person who bites on a flintstone. He will derive no benefit from it and will only break or darken his teeth. So too, a miser is as hard as a stone and will give up nothing of his wealth, to such an extent that he will not even offer a kind word, but instead heap insult and derision upon whoever asks him.

104

A person who asks for charity from a generous and benevolent person is compared to a calf that suckles milk from the cow.

The explanation is as follows: The nature of the generous is to give, just as it is the nature of air to escape from an inflated balloon, even though the mouth of the balloon is on its bottom. So likewise, when one has yet to request charity from a generous benefactor, the benefactor is consternated. This is similar to a milk-cow. That is, as long as she is not milked

and the milk remains in her udders, she is greatly pained, more than any other living creature. When the calf suckles milk from her udders, she derives much pleasure. In contrast, if she is not milked and it remains in her udders, she can become very consternated, perhaps even goring the animals in her vicinity because of the great pain. However, when she is finally milked, she becomes relaxed and enjoys it immensely. About this our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹¹⁰ “More than the calf wishes to suckle, the cow wishes to be suckled.”

105

Rebukes are compared to laundering a garment.

The explanation is as follows: When a garment is stained and soiled, it must be soaked in a mixture of water and harsh detergents that extract the filth in it. It is soaked in this solution and then beaten over a stone and scrubbed. Through this, the filth is separated from the garment and it becomes fresh and clean. In the same manner, whoever rebukes his fellow must remind him of his sins and transgressions, causing him anguish with various reprimands and chastisements. Through this he becomes whitened and abandons his sins and bad behavior and by separating himself from them he becomes clean and pure.

¹¹⁰ Talmud Bavli, Pesachim 112a

Whoever rebukes a wise person is compared to a doctor.

The explanation is as follows: When a doctor prescribes a bitter medicine to a patient who has understanding, the patient will rejoice and take the medicine, even though it is bitter, because he understands that it is for his benefit and will heal him. The same is true of a wise man who rebukes his fellow. He tells his friend, “Know, that I have seen such-and-such negative quality in you which is unbecoming for a person of your stature. You should desist from such behavior and do such-and-such instead, through which you will be rectified.” If he is wise, he will accept the rebuke with joy and will follow the advice, because he understands that it is for his betterment. He will even praise the one who rebuked him and considered it as if he did him a great favor. About this King Solomon stated in his great wisdom,¹¹¹ “Reprove a wise man, and he will love you,” and,¹¹² “The reprovers will be pleasant and a good blessing will come upon them.”

¹¹¹ Proverbs 9:8

¹¹² Proverbs 24:25

107

Whoever reproves a scoffer is compared to a person who digs and plows on a dung heap.

The explanation is as follows: If a person chastises scoffers, the more he chastises them, the more they scoff and berate him in return. They add sin to their iniquity by speaking evil of him, spreading slander and gossip to everyone they meet. This is like a person who digs and plows in a pile of excrement. The more he digs and turns the excrement over, the more the stench of the excrement spreads in all directions.

Moreover, no matter how much he digs and plows, the excrement remains excrement and is undiminished. The same is true of a person who chastises the scoffer. He tells him “You have done this despicable act, you have committed this grievous sin, you have sinned against so-and-so.” Even though he reminds the scoffer of all his sins and misdeeds, the scoffer does not separate himself from them, but continues in his wicked ways.

Thus, it is compared to a person who digs and turns over the feces of a dunghill. All he accomplishes is that the stench spreads out, but the feces remain in their place. In addition, he himself becomes soiled with shame and stench. Moreover, by doing so he acquires a lifelong enemy who will forever hate and despise him, for the scoffer hates any amount of rebuke,

chastisement or criticism. About this King Solomon stated,¹¹³ “Do not reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you.”

108

Authority is compared to a person who the king elevated to a high position, but does not know why.

The explanation is as follows: When a person ascends to a position of greatness and authority, it could be for good or for bad. How is it for good? This is analogous to a king who had a faithful servant who was an overseer of a small village. The king saw that his service was excellent and that he was extremely trustworthy. The king therefore said to himself that it is not fitting for a person of such trustworthiness to be the overseer of such a small and insignificant place. He therefore appointed him to be the overseer of a great mountain stronghold the people of which were great, important and mighty, so that he could protect it from all enemies.

How is it for bad? This is analogous to a king who was angry at someone who had betrayed him. Because of his great anger, he was undecided about what would be the worst form of death by which to execute him. Upon further consideration, the king commanded that he be taken up a very high and steep mountain and pushed off the cliff, so that he will be completely crushed and broken by the fall, for the higher the mountain, the

¹¹³ Proverbs 9:8

greater the impact of the fall. In the same manner, there are those who have angered *HaShem*, blessed is He, to such a degree that their judgment is to be destroyed through their elevation. This is similar to the serpent whose destruction was commensurate to his greatness, as it states,¹¹⁴ “The serpent was cunning beyond any beast of the field,” and with respect to the curse it received, it states,¹¹⁵ “You are accursed beyond all the cattle and all beasts of the field.” Likewise, King Solomon cried out and said,¹¹⁶ “Riches are hoarded by their owner to his misfortune.” That is, the higher one rises, the greater the fall.

109

The relation between the representative of the public and the masses, is like the relationship between the limbs of the body and the soul.

The explanation is as follows: The soul is the primary aspect of man and all his limbs and organs are secondary to it. Thus, regardless of what the limbs do, whether for good or for evil, the soul is blamed for it all. The same is true of the representative of the public. Whatever the masses do, whether for good or for evil, is pinned on him and he is held responsible.

¹¹⁴ Genesis 3:1

¹¹⁵ Genesis 3:14

¹¹⁶ Ecclesiastes 5:12

This is analogous to the mouth that speaks negative words or utters curses. No one blames the mouth for uttering these words, but rather, we blame the speaker for uttering them. Likewise, if a person's hands performed a praiseworthy deed or an ugly deed, we do not praise or blame the hands for doing it, but rather, the person for doing it. The same is true of the acts of all the other limbs, whether they are for good or for evil, they all are pinned on the soul, which is a person's primary aspect. The relationship between the representative of the public and the masses is equal to this. If there is sin and wrongdoing amongst the people, the representative of the public takes the blame, for he is primary, just as the soul is primary.

It is regarding this that our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹¹⁷ "The household of the Exilarch were apprehended for the sins of the public." And they continued and said, "Whoever is capable of effectively protesting sinful conduct and does not do so, he himself is apprehended for the sins."

This is compared to the soul, which is capable of exerting dominion over the conduct of the body, but does not do so. Thus, when a person sins with one of his limbs, committing murder, adultery or the like, his whole self is smitten, body and soul. In the same manner, if one of the masses sins and the public representative, who had the ability to protest, does not do so, both the sinner and the public representative are guilty and both are punished.

¹¹⁷ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 54b

110

When the body and soul are judged on account of sin, they are like a blind man and a lame man who the king gave the responsibility of guarding an orchard, but they blundered and did not properly guard it.

The explanation is as follows: When *HaShem*, blessed is He, brings about judgment, the soul declares, “It was not I who blundered. It was the body, that possesses an evil inclination that makes it sin.” On the other hand, the body declares, “Were it not for the soul I could not have sinned, for a body without a soul is as lifeless as an inanimate stone. Without the soul who moves me, I cannot make even the slightest move.”

The two are analogous to a blind man and a lame man who the king charged with guarding his orchard, but they transgressed and ate of its fruits. When the king brought them to judgment the blind man said, “I couldn’t have eaten them, for I could not see where they were,” and the lame man said, “I couldn’t have eaten them, for I could not go to where they were.” What did the king do? He put the lame man on the blind man’s shoulders and said, “The two of you joined in partnership to transgress my will, for you provided the eyes and you provided the legs and both of you ate of the fruits. Therefore, you will be punished together.”

In the same manner, *HaShem*, blessed is He, joined the soul to the body and advised them that if they sin before Him, they will be regarded as a partnership. Regarding this, the Psalmist stated,¹¹⁸ “He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that He may judge His people.” The words “He calls to the heavens above” refer to the soul, as we see that the numerical value of the heavens-*HaShamayim*-השמים-395 is equal to the soul-*Neshamah*-נשמה-395. The words, “And to the earth” refer to the body, which was taken from the earth. We thus see that both the soul and the body are brought as one in judgement before *HaShem*.

111

The path of life is compared to a wealthy city filled with all kinds of goodness, but the only way to get there is to pass through great mountains and wide deserts that are guarded by many bandits and highway robbers.

The explanation is as follows: When a person fulfills *HaShem*'s commandments and performs good deeds, he inherits eternal life in a world of wealth, honor and all manner of wondrous goodness. However, the only way for him to get there is through great difficulty and suffering. The various tribulations that he must go through are compared to the great

¹¹⁸ Psalms 50:4

mountains and deserts that he must pass through to merit reaching the world of eternal life.

This is analogous to a wealthy city filled with all kinds of abundant goodness and whose inhabitants are great merchants and businessmen who deal in many types of merchandise. The paths to the city are through great mountains and parched deserts. Moreover, because of the abundant merchandise that is brought to and from the city, the highways are populated with many robbers and bandits who lay in wait to ambush the merchants and steal their funds and goods.

The path to the world of eternal life is similar to this. It is a world of absolute goodness, a world of true and eternal wealth. The highway robbers along the way are the various troubles, trials, tribulations, accusing angels and evil inclinations that attempt to prevent a person from fulfilling his desire to do good deeds in this world. This is why we find that when a person wishes to fulfill *HaShem's* commandments and do good, he is met with all kinds of difficulties and challenges that obstruct him from doing so.

This is the path that the righteous suffer in this world, in that they are met with many trials and tribulations when they come to fulfill the commandments and perform good deeds. This is specifically because their merchandise is so precious and their wealth is so abundant. Nevertheless, they pass through many great mountains and parched deserts and although the bandits try to rob them, if they are steadfast, they are unable to do so.

112

The path of death is compared to a hunter who leaves food for the animals and birds, but only to entice them to gather there so that he may hunt them.

The explanation is as follows: When a person comes to wrongdoing, he does not perceive any obstruction or obstacle that prevents him from doing so. On the contrary, he only finds sweetness and delight. This is because the hunter, who is the evil inclination, deceives the mind of man and smoothens the path of sin for him, convincing him to transgress through sweet and delightful thoughts and words. This is how he entices a person, until he is ensnared in his net.

This is analogous to a hunter who wants to hunt various animals and birds. He casts out his net and places all kinds of food in it, for each animal according to what it likes to eat. When they then gather to eat the food, he pulls up the net and captures them. The same principle applies to a person who comes to transgress. The various destructive accusing angels smoothens the path for him and entice him to taste the sweetness, until he comes to actually transgress. Once he has transgressed, he is caught in their net and from there they take him to be destroyed in the pit of destruction. It is regarding this that King Solomon cried out and stated,¹¹⁹ “To save you from the strange woman, from the foreign woman who smoothens her words...

¹¹⁹ Proverbs 2:16

for her house declines towards death... and all who come to her do not return...” He then continues,¹²⁰ “He follows after her unsuspectingly... until the arrow splits his liver... There is a way that seems right to a man, but its ends are the ways of death.”

113

Council is compared to the foundations of a building.

The explanation is as follows: When a builder wishes to construct a building, he must first dig out a place for the foundations, so that he can construct it upon bedrock or solid earth. In the same way, a person who comes to take council must delve into it until it is founded upon strong and sound principles. Just as the foundation must be made of large and strong blocks and stones, in the same way, a person who comes to take council should do so from people who are great and wise, who are able to delve into the depths of the matter and set him on the proper and true course.

Additionally, just as the foundation must be strong enough to support the full weight of the building, so likewise, whoever increases in seeking out council only stands to strengthen and perfect his foundations. Thus, King Solomon stated in his great wisdom,¹²¹ “In a multitude of counselors

¹²⁰ Proverbs 7:22; 14:12

¹²¹ Proverbs 11:14

there is salvation.” Now, just as a person who wishes to build a magnificent structure must take council from expert architects who are proficient in properly building the foundations, so likewise, whenever a person wishes to do great things, he must seek the advice of experienced experts. Thus, he must take council from *HaShem*, blessed is He, for He is the greatest and most perfect counselor of all. Regarding this it states,¹²² “There are many thoughts in the heart of man, but the counsel of *HaShem*, only it will prevail.”

114

A secret is compared to an inflated balloon.

The explanation is as follows. If a person inflates a balloon and seals it well, the air remains in it without leaking out. The same principle holds true of a person who must keep a secret that he has been entrusted with; he guards it well, making sure not to reveal it. However, if he punctures the balloon, even with the finest needle and makes a tiny hole in it, all the air will certainly leak out.

In the same way, even if a person reveals the smallest part of a secret he has been entrusted with, through a tiny hint, the end result is that it will all be revealed. Just as the one who pricked a hole in the balloon caused all its air to be released, so too, revealing another person’s secret is compared to smiting

¹²² Proverbs 19:21

him with a fatal blow, for it is as if he took out his spirit and slew him, God forbid.

115

Worldly occupation for the body is compared to shepherd who chases a wolf away from his flock.

The explanation is as follows: When *HaShem*, blessed is He, created the world, He created man upright so that he could serve *HaShem*, blessed is He. However, man sinned by leaving the service of *HaShem* and replacing it with sin and strange service. Therefore, *HaShem*, blessed is He, decreed that man must toil with hard labor and difficult work, and told him,¹²³ “By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread.” However, all this is so that through being occupied in his labor he will forget about sinning and pursuing evil desires.

Now, *HaShem*, blessed is He, decreed two different forms of labor and toil upon man, through which he will forget to sin. These are the labor of acquiring wisdom and physical labor. Thus, our sages, of blessed memory, aptly stated,¹²⁴ “Excellent is the study of Torah when combined with a worldly occupation, for the toil of them both keeps sin out of one’s mind.” We therefore find that he who engages in both wisdom and worldly occupation, nullifies the wicked thoughts of the

¹²³ Genesis 3:19

¹²⁴ Mishnah Avot 2:2

evil inclination and causes him to depart. He thus is compared to a shepherd who saves his livestock and property by chasing the wolf away from his flock.

116

Idleness for the body is compared to an un-ploughed field that lies fallow and unproductive.

The explanation is as follows: A field that is not ploughed, worked and sowed, will certainly not produce any harvest, but will instead be overgrown with weeds, thistles and brush. An idle person is similar to this. Not only will he not be productive, but His evil inclination will think wicked thoughts and plant evil schemes into his heart, leading him into serious crimes and sins. This is compared to the growth of weeds, thistles and brush in an idle field, for his evil inclination will plant schemes of theft, robbery and murder in his heart and lead him on a downward spiral. About this, our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹²⁵ “Idleness leads to boredom, idiocy and licentiousness.”

¹²⁵ Talmud Bavli, Ketubot 59b

Foul language is compared to a vessel that was made to drink from, but was used as a urinal instead

The explanation is as follows: When *HaShem*, blessed is He, created the two-hundred and forty-eight limbs of man, he gave each limb the function that was appropriate for it. He created the eyes to see, the ears to hear, the hands to perform all sorts of labor, the feet for travel and the lower organs to purge the body of its dross and cleanse it. However, He gave the mouth, a very elevated function, over and above the other organs of the body. For the tongue is analogous to a king sitting on his throne. That is, the mouth and tongue were created to praise, glorify and beautify the Holy One, blessed is He, and to teach of His greatness and the wonders of His works. It was created to judge with righteousness and uprightness and to teach the service of *HaShem*, blessed is He.

This is analogous to a beautiful golden goblet that was made by a master goldsmith to be used by the king. It thus should be kept completely pure and clean and guarded from coming in contact with any filth. If, however, someone urinated into it or soiled it with his excrement, it no longer is fit for drinking, for it has become disgusting. In the same way, the tongue was created to praise the Creator of the world and to be used for prayer, learning and teaching the ways of *HaShem* and for righteous judgment. If, however, a person soils it with foul

language, it is as if he has turned it into a bucket of excrement. How then can he use it later for prayer, mentioning the name of *HaShem*, or any other holy matters, for he has already turned it into a bucket of excrement! King Solomon thus cried out and said, “The mouth of heresy is a deep pit, whoever is abhorred by *HaShem* will fall there.”

118

Merits and good deeds in relation to their reward are compared to plants and trees.

The explanation is as follows: There are those who do good deeds, but once *HaShem*, blessed is He, rewards them, those deeds are forgotten. This is analogous to a farmer who plants various kinds of grain and the like. Once he has harvested them, he brings both the profits and the principle into his home. Thus, everything he originally planted and all that increased and grew was harvested and gathered into his home. He cannot reap a second time until he plants his field yet again. The same is true of fulfilling *HaShem*'s commandments in this world; one must continually perform them many times, for perhaps he has already harvested the reward for his first deeds and nothing remains of them for the world to come.

However, there are other merits and good deeds that are much greater and stronger. That is, even though *HaShem*, blessed is He, already rewarded him for them, nevertheless, his

deeds are so great that they remain in place and are established forever. This is analogous to a farmer who plants fruit trees. Though he harvests their fruits every year, the body of the tree remains in place and continues producing new fruits and fruits of fruits. It is the same in regard to great merits. They continually produce new fruits. The righteous eat of these fruits in this world, but the principle remains for them in the world to come.

119

The performance of good deeds is compared to a precious diamond.

The explanation is as follows: A diamond is an object of desire, but not everyone recognizes or appreciates its great value. Only expert diamond merchants can discern its true value. Good deeds are comparable to this. Not all people know and recognize the preciousness and value of those who involve themselves with good deeds. This is because the reward for good deeds are concealed from the eyes of mankind. This is as stated,¹²⁶ “No eye has seen it, O’ God, except for You, that which He shall do for those who await Him.”

Now, just as only a few people fully recognize the true value and worth of a precious gem, so likewise, only a few people jump at the opportunity to purchase it. This is because

¹²⁶ Isaiah 64:3

such a stone is very expensive and not everyone has the wealth to purchase it, even if they recognize and appreciate its true value.

The same principle applies to good deeds. Even though there many who recognize that a person who performs good deeds merits a doubled and quadrupled measure of reward, nonetheless, not everyone is capable of subduing their evil inclination to do good deeds and follow the straight path. This is because not everyone can withstand and overcome the great difficulties and suffering that accompanies performance of good deeds.

This is analogous to the fact that not everyone is wealthy enough to purchase precious stones and pearls. Likewise, when a person comes to perform good deeds, he must overcome many obstacles that prevent him from accomplishing it. A person such as this is compared to a pauper who cannot afford to acquire the precious stone except through great toil and suffering, such as selling many of his possessions. This is because his evil inclination stands in opposition to him from his youth.

120

The performance of wicked deeds is compared to a wine merchant who has a barrel of spoiled wine and wants to empty it out.

The explanation is as follows: All the deeds and merchandise of the evil inclination are wicked and spoiled. He therefore wishes to get rid of them. This is comparable to a wine merchant who has a barrel of spoiled wine and wants to empty the wine from the barrel. What does he do? He lets it be known that his wine is for sale. If he manages to sell it, he is happy. However, if he realizes that he cannot sell it, he gives the wine away for free. This is because his true intention is not to sell the wine, but to empty the barrel. It is the same way with the evil inclination. Because all his merchandise is spoiled and rotten, he tries to push it off on man. If he can convince him to purchase the sin for money, he is happy. However, if he cannot convince him to pay for it, he tries to convince him to sin with his body, without spending money.

121

Thought is compared to ploughing.

Just as a person is unable to plant his crops without first ploughing his field, so likewise, a person is incapable of doing any deeds that will be proper and straight if he does not think about them first. Moreover, just as a person who ploughs his field many times will increase its produce by many folds, so is it with thought. Whoever contemplates something for a long while, constantly turning it over and over in his mind, will increase in wisdom and knowledge and clarify what it is he wishes to accomplish. He thus will be able to accomplish his goal and bring it to actual fruition. Now, just as ploughing is what causes the plants to develop many roots in the depths of the soil, so likewise it is thought that provides the primary roots to all the deeds of man.

122

A good thought is compared to one who consults the king.

The explanation is as follows: When a person thinks a good thought to perform the commandments of *HaShem* and do good deeds, that thought cleaves to *HaShem*, blessed is He.

This is because *HaShem*, blessed is He, is good, and goodness cleaves to goodness. Thus, when one thinks good thoughts, he can be certain that *HaShem*, blessed is He, is found in his council. It therefore is fitting that such thoughts should be fulfilled and even if they do not come to fruition in actuality, the merit stands for him.

This is analogous to a person who comes before the king to seek his council. He tells the king, “My master, the king, it is my intention to serve you with such and such types of service and to do what is good and proper in your eyes.” The king rejoices in his words and blesses him to go and succeed. He then strengthens himself to fulfill his intentions, now that he has the council and blessing of the king.

If he is met with obstacles that are beyond his control and is prevented from actually fulfilling his good thought, the king nevertheless rewards him for his effort and good intentions. The king continues to desire to bestow goodness upon him, because he is upright in his thoughts and intentions and truly desires to serve the king to his maximum capability, whereas the obstructions that thwarted him were not under his control.

123

Wicked thoughts are compared to one who rebels against the king.

The explanation is as follows: When a person thinks evil thoughts and intentions of sin, he removes himself from the service of *HaShem*, blessed is He, and gives himself over to the service of the evil inclination, to whom he becomes enslaved. This is because the evil inclination is an accuser who rebels against *HaShem*, blessed is He.

This is analogous to a person who was a soldier of the king and fought against his enemies in the king's wars. However, he defected and became a traitor, aiding and abetting the king's enemies by feeding them and arming them with weapons of war to fight against the king. Is there anyone more treacherous than this? Such a person passes himself off as the king's servant, but joins forces with his enemies and aids and abets them in their rebellion against him.

124

A good reputation is compared to warrior who conquered a great fortress with great strength and a mighty hand.

The explanation is as follows: If a person wants to acquire a good reputation, he can only do so through great toil and effort. He must speak beautiful and delightful words, do many acts of goodness in the world and associate with the great and wise. He must be steadfast in his adherence to truth, distance himself from all that is false and face many financial expenditures and challenges to accomplish this.

This is analogous to a warrior who comes to conquer a very large and strong fortress inhabited by many mighty men of war. He will need to amass many soldiers around the fortress and lay siege with many weapons of war, procured at great expense, and he will have to endure many trials and travails in order to conquer the it. He must be courageous and persist at all costs if he hopes to conquer and subjugate it. Moreover, even if he succeeds, he can easily lose dominion over it in short order. The same is true of a good reputation. It is difficult to acquire but easy to lose.

125

Partnership is compared to the stone column at the center of a bridge.

The explanation is as follows: As long as the stone column at the center of the bridge remains intact, all may safely pass over it without fear of danger. However, if the stone column becomes weakened or damaged, the bridge must be closed, for it no longer provides safe passage for people to traverse the river.

In the same manner, the trust that exists between partners is like the stone column at the center of a bridge. As long as the trust between them is intact, the partnership will endure and they will find success in their business endeavors. They will be able to do business together based on the foundation of faith that exists between them and will not be hurt or damaged, like a person who passes over a sturdy bridge.

However, if the trust between them is damaged or destroyed, it is like a bridge whose column is damaged or destroyed. Whoever attempts to traverse it risks falling and plunging to his death. In the same way, when trust is lacking between partners, one of them may become irreversibly hurt. He must therefore carefully examine all matters of the business and be exceedingly cautious of his dishonest partner. This is analogous to a bridge that lacks a strong center column,

requiring that all who pass it must be exceedingly careful not come to disaster.

Just as the primary strength of the deep waters of the river rush past the center column of the bridge, so likewise, the primary aspect of any partnership must be trust. If faith and honesty exist, the partnership can be sustained and succeed, but if trust is lost, the partnership is lost.

126

Youth in relation to reproof is compared to a fork in the road.

The explanation is as follows: When a child is young, he is filthy with the impurities of the evil inclination. This is because his knowledge and understanding are still hidden and have yet to be revealed in him. When he matures and arrives at the age of thirteen, and begins to show signs of knowledge and understanding, he is analogous to a person who is standing at a fork in the road. If he does not know where each path leads, he liable to err and go on the wrong path.

So likewise, when a person arrives at the age of thirteen, he comes to a fork in the road. He can either go to the right, and follow the path of goodness, or he go to the left, and follow the path of evil. The reproof and chastisement he receives at this time, will guide him on the path of goodness, thus saving him from evil. The path he becomes accustomed to, is the path

he will travel all the days of his life. About this King Solomon said in his great wisdom,¹²⁷ “Train a youth according to his way; even when he ages, he will not depart from it.” He similarly stated,¹²⁸ “Do not withhold discipline from a youth; If you strike him with the rod he will not die. Rather, strike him with the rod and rescue his soul from the grave.”

127

The reproof of youth is compared to plants in the winter.

The explanation is as follows: During winter, the sky is often overcast and there are strong winds, storms, rains, snow and ice. In the winter the trees and plants send their roots down into the earth, and through the strength of these roots, are given strength to form branches and develop fruits as summer approaches.

A child who is properly disciplined in the ways of *HaShem's* Torah from early childhood is analogous to this. The parent must be diligent in keeping the child on the straight path, and if he misbehaves, should show him an angry face, thus correcting him. The child should be admonished for his bad behavior and given consequences. Through this, he develops strong roots of wisdom, upright behavior and fear of heaven.

¹²⁷ Proverbs 22:6

¹²⁸ Proverbs 23:13

When this child consequently reaches adolescence and becomes a young man, it is analogous to summertime, for he will produce great branches and delightful fruits. About this, King Solomon said in his great wisdom,¹²⁹ “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a youth; the rod of discipline will distance it from him.”

However, if a child is not disciplined when he is young, he is analogous to a tree that has not developed proper roots. All his deeds will thus be empty and deficient and he will not produce anything of substance. This is as stated,¹³⁰ “As if they were not even planted, as if they were not even sown, as if their stock was not even rooted in the ground; even if He were to blow on them, they would wither and a storm wind would carry them away as stubble.”

128

A person who derives pleasure from the world but does not involve himself in benefitting the world, is compared to one who was given a beautiful orchard by the king and was commanded to work it and thus derive benefit of its fruits.

The explanation is as follows: Man was created for the sole purpose of serving *HaShem*, blessed is He, with complete

¹²⁹ Proverbs 22:15

¹³⁰ Isaiah 40:24

service, through which he derives benefit from the world. That is, his service of *HaShem* should be his primary occupation, whereas the pleasure he derives from the world should be of secondary importance.

HaShem, blessed is He, thus gave the world over into the hands of man, like a king who granted someone an orchard and instructed him to guard and work it. But if instead of working it, he did the opposite and ruined it, eating, drinking and enjoying the world without giving thought to anything except to his own physical pleasures, he is guilty of disobeying the king and destroying the world, rather than benefitting it. Such a one is analogous to a person who destroys the king's orchard, instead of guarding and working it.

In order to avoid this, it is appropriate that upon arising each morning, before eating or getting involved in other activities, a person should involve himself in the service of *HaShem*, blessed is He, such as praying, giving charity and doing acts of kindness, acting righteously and doing good deeds. This is analogous to a person who first toils in the orchard of the king and only afterwards eats of its fruits. In contrast, if he first eats and derives pleasure, before serving *HaShem*, blessed is He, he is found guilty of the death penalty, like someone who eats from the king's orchard without working it.

129

The success of the wealthy is compared to rain, whereas the success of the poor is compared to dew.

The explanation is as follows: Even though it only rains occasionally, nonetheless, because it comes in abundance it causes the plants to successfully grow. The success of the wealthy is analogous to this because, though it comes occasionally, it comes in abundance and then increases and grows, like rains that do not come every day. In the same way, the livelihood of the wealthy is not dependent upon *HaShem*, blessed is He, on a daily basis. Rather, *HaShem* gives him enough wealth to sustain him for many days, similar to rain that sustains the plants for many days, even though the rains have stopped.

Now, dew sustains the plants even when there is no rain. In the same way, the blessings of *HaShem*, blessed is He, come to the poor and sustain them a little at a time, just enough for each day. Just as the dew never ceases to descend and comes on a daily basis, so likewise, *HaShem*, blessed is He, is kind to the poor on a daily basis and gives them enough sustenance for each day. This is analogous to dew which never ceases to descend and is present in the world every day.

130

The pleasure of the wealthy man in his wealth is compared to a field that is worked, but receives too much rain. The pleasure of the poor man in his poverty is compared to a field that is not worked, but when the rains come it absorbs them with great thirst.

The explanation is as follows: If it was truly the case that the wealthy derive pleasure in all matters commensurate to the degree of their wealth and that the poor suffer in all matters commensurate to the degree of their poverty, we would never find a poor man who has pleasure or a wealthy man who suffers.

However, such is not the case. Instead, *HaShem*, blessed is He, directs His kindness upon all things. Thus, although the wealthy have an abundance of all pleasurable things, *HaShem*, blessed is He, removed the taste from their palate. That is, although he does indeed derive pleasure from the many delightful things at his disposal, the pleasure is not commensurate to the abundance.

This is compared to a field that is fully worked, but receives more water than necessary, in which case, the plants do not grow commensurate to the abundance of irrigation. The same matter applies to the abundance of the wealthy. Because it is always readily available, the wealthy cannot appreciate the full delight of their pleasurable things.

In contrast, the poor are compared to a field that is not properly worked, but when the rains come, it absorbs them with great thirst. The plants within it derive great pleasure from these rains and begin to grow. In the same manner, *HaShem*, blessed is He, gave the small amount from which the poor are sustained the ability to give them great pleasure and delight.

For example, though his food may not be of the finest and choicest quality, he nonetheless finds it to be very delicious and delightful. Specifically, because it is not readily available, he appreciates it greatly and can derive much more pleasure from it than the wealthy man with all his abundant delicacies.

This is a gift that the Holy One, blessed is He, gave to the poor in His abundant kindness. About this, King Solomon stated in his great wisdom,¹³¹ “The sated soul will trample a honeycomb; but to the hungry soul, all bitterness is sweet.” He likewise stated,¹³² “Sweet is the sleep of the laborer, whether he eats little or much; whereas the satiety of the rich does not let him sleep.”

¹³¹ Proverbs 27:7

¹³² Ecclesiastes 5:11

131

A man and his wife are compared to the sun and the moon.

The explanation is as follows: The sun illuminates by day, whereas the moon illuminates by night. In the same manner, the work of man and his business dealings are in the market places and out in the streets. This is comparable to the sun that illuminates during the day and spreads its rays in all directions. The work and involvement of the woman, on the other hand, are in the chambers of her home, in a way of modesty and privacy. This is like the moon that shines by night, whose light does not spread everywhere, but only in those places where its light reaches.

Now, the sun is the primary luminary, whereas the moon has no light of her own, only what she receives from the sun. In the same manner, the woman does not receive blessings and success or the fruits of her womb, except through her husband. Moreover, just as the orbit of the sun is above the orbit of the moon, so likewise, the dominion of the man in his house is appropriately higher than the dominion of the woman.

Similarly, just as from the moment the sun begins to shine in the morning, the light of the moon is nullified before it, so likewise, it is inappropriate for the woman to rule over her husband. Rather, she should give him honor, awe and service. Now, just as from the moment the sun is concealed, the moon

begins to illuminate and shine, so likewise, once her husband has gone to sleep, the woman should rise while it is still night and command her maids and household, taking care of all the needs of the home and ensuring the success of their possessions. About this King Solomon stated in his great wisdom,¹³³ “She arises while it is yet night and gives food to her household and a portion to her maidens.”

132

A modest woman is compared to a locked room.

The explanation is as follows: The room of the house that is locked is the inner sanctum of that house, for not everyone may enter there. In the same manner, a modest woman stays in the sanctuary of her home and not everyone sees her. It is regarding this that Scripture states,¹³⁴ “As chaste as a locked garden, so is My sister, My bride,” and similarly,¹³⁵ “All the glory of the princess is within.”

When a room is locked, not everyone knows it’s contents. The same holds true of the modest woman. Because she is modest, no one can speak ill or crudely of her, and ultimately, all they can point to is her modesty. Now, just as all the precious objects a person possesses, such as gold, silver,

¹³³ Proverbs 31:15

¹³⁴ Song of Songs 4:12

¹³⁵ Psalms 45:14

jewelry and expensive clothing, is stored in a locked chamber, so is it regarding a modest woman. She possesses many virtuous, precious and delightful qualities and everyone only cherishes and thinks highly of her, like a precious pearl, as stated,¹³⁶ “An accomplished woman who can find? Her value far exceeds precious pearls.”

133

An immodest woman is compared to a garbage dump.

The explanation is as follows: A garbage dump is a place that is freely open to the public, where everyone dumps their garbage and excrement. The same is true of a brazen woman who abandons herself to speak immodestly with everyone. The result is that, ultimately, they speak ill and crudely of her. This one points out her immodesty and impudence and that one points out how crude and disgraceful she is. Her bad reputation thus spreads and she becomes like the garbage dump, since everyone dumps indignation upon her.

¹³⁶ Proverbs 31:10

134

A good marriage between a man and woman is analogous to a protruding seal that fits perfectly into an indented seal.

The explanation is that when a marriage between a man and woman is beautiful and blessed by Heaven, the man and woman are compared to the form of two seals, one protruding and the other indented. Because of the perfect fit, when the two are united they become as one and there is no separation between them. In the same manner, when the marriage between a man and woman is beautiful and blessed by Heaven, they are as one. Whatever the husband says is desirable and accepted by his wife and whatever she says is desirable and accepted by her husband. They accept each other wholeheartedly for who they are, and are thus compared to the two forms of a seal. Such a marriage is pleasant and delightful, and together, they are pleasant and accepted by everyone they meet and all their days are filled with love and joy. It is about such a marriage that the sages, of blessed memory, said,¹³⁷ “One who remains without a wife, remains without joy.”

¹³⁷ Talmud Bavli, Yevamot 62b

135

A marriage that is not good is analogous to two protruding seals.

The explanation is as follows: When the marriage between a man and woman is difficult and undesirable to Heaven, the man and woman are compared to two protruding seals that do not fit together, in that they cannot accept each other. Whatever the husband says is not accepted in the heart of his wife and whatever the wife says is not accepted in the heart of the husband. Thus, they constantly fight and argue and never reach agreement, for they are not of one mind. This is because they are like two protruding seals that do not fit together. Thus, each one cannot accept the opinion of the other and they are in a constant state of turmoil and disharmony. In a marriage such as this, either he will bury her before her time or she will bury him before his time, or they will come to be impoverished.

136

A woman's jewelry is compared to a house.

The explanation is as follows: Just as a person does not go to great effort to decorate and beautify the outer walls of his

house, but rather, invests most of his resources in decorating and beautifying the interior furnishings of his house, so is it with a woman. It is inappropriate for her to beautify herself with her finest jewelry and attire to go out. She should rather do this in the privacy of her home for her husband, so that she should be desirable to him, whereas, when she goes out, she should only don average jewelry, to be presentable in public.

Our sages, of blessed memory, related a story of a wise woman who would don her finest garments and jewelry at home for her husband, but when going out, would only wear average clothing and jewelry. She was asked, “Why do you do this?” And she responded, “All the desirable and valuable objects of the house are safe as long as they remain at home. However, when taken out, they are no longer secure. Therefore, I leave the precious and desirable items inside my home, where they are well protected.”

137

A person who is happy with his lot is compared to oil.

The explanation is as follows: Just as when a large vessel is filled with water or other liquid and then a small amount of oil is added to it, the oil rises to the top and the vessel then appears to be full of oil, so is it with a person who is happy with his lot. Though he may have many difficulties and needs

and his home is empty of provisions, nonetheless, if he earns a small profit from his ventures, his joy and satisfaction is reflected in his face as if his house is full of wealth and property and he rejoices in his salvation. This is like the little oil that floats to the top of the vessel though it is full of other liquids. Moreover, just as a little oil illuminates the lamp more than all other liquids, so likewise, one who is happy with his lot has far more joy and illumination than the very wealthy.

138

An envious person is compared to a leech.

The explanation is as follows: A leech has two mouths. Therefore, it is never satisfied, even if it sucks blood until it is ready to burst. The same is true of an envious person. Though he may have great wealth and all manner of success, his eyes are never satisfied.

139

The suffering of the wicked is compared to a tremendous flood of waters that rush under the supports of a bridge.

The explanation is as follows: When travails and sufferings come upon the wicked, they cannot withstand them, because they are not accustomed to it. Rather, when the slightest travails or suffering come upon them, they immediately lose their trust in *HaShem* and abandon their faith in Him. This is analogous to a sudden surge of tremendous flood waters that rush under the supports of a bridge, destroying its foundation and uprooting it from its place. About this it states,¹³⁸ “When the storm passes the wicked is no more, but the righteous is the foundation of the world.”

140

The suffering the righteous is compared to mighty storm waters that rush under a bridge built on floats.

The explanation is as follows: When travails and suffering come upon the righteous, the more suffering is heaped upon them, the more they strengthen themselves and fill their

¹³⁸ Proverbs 10:25

hearts with trust and faith in *HaShem*, blessed is He. Thus, they continuously ascend ever higher. This is compared to a bridge built on floats. Even if mighty and turbulent storm waters come, the bridge simply ascends and rises above them. Thus, the storm waters cannot uproot it from its place.

The same is true of the righteous. When suffering comes upon them, they strengthen and add to their great trust and hope in *HaShem*, blessed is He, and become even stronger and more steadfast in their faith and trust in Him. About this scripture states,¹³⁹ “When He slew them, then they would seek Him; they would repent and pursue God.”

141

The tests faced by the wicked are analogous to a person who hits a poorly made earthen vessel with a rod.

The explanation is as follows: When a potter wishes to demonstrate the strength of his vessels to his prospective customers and show that they are well made and strong, he tests their strength by hitting one of them with a rod. If the vessel is poorly made, it will shatter from a single blow. Moreover, once the customers see that this vessel is of low quality, they will surmise that all his products are likewise so, and will not buy from him.

¹³⁹ Psalms 78:34

The same is true of a wicked person. If *HaShem*, blessed is He, tests him a little bit, his faith immediately shatters and he completely uproots himself from it and denies *HaShem*. Moreover, by doing so, he blemishes the reputation of all the members of in his nation, for people surmise that since he is bad, they too must be bad.

142

The tests faced by the righteous are compared to a potter who checks his sturdy, well-made vessels.

The explanation is as follows: When the potter tests and hits his sturdy vessels with a rod, they withstand the impact and do not shatter. Thus, the one vessel that he hits acts as an indicator which sheds light that all his vessels are sturdy and well made. They thus are praised and desired by all his customers. So likewise, when *HaShem*, blessed is He, tests the righteous, they withstand the tests and continue strengthening their trust and faith in *HaShem*. Through them *HaShem*, blessed is He, is praised and glorified by all who know them. This is similar to the tests that our father Avraham endured or that Chananiah, Misha'el and Azariah endured in the fiery furnace, or Daniel in the lion's den. Regarding them scripture

states,¹⁴⁰ “And He said to me: ‘You are My servant Israel, in whom I will be glorified.’”

143

Those who possess a skill or trade are compared to a person who knows how to swim.

The explanation is as follows: Any person who learns and practices a skill or trade, even though he may presently be wealthy and not in financial need of this skill, nevertheless, it is possible that one day he will lose his wealth and need to support himself honorably, without being dependent, living with great difficulty or dying a paupers death. This is analogous to a person who knows how to swim. If he suddenly is caught in a flood or if in fleeing from his enemy he is blocked by a body of water, he can save himself. However, if he does not know how to swim, death will be near.

¹⁴⁰ Isaiah 49:3

144

The honor of the wealthy is compared to a full bucket and the honor of the poor is compared to an empty bucket.

The explanation is as follows: When a bucket that is used to draw water from a well is empty, it is lowered into the well until it is full. The same is true of the poor man. Because he is empty, everyone lowers him, degrades him and affords him no honor. He thus is like the empty bucket of the well. However, once the bucket is full, it is drawn up out of the well. In the same way, when a man becomes wealthy, everyone honors him and elevates his stature, like the full bucket that is drawn up out of the well. About this, King Solomon said in his great wisdom,¹⁴¹ “The poor is hated even by his own neighbor, but the rich has many friends.”

145

Laziness is compared to the farmer who leaves his field to lay idle.

The explanation is as follows: *HaShem*, blessed is He, gives each person the ability to exert himself and endeavor in

¹⁴¹ Proverbs 14:20

pursuit of his sustenance. If a person endeavors with all his might but is still unable to sustain himself, then *HaShem*, blessed is He, fills his lacking and sends him his sustenance.

Endeavoring and exerting oneself in the pursuit of livelihood is compared to a field being plowed and sowed. Man does what is in his capacity to do, and once he has plowed and sown his field, it is *HaShem*, blessed is He, who brings the clouds and blows the winds, bringing down the rains and causing the plants and trees to grow and bear fruit. We thus see that man begins the labor, and *HaShem*, blessed is He, completes it.

Therefore, when a person begins by plowing and sowing his field, he creates a receptacle for *HaShem's* blessings to dwell within. In this manner, when a person begins his labor and toils to the extent of his abilities, *HaShem*, blessed is He, fills his lacking and sends him blessings, so that he can sustain himself.

However, if he works slothfully or he does not work at all, he will never receive blessings. This is analogous to a farmer who leaves his field to lay idle, never plowing and sowing it. The winds and rains of blessing that *HaShem* sends will not help grow his crops, for after all, he has not planted any seeds.

Now, *HaShem*, blessed is He, sustains all flesh and provides sustenance to all creatures, except the lazy man. For, because of his laziness and lack of work, he removes himself from dependence on *HaShem*, for he has no vessel within which the blessings of *HaShem* might dwell. About this, King

Solomon stated in his great wisdom,¹⁴² “The desire of the lazy kills him, for his hands refuse to work.” He also stated,¹⁴³ “Because of the winter cold the sluggard will not plow, he expects a crop at harvest time, but there is none.”

146

The confession of sins is compared to vomiting.

The explanation is as follows: Just as a person who eats spoiled food becomes sick and nauseous and regrets having eaten it, should vomit it out to feel better, so also, a person who has committed sins is commanded by *HaShem* to vomit them out by verbally confessing his sins and committing to never do them again. He thus removes himself from them, just as he would remove himself from his vomit. Because he is disgusted by it, he distances himself from it and cannot even bear to look at it. However, if he repeats his sins after having regretted and confessed them, he is compared to a dog that eats its own vomit. About this, King Solomon said in his great wisdom,¹⁴⁴ “Like a dog who returns to his vomit, so is a fool who repeats his folly.”

¹⁴² Proverbs 21:25

¹⁴³ Proverbs 20:4

¹⁴⁴ Proverbs 26:11

Good deeds in this world are compared to a farmer who is not slothful because of cold weather and plows and sows his field in the winter.

The explanation is as follows: This is the world of deeds, whereas the world to come is the world of reward. This world is thus compared to winter, whereas the world to come is compared to summer. A person who wants to do good deeds in this world cannot do so without challenges and difficulty. This is like a farmer who plows and sows his field in the winter. To do this he must endure the cold, winds, rain and snow. Nevertheless, he is industrious and does not excuse himself from his work because of bad weather.

Now sometimes, though he needs to feed himself with last season's leftover grains, he instead deprives himself and cast the grains on his field. This is because he puts his trust in *HaShem* that when harvest time will come, he will reap both the principle and the profit. Good deeds performed in this world are analogous to this. One must have faith that *HaShem*, blessed is He, will reward him handsomely in the future, if not in this world, then in the world to come, and should do them with the understanding that the reward is not immediate.

Good deeds in the world to come are compared to a farmer who harvests and gathers his grain and fruit in the summertime.

The explanation is as follows: The world to come is like the time of harvest. It is the world of rest and eternal life. It is the world in which reward is bestowed upon man for the deeds he performed in this world. This is similar to summer, when all the fruit and grain that was planted in the winter is harvested.

Thus, man must plow and sow *Mitzvot* and good deeds in this world, so that he can gather the fruit of his good deeds and have wealth and honor in the world to come. This is because the world to come is the world of eternal wealth and honor.

In truth, wealth and honor were not created for this world, which is short-lived. They only exist in this world to give man the opportunity to contemplate that just as he needs them in this world, which is short, he needs them, all the more so, in the world to come, which is eternal, and that if he does not correct his deeds in this world, he will not have the opportunity to correct them then. About this, King Solomon said in his great wisdom,¹⁴⁵ “Because of the winter cold the sluggard will not plow, He expects a crop at harvest time but there is none.”

¹⁴⁵ Proverbs 20:4

Wealth and honor in this world are compared to a person who possesses wealth and honor in his house, but never takes them out of his house to display them before kings, princes and other important people. The world to come is compared to a person who has wealth and honor and who stands in the court of the king in the company of all his ministers, princes and great and important people.

The explanation is as follows: The wealth and honor of this world are physical and have no real value, because a person is here today, but gone tomorrow. In this world, although he may receive much honor from an earthly king of flesh and blood, nonetheless, there other kings who do not recognize him and have never heard of him. Thus, all the wealth and honor a person receives in this world is analogous to a person who has great wealth and honor in his own house, but is an unknown outside of his house.

However, the wealth and honor of the world to come are bestowed upon the soul and are revealed and publicized in all of worlds, for it is the King, King of Kings, who desires to honor him. This is analogous to a person whose wealth and honor are famous throughout the world. Thus, the wealth and honor bestowed by an earthly king of flesh and blood are analogous to a person who receives honor in his own home. However, the honor that the Holy One, blessed is He, bestows upon the

righteous, is compared to a person who is honored at the king's court.

A person should contemplate all of these matters now, while he still lives in this world and do everything in his power to do what is right and good in the eyes of the Holy One, blessed is He, as King Solomon said,¹⁴⁶ “Whatever is in your power to do, do it, etc.” It also states,¹⁴⁷ “The pious shall exult in glory, they will sing joyously upon their beds.”

¹⁴⁶ Ecclesiastes 9:10

¹⁴⁷ Psalms 149:5

