

קבלת שבת

Kabbalat Shabbat

Reuven Meir Haralick

**In Dedication to
Reb Shlomo Carlebach**

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Reb Shlomo Carlebach

If there is one person who in our time has transformed the Kabbalat Shabbat prayer service, it is Reb Shlomo Carlebach. Reb Shlomo introduced a setting for conducting tefilot (prayer services) in an atmosphere of singing and dancing with simcha (joy and happiness). Prayer is not by quick dry mechanical repetition of memorized words and phrases. Reb Carlebach's prayer was not mechanical. In prayer he stood before God, not just intellectually, but with his whole body and voice. And as he stood before God, those in the congregation felt that they also were standing before God. Reb Carlebach composed uplifting melodies of the soul, melodies that can repeat and repeat, yet never become tiresome. Through his inspiration and the nigun's he has brought down and given us, the Kabbalat Shabbat Friday night prayer service has become a time during which we transcend and transition into and live the paradise of Shabbos. A person who has gotten used to the Carlebach style of Kabbalat prayer service, never wants to do it any other way.

Reb Shlomo's nigunim are very special. They are among the nigunim that the Levites sang during the time of the Temple. Reb Shlomo retrieved them from the Heavenly vault where they had lain locked up for so many years and brought them from Heaven to Earth. That is one of the reasons that when the Kabbalat Shabbat service begins with the L'chu N'ran'noh, Come let us sing, the entire congregation joins the Ba'al Tefilah and each hears the melody in unity as if we are listening and singing a Heavenly melody. As well we are also transporting our consciousness, transitioning it into Shabbat.

Pomona Shomo Minyan: Ohr Shlomo

In the small village of Pomona NY, population 3,150, a village that is about 30 miles north of New York City, live Michael and Rivka Most. Every Friday night, their living room is emptied of furniture and folding chairs are set around the room. This room becomes a sacred place for the local Shlomo Minyan. Right after candle lighting time begins Mincha, the afternoon prayer service. And after Mincha begins the Shlomo Kabbalat Shabbat service, often lead by Michael. Who would ever think that the rural village of Pomona has such a vibrant Shlomo Minyan? People from all over the US and Israel know about it. And if they are near the Pomona area, they come for Shabbat.

As Pomona is a small village, the Shlomo Minyan is small. The number of local people who come varies from about a dozen to two dozen. Sometimes Michael invites young men from Brooklyn or Lakewood. He and Rivka host some for the Shabbat and the remainder are hosted by others attending the Minyan. On these nights the Minyan can have three or four dozen or more.

When Michael begins the L'Chu N'ran'noh we become conscious of a change. We are all drawn in. There are no listeners. Everyone participates in the prayer and in the singing. As the singing builds up, it gets modulated by the rhythmic clapping, the foot stamping and the dancing. Our whole mind and body are singing to Hashem. It is surely the case that many times, Reb Shlomo himself, comes from his heavenly place to join this Minyan.

Notes and Permissions

We are appreciative to the Carlebach estate for giving permission to include the sheet music of the nigguns Reb Shlomo composed for the Kabbalat Shabbat service.

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We are also appreciative to Abigail Sarah Bagraitto for permission to use a copy of her painting *The Sabbath Queen* on the back cover of the book.

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Introduction To קבלת שבת

Shabbat is the entranceway to Gan Eden. How do we know what Gan Eden is like? We read in the Sabbath morning Mussaf service:

They shall rejoice in Your Kingship -- those who observe the Sabbath and call it a delight.

Gan Eden is rejoicing in God's Kingship, rejoicing that we are part of God's world, God's Kingdom, that our souls are part of God as subjects to Him. When do we especially place ourselves so that we consciously know this? On Shabbat. For when we observe the Sabbath, live it and rejoice in it with such a rejoicing that we call it a day of delight, then we become consciously aware that we are in God's Kingdom and we are rejoicing there. Once we are there the verse continues,

The people that sanctify the seventh day -- they will all be satisfied and delighted from Your Goodness.

Gan Eden is the state where we are completely satisfied and delighted with God's Goodness.

To live the Shabbat, is more than to live it in accordance with the Halachot. To be sure that must be done. But not doing creative activity that involves us in the physical world is only the pre-condition to transcend the physical world. For if we are only concerned with the physical world, we have held ourselves down and tied ourselves up. We cannot transcend and enter the Gan Eden of Shabbat. The Halachot are the outer part. The inner part, which the Halachot help us to do, is to change our emotional, psychological, and spiritual state to one of living on Shabbat in such a way that our state is one of complete rejoicing. We smile, we are at peace, and we radiate the joy of the Sabbath.

The issue is how to transcend and go beyond the physical world of the six weekday consciousness? To do so we must change our consciousness. We must change our consciousness and perspective that we live during the six weekdays. First we must understand the Shabbat. Then by fully participating and living the Kabbalat prayer service, by making the Kabbalat prayer service come to life, by making the words of the Kabbalat prayer service be our words, be our feelings, and be our thoughts, we can change our consciousness.

Rebbe Nachman teaches that

When the Shabbat arrives it infuses the universe with increases spirituality as an unimpeded flow of spiritual energy descends into the world. This energy initiates the spiritual ascent of everything in creation to higher levels of wholeness and holiness.

For humankind, Shabbat means the capacity for greater spiritual intensity. This wholeness holds the potential for heightened insightfulness of the mind and heightened sensitivity of the heart, the vehicles for spiritual uplifting.¹

Shabbat is the day that we focus less on the material and more on the spiritual. We sanctify time. The secular fades and the sacred make its presence known. We carry ourselves to higher levels of wholeness and holiness. We can link ourselves to the eternal world, the World to Come. Sanctification of time is not just rest, not just sleep. Sanctification of time means receptiveness to that which is beyond the physical and beyond pure intellect. This receptiveness does not come about by reasoning and logic. It comes about by opening ourselves more fully to the Divine Light. If our mind is full of concerns of business, of profession, of money, or other weekday events, the channel to receive this Divine Light is blocked. To receive we must rest, rest our minds from the busyness of the weekday. In the tranquillity of that rest, we can hear the call of the spirit.

The spirit calls to us to draw closer to God. It sings its song: Come to Me. Come to Me. It sings its song reviewing for us the truth of the week: the ways in which we pressed into reality lovingkindness, fortitude, humility, dedicatedness, rationality, vigorousness, and industriousness. When we are aware of our own strengths and weaknesses of these personal characteristics, we can help ourselves reach even higher levels of virtue the next week. For to come close to God, we must necessarily come close to the other people in our lives. And to come close to them, whether they be few or many, we must be virtuous. It is in the sacredness of the Shabbat, in the sacred joy that we live and the sacred joy we help others live that the stage is set. On Shabbat we can better understand who we truly are and what we truly want to become without the rationalizations and defenses of the intellect that constitute for us our illusions. On Shabbat we can live what we truly are.

Reb Shlomo teaches that

Some people say that in order to really be “in Shabbos,” we have to leave all our baggage outside and be a little bit *Shabbosdik* for a day.

This is not real. Mamesh being “in Shabbos” means that we take everything we have and bring it with us into the holy day.²

How can Reb Shlomo say that on Shabbos, we bring everything we have, including all that

1. Moshe Mykoff, *7th Heaven, Shabbat with Rebbe Nachman*, Breslov Research Institute, Jerusalem, 2002, p. 73.
2. Shlomo Katz, (Compiler), *The Soul of Jerusalem*, Mosaica Press, 2014, p. 20-21.

we have that we deal with during the week, and we bring all this with us on Shabbat? To understand this we must understand that if we just separate ourselves from our weekly work, just leave it at the office, then that weekly work is does not join with us in celebrating the Shabbat. It is a matter of our consciousness. If we bring everything with us on Shabbat, not only do we celebrate Shabbat, but we give the Shabbat to everything that is associated with us. This is another state of consciousness.

Reb Shlomo teaches that Kabbalat Shabbat is

a holiness that you can't add to, but you have to receive. You're not creating it and you can't destroy it. You cannot destroy it, but the question is, is it clear to you that unless you receive it, it's not shining inside of you.³

The Kabbalat Shabbat prayer service is our entranceway. We must make the words of the Kabbalat prayer service be our words, make its meaning be our meaning, make its expression be our expression, make its joy be our joy, make its yearning be our yearning. We must feel the feelings the words describe. That is why we sing them. That is why we dance them. We must believe the words by setting our frame of mind to be as close as we can make it to be the frame of mind of the Psalmist. When we think the thought, sing the words, dance the rhythm, feel the feeling, we put into our subconscious the reality that we are greeting God, we are blessing God, we are exalting God, not just in the Kabbalat Shabbat prayer service, but in our lives, daily, in the work place and in the market place. Our subconscious then externalizes that internal reality into our full reality for the entire week.

We must understand the language of the prayers themselves. For its expressions, its symbols and phrase usages are not our ordinary expressions, symbols, and phrase usages. We may read its words but may not truly understand what we are praying. And if we cognitively miss its true meaning, we diminish the help it gives us in transcending into the sacredness of the Shabbat.

Reb Shlomo teaches that

If anything good happens to me and I think I deserve it, and I think I prepared myself for it, I might have joy, but I'll never experience bliss. Bliss is if I absolutely know I don't deserve it. What a gift, what a gift. Therefore on Shabbos we say "Mekadesh HaShabbos," (Who sanctifies the Shabbat). Shabbos comes from such a place that only God can give it to me.⁴

3. Shlomo Carlebach, *The Torah Commentary of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, Genesis, Part I*, (Shlomo Katz, editor), Urim Publications, Jerusalem 2012, p.87.

4. Shlomo Carlebach, *The Torah Commentary of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, Genesis, Part I*, (Shlomo Katz, editor), Urim Publications, Jerusalem 2012, p.249.

This is the purpose of this book: to help us understand the Kabbalat Shabbat prayer service so that by fully participating in it, we may transcend into the sacredness of the Shabbat.

The Talmud (Shabbos 119a) teaches that as the Shabbos drew near, the Talmudic Sage R' Chanina would don his finest clothing and invite others to join him in going out to greet 'the Bride, the [Shabbos] Queen.' A thousand years later, the Kabbalists of Safed embellished this custom by actually walking out to the fields to welcome the Shabbos. It was there in Safed that the welcoming the Shabbos, service was first formulated and from there it spread to the entire world.⁵

First we recite six psalms [95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 29], an allusion to the six days of work just past. The theme of these hymns is the rise and the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth, the universal goal of the worldwide Sabbath to come, of whose glory the weekly Sabbath is only a faint reflection and for which we are to prepare ourselves by our weekday endeavors. By way of introduction, Psalm 95 tells us that this supreme goal is indeed attainable, for even though God, wroth at the errors of our fathers, had sworn "they shall never come into My rest", He has nevertheless given us the opportunity to attain to this salvation at any time, even this very day, "if only you will hearken to His voice."

In Psalm 96, Israel calls upon all the peoples, all the families of nations, -- in short, upon all the rest of mankind, to join with us and with all living things in the world-wide chorus of homage to our God, "before the Lord, for He comes, He comes to judge the earth." Now we look into the future, anticipating the bliss of the kingdom of God that is to be and we say, "once the Lord will have begun His reign, the earth will rejoice", all those who would scoff at Him shall be put to shame and the righteous will jubilate in pure and perfect happiness (Psalm 97) and even nature, now liberated, will rejoice, for its forces will then no longer be exploited for immoral purposes (Psalm 98). The Lord shall be enthroned once more in Zion, lowering Himself upon the wings of Cherubim, high above all the nations, and once again the sons of man will cast themselves down before Him on His holy mountain (Psalm 99). All the forces that fill the universe will then be recognized for what they really are, nothing more than simply the "voice of the Lord." The universe will be a Temple in which all things will proclaim His glory; then the Lord will truly become the King of all the Universe, but to His people in particular He will grant victorious power and the long-awaited bliss of peace (Psalm 29).

These six psalms serve, at the threshold of the holy Sabbath, to inspire us with that exaltation, and imbue us with that serenity and peace of mind which our sages have called "the additional soul" that is granted to every Jew on the Sabbath.⁶

5. Shimon Finkelman, *Shabbos*, Mesorah Publications, New York, 1994, p 113.

6. Elie Munk, *The World of Prayer, Vol 2*, Gertrude Hirschler, trans., Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem 1963, p4-5.

Psalm 95

On the eve of the Sabbath, the holiest of days, when Israel is granted a glimmer of the future world of spiritual bliss, it is customary to welcome the Sabbath with the **קבלת שבת**, the welcoming service that begins with this psalm and its call: “Come! Let us sing to Hashem.”⁷

This is the sixth of the eleven psalms which Moses composed. He dedicated it to the tribe of Issachar, a family of scholars who were constantly immersed in **רננה של תורה**, the joyous song of Torah.

This psalm is composed of two parts. The first seven verses are the Psalmist’s call to his people: Come with alacrity to sing to God, to praise Him, to thank Him, to acknowledge Him as the sole Creator and Guiding Force -- of the universe in general and Israel in particular. True, in our present state of exile and subjugation we may seem to be forsaken, but this situation is only temporary -- it can change, “today! if we but heed His call.”

The second section is in the form of a direct exhortation from God to Israel, in which He recalls the disastrous results of our ancestor’s sins in the Wilderness and urges us not to emulate that course.

Only the joyous song of Torah study can lift Israel out of the present wilderness of exile. Surely Israel will be redeemed when every Jew turns to his brother and declares: “Let us strive for spiritual excellence and ecstasy and sing joyously to Hashem!”

Psalm 95 portrays our exile as a second journey through the wilderness to which we ourselves can put an end at any time through our own good conduct. This psalm appeals to us to complete this pilgrimage through the ages with gladness, and thereby to pave the way for the universal worship of God on earth.⁸

Radak explains that this psalm refers to the future era of the Messiah when Israel will achieve a deeper awareness of God’s power and omnipresence. Then every Jew will arouse his neighbor with the words of this psalm, urging him to praise the Almighty for the wonders He wrought during the epoch of Messianic triumph and redemption.⁹

Come Let us Sing to Hashem,

לְכוּ נִרְנְנָה לַיהוָה

The verb **לכו**, is the second person masculine plural imperative of the verb **הלך**, meaning to

7. Avroham Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1175.

8. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 173.

9. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York 2001, p. 1176.

go, or to walk. There are other a couple of other times where this verb is used in the imperative form in the Torah which are helpful to understand its use here. When God is talking to Abraham and is telling him to go from his father's house, from his land of birth, the Torah uses the verb **לך**. God is telling Abraham to go from where he is to another place, a place that Abraham cannot even understand because it is a place he has not yet experienced. It is a place, a land the God will show him. There are two senses to this kind of going. Not only is it a going from one place to another, but is a going from one state of spiritual consciousness and being to another state. And it is exactly this meaning that it has in Psalm 95. It is a directive and it is exhorting us with an urgent appeal. Go from where your spiritual state of being and consciousness currently is and move to the God consciousness state where you would be singing to Hashem. Thus, Go forth, let us sing to Hashem.

The term **לכו**, [literally go forth, but typically translated as] come, represents an enthusiastic appeal, urging someone to surrender his doubts or leave a course of action to which he has become attached, Forget your preoccupation with material concerns and heretical beliefs, the Psalmist urges, and join me in singing God's praises! (Meiri)¹⁰

The Jews will say to each other in Messianic times that they should sing praises to God, Who saved them. In such places, the word **לכו** does not denote going or coming, but an appeal to respond with alacrity.¹¹

“Oh go forth,” we are told, cease dwelling upon doleful thoughts, let us rejoice, and let us give loud voice to this our joy (this is the literal meaning of **רנו**. Let us stir up homage to Him Who is the rock of our straight, unbowed existence (this is the literal meaning of **ישע**) in the midst of our affliction.¹²

Some say that the psalm refers to the ingathering of the exiles. As the Book of Ezekiel makes clear, this will take place prior to the coming of the Messiah, when they will repent and return to God. The Jewish people will say, *Come let us rejoice in song to the Lord* that He has brought us out from the midst of the nations. Let us sound the royal salute to the King who has overwhelmed superior forces, contrary to the natural pattern predicted by the constellations.¹³

Let us call out to the rock of our salvation.

נְרִיעָה לְצוּר יְשַׁעֲנוּ:

The directive of the first verse continues with the next few verses. But already it is more

10. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1176.

11. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms, Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 368.

12. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 173.

13. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 57.

than a directive. For when we go out and change our consciousness, attuning ourselves to Shabbat, our natural reaction will be to call out with joy to the rock of our salvation.

The verb **נריעה**, is the first person common plural of the Hiphil imperfect form of the verb **רוע**, which means to passionately or triumphantly shout or call out with joy. So we are not just singing to Hashem, we are moving to a state of passionate shouting with joy. This triumphant passionate shouting is not to the Hashem under the name **י-ה-ו-ה**, the eternal transcendental name, but to the rock, **צור**, the name that brings to mind that there is a part of Hashem within physicality, a part of Hashem with whom we have a personal relationship. As a rock is hard and unbreakable, so is Hashem unbreakable. And in this relationship, Hashem is the one who brings us our salvation. Salvation is salvation from death, the death we brought upon ourselves when we were thrown out of Gan Eden.

Let us imbue our spirits with the awareness of the glorious character of our mission, which no blow of fate can dim, and let us come before Him, not with lamentation but with thanksgiving.¹⁴

Let us all recognize God as the source of our strength and salvation. Let us demonstrate our faith and obedience in a dramatic and public fashion, just as the shofar is sounded publicly to announce the coronation of a new King (Malbim).¹⁵

The first part of the verse refers to God as Hashem, the four letter name formed from the letters of **היה הוה ויהיה**, Who was, Who is, and Who will be. This Name suggests to all nations that He brought everything into existence and is the Source of all life -- past, present, and future. Israel, however, has a more personal awareness of God. To us, He is **צור ישענו**, the Rock of our salvation, because He is the Protector of Israel throughout our history. No matter how imminent Israel's destruction has often seemed, God always prevented the inevitable from happening (Avnei Eliyahu).¹⁶

The four letter name is God, the eternal and transcendent. The rock is a symbol of the presence God in our physical reality. Especially on Shabbat, we go forth in the direction of God eternal and transcendent to recognize the sacred presence of God in our physical reality. We shift our consciousness to the sacred.

Let us welcome His presence with thanksgiving, **נְקַדְמָה כְּנִיּוֹ בְּתוֹדָה**

The root of **נְקַדְמָה** is **קדם**, which means to advance, to welcome or receive. As a noun it means ancient days as in **חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם**, restore our days as of old, or **אֱלֹהֵי קֶדֶם**, ancient God or eternal God. As an adverb it means previously, before or prior to. It carries the

14. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 173.

15. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1176.

16. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York 2001, p. 1176.

notion of primordial being, from the beginning. In the beginning we were consciously with the presence of Hashem. Now we have to direct our consciousness to receive Hashem and then we can be conscious of His presence at it was in the beginning.

פָּנָיו literally means His face, His countenance, His front. The presence of Hashem is His face. As a noun, **פָּנִים** is related to **פָּנֶה**, which means turn, turning, or facing. Thus there is a sense not only of face and facing, but also one of turning toward. We are greeting Hashem by turning toward Hashem with thanksgiving.

The front pairs with the back. The front is the face. When we look into another person's face we relate to the essence of that person. The back is what hides the essence. By greeting the face of Hashem we are greeting that part of Hashem's essence to which we can relate. There is a secret here. We turn toward the front of Hashem. The front of Hashem cannot be seen with our eyes, for our eyes only see physical objects, forms and shapes situated in space separated from everything else. But our turning toward Hashem lets us feel, experience, or sense the presence of Hashem. This presence is experienced as an unfathomable unity. We have no words and no thoughts. Only the feeling of unity. It all happens in our consciousness.

There is one other place in Tanach we are urged to turn toward Hashem in a way that we can experience His Presence.. The verse is¹⁷

Always [continually] search for His countenance [face]

בְּקִשׁוֹ פָּנָיו תָּמִיד

Both places are telling us that we are to raise our consciousness to experience, sense and feel Hashem's unified presence. We are to greet His Face [Front], His essence, and continually search for His Face [Front], essence in all of our situations.

When Hashem shows or reveals Himself, we only can see His Back, His Hiddenness. But when we search for His revelation, and when we greet Him or search for Him, we can experience or feel His Front.

Let us thank Him orally for the good that He has bestowed upon us.¹⁸

In the time of the Messiah, when we give thanks for the miracle of our deliverance, *we will come before His presence with thanksgiving.* We will bring thanksgiving-offerings in the Holy Temple, and *shout joyously to Him* with psalms for the glory of God.¹⁹

17. I Chronicles 16:11; Psalms 105:4

18. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms*, Vol. 3, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 368.

19. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 59.

With praiseful songs let us call out to Him.

בְּזִמְרוֹת נְרִיעַ לוֹ:

When we experience the Living Presence and Unity of Hashem, it brings us to the state of expressing ourselves by passionately singing joyful and praiseful songs to Him.

This is the last exhortation in the introduction. It directs us to call out, to shout out with joy in praiseful song. The root of נְרִיעַ is רוּע, which as a noun is תְּרוּעָה, a loud shout, like the blast of the shofar.

*And all Israel shouted with a great shout.*²⁰

וַיִּרְעוּ כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל תְּרוּעָה גְדוֹלָה

We stir up homage to Him not with plaintive dejection, but בְּזִמְרוֹת נְרִיעַ לוֹ, by the singing of songs. נְרִיעַ is the predicate giving the reasons for this call. For there is nothing better suited to call the attention of the non-Jewish world in which Israel lives and must suffer, to the One and Only God, and to the bliss inherent in a loyal life of duty dedicated to Him, than the observations that men who lack all those things which are ordinarily deemed sources of support and joy of life, still find in the God given moral and spiritual treasures sufficient joyous compensation for whatever has been denied them.²¹

After we offer thanksgiving for the kindness that God dispensed in the past, we will pray for His continued kindness in the future (Midrash Chachomim).²²

For a great God is Hashem

כִּי אֵל גְּדוֹל יְיָ

Having followed the directions of the beginning verses, we have brought ourselves to a God-conscious state. And we begin singing to him *For a great God is Hashem*, just as Moses led the Israelites to sing the Psalm.

While Israel languishes in exile, heretics dare to deny that Hashem is God. But in the Messianic era, God's presence and supervision will be clearly evident; then all will admit His greatness (Radak).²³

Then [in the time of the Messiah] we shall say this, for then no one will deny, as they do now, that God has power or that He controls the world. In the time of the Messiah, it will obvious that He is Omnipotent.²⁴

20. I Samuel 4:5.

21. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 173-174.

22. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1176.

23. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1176.

24. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms, Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 368.

And a great King
Above all heavenly powers.

וּמַלְךְ גָּדוֹל
עַל כָּל אֱלֹהִים:

We are holding the awareness that Hashem is a great King, above all heavenly powers.

The **אלהים** of this verse refers, of course to the angels and other forces through whom God exercises His mastery of the universe. Thus, He assigns one force to provide rainfall, another to heal the sick, a third to regulate the tides, and so on. But no matter how strong and independent these powers seem to be, He is their acknowledged King. Human beings, too, are called to inculcate themselves with this recognition (Radak).²⁵

These are the celestial hosts, which are appointed as judges (**אלהים**) over the earth. Then everyone will recognize that He is the King over them and they do nothing other than His bidding.²⁶

For Hashem, to Whom we look for every moment of our lives both as individuals and as a nation, is great as **אל**, as the Lord and original Fount of all forces.²⁷

Although God is **מלך**, king, i.e. judge, and during the 10 days from New Year's until the Day of Atonement, the days of penitence, we remind ourselves of this fact by inserting several references to God's being king in the daily **אמירה** prayer, nonetheless He is **אל גדול**. He is full of kindness, and this attribute overshadows the attribute of justice, i.e. **על כל אלהים**, whenever this attribute of justice is in evidence.²⁸

Here the Singer begins the substance of his praise of God. *For the Lord is a great God* in stature and power. He is *a great King* above all gods -- the Sovereign *over all heavenly hosts* or powers, that control ("judge") the earth. In the time of the Messiah, it will be recognized that God is King over any and all these "gods." They can do nothing unless it is as His envoys.²⁹

All other manifestations of dominion will then acknowledge that God is higher, that He dominates them. As it says,³⁰

25. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1177.

26. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms, Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 368.

27. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 174.

28. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 721.

29. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 60.

30. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 60.

And it shall come to pass on that day, that the Lord will punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.³¹

For in his hand are the mysteries of the earth

אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ מְחַקְרֵי אֶרֶץ

In our awareness of the greatness of Hashem, we become aware of the beautiful even unimaginable intricacy and complexity of what Hashem has created. For example, in the early 1900's a human cell was known to have a nucleus and protoplasm. The nucleus contained the DNA which carries the genetic information. In our century, the 21st century, the situation is vastly more complex. It is now known that there are biomolecular rotational and translational motors. These motors convert chemical energy into mechanical work or motion. They exhibit remarkable control and precision, very often at levels rarely seen in man-made motors. They constitute the basis of cellular function.

The typical biomolecular motor is a protein that uses free energy from ATP (Adenosine Tri-phosphate) or other nucleotide triphosphate (NTP) hydrolysis as its fuel to produce mechanical force. ATP is the universal currency of energy in biological systems and, in almost every living cell, is generated from glucose by a sequence of reactions called glycolysis. These motor proteins are involved in several critical cellular processes and have functions ranging from ATP synthesis, organelle transport, muscle contraction, protein folding and nucleic acid translocation. The cell itself is a complex system with nano parts, geometric sensors, chemical sensors, precision motors, molecular and quantum level reactions. All this is absolutely amazing and this is just one example of the mysteries of the earth created by God.

Literally, the word **מַחְקֵי** means examination, or investigation. Here it indicates that there are many natural phenomena which defy logic and human investigation, yet God understands every aspect of nature (Meiri). Similarly, God examines the depths of every human heart and knows man's deepest thoughts (Meir Tehillos).³²

Just as the heights of the heavens and earth are in His hands and He is King over them, so too are the depths of the earth. Mezudath David defines **מַחְקֵי**, as "hidden mysteries of the earth," which require searching in order to be solved.³³

And the mountain summits are his.

וְתוֹעֵפּוֹת הַרִים לוֹ:

The term **תוֹעֵפּוֹת** is linked to **עוֹף יְעוֹפֵף**, *birds that fly above*³⁴. Hence it refers to soaring mountain peaks.³⁵

31. *Isaiah* 24:21.

32. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1177-1178.

33. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms, Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 368.

34. Genesis 1:20.

35. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York,

Some render the term **תועפות** in the sense of uncovering and shining as in,

*Its darkness will be like the morning.*³⁶

It is the will of God that man should explore and study the open places of the earth and the mountains.³⁷

For His is the sea

אֲשֶׁר לֹה הַיָּם

And he made it

וְהוּא עָשָׂהוּ

His Hands formed the dry land

וַיַּבְשֵׁת יָדָיו יַבְשָׁר

The sea has no marks of distinction. Everywhere in the sea looks the same. The land has all kinds of marks of distinction. We call them landmarks. Our spiritual service involves taking all the various kinds of distinctions the land has and in our consciousness unifying them thereby completing them and identifying them with and indeed bringing them to their source in Hashem.

Be'er Avraham explains that **יצירה**, fashioning, denotes the shaping of the general outline and dimensions of an object whereas **עשיה**, literally making, refers to completing an object, down to the last detail.³⁹

The sea was *made* for the sea does not require improvement: *He made it complete*. By contrast, the dry land was *formed*, which yet requires the stage of making by man.⁴⁰

God purposely fashioned the dry land and the creatures that inhabit it in a way that left them imperfect. He entrusted the earth to the seventy nations and charged them with the task of bringing every creature in their domain to its ultimate perfection.

This does not apply to the sea, however, *The sea is His* [God's] alone, for He did not apportion it to any one of the seventy nations. Since *He made it* and perfected it,

1991, p. 60.

36. Job 11:17.

37. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 61.

38. *Psalm* 139:20.

39. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1178.

40. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 61.

its creatures need not be refined by human hands. That is why fish do not require the ritual slaughter which is mandatory for kosher meat.⁴¹

First he mentions the earth in general, and now he mentions the sea and the dry land in particular, for all is His, in His hands and in His domain. He fashioned it [the waters] so that it would be gathered in one place. All living creatures and vegetation should be on the dry land. Since everything both above and below is in God's hands, it is in His power to raise and to humble whomever He wishes. He humbled us for the duration of our exile, and now He exalts us over all peoples.⁴²

His hands shaped the earth, including the land of Israel, and *He made the seas*. Originally, 2/3 of the globe had been covered by dry land. During the generation of Enosh, God expanded the sea, so that only 1/3 of the globe remained as dry land. The reason He did not flood more of the earth is that His own hand shaped the **יבשת**, i.e. **ארץ ישראל**, the land of Israel. The reason the land of Israel is called **יבשת**, dry land, is that even during the deluge in the days of Noah, this land was not flooded.⁴³

Regardless of the location, province or district upon which the Jew may happen in his wanderings, he is everywhere under the sovereignty of the One God, and the One God is near, ruling and commanding, wherever the Jew may go.⁴⁴

Come, let us prostrate ourselves and bow

בָּאוּ נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וְנִכְרַעַה

Let us kneel before God, our maker.

נִבְרָכָה לִפְנֵי יְיָ עֲשֵׂנוּ:

Having now thought about and sung the greatness of Hashem, the amazing complexity of what He has created and the unifying and harmony we must do in our spiritual service, our feeling is exactly the directions given in this verse. We feel like humbling ourselves by prostrating, stretching ourselves out on the ground in adoration and submission to Hashem. Then as we get up, we feel like bowing down. And after bowing down, we get up and feel like kneeling before Hashem our maker.

In the Future, we will owe praise and thanksgiving to God for His deliverance and we will all acknowledge that the Lord is a great God. But that will not be enough. *Come, let us prostrate ourselves and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.* We will be subservient to His glory as a servant is acquiescent under the yoke of his master.⁴⁵

41. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1178.

42. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms, Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 368.

43. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 722.

44. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 174.

45. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 62.

They will say to one another, “Come, let us prostrate ourselves,” for we are obliged to thank Him and to kneel before Him with all sorts of prostrations. [Prostration] denotes spreading out the body on the ground, including the arms and legs. Let us bend the head and part of the body. This is how we bow when reciting the blessings of the Amidah. Let us kneel denotes kneeling with the knees on the ground.⁴⁶

Rashi points out that⁴⁷ the verb root of “let us kneel” is the same verb root of Genesis 24:11 when Eliezer, the head of Avraham’s house, traveled to Nahore to seek out a wife for Yitzhak, he

*kneeled the camels down outside the city by the well,*⁴⁸

There he waited for a maiden to come who might volunteer to water the camels. Water is a code word for Torah, for spirituality. When we kneel down, physically or metaphorically, we open ourselves to receive from Hashem. On shabbat we open ourselves to receive from Hashem.

This was the call that Adam, the first man created by God Himself, addressed to all the creatures of the world: to Acknowledge the kingship of God, the Creator, and to submit to His will completely. We, as Jews, have reason to be even more responsive to this call.⁴⁹

Therefore: “Come, let us all unite in one emotion in perfect devotion to Him in both our lives and actions, as expressed by **השתחויה**, casting ourselves down before Him.” While in other instances **כריעה**, “kneeling,” precedes the act of prostration (Esther 3:2,5), the order is reversed here, thus indicating a rising up immediately following the prostration. For according to our sages all that is glorious, blessed and great can be won by such unreserved devotion. This same thought seems to be indicated here by the fact that the act of rising up comes only after the complete and perfect prostration.⁵⁰

Sfas Emes comments that “Let us prostrate” refers to the morning service (**שחרית**), in which man begins the day by dedicating his entire being to God’s service. **שחר** literally means dawn. “Let us bow” refers to the afternoon service (**מנחה**), when man pauses in the midst of his daily activities to pay homage to God. [Bowing alludes to mid-day because a person bows from the waist, the middle of the body.] “Let us kneel” refers to the evening service (**ערבית**). When one sinks to his knees, it appears as if he is returning to the earth from which the first man once emerged. Similarly,

46. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms*, Vol. 3, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 368.

47. *Rashi’s Commentary on Psalms*, Mayer Gruber, Translator, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 2007, p. 595.

48. **Genesis** 42:11

49. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer*, Vol 2, Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 12.

50. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 174.

at night a man returns his soul to his Maker and return to his source when he sinks into sleep.⁵¹

For He is our God

כִּי הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ

And we are the people of His pasture

וְאֵנְחֵנוּ עִם מְרְעֵיתוֹ

And the flock [guided by] his Hand -- this day

וְצֹאן יָדוֹ הַיּוֹם

If we will listen to His voice

אִם בְּקִלּוֹ תִשְׁמָעוּ:

Having humbled ourselves and now standing, we realize that He is our God and we are the people of His pasture. His hand guides the flock. We just have to listen to His voice. For when we listen we are affirming that we are his people.

When are we His people? That is so when *we are the people of His pasture*, and not when we are in the category of lions. As it says,

*My inheritance has become to Me as a lion in the forest; it cries out against me.*⁵²

The Midrash teaches that this is so only when we conduct ourselves humbly like sheep, rather than like lions. Every lion is himself a monarch, and in his pride thinks that he is greater than any other.⁵³

How aptly does this express the special relationship between God and our people: He is our Shepherd, and we are His own flock; we are directly under His Divine Providence. It is, therefore, our special duty to hearken to His voice and carry out His commandments -- this day, meaning, in this world (Rashi), in this world of action.⁵⁴

Having expressed this special relationship between God and the Jewish people as Shepherd and flock, the psalmist goes on to refer to the Exodus of our people from Egypt and the forty years' wandering through the desert. That was the time when God first showed His personal concern for our people and the special care He took of His flock. The psalm concludes on a note of caution: The "resting place" the Promised Land, can be reached only by following the way of God -- if you will only hearken to His voice.⁵⁵

51. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1179.

52. Jeremiah 12:8.

53. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 64.

54. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer, Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 13.

55. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer, Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 13.

This verse states the motivation for the emotions described above; namely, the joyous mood, the song and thanksgiving before the Lord, as well as the solemnity of the symbolic act of perfect devotion to Him. “for He is still our God; with every act of ours we are still the people whom He guides, and we are the flock of His almighty hand with every turn of our destinies. All this is true and fully valid היום, “even today, if only we will hearken to His voice.” Obedience is the only condition necessary for גאולה. The Holy Scriptures and our Sages state no other stipulation for our deliverance than תשובה, a return to perfect obedience to God, היום אם בקלו תשמעו.⁵⁶

Today, if you would but heed His voice. The scripture teaches a great principle about how to serve God. It is that one should not think of more than one day at a time. Whether it be to earn a livelihood and care for one’s needs, or to serve God, do not look from one day to the next. Consider *today* -- only this day and only the immediate hour.

When one embarks upon a path of serving God, this seems burdensome. But if a man considers that he has no more than this day and this hour, it will not be at all burdensome.

Nor should one delay from one day to the next. Do not say to yourself that tomorrow you will begin to pray and the like. For a man does not possess anything in this world except the present day and the present hour. Tomorrow is already quite another day entirely. Therefore: *Today, if you would but heed His voice!*⁵⁷

Radak explains: If we would only listen to His commands, God would repeat the miracles of the exodus from Egypt for us even today. All God asks is that we do not repeat the defiance of the Jews who tested Him immediately after He released them from bondage.

If all of Israel would repent even for one day, the son of David [the Messiah] would immediately arrive, as this verse attests: “Even today, if we but heed His call.” If all of Israel would observe a single Sabbath properly, the son of David would arrive. Scripture refers to the Sabbath as היום, today [literally the day, i.e., the day par excellence] (Exodus 16:25), and the Psalmist assures Israel: Even today [the Messiah will come], *if we but heed His call* (Yerushalmi Taanis 1:1).⁵⁸

Psalm 95 began with the exhortation: *Let us sing to Hashem.* As we follow this exhortation to sing, our consciousness begins moving from the weekday consciousness to the Shabbat consciousness. As the consciousness of the psalmist changes, the psalmist rises becoming

56. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 175.

57. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 65.

58. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1180.

closer and closer to Hashem and finally to the level of prophet and begins speaking the words of Hashem.

Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah	אַל תִּקְשׁוּ לְבַבְכֶם כְּמֵרִיבָה
As on the day of Massah in the wilderness	כְּיוֹם מַסָּה בְּמִדְבָּר:
When your forefathers tried Me	אֲשֶׁר נִסּוּנִי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם
They tested me, though they had seen my deed	בְּחַנוּנֵי גַם רָאוּ פְעָלִי:

Now begins the concluding verses of the psalm. We have reached the state of consciousness where we can hear Hashem as the prophets heard Hashem. He directly implores us not to harden our hearts and not to test Hashem as our forefathers tested Hashem in the wilderness. Do not understand these verses as a command. Understand them as Hashem pleading with the Israelites. “Please, do not harden your hearts ...”

Here they were in this vast and terrible wilderness, and every day beheld the wonders of God, yet they *tested Me*.⁵⁹

Do not harden your hearts as your ancestors did at the place Massah and Meribah (Exodus 17:7), “because of the quarrel of the children of Israel and because they tested the Lord, saying ‘Is the Lord in our midst or not?’ ” They tested Me many times, even though they had seen My work in Egypt. They had seen that I had split the sea for them, brought down manna for them, and split the rock for them. Nevertheless, they tested Me, both before and after they saw what I did for them.⁶⁰

The Israelites in the wilderness committed two wrongs. For one, *your forefathers tried Me* when they said, *Is the Lord among us or not*.⁶¹ Secondly they tested Me by complaining about the abundance I bestowed upon them, when they said about the manna, *Our soul loathes this miserable bread*.⁶² They acted in this manner, though *they saw My work*, that I alone could do contrary to the pattern of nature.⁶³

מריבה denotes dissatisfaction with Divine guidance, and **מסה** refers to a doubting of the adequacy of God’s power, or at least of that of His protecting and aiding presence. In the wilderness, where every moment of their continued survival should have been to them the most ample proof of God’s extraordinary saving and protecting power and presence, they should have had no cause at all for **מסה**, for

59. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me’am Lo’ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 66.

60. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms*, Vol. 3, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 369.

61. *Exodus* 17:7.

62. *Numbers* 21:5.

63. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me’am Lo’ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 66.

harboring those doubts that led them to put God to the test, נִסּוּי. נִסָּה is “to put to the test,” to see whether someone is indeed capable of a certain achievement. בְּחִן is to determine the degree of value and strength inherent in another. נִסּוּי, “What they had already experienced concerning God’s power was not sufficient for them; they constantly demanded new proofs.”⁶⁴

They doubted God’s ability to perform wonders in the wilderness. They repeatedly tested God, to see if He could sustain them. Even after God demonstrated His supernatural power and provided them with miraculous nutrition in the form of manna, they were not satisfied. Then they tested God’s works and complained about what they had seen, lamenting⁶⁵

*There is no bread nor is there any water and our soul loathes this miserable bread [i.e., the manna].*⁶⁶

The Psalmist now alludes to various instances in which the Jews had defied God in the wilderness. In general, God considered that generation to be very difficult and stubborn:

*And Hashem said to Moses, “I have seen this nation and behold it is a stiff-necked nation.”*⁶⁷

Immediately after they left Egypt the Jews refused to put their full faith in God. When they had no water, they did not hesitate to quarrel with God and to challenge Him.⁶⁸

The Israelite nation was particularly difficult because they had just experienced the plagues in Egypt that set them free, the daily manna in the dessert that fed them, and the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day that led them through the dessert.⁶⁹ Likewise in our day there are constant miracles that are a one-of-a kind coincidences that are not coincidences. We will perceive them if we can maintain ourselves in a God conscious state. If we are not in a God conscious state, we will not perceive them. And not perceiving them, we will not know His ways. And we will in our own way be just like the Israelites, a stiff necked people.

*And they called the name of the place Massah and Merivah because of the quarrel of the Children of Israel and their testing of Hashem saying, “Is Hashem among us or not?”*⁷⁰

64. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 176.

65. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1181.

66. *Numbers* 21:5.

67. *Exodus* 32:9.

68. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1181.

69. *Exodus* 13:21-22.

70. *Exodus* 17:7.

God's love and care for them so clearly demonstrated in the Exodus should have remained uppermost in their minds when they were at a temporary loss to understand why God was withholding water from them. Their failure in this regard was a result of their allowing themselves to succumb to the physical pressures of their immediate situation, instead of living with the higher reality which they had been shown.⁷¹

For forty years	אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה
I was angry with that generation	אֶקְוֵט בְּדוֹר
Then I said, an errant hearted people are they	וְאָמַר עַם תַּעֲיֵי לִבָּב הֵם
And they do not know my ways.	וְהֵם לֹא יָדְעוּ דַרְכָּי:

Here the pleading of Hashem continues. “Look what you have done for forty years”. Angry here does not mean angry as one person might get angry with another. Angry here means that that generation pushed away from Him. So in their own reflection, they experienced Hashem as pushing away from them. It is the way I created the world. Those who push me away will not be able to experience my presence. Those who do so continuously, continuously make errors. They do not know my way. My way is to bring an intense meaningful joy and peace to those who unite with me.

After Hashem finishes pleading, he begins to speak from the intellect, the side of discernment and judgment. He makes a judgment: they are an errant hearted people and they do not know my ways.

Some translate אֶקְוֵט in the sense of cutting off as in *whose trust shall be cut off*⁷². The scripture indicates that the process of their destruction (cutting off) continued for forty years.

I concluded that I would quarrel with this generation for 40 years, since I ascribe their behavior to an erring heart, that they did not know My ways. Their problem is the **יצר הרע**, the dual heart. We have a tradition that a person does not thoroughly understand all his teacher tries to teach him, until he has studied with him for 40 years, (based on Deuteronomy 29:3 and Talmud Avodah Zarah 5).⁷³

The Lord speaks: “For forty years I strove to effect the improvement of an entire generation of that era by showing them that I was displeased with them and by making them feel My displeasure. I thought that they had simply erred and would therefore let themselves be cured of their error and recognize the truth. But this whole generation with whom I had taken such pains still did not come to recognize

71. Menachem Davis (ed.), *The Book of Psalms*, Mesorah Publications Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 269.

72. Job 8:14.

73. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 723.

My ways. **דרכי** are the ways of My sovereignty and the paths in which men should walk in accordance with My will.⁷⁴

Because the Israelites who left Egypt were not righteous at heart, they failed to recognize God's enormous power and His interest in their welfare. It was not God Who was remiss -- rather the Israelites perception of Him. Therefore God decreed forty years of wandering in the wilderness during which all the adults of that generation would die.⁷⁵

I quarreled with them because the incident of the spies angered Me until I decreed that they tarry in the desert for forty years. They did not recognize the miracles that I had performed for them. They were afraid to enter the land and did not trust in Me. Therefore, I swore that they would not enter, and those who were twenty years old when they left Egypt died in the desert.⁷⁶

Although I have sworn that you will not come to **מנוחתי**, the land of My rest, this is only as long as you have no one from whose merit you can benefit. Once Moses will be resurrected and enter the land of Israel, -- you will be resurrected also, thanks to his merit. This is what our sages had in mind when they said that when Moses come in the future, he will bring the generation of the **יוציא מצרים**, the generation of the Exodus, with him (Pesikta zutrati, Deuteronomy 1:37).⁷⁷

Ibn Ezra points out that throughout the bulk of the forty year sojourn, God did not communicate with Moses. Moses lost his prophetic vision [because a prophet is only granted Divine perception in the merit of the people whom he represents. If they quarrel with God and reject his instruction (as communicated by the prophet), the channels of prophecy become blocked, for God concludes that it is fruitless for His prophet to convey additional Divine directives to a rebellious people].⁷⁸

Therefore, I have sworn in my wrath

אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי בְּאַפִּי

That they shall not enter my resting place.

אִם יָבֹאוּן אֶל מְנוּחָתִי:

What does resting place mean? It means a place of being in which the experience is a joyous peace, oneness, and rest. The phrase: "they shall not enter my resting place" means that Hashem has created the world in such a way, that those people who follow Hashem's way will move themselves closer to Hashem and experience a joyous peace, oneness, and rest. And those that do not follow Hashem's way will move themselves farther from Hashem and will not have the experience of a joyous

74. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 176.

75. Menachem Davis (ed.), *The Book of Psalms*, Mesorah Publications Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 269-270.

76. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms*, Vol. 3, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 369- 370.

77. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 723.

78. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1181.

peace, oneness and rest.

Hashem does not change. Therefore, Hashem does not go from a non-angry state to an angry state. The Torah is written in the language of man. Should another person prevent me from experiencing his resting place of a joyous peace, oneness, and rest, we might say the other person is angry, pushing me away from his “resting place”.

So that finally My displeasure grew so great that I swore in My wrath, “They shall not come into My rest,” I swore that they should not attain the ultimate goal to which I intended to guide them by leading them through the wilderness.⁷⁹

My resting place -- into the land of Israel and Jerusalem, which I called “resting place,” as it says *this is my resting place to eternity*⁸⁰ and *to the resting place and to the inheritance*⁸¹ This is where the Israelites rested. God calls it “My resting place,” meaning the resting place that I gave them.⁸²

The statement I have sworn in my wrath is written in the language of man. Hashem has no wrath. Hashem does not change. The meaning is this: the world is created in a way so that those to do not follow my ways, will not find my presence. And if they do not find my presence, they will not experience the completeness and peace of my resting place.

The decree that they must die in the wilderness was pronounced in the second year, but it was in God’s thought when they made the Golden Calf. Yet He waited until the spies had sinned, because the Israelites blamed the “mixed multitude” in their midst for the Golden Calf. They claimed that this “multitude” had incited them to commit the transgression. The spies dispatched by Moses to scout the land were all men of high lineage, and when they sinned, God took account of the previous sin as well.⁸³

That they shall not enter My land of contentment. Indeed the Jews did not deserve to enter the Promised Land. For God designed it as an abode of tranquility and prosperity, but the Jews despised it and maligned it as a place of danger and death (Radak). The Talmud (Sanhedrin 100a) teaches that [literally my rest] refers to the eternal rest and reward in the World to Come.⁸⁴

Rabbi Akiva maintains that the generation of the wilderness lost their share in the World to Come, for:

79. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 176.

80. *Psalm* 132: 14.

81. *Deuteronomy* 12:9.

82. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms*, Vol. 3, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 370..

83. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 68.

84. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1182.

*In this wilderness they shall perish and there they shall die.*⁸⁵

Rabbi Akiva interprets this to mean: They shall perish from life in This World and they shall die and be cut off from the World to Come. Furthermore, he notes, God states: “I have sworn in My wrath that they shall not enter My land of contentment.”⁸⁶

Rabbi Eliezer, however, holds that the generation of the wilderness does have a portion in the World to Come. Since God swore in His wrath, as it were, He had the right to regret His words and to retract His oath when His anger abated. Rabbi Eliezer supports his opinion with the verse

*Gather Me my devout ones, sealers of My covenant through sacrifice.*⁸⁷

He contends that the devout ones alludes to the Jews who left Egypt and followed God into the wilderness without pausing to make any preparations. Because they sealed a covenant with God through self-sacrifice, God will gather them into His presence in the World to Come.⁸⁸

The Midrash says: The Holy One said, *I swore in My wrath* and I reversed Myself. *They would not enter into My rest* -- they will not come into this rest; but they will come into another rest. R. Bibi said in the name of R. Joshua ben Levi: A king was angry at his son. He rejected him, cast him out, and swore that the son would never again enter the palace. Then what did he do? He demolished the palace, built another one, and then invited his son into the new palace. He thus brought back his son inside and yet fulfilled his oath. Similarly, God said; *I swore in My wrath* and I reversed Myself. I swore that *they would not enter into My rest* -- into this rest. But they would come into another rest.⁸⁹

[Similarly, God promised to gather from the exile all the devout ones of Israel who will be redeemed by the Messiah. In the future all of the devout will sing to Hashem and greet Him with intense thanksgiving.]⁹⁰

85. Numbers 14:29.

86. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1183.

87. Psalm 50:5.

88. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1183.

89. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 68.

90. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1182-1183.

Psalm 96

This is the seventh psalm which Moses composed. Midrash Shocher Tov quotes Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, who said: I know to whom Moses dedicated the first six psalms because I heard it from my teachers. However, beyond that I received no tradition.

Ibn Yachya attempts to identify the tribes to whom the remaining five psalms (in this series of eleven) were dedicated. He explains that this psalm was dedicated to Zevulun, who rejoiced when he went out to earn a livelihood so that he could support his brother Issachar, who studied Torah (see Deuteronomy 33:18). Therefore, Zevulun would constantly sing to Hashem a new song, thanking Him for the Divine blessing which resulted in his wealth.

Later, King David adapted this psalm to his own circumstances. Radak comments that King David recited it (together with psalm 103) when he brought up the Holy Ark from the house of Oved Edom (see II Samuel Chapter 6). Thus this composition contains a deeper symbolism. The Ark had been held captive in Philistine exile and David sang joyously upon the occasion of its redemption. Similarly, when Israel is finally released from exile, the Jews will join the Messiah and exult: Sing to Hashem a new song, sing to Hashem everyone on earth.

The psalm appears (with minor variations) in I Chronicles 16:23-33, where it is attributed to Assaf and his brothers. David appointed them to lead the thanksgiving to God on the day when David placed the Holy Ark in a tent before the presence of Hashem.⁹¹

At the end of Psalm 95 we were told of a negative aspect of our task while in Galuth, namely, of the errors from which we must guard ourselves during our long wanderings through exile. Psalm 96, on the other hand, has as its theme the fulfillment of the great and blissful purpose of our journeys among the nations, namely, the “wakening of awe” for God throughout the world, of which mention was already made in verse 1 of Psalm 95.⁹²

This psalm discusses the time of the final redemption. It is worth remembering the statement of the prophet Jeremiah

*Therefore, behold, the days come, says God, that it shall no more be said As the living God who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries where He had driven them, and I will bring them back into their land that I gave to their fathers.*⁹³

We will no longer have to content ourselves with praising God for something He has done

91. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1185.

92. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 177.

93. *Jeremiah* 16:14-15.

for us in the distant past, but the new song will extol God's greatness in such a fashion that there is no need to support it by referring to ancient history.

His achievements at that time will eclipse all that has gone before. In Egypt, God's manifestations were restricted to the land of Egypt. Similarly, miracles performed for Israel throughout history have been of a local variety. However, during messianic times, God's miracles will fill the whole earth, as we read

*I will perform miracles in heaven and on earth, blood, fire and smoke.*⁹⁴

Sing to Hashem a new song

שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ

Sing to Hashem everyone on earth

שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה כָּל הָאָרֶץ:

This song deals with the future, as is proven by the final verse, “for He has come to judge the earth.” Any reference to a “new song” deals with the future. Another example of a new song occurs in the Passover Haggadah. Just before Psalm 113, the Haggadah implores us with the verse:

Let us, therefore, recite a new song before Him! Halleluyah!

These same words serve as the introduction to many psalms which speak of the future. See Psalms 33:3, 40:4, 96:1, 98:1, 144.9, 149.1 and Isaiah 42:10.

This psalm speaks of the Messianic Era, when the extraordinary salvation that God will have brought to our people will call for a new kind of praise, “a new song.”⁹⁵

This resembles Psalm 95, in which one person urges the other to praise God. In this psalm, each one urges his friend to sing to the Lord with a new song, for He gathered Israel from the nations and from the exile. The concept of a new song is one that has not already been composed and written. In Psalm 98, it is repeated for emphasis. When he was transporting the ark from the house of Obed-edom the Gittite, David composed this Psalm⁹⁶ along with Psalm 105, although there are differences between the two. He calls this a new song because it is repeated in this book to be recited at the ingathering of the exiles, when it will indeed be a new song (Radak).⁹⁷

It is Israel's task to enter into the midst of the nations with a “new song” to “behold” God's greatness, and the “newness” of this song lies in the call שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה כָּל הָאָרֶץ, a summons to all of mankind to unite in “beholding” the greatness of the One God.

94. Joel 3:3.

95. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer, Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 13.

96. Radak does not acknowledge that Psalm 96 was composed by Moses.

97. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms, Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 370..

This union of all of mankind in the praise of God is the “new” phenomenon which, as a result of the development of the ages, will one day bring about the renewal and regeneration of all the world. Any song that stems from the contemplation of this state of the future is called **שיר חדש**.⁹⁸

The verb **שיר**, is primarily used to denote “singing praises,” proclaiming the show of God’s hand in the course of history. **שירה** sings of the invisible aspect of Divine rule in the events of the present, but **שיר** refers to those signs of His Sovereignty that will become apparent only some day in the future. **שיר** and particularly **שיר חדש** are always employed with reference to the eventual ultimate redemption of the world, to which all the developments of history will lead. The masculine form **שיר** refers to that salvation which will be the final, splendid goal of the entire march of time, and not a mere stepping stone to some other eventual redemption.⁹⁹

In the time of the Messiah, every man will arouse his neighbor to praise God with these words. [Thus these same words serve as the introduction to many psalms which speak of the future. See Psalms 33:3, 40:4, 98:1, 149.1 and Isaiah 42:10.]

The Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 23:11) points out that throughout Scripture the word for song is **שירה** (which is the feminine form), but the new song of the future is in the masculine form. **שיר**. The Midrash explains that in this world of adversity and struggle, every brief period of triumph and song is succeeded by a new tragedy. Since this pattern resembles the female cycle of pregnancy and childbirth, song takes the feminine form.

However, the song of the future is in the masculine form **שיר**, because it describes the Messianic song of ultimate triumph after which no further misfortunes will be born (see Rashi to Arachin 13b).¹⁰⁰

In what respect will this song be new? Alshich explains that when good triumphed over evil in the past, evil was not utterly vanquished. For example, the impure spirit still pervaded the atmosphere of Egypt even after the Egyptians were annihilated at the sea. The same was true after Israel’s other victories over their enemies. In the future, however, the atmosphere will be completely purged of every detrimental influence.¹⁰¹

Sing to Hashem; bless His name

נְשִׁירוּ לַיְיָ בְּרָכוּ שְׁמוֹ

Announce His salvation from day to day

בְּשִׁירוֹ מִיּוֹם לְיוֹם יְשׁוּעָתוֹ:

98. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 177.

99. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 233.

100. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1186.

101. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1186.

In reference to Hashem, the Hebrew שמו, His name, is a code word for Hashem's manifestation in the physical world. The Psalmist implores us to so recognize Hashem's presence in the physical world that we bring ourselves to the state of blessing His name.

Blessing His Name can be thought to say a blessing to God. But blessing God is not something to be done as a matter of rote. It must be done with the heart. Even more full and powerful is that by our recognition of Hashem in the world in all our ordinary situations and circumstances, we indeed are heartedly blessing God.

Bless His Name, i.e., advance and spread the knowledge of Him. Spread the message that God gives us salvation every day. Proclaim that not only extraordinary, "supernatural" events, but also the day-to-day "true being" of man attained in the customary course of natural order constitutes a generous gift of the providence of God Who never slumbers and Who cares for us with never-ceasing devotion.¹⁰²

Bless God for the kindness He will display when gathering the exiles (Sforno).¹⁰³

Do not be content with mere knowledge of God's salvation; unless the thrill of the event is recalled, it soon comes to be taken for granted. Instead, proclaim it publicly and remind one another of God's goodness, thereby renewing the joy that was felt when the miracle occurred (Radak).¹⁰⁴

Announce to each other, although everyone will know of the salvation. The announcement of the redemption will be so dear to them that they will announce it every day as through it had recently happened. (Radak).¹⁰⁵

Relate His glory among the peoples

סִפְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם כְּבוֹדוֹ

His wonders among all nations

בְּכָל הָעַמִּים נִפְלְאוֹתָיו:

We are being exhorted to sing new songs that tell of all the ways in which we see Hashem's hand in the world and in our lives. A new song today is different from the new song that we sang yesterday. For with today's God consciousness, we perceive new incidents, new wonders, and new ways that God's presence enters our lives.

The Hebrew word כבוד means honor; with respect to Hashem, glory of Hashem or His glory

102. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 178.

103. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1186.

104. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1186.

105. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms, Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 370..

means the great deeds of Hashem through which His glory becomes manifested.¹⁰⁶

The word גוים applies to the exile Israel underwent in Babylonia, when they had lived in one area. בכל העמים amongst the nations, refers to the exile of the Persians when Israel lived scattered throughout the Persian Empire (as we know from the book of Esther).¹⁰⁷

God will be glorious because He will honor and glorify Israel in the presence of all the nations [whereas previously Israel was downtrodden and despised in exile].¹⁰⁸

Tell of His glory, how he glorified you before the eyes of the nations after you were despised and humiliated among them (Radak).¹⁰⁹

Norah Tehillos explains that peoples, are bound only by ethnic similarity or geographic proximity. Their bonds are purely physical and they lack a common recognition of a deity. They are impressed by physical power and glory which they relate among themselves.

The nations, however, are united by a firm faith in one God. Since they possess deep spiritual awareness, they recognize God's supernatural wonders and they promulgate their beliefs to all other men of the spirit.¹¹⁰

When the unfolding of human power and force is demonstrated in the relationships of nation to nation as closed entities opposing one another, you shall have the courage to stand up and proclaim the wondrous works of God that reveal His greatness and might. בכל העמים and in the midst of human social intercourse, where individual personalities interact, wherever it may be, you shall also not lack the courage to proclaim the One God Who, through His wondrous works has revealed Himself to be the sole true Personality.¹¹¹

Great is God and exceedingly lauded

Awesome is He above all heavenly powers

כִּי גָדוֹל יְיָ וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד
נִרְאָה הוּא עַל כָּל אֱלֹהִים:

Hashem is undeniably the Master of the Universe. His great power brings Him praise because He uses it to perform kindness and mercy to all (Sforno).

106. *The Bible Psalms, Volume II*, Amos Hakham, Mosad Harav Kook, Jerusalem, 2003, p. 404.

107. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 725.

108. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1186-1187.

109. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms, Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 370..

110. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1187.

111. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 178.

The **אלהים** are the angels and the celestial forces which are closest to Hashem and which have the clearest comprehension of His awesomeness (Radak).¹¹²

Proclaim that only the Lord can be truly “great.” It is He who is Hashem, and Who thus hold all the future in His hands. At the same time, “he shines forth” with infinite clarity, recognizable to all, from everything that exists. All living things constitute “a revelation of His greatness in mighty acts.” And declare that He stands in awesome exaltation above all those things that man in his delusion would endow with divine qualities.¹¹³

For all deities

כִּי כָּל אֱלֹהֵי

Of the nations are nothings

הָעַמִּים אֱלִילִים

Dieties of the nations here refers to anything which is placed first in consciousness ahead of God. These include things such as power, wealth, and social position, etc. As well it includes all those ideologies or people that the nations of the world treat as gods. In our time there are people who treat political systems such as communism as a god and consider science as pure scientism, which holds the universe as godless, as their god. Throughout history it is not uncommon for political dictators to take grandiose titles, demand increasing devotion, and total worship of themselves and their ideology. Examples include the Pharaohs of Egypt, the Inca Emperors, the Emperors of China and Japan, totalitarian cult figures such as Stalin of Russia, Mao of China, and the Kim dynasty of North Korea to name a few.

Ibn Ezra traces the root of **אלילים** to not, nothing, alluding to the fact that no man-made or man-designated deity has value. They are all nothings, completely worthless. Sifra (Kidoshim 19) lists ten names which Scripture uses for idols. Each of these names alludes to a different aspect of an idol’s worthlessness. [Idol’s can be called] **אלילים** because they are **חלולים**, hollow and empty.¹¹⁴

All these powers, i.e. the idols are nothing, **אלילים**, from **אל** a negative force, powers which basically tend to deny rather than grant largesse.¹¹⁵

Declare also that only the gods of the nations are gods that deny, that is, they are gods that withhold favor. These the nations imagine as gods that are inimical to the welfare of mankind. For this reason, it is believed, men must fear them for their very lives and seek their favor by adoring them. Not so the Lord, Whose Name Hashem proclaims the very opposite of denying. Who instead is ready at all times to give man new life and a new future. He is not a God Who denies. He is the

112. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1187.

113. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 178.

114. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1187.

115. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 725.

Creating God of the universe, and whatever substance there may be to the supposed gods of the nations, [they] must bow to the One God in complete submission to His goals of salvation.¹¹⁶

But God did make heaven

וַיַּיְשֵׁב אֱלֹהִים עֵשָׂה:

He made them all by Himself. During the first six days of creation, Hashem made heaven [on the second day of Creation] before He created the angels [later on the second day. See Rashi to Genesis 1:5] and the heavenly luminaries [on the fourth day of Creation], so that no one could say that God needed the angels to help Him create the wondrous heavens (Tehillos Hashem).

Radak points out that initially the idolators worshiped the sun, the moon, and the stars. These celestial bodies are utterly insignificant when compared to God, because Hashem [Himself] made the heavens, including these heavenly bodies, and the Creator certainly surpasses His creations.¹¹⁷

Heaven here can be taken to mean the heaven of the heaven and earth that God created in the beginning. As well this includes the creation of consciousness by which we acknowledge value to things. When we give value to that which is spiritually authentic, we experience a hint of heaven. The consequence of giving value to nothing is a living hell.

The verse is also a reminder of Jeremiah who in speaking of the Messianic era says:

*The gods who did not make the heaven and the earth shall vanish from the earth and from under the heavens.*¹¹⁸

Glory and majesty are before Him

הוֹד וְהָדָר לְפָנָיו

Might and splendor are in His sanctuary

עֹז וְתִפְאֵרֶת בְּמִקְדָּשׁוֹ:

In the Messianic Era, all people will value true essence and not just appearance. Therefore we will be living in His sanctuary. Our consciousness will be filled with might and splendor, the glory and majesty of Hashem will be experienced by all.

In the future, God's praises will be so widespread that even the majestic and glorious stars will offer praise to the Creator. They will declare that their majesty is a reflection of Divine glory (Radak).¹¹⁹

116. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 178-179.

117. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1188.

118. *Jeremiah* 10:11.

119. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1188.

They ascribe these attributes to Him in His sanctuary, the heavens, which is the dwelling of His sanctity. They will tell of His might and His glory and acknowledge that He is the Lord over everything. (Radak).¹²⁰

Malbim defines **הוד** as the intrinsic glory which is the true essence of God, whereas **הדר** is the external majesty which is visible to the observer.

Kedushas Levi points out that **הדר** literally means to return (in Aramaic Hebrew). God generously bestows vitality and **הוד**, glory, upon all of His creations. In gratitude, all of God's creations praise Him and reflect glory back to God. The glory which they return to God is called **הוד**: it is this which comes **לפניו**, before Him.

His sanctuary refers to God's celestial Temple in the vault of the heavens where the planets and constellations are in perpetual orbit (Sforno; Meiri). This Sanctuary proclaims God's might and splendor as Psalm 19:2 says: The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse of the sky tells of His handiwork (Radak).

Malbim defines **עוז** as inner might which fortifies its possessor, whereas **תפארת** refers to external splendor which impresses all who behold it.¹²¹

Unlike the false gods of the nations, the Lord is not jealous of man's most glorious prosperity. Man may appear before His countenance in both glory of person and majesty of power. Indeed, it is only before God's countenance that man can truly attain these attributes. Moral fortitude to deprive himself of that which would be unseemly as well as the glory of the full development of man's potentiality, can be acquired in God's Sanctuary. (**תפארת** [beauty] is the fullest development of the glory that lies dormant within any being. **פאר** is an intensified form of **באר** which means "to become clear, lucid or visible.") For the Sanctuary of the Lord is not a place of destruction, but one where all man's moral and spiritual greatness can unfold, and from which man can derive all the salvation that is within his capability to attain.¹²²

Having been told to proclaim the grandeur of God amongst the nations, these nations may ask where God's grandeur is, seeing He allowed His sanctuary to be destroyed, and He did nothing to punish those who have destroyed the temple. To this the Psalmist replies that His ability to restrain expression of His anger is His very strength. Punishment of the gentiles who prance around on the site of the former temple has been delayed only due to the lack of merit on the part of Israel. Had there been a sufficient number of good people amongst Israel, their merit would have saved the temple.¹²³

120. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms, Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 371.

121. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1188.

122. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 179.

123. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 726.

Give to Hashem families of the nations

הָבוּ לַיהוָה מִשְׁפָּחוֹת עַמִּים

Give to Hashem honor and strength

הָבוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד וְעוֹז:

However much they may differ from one another, the various families of nations, the distinct nationalities are all equal in one thing: each nation claims for itself כבוד, eminent importance, and עוז, strength and invincibility. Therefore Israel should approach the nations with the demand to give all כבוד and עוז to God, and at last to render to His Name, which they have long known, that כבוד, acknowledgement, which they have denied Him heretofore.¹²⁴

Give to Hashem honor His name

הָבוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ

Raise an offering

שְׂאוּ מִנְחָה

And come to his courtyard

וּבְאוּ לְחִצְרוֹתָיו:

And it is not sufficient that they do so with mere words; let them gather up tangible tokens of the homage with all that which they call their own, and bearing these symbols of tribute, let them come into His courts, into the antechambers of His Sanctuary.¹²⁵

Chazah Zion maintains that this refers to the offering of human energy and resources which will be dedicated to Hashem when men become inspired to attribute all they have to God.¹²⁶

You, i.e. the nations of the world, should not argue that since converts will not be accepted during the messianic era, (Talmud Yebamot 24) what difference does it make what you believe? The psalmist replies

*They will bring an offering with all your brethren, and I will also take them as priests, says the Lord.*¹²⁷

Representatives of the gentile nations will enjoy the right to bring offerings to the courtyard of the temple, if not like priests who perform the service inside the sanctuary, at least on a footing comparable to ordinary Israelites. This is why the Psalmist advises carry your gift offerings and enter His courtyards.¹²⁸

124. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 179.

125. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 179-180.

126. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1189.

127. Isaiah 66:20-21.

128. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 727.

Prostrate [yourselves] to Hashem

In the majesty of holiness

הִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לַיְי
בְּהַדְרַת קִדְּשׁ

Cast yourselves down at the feet of the Lord with all that you possess, in order to serve Him. In the glory which the Sanctuary enables man to unfold. But compared to God Himself, the splendor of this **חֹדֶר** is merely **הַדְרָה**, a reflection of the glory of God Himself.¹²⁹

Let the source of sanctity, the holy Temple, be more splendid than all other structures (Radak) [that men will serve God with intense awe and respect].

Indeed, the Talmud (Berachos 30a) says that the word **הַדְרָה** should be read as **הַרְוָה**, awe. From this we learn that before one stands to pray, he should be imbued with a sense of awe and reverence.¹³⁰

Tremble before His countenance

All the earth.

חִילוּ מִפְּנֵי
כָּל הָאָרֶץ:

The nations who failed to fear God throughout the millennia of history will recognize His greatness in the Messianic era and will tremble before Him (Radak).¹³¹

חִילוּ is the imperative form of the verb **חול**, meaning to tremble as the woman trembles with birth pangs. **חיל** are actually the pangs associated with impending birth. Before His countenance, let the whole earth, without opposition, enter into the travail that is part of its moral and spiritual rebirth.¹³²

Declare among the nations

That Hashem has reigned

אֲמָרוּ בְּגוֹיִם
יְי מֶלֶךְ:

You will recognize His kingdom by the fact that the earth is tranquil. God will have taken His people out of exile amidst great pompous and glory. Even the rulers of the nations will have sent them back to their land. From this and from the judgment He will have performed upon Jerusalem, it will be evident that He is the ruler of the world and the kingdom is His. Furthermore, the world will then be at peace, as the prophets Isaiah and Micah prophesied (Isaiah 2:4, Micah 4:3): “Nation will not raise sword against nation, neither will they learn any more war.”(Radak).¹³³

129. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 180.

130. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1189.

131. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1189.

132. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 180.

133. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms, Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 371.

Indeed, firmly established is the world
So that it cannot topple

אף תִּכּוֹן תֵּבֵל
בְּל תִּמּוֹט

The families of the nations who take an offering will observe the splendor of the Temple. They will then return to their respective lands and announce to those who stayed behind, “we have seen with our own eyes that Hashem reigns.” (Ibn Ezra; Radak)

Before the Messianic era, the earth will be in a state of chaos and decay, as the prophet says (Isaiah 24:18-20): The foundations of the earth shake, the earth is completely broken down, the earth crumbles away, the earth continually falters, the earth reels to and fro like a drunkard (Ibn Ezra). [God will send the Messiah to bring stability to the world.]

Rashi (commentary to I Chronicles 16:30) observes that a mortal king exploits his power, for when he sees that his subjects fear him he seeks to increase their fear that he may destroy them and their homes. But when God, the King of Kings, sees that His creations fear and serve Him as they should, He lets them be. Indeed, God then brings additional stability to the earth, so that men will tremble before Him everyone on earth, then He in turn will see to it that the world is fixed so that it cannot falter.¹³⁴

He will judge the nations with fairness

יִדִין עַמִּים בְּמִישָׁרִים:

God will bring lasting peace to the world in the Messianic Era as the prophet Micah foretells:

*He will judge between many peoples, and will settle the arguments of mighty nations from far away. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning knives; nation will not lift sword against nation, nor will they learn war anymore. They will sit, each man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none will make them afraid for the mouth of Hashem, Master of Legions, has spoken.*¹³⁵

Declare it among the nations that face each other armed as separate powers: Peace will not come to mankind until the Lord will have begun his reign on earth, and He, His Will, and His Law will judge human society with מִישָׁרִים [rightness, fairness]. The basis of the society to be established upon God’s will is צֶדֶק, justice, which is

134. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1189-1190.

135. *Micah* 4:3-4.

implemented by **משפת**, lawful order, and the application of which in individual cases is called **דין**, judgement. However, it is not enough that each individual should merely acknowledge justice by confining himself within the limits designated by law not only with respect to his own claims, but also as regards the services which he may be expected to render to others. Such an attitude is adequate neither to help man attain perfection, nor to advance the coming of salvation to all human society.

The Jewish state fell because its inhabitants were content to act simply in accordance with the strict letter of the Law.¹³⁶ When it comes to render services to our fellow men, **צדק** alone is not enough. We must also take into consideration the concept of **צדקה**, “duty”, which commands us to render to our neighbor even that for which he may have no legal claim, but which is necessary for both his welfare as an individual and for the fulfillment of the destiny and task which God has given to all of us as a nation. Here a life spent in fulfilling one’s duty to others by dealing kindly with them is called **מישרים**; it is a life lived in a fashion that is **ישר**, “straight,” and in accordance with our nature and our destiny.¹³⁷

The heavens will be glad
And the earth will rejoice

יִשְׂמְחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם
וְתִגַּל הָאָרֶץ

In every instance where the Holy Scriptures speak of mankind’s eventual deliverance from sin and man’s return to his own morally pure destiny under God, that we also find mention of a flourishing rejuvenation of nature. This is not mere poetic language. There is a close relationship between the moral conduct of man and the growth or inhibition of the development of the world of nature into which God has put man in order to discharge his tasks. Moreover, apart from that, if man fulfills his destiny, then everything that blossoms for man and is used by him for his purposes will also attain its true, higher destiny. But as long as man will take all that serves his life and work and which he subjects to his rule, and will employ it solely to serve his material and sensual desires, then the heavens will mourn when they look down and see what manner of life it is that they awaken with the light of their sun and rear with their drops of rain and dew.¹³⁸

Radak interprets this as a figurative allusion to the happiness which will sweep the universe at the advent of the Messianic era of eternal peace. As Rashbam observes: When there is peace people are filled with optimism.

Ibn Ezra explains that even the components of nature will signify their joy by

136. *Baba Matzia* p. 30b.

137. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 180-181.

138. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 181.

carrying out the functions assigned to them by God. The heavens will give abundant rain and dew; the earth will give generous crops.

The Gaon of Vilna explains that שמחה joy, denotes the intense emotion of happiness which one experiences when encountering something completely new. Thus the heavens may be described as rejoicing because they symbolize the realm of the spirit which is constantly refreshed and renewed. In contrast, גילה, gladness, refers to the happiness evoked by that which is established and familiar. The term is appropriate for the earth, for the physical material world has not changed since the six days of creation (Eitz Yoseif).¹³⁹

The Heavens and the earth will rejoice that they need not become the instruments of the nation's destruction, something which would have caused them sorrow.¹⁴⁰

The sea and its fullness will roar

יַרְעֵם הַיָּם וּמְלֵאוֹ:

And its fullness refers to the fish which fill the sea; they, too will sing God's praises (Radak).¹⁴¹

Ibn Ezra suggests that the roaring sea is descriptive of the clouds ascending from the sea. He further suggests that the verses may be figurative of the tranquility and security that will dominate the world when God's righteousness will manifest itself on earth.¹⁴²

In the sea there will be roaring because the spiritual representative of the sea at the celestial Court remembers the first time God descended into the physical world and how the sea was split at that time. He is afraid that the sea will be split once more.¹⁴³

The field will exult

יַעֲלוּ שָׂדֵי

And all that is in it

וְכָל אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ

Fields and meadows rejoice when their gifts are employed by man for a life that is pleasing to God, and are thus lifted from the fetters of physical nature into the loftier realm of moral freedom close to God. But if man uses the strength which the ear of grain gives to his muscle only in order to murder his brother, if he partakes of the fruit of the vine without moderation and is thus turned into a drunken brute, then both the ear of grain and the grape of the vineyard will be cast down in abject

139. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1190.

140. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 728.

141. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1191.

142. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms, Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 372.

143. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 728.

mourning.¹⁴⁴

The field is a metaphor for this world and all that is therein are all the creatures.¹⁴⁵

The animals of the field and the beasts of the wilderness will all exult together (Radak).

Alshich comments that when Adam sinned, God cursed the earth which Adam would thereafter have to cultivate for his sustenance. As Genesis (3:17) states: Cursed is the ground because of you, in sorrow you shall eat of it all the days of your life. In the future, however, this curse will be nullified and the fields will exult when they return to their original blessed state.¹⁴⁶

The fields, the trees, all that is in them, i.e. the animals, will rejoice then -- since the curse that earth had been afflicted with at the time of Adam's sin will be lifted from the earth at that time. Even the carnivorous beasts will no longer feed on other living creatures in order to sustain themselves (compare Isaiah 11:7).¹⁴⁷

Then will sing

All the trees of the forest

אֲז יִרְנְנֵי
כָּל עֵצֵי יַעַר:

Trees are often used as symbols of men. Jews are likened to fruit-bearing trees, because they constantly produce the fruits of Mitzvot and good deeds. But in the future, even the trees of the forest, trees that bore no fruits, will rejoice, for everybody will produce good fruits.¹⁴⁸

The forest is the habitat of the animal world. But its trees, once they are felled, enter the service of man so that he may build his houses and put them to a variety of uses in his private and social life. If man climbs the mountains and fells the giants of the forests in order to raise up edifices in which to unfold a way of life that is truly human, then the trees will rejoice. For, while formerly they had fulfilled the function of sheltering animals that were innocent, to be sure, but devoid of intelligence, they now have been turned into dwelling places under the roofs of which the God-like nobility of God-oriented moral endeavor unfolds. But if the cedar and oak must come down from their high places only to be slaves to the vain ambitions of voluptuousness and violence, then the forest weeps and laments: "what right has man to lay violent hands upon the dumb but innocent realm of nature, seeing that he, who should be capable of reasoning, plans to make nature subservient to a life that

144. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 181-182.

145. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer, Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 14.

146. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1191.

147. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 729.

148. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer, Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 14.

runs counter to all reason and is tainted with guilt.¹⁴⁹

Rashi explains that the trees of the forest symbolize the monarchs of the gentile nations. [With their strength and erect bearing, they resemble towering trees. They, too, are destined to recognize the sovereignty of Messiah, and they shall rejoice when he arrives.]¹⁵⁰

The forests will jubilate since also the non fruit bearing trees will start producing edible fruit at that time.¹⁵¹

The heaven's joy, the earth's exultation, the field's jubilation, and the trees' singing praises are all figurative of the great joy that will prevail because of the great peace and goodness that will be in the world at that time.¹⁵²

Before Hashem	לְפָנַי יי
For He will have arrived	כִּי בָא
For He will have arrived	כִּי בָא
To judge the earth	לְשַׁפֵּט הָאָרֶץ

The words כִּי בָא, for He arrives, are repeated because God's arrival will serve a dual purpose. First, He will redeem Israel. Second, He will punish the nations who tormented the Jewish people (Ibn Yachya).

Malbim offers another interpretation of the "two arrivals": First, He will manifest Himself in the functions of nature when people recognize that the so-called Law of Nature is truly the concealed Hand of God. Second, God will be perceived as the One Who judges the deed of mankind.¹⁵³

He will judge the world with righteousness	יִשְׁפֹּט תֵּבֵל בְּצִדְקָה
And the nations with His faithfulness	וְעַמִּים בְּאֵמוּנָתוֹ:

He will judge the peoples in faithfulness, with the quality of faithfulness that is His.¹⁵⁴

149. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 182.

150. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1191.

151. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 729.

152. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms, Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 372.

153. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1191.

154. Amos Hakham, *The Bible Psalms*, Mosad Harav Kook, Jerusalem, 2003, p.408.

In the future, all the predictions of the prophets will be fulfilled. Their prophecies concerning the redemption of Israel and the doom of the nations will prove to be faithful and accurate (Arugos Habosem).

[At that time, all men will unite to form a community of faith dedicated to proclaiming their belief in the One and Only God Who created heaven and earth and Who controls nature and history.]¹⁵⁵

Justice will be administered by Hashem [using] the attribute of mercy, instead of the attribute of justice.¹⁵⁶

Therefore, the heavens will rejoice, the earth will exult, the fields will be joyful and all the trees of the forest will be glad when God will intervene on earth. For He will intervene in order to judge the earth, to arrange the world of man on the basis of justice, and to train human societies for their salvation in His faithfulness which will never forsake them.¹⁵⁷

155. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1191.

156. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 729.

157. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 182.

Psalm 97

This psalm overflows with joy about the revelation of the Glory of God's Kingdom. As we sing the psalm, the joy spreads to us. We and all of God's creatures rejoice in the Kingdom of God and express gratitude and give thanks to His Name. Certainly when this psalm was originally recited, it was not only sung, but it was danced. Psalm 97 is parallel to Psalm 96, adding to it. In the middle of the previous psalm is the verse "Say among the nations that the Lord reigns ... and let the earth be glad" and this psalm begins "When Hashem will reign, the earth will exult." The Hebrew for "When Hashem will reign" is **יְיָ מֶלֶךְ**. However, the Hebrew is actually in the past tense. The prophet is speaking in the past tense. This means that the prophet is already in the future and is looking back. So he speaks in the past tense. This suggests that we too should be projecting ourselves to the future and speaking in the past. To do so, we have to be full of joy.

Psalm 97 continues the theme of the preceding chapter. Verses 2-7 speak of the solemn events which must precede the happy advent of God's kingdom. Only the downfall of all the enemies of God's kingdom and of all the powers and forces that men mistakenly worship can pave the way for a time when the whole world will be truly aware of the existence of God and of His sovereign power. Verses 8 and 9 then describe the impact which the beginnings of this new day will have on Zion and upon the cities of Judea which had been related to the background for so long. And verses 10-12 discuss the conclusion that all the honest and righteous men on earth should draw even now through their confidence that this future is sure to come.¹⁵⁸

Ibn Yachya observes that Moses dedicated this psalm, his eighth, to the tribe of Joseph (Ephraim and Menashe), from whom Joshua is descended. Joshua would conquer the land of Canaan in God's Name, and this victory is described in verse 1: When Hashem will reign, the land [of Canaan] will exult!

Fire will advance before him [Joshua] (verse 3) and the mountains [i.e. the mighty monarchs of Canaan] will melt like wax (verse 5).

This psalm alludes to the future, as Midrash Avakir explains with a parable: A king had two servants. One burst out in song and laughter, while the other cried bitter tears. The king attempted to console his weeping servant saying, "In my eyes you are both equal. Why do you cry?"

The servant replied, "My colleague lives with you and eats at your table. He certainly has good reason to sing. You have kept me at a distance and put my sustenance in the hands of others. Therefore, I cry!"

158. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 183.

Similarly, God created both the heavens and the earth together. The heavens sing joyously, as Psalm 19:2 states: The heavens declare the glory of God. The earth cries, however, and protests to the Holy One, Blessed is He, “The heavens are near You, and they enjoy the splendid radiance of Your presence. Furthermore, the Angel of Death has no power over the heavenly bodies and luminaries. But I am far from your presence and subject to the authority of the Angel of Death. Therefore, I cry.”

Then Hashem consoled the earth: “Fear not! In the future, your lot will improve, and you will have ample reason to rejoice as the Psalmist says, When Hashem will reign [i.e. when His presence will fill the land], the earth will exult.¹⁵⁹

When Hashem will reign

The earth will exult

וַיִּמְלֹךְ
תִּגַּל הָאָרֶץ

In this verse, the verb reign, **מלך**, is grammatically in the past tense. In prophecy, when the past tense is used, it means that the event being described will happen and there is nothing that can change it from happening. In this knowledge we can all rejoice.

If Hashem reigns sometime in the future and that reigning is different than now, does that mean that Hashem is not reigning now? Surely that cannot be for there is only one Force in the world. Then what is the difference between Hashem reigning now and Hashem reigning sometime in the future Messianic Era? The difference is two-fold. First in our time, our consciousness loses track that Hashem is reigning. In the Messianic Era, we will be fully conscious of Hashem reigning. As a result we not only will be virtuous, but we will be more creative. We will not participate in any negativity. We will be in awe and wonder of the One and of the Many which is the One for the One in our consciousness and the Many in our consciousness are just two ways of perceiving the One. When Hashem will reign, the earth will exult because we will know how to live our spirituality.

It speaks of the future, of the Messianic Era, when God will demonstrate His kingship over the whole earth, including the distant isles. It will be an occasion for tremendous rejoicing for the world will then enter the era of its fulfillment and perfection.¹⁶⁰

Although God’s future supremacy will seem to be a shocking new phenomenon in the long course of history, the reality should not escape us -- God has always reigned, it is only we who failed to perceive it¹⁶¹.

Since the prophet is speaking in the past tense, the prophet is already in the future of the

159. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1193.

160. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer*, Vol 2, Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 14.

161. Menachem Davis (ed.), *The Book of Psalms*, Mesorah Publications Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 272.

Messianic Era and looking back. When we say the words **וְיִמְלֹךְ**, we transport our consciousness to the future like the prophet and look back, affirming what the prophet has said.

Numerous islands will be glad

יִשְׂמְחוּ אֲיִים רַבִּים:

Even as **איה** and **אי** indicate the question of locality, i.e. “where,” so **אי** denotes a location that is distant and isolated from other places, especially an “island.” In accounts of the eventual return of man to the state where he will recognize and know God it is quite frequently stressed that this recognition and acknowledgement of truth will extend even to **איים**.¹⁶²

This most likely denotes such localities which had hitherto been isolated from the rest of civilization. Because of their isolation they were less prone to corruption, and thus, in their case, the true recognition of God would be simply another phase of their steady and constant progress upon the right path, rather than a “return” from the wrong way. Thus the thought here is: “*when the reign of God will begin on earth, as the world comes to acknowledge and recognize God’s supremacy, an era of serene bliss will begin even in the most far-off places.*”¹⁶³

Even the remote islands will hear of God’s glory (Radak). Small islands will have special reason to rejoice because they were defenseless against the larger nations, which made them into colonies and exploited their wealth. The Messiah will proclaim their independence, which will bring them joy (Rashbam).¹⁶⁴

Cloud and dense darkness will surround Him

עָנָן וְעֲרָפֶל סָבִיבֵי

The numerous islands which had never caused Israel any harm will be happy, but not so the nearby islands. They will be surrounded by various types of dark clouds, i.e. forces depicting God’s anger. There are the islands whose inhabitants had mistreated Israel and had observed how God differentiated in His treatment of the righteous and those who have oppressed them. He refers to the righteous at the time of redemption, whose exemplary behavior has enables Zion to be redeemed through justice and its residents through tzedakah, charity (Isaiah 1:27).¹⁶⁵

To make it dark and gloomy for the wicked (Radak).¹⁶⁶

Even as the processes of cleansing and fructification that precede vigorous growth

162. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 183.

163. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 183.

164. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1194.

165. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 729-730.

166. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms*, Vol. 3, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 372.

on earth take place not in bright and cheerful sunshine but beneath clouds and darkness, so the happy kingdom of God, too, is preceded by sad and dark times which serve to pave the way for it.¹⁶⁷

While God Himself will still be hidden from man, as if He were surrounded by a cloud and by darkness -- for the essence of God cannot be grasped by the human intellect. Nevertheless, His reign on earth will be clearly recognized by His dispensing righteousness and justice. The first act of Divine justice will be the destruction of His enemies.¹⁶⁸

Since God rewards the wicked in this World to recompense them for their few merits, it appears as if they are His favorites who surround Him. In the World to Come of the future, however, God will bring cloud and darkness (i.e. destruction upon them (Radak).¹⁶⁹

Sforno and Ibn Yachya maintain that these words describe the way in which God's constant supervision of this world is obscured by the seemingly independent operation of the laws of nature (see Malbim).¹⁷⁰

We often fail to understand the justice of God's ways; it is as if His guidance of events is masked by cloud and darkness. In reality, however, *righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne*; everything He does is for a reason.¹⁷¹

Righteousness and justice

צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט

Are the foundation of His throne

מְכוֹן כְּסֵאוֹ:

When people see that the wicked are rewarded, they question God's equity. But when they witness the ultimate destruction of the wicked, they will all attest that righteousness and justice are His throne's foundation (Radak).¹⁷²

For **צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט מְכוֹן כְּסֵאוֹ**, the bases upon which God desires to build the throne of His sovereignty are the ideal of justice and the arrangement of earthly affairs in accordance with that justice, and before this can happen, the way must first be paved for the universal recognition of this ideal of justice and right, and everything that is hostile in principle to such ideals must give way before the power of the new era that is dawning.¹⁷³

167. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 184.

168. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer*, Vol 2, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 15.

169. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1194.

170. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1194.

171. Menachem Davis (ed.), *The Book of Psalms*, Mesorah Publications Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 272.

172. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1194.

173. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 184.

God sits on his throne. In the metaphor for the five year old, it is the King of Kings sitting on his throne. But the throne is a seat which supports the person sitting on it. What is it that supports God? His throne: which is the righteousness and justice that we bring into manifestation by the life we live. It is our life of righteousness and justice that supports God.

Fire will advance before Him

אֵשׁ לְפָנָיו תֵּלֵךְ

The verb **תלך**, translated here as will advance, is in the future tense. As this is a prophecy, it means that it may happen but if there is the proper **תשובה**, return and repentance then it might happen differently.

Rashi says this alludes to the outbreak of the war of God and Magog (which precedes the advent of Messiah),¹⁷⁴

*I will punish him with pestilence and with blood. Torrential rain, hailstones, and sulfurous fire I will rain upon him.*¹⁷⁵

God's avenging fire will go forth at the behest and under the direction of the Messiah,¹⁷⁶

*He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.*¹⁷⁷

Similarly, Midrash Shocher Tov (psalm 2) explains that they will inform the Messiah, "This state has risen in revolt against you!"

The Messiah will respond, "Let the locust come to destroy that land!"

Then the Messiah will receive a report, "This province is in rebellion!"

Whereupon the Messiah will command, "Let the Angel of Death come and slay them!" (Yaavetz HaDoresh).¹⁷⁸

According to Rashi, this refers to God and Magog (leading the enemies of God and of the Jews) who after overpowering many nations, will gather their forces against the Jews, and will be utterly destroyed by an earthquake, pestilence, fire and brimstone, and mutual slaughter as prophesied by Ezekiel [chapter 38 and 39].¹⁷⁹

174. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1194.

175. *Ezekiel* 38:22.

176. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1194.

177. *Isaiah* 11:4.

178. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1193-1195.

179. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer*, Vol 2, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 15.

Thus it is said of the fiery force of the dawning new day which devours and purifies,¹⁸⁰

*The time will come, glowing like a fiery oven*¹⁸¹

And consume His enemies all around

וּתְלֵהט סָבִיב צָרָיו:

They will have no avenues of escape (Radak).¹⁸²

His lightening bolts will light up the world

הָאֵירוּ בְרָקָיו תִּבְּל

But even while this dark era bursts like a ruinous thunderstorm upon the incorrigible, its flashes of lightning serve to enlighten those still capable of acquiring better knowledge and understanding. Those who are not destined to perish from the impact of this storm will gain better insight through what they will now witness, and they will go into that state of travail which accompanies moral rebirth and betterment.¹⁸³

Baalie Bris Avraham comments that this can be explained with the observation of the Rambam in his introduction to the *Guide to the Perplexed*. Rambam compares the dilemma of a man who is grappling with the uncertainty and mystery of life to the situation of a traveler who has lost his way on a dark and stormy night. At intervals, a bolt of lightning illuminates the darkness; for a brief moment, the lost traveler catches a glimpse of the path he must take. Similarly, man is lost in a sea of falsehood and desperately seeks the path of truth. Only on rare occasions does God illuminate a man's intellect with a flash of perception and truth, and it is this insight which guides man through the darkness which swiftly envelops him once again.¹⁸⁴

In the future, God will grant man perpetual insight and understand as the Psalmist here promises: *His lightning bolts [constantly] light up the [inhabited] world, banishing doubts and misconceptions forever.*¹⁸⁵

The earth will see and tremble

רָאֵתָהּ וּתְחִל הָאָרֶץ:

In the future, a great earthquake will convulse the Land of Israel (Rashi); all the nations of the earth will see it and tremble before this manifestation of God's might

180. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 184.

181. *Malachi* 3:19.

182. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms*, Vol. 3, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 373.

183. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 184.

184. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1195.

185. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1195.

(Radak).¹⁸⁶

*Surely there will be a great earthquake on that day in the land of Israel. And at My presence, the fishes of the sea ... will quake.*¹⁸⁷

At the time of the revelation at Mount Sinai, a similar phenomenon had been observed. At that time His lightning had lit up the universe and two contradictory manifestations were observed simultaneously. The inhabitants of the earth were able to watch this phenomenon whereas the earth itself when it observed what was happening **ותחל**, went into travail, suffered contractions.¹⁸⁸

Mountains like wax

הַרִים כַּדֹּנֶה

Will melt before Hashem

נִמְסוּ מִלְפָּנָי יי

הרים refers to the great powers on earth to which men had hitherto looked up in admiration.¹⁸⁹

How did this travail of the earth express itself? The mountains melted like wax in the face of God's Presence; not only in the face of God's Presence, but even before that, in the presence of the Master of the universe, i.e. the Shechinah, the Divine entourage. The fact that the Psalmist does not say **מפני**, on account of, but rather **לפני**, in front of, indicates that these bolts of lightning would be spreading outwards, expanding their brilliance.¹⁹⁰

God will humble the arrogant nations who consider themselves to be as formidable as mountains (Ibn Ezra).¹⁹¹

Yet in 98:8 the Psalmist says that in the future, mountains will exult together. This can be explained as follows: the mountains, i.e., the nations that remain arrogant, will melt, However, those mountains which humbly unite with other mountains will exult.¹⁹²

Before the Master of all the earth

מִלְפָּנֵי אֲדוֹן כָּל הָאָרֶץ:

The arrogance of the mighty nations will melt when they realize that it is Hashem

186. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1195.

187. *Ezekiel* 38:19.

188. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 730.

189. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 184.

190. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 730.

191. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1195.

192. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1195.

who is the אֲדֹנָי, Lord, of the earth (Ibn Ezra).¹⁹³

The heavens will declare his righteousness

הַגִּידוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם צְדָקוֹ

Once all that is corrigibly evil has been destroyed, once the way to better insight has been paved in the hearts of those receptive to such teaching, and the imposing grandeur of once-feared earthly powers has melted away before the majesty of the sole true Lord, then all the evens that heaven has brought about on earth will have accomplished their purpose, which is to bring to the attention of men the ideal of Divine justice embodied into fact.¹⁹⁴

By raining hailstones and destruction upon the wicked, the heavenly forces will, in effect, declare His glory (Radak).¹⁹⁵

And all the nations will see His glory

וְרָאוּ כָּל הָעַמִּים כְּבוֹדוֹ:

He wants the nations to see that the Jewish people can survive what the earth itself is unable to survive, i.e. the mountains are melting.¹⁹⁶

In all that is and in all that is yet to be, in all the phenomena of nature and all the events of history, they will see nothing else but revelations of the might of the One God.¹⁹⁷

When those who defied God are punished, His glory will be evident (Radak).¹⁹⁸

Humiliated will be all those who worship idols

יִבְשׁוּ כָּל עֲבָדֵי פֶסֶל

Who pride themselves in nothings

הַמִּתְהַלְלִים בְּאֵלִילִים

Sifra (Kedushim 19) says that an idol is called פֶּסֶל because they are נִפְסָלִים, carved by men.¹⁹⁹

פֶּסֶל is the name of a likeness in stone or wood of an אֵלִיל, a deity which the pagan worships. Reproduction of the sun or the moon, would be called a פֶּסֶל, whereas the sun or moon itself in such case would be described as אֵלִיל.²⁰⁰

193. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1195.

194. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 184-185.

195. Menachem Davis (ed.), *The Book of Psalms*, Mesorah Publications Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 273.

196. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 731.

197. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 185.

198. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1196.

199. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1187.

200. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 731.

Alshich defines אליל [from אל, god] as the spiritual forces in which the pagans believe, including the sun, moon, stars, angels, and spirits. Each of these celestial forces is represented by a man-made פסל, graven image. The pagans attributed their success to these deities. But when God smites the pagans and demonstrates that their deities are powerless to defend them, the pagans will be ashamed of the trust they placed in worthless graven images (Radak).²⁰¹

No form of idolatry, either physical (פסל) or ideological (אלילים) shall ever again have a hold upon the human heart, for all that men had worshipped heretofore shall now lie prostrate before the One God.²⁰²

The Yerushalmi (Avodah Zarah 4:7) says that in the future every idol will come before its worshipers and contemptuously spit in their faces. The worshipers will be shamed and the idols (having completed their mission) will vanish from the earth.²⁰³

*And the idols will completely pass away.*²⁰⁴

The celestial bodies which the gentiles worship will also be shamed as the prophet foretells, (Sforno)²⁰⁵

*The moon will be disgraced and the sun ashamed when Hashem of Legions will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem.*²⁰⁶

Heretofore, the idolaters said that they prospered because of the idols they worshipped. However, now that God will judge them, they will be convinced that their idols -- shapes made to represent the heavenly host -- are of no substance, and there there is no power but God's.²⁰⁷

To Him will all the heavenly powers bow

הַשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לוֹ כָּל אֱלֹהִים:

The Yerushalmi (Avodah Zarah 4:7) continues: In the future, all the idols will kneel before God; then they will vanish. Those who worshipped these false gods will recognize the truth, and they too will prostrate themselves before the true God (Radak).²⁰⁸

201. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1196.

202. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 185.

203. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1196.

204. *Isaiah* 2:18.

205. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1196.

206. *Isaiah* 24:23.

207. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms*, Vol. 3, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 373-374.

208. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1196.

Zion will hear and be glad

שְׁמָעָה וְתִשְׂמַח צִיּוֹן

The rest of the peoples will quake at that sound. Israel will rejoice because they know that he hailstones and the fire are descending to punish the wicked, viz. the nations gathered for war against Jerusalem (Radak).²⁰⁹

And the daughters of Judah will exult

וְתִגְלְגְלָהּ בְּנוֹת יְהוּדָה

When the One God will thus be worshipped throughout the earth, then joy will also return to Zion, the ancient eternal Sanctuary of the Lord, and to the daughters of Judah, the desolate cities which rallied round this Sanctuary and shared its fate. For then the One God Who, from out of Zion, caused His spirit and His Law to shape all of life within the cities of Judah, will be recognized by all the nations as the One God Who rules over all things in glorious majesty. And this deliverance of all mankind also will bring with it the resurrection of Zion and Judah.²¹⁰

The Messiah, the Scion of David, is a descendant of the tribe of Judah. Therefore, the daughters of Judah, the Messiah's relatives, will have special reason to rejoice, upon his arrival (Chazah Zion).²¹¹

The daughters of Judah are the cities of Judah.²¹²

Because of your judgments, Hashem

לְמַעַן מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ יְיָ

The Messiah will judge all the nations in the Valley of Jehoshaphat [in the vicinity of Judea], and all of Israel will rejoice when they see justice meted out to their tormentors (Radak).²¹³

For You Hashem are supreme

כִּי אַתָּה יְיָ עֶלְיוֹן

Above all the earth

עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ

When the graven images are shattered and the deities humbled (verse 7) everyone will realize that *You, Hashem are alone supreme above all the forces of the earth* (Radak).²¹⁴

209. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms*, Vol. 3, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 374.

210. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 185.

211. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1196.

212. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms*, Vol. 3, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 374.

213. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1197.

214. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1197.

Exceedingly exalted
Above all heavenly powers

מֵאֲדָנֶעֱלִיָּת
עַל כָּל אֱלֹהִים:

When men recognize God's sovereignty, He draws new strength, so to speak and He becomes more exalted than ever (Kiflayim L'Tushiah).²¹⁵

Therefore, you who are lovers of Hashem, despise evil אֱהִי יי שְׂנֹאוֹ רָע

The man who cultivates a flourishing garden cannot let any weeds remain. Similarly, the man who seeks to implant the love of God in his heart must uproot every trace of evil from his personality.²¹⁶

Some fear the wicked because they appear to be exceptionally prosperous and successful. Men of evil give the impression that God protects them. But God will demonstrate that *He is supreme ... exceedingly exalted above all powers* (verse 9) when He topples the gods of the evildoers and demonstrates that they are helpless. At that time the lovers of Hashem will despise evil, without any fear of reprisal or retribution (Ibn Ezra).²¹⁷

This glimpse into the future of mankind as given in Psalms 96 and 97 is intended to call upon those of every generation who are the friends of God's cause even now to hate implacably, not the evil man, but only evil itself, and to rise in open opposition against evil whenever and wherever it may appear. For this brief look into the days to come is meant to assure us that evil cannot last forever in this world, that the future belongs to the righteous, and that with every human act of intervention against evil the kingdom of God, and hence human salvation on earth, is brought one step nearer.²¹⁸

The Psalmist therefore calls upon *those who love God to hate evil* -- now, and not wait for the time when God will banish it. One who truly loves God cannot be indifferent to evil; the strength of one's love for God can be measured by the intensity of one's hatred of evil. However, it is evil itself, not the evil-doer, that the lover of God is called upon to hate. For very often the evil-doer acts out of ignorance or for other reasons, and in such cases he should be pitied and helped. But if there are really wicked men who might oppose any attempt to eradicate evil, the pious mean need not fear them, for the Psalmist assures us:²¹⁹

215. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1197.

216. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1197.

217. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1197.

218. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 185-186.

219. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer*, Vol 2, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 15.

He guards the souls of His devout ones

שֹׁמֵר נַפְשׁוֹת חַסִּידָיו

First the Psalmist says *Lovers of God, hate those who are wicked!* do not be afraid that because they appear successful your hatred would backfire and that you would become their victims and that there is nothing that stands in the way of the wicked accomplishing what they have set out to do. Remember **שֹׁמֵר נַפְשׁוֹת חַסִּידָיו**, *He watches over the souls of His pious ones.* He who preserves His pious ones from sinning, i.e. protects **נַפְשׁוֹת** their souls, and does not allow them to fall victim to Satan, protects them also against becoming the cause of disaster.²²⁰

Every fighter against evil, therefore, is a champion of God's own cause and enjoys His special protection.²²¹

Even when Israel is in exile there is no reason to fear men of evil, because God always safeguards the souls of His devout ones (Sforno).²²²

From the hand of the wicked He rescues them

מִיַּד רְשָׁעִים יִצִּילֵם:

God will most certainly save His chassidim, [His] pious ones from the hands of the wicked, so that the latter will not kill them. The reason the Psalmist says *from the hands of the wicked* instead of simply “from the wicked”, is in accordance with our commentary on Proverbs, that God allows the wicked the latitude inherent in having granted all men free choice. The wicked may make all the preparations to carry out his evil design, until his net seems certain to ensnare the righteous. After that God provides a way for the righteous not to fall into the net spread out for him by the sinner.²²³ This is the meaning of

*You will not fear sudden terror, nor the destruction by the wicked when it comes*²²⁴

i.e. even when you seem to be in their hand already,

*for Hashem will be your confidence and He will guard your foot against the trap.*²²⁵

God does not interfere with the free will of the wicked, but he delivers His devout ones from the conspiracies which evildoers direct against them (Alshich; Shaarei Hayosher).²²⁶

220. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 732.

221. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 186.

222. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1197.

223. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 733.

224. *Proverbs* 3:25.

225. *Proverbs* 3:26.

226. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1197.

Not **אור זרע לצדיקים** but **אור-זרע לצדיקים**. Not “light is sown for the righteous,” which would mean that every righteous man shall see in his own lifetime the full fruition of the light that is his. Instead we read *Sown light is for the righteous*. The righteous man is aware at all times that his present portion is only light that is sown. It is only in the distant future that the true good to which he renders homage will bloom and ripen on earth. But the seed has been sown by the Lord of time in the womb of time.²²⁷

The spiritual light -- the reward for good deeds and the personal perfection that are their natural result -- are like seeds sown in fertile soil (Rashi; Radak).²²⁸

Rashi emphasizes that this should be understood literally: light is sown, and it is ready to sprout forth for the righteous. Even if but a little light is sown, they will later reap light in abundance (Ibn Ezra) in the days of the Messiah and in the World to Come (Sforno).²²⁹

The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 17:5) explains that every material object in Creation holds within itself the potential for spiritual purpose and growth. The righteous recognize that seeds of Spiritual Light are sown and concealed throughout the world, so that man may cultivate a rich harvest of mitzvos. Opportunities to fulfill the precepts of the Torah are everywhere, even in the most mundane acts.²³⁰

Elsewhere, the Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 35:1) says that this verse refers to the original light which illuminated the world at the time of Creation. With this light, a man could see from one end of the world to the other. But God realized that wicked men might someday use this light for corrupt purposes. Therefore, God hid this light in the Garden of Eden, where it is reserved as a reward for the righteous.²³¹

The **צדיק**, righteous, is mentioned here in the singular, because a righteous man can live alone and serve God.²³²

The main concern of the righteous is with spiritual matters; therefore their reward is primarily reserved for the future World of the Spirit. Thus, *light is sown for the righteous* in the future.²³³

227. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 186.

228. Menachem Davis (ed.), *The Book of Psalms*, Mesorah Publications Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 274.

229. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1197-1198.

230. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1198.

231. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1198.

232. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1199.

233. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1199.

The good works that a person does are likened to the sowing or planting of seeds. The analogy brings out several significant facts. A seed (of a fruit-tree, for example) planted in the soil eventually produces a fruit-bearing tree. The results are extraordinary, for the seed is very small, and it has no taste or fragrance, yet out of it grows a huge tree with delicious fruits. The reward of sowing and planting is by far greater than the effort. All this we find also in the case of doing a Mitzvah. "The Mitzvot were not given for enjoyment," our Sages declare. We do a Mitzvah because God commanded us to do it, whether we understand it or not. But the reward is sure to be enjoyable and delicious, and infinitely greater than the small effort or little sacrifice involved. Furthermore, it takes time for the seed to grow into a fruit-bearing tree; so also in the case of a Mitzvah. We must not expect an immediate reward, for the main reward is to come in the future world, Olam HaBa. But God may be relied upon to keep His promise, and the Psalmist therefore calls: *Rejoice, ye righteous in God.*²³⁴

The light sown for the righteous refers, of course, to Torah and Mitzvot, *for a Mitzvah is a lamp and the Torah is light.*²³⁵ The Midrash states that God planted the Torah and Mitzvot here on earth (instead of giving them to the angels in heaven) in order to enable us to inherit the World to Come. In His goodness, God left no thing or place in this world where He did not plant Mitzvot: in the field -- there are many Mitzvot connected with every activity of plowing, sowing, reaping, and so forth; in the home -- there is the Mezuzah; in clothing -- tzitzit and shatnes. And so at every step throughout his life, a Jew has many opportunities to do Mitzvot. Because the Torah and Mitzvot are God's wisdom and will, they are infinite, just as God Himself is infinite. This is why, when a Jew studies God's Torah and observes God's commandments, he sows something that contains the seeds that produce infinite results and infinite fruits and rewards beyond our limited understanding and imagination. We can only rejoice in the thought that God has chosen us to do His Mitzvot, and in this way made it possible for us to share in His holiness.²³⁶

And for the upright in heart gladness

וּלְיֹשְׁרֵי לֵב שְׂמֵחָה:

The **יֹשְׁרִים**, upright, are referred to in the plural, because their lives are also dedicated to serving God by helping others.²³⁷

The upright are dedicated to improving the lot of their fellow man in this world; therefore, they are rewarded with rejoicing in this world.²³⁸

234. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer*, Vol 2, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 16.

235. *Proverbs* 6:23.

236. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer*, Vol 2, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 16.

237. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1199.

238. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1199.

They will reap the light and the joy in the future of the Messianic era.²³⁹
The Talmud (Taanis 15a) states that not everyone is destined to be blessed with light, and not everyone is destined to be blessed with gladness. Only the righteous will have light, and only the upright will merit gladness.²⁴⁰

And if he is not only צדיק, doing his duty, but is also ישר לב, upright in his attitude, if he possesses that uprightness of heart which makes him find joy only in what is good and right, and causes him to derive pleasure solely from the awareness that he has done his duty, then he will reap at all times a double harvest of happiness. First, he will derive joy from the awareness of duty well done, and then happiness from the realization that he has thus taken the Divine path which leads to the salvation that one day will blossom forth for all mankind.²⁴¹

Sfas Emes (in his essays on Yom Kippur) explains that the upright person has perfected his personality to such an extent that he resembles Adam before his sin, as King Solomon teaches

*God has made man upright [literally straight] but they sought many intrigues.*²⁴²

Man will rejoice when he regains his original purity and uprightness.²⁴³

Be glad, O righteous, in Hashem

שְׂמְחוּ צְדִיקִים בַּיְי

In the future, the influence of the Messiah will elevate everyone to higher spiritual levels. The righteous will then begin to rejoice and the upright will reach new heights of ecstasy, as we read in the liturgy for the High Holidays:

*And thus the righteous will see and rejoice and the upright will exult (see Siddur HaGrah with commentary of Siah Yitzchak).*²⁴⁴

However distant this glorious future may still be, let the righteous of every generation rejoice in the Lord, Who has revealed Himself to us particularly as the God of the future. And even if the ideal of the universal worship of Him will come to fruition only at some future time still veiled from our eyes, yet He has bequeathed to us זכר, a “memorial” of this blissful state what will eventually prevail. This “memorial” is the treasure to be cherished in our hearts and spirits “for every generation,” one which should serve as our guiding light throughout all the dark days to come until the dawn of our promised brighter future. This is God’s precious

239. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 374.

240. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1198.

241. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 186.

242. *Ecclesiastes* 7:29.

243. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1198.

244. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1199.

gift which we acknowledge with grateful homage.²⁴⁵

Should you ask what comfort is being offered to the צדיק in this world, -- the answer is ב"י. He will be with God.²⁴⁶

And give thanks for the mention of his Holiness

וְהוֹדוּ לְזִכָּר קְדֹשׁ:

Man will remember God when Israel is released from exile. Then the entire world will recognize that it is God Who has superintended this momentous redemption (Tehillos Hashem).²⁴⁷

Give thanks, i.e. הודו, that God has seen fit לזכר קדשו, to make your fate a reflection, a memorial of His own experience during these years of exile.²⁴⁸

245. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 186-187.

246. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 734.

247. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1199.

248. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 734.

Psalm 98

Psalm 98 is a song of praise to God for the salvation that He has brought [and will bring to] Israel and for the revelation of the glory of His kingdom in the world. The psalm begins with a command to the congregation to sing a new song to the Lord for His marvels, and for the victories that He has given [and will give] to Israel, victories that have revealed [and will reveal] the glory of God to the nations. Therefore, in the second section of the psalm, the psalmist addresses all the inhabitants of the world, and instructs them to make joyful music in honor of God, and to crown Him as their king. In the third section of the psalm, he addresses the forces of the nature -- the sea, the land, the rivers and the mountains -- and instructs them to sing praises in honor of God's arrival as judge of the earth.²⁴⁹

Ibn Yachya explains that Moses dedicated this psalm to the tribe of Naftali, whom he blessed in Deuteronomy 33:23. "Naftali, satiated with favor and filled with Hashem's blessing, go possess the sea and its south shore." The contentment of Naftali describes the universal abundance and peace which will envelop the earth in the Messianic era. The Children of Israel will then merit special tranquility and peace of mind, which will prompt them to sing to Hashem. The Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 23:5) states that it is because of Abraham's unshakable faith in God that his descendants will be privileged to sing this song, for nothing could disturb Abraham's serene trust in Hashem, and his descendants inherited this sublime faith. King Solomon taught that faith is the prime ingredient of song as the Song of Songs (4:8) states: *you shall sing from the heights of faith.*²⁵⁰

On this psalm, Rebbe Nachman writes

And then a new song will be aroused, in the aspect of "Sing to Hashem a new song, for He has done wonders. That is a reference to the song that will be aroused in the future which is the melody of providence, the aspect of wonders. This is because at that time the world will function by means of providence and wonders. This is because there is a melody in the aspect of the way of nature, which is the aspect of "The heavens tell the glory of God and the work of His hands does the heaven express." This is the aspect of melody and song of the way of nature, of the attributes of heavens -- that is to say, the aspect of the songs and praises that praise Hashem, be He blessed, for His guidance of the present, who guides the world in accordance with the way of nature. But in the future, a new song will be awakened in the aspect of wonders, the aspect of providence, for then God will guide the world through providence only. And this new song that will be awoken in the future, which is the aspect of a song that is simple, doubled, tripled, quadrupled which as applied to the Tetragrammaton, adds up to 72, the aspect of kindness, [דוד, kindness, has the numerical value of 72]. Via that will come the renewal of the

249. Amos Hakham, *The Bible Psalms Volume Two*, Mosad Harav Kook, Jerusalem, Israel, 2003, p.422.

250. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1201.

world in the future days, the aspect of the world will be built with kindness. ... And as a result prophecy will spread. And as a result of prophecy we will attain faith. And with faith the world will be renewed in the future days.²⁵¹

A Psalm, Sing to Hashem a new song

מְזִמּוֹר שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חָדָשׁ

These same words serve as the introduction to many psalms which speak of the future. See Psalms 33:3, 40:4, 96:1, 98:1, 144.9, 149.1 and Isaiah 42:10.

The verb שִׁיר, is primarily used to denote “singing praises,” proclaiming the show of God’s hand in the course of history. שִׁירָה sings of the invisible aspect of Divine rule in the events of the present, but שִׁיר refers to those signs of His Sovereignty that will become apparent only some day in the future. שִׁיר and particularly שִׁיר חָדָשׁ are always employed with reference to the eventual ultimate redemption of the world, to which all the developments of history will lead. The masculine form שִׁיר refers to that salvation which will be the final, splendid goal of the entire march of time, and not a mere stepping stone to some other eventual redemption.²⁵²

In the time of the Messiah, every man will arouse his neighbor to praise God with these words.²⁵³

The new song is the one that will be sung at the time of the Messiah, celebrating both the re-emergence of God’s Presence, the Shechinah, on earth from its self imposed exile, as well as the salvations the Jewish people will have experienced at that time.²⁵⁴

For He has done wonders

כִּי נִפְלְאוֹת עָשָׂה

The verb עָשָׂה is in the past tense, making it have a double meaning. First, it is in the past tense because the wonders have occurred in the past. Second it is in the past tense because the prophet is in the future Messianic Era and describing the wonders that have occurred prior to that era. The Hebrew word translated as wonders is נִפְלְאוֹת.

The term נִפְלְאוֹת, marvels, refers here to the acts of salvation that God has performed for His people. Similar (Exodus 34:10) “before all your people I will do marvels”. Also see Psalms 72:18, and 86:10.²⁵⁵

In ordinary acts of Divine providence we see coming into play the natural order of

251. Zvi Mark, *Mysticism and Madness*, Continuum, New York, 2009, p175.

252. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 233.

253. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1186.

254. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 734.

255. Amos Hakham, *The Bible Psalms Volume Two*, Mosad Harav Kook, Jerusalem, 2003, p. 419.

things, which, of course, was also instituted by God Himself, as well as the free will of human action, the result of which combination God employs for His own purposes. Therefore, the short-sighted human eye interprets such “nature” events simply as being the result of “nature” and of human action. It fails to perceive the invisible guidance of God in Whose service and for Whose purposes both of these complete their appointed course. On the other hand, the **נפלאות** which God brings about occur not only outside the nature order of things, but actually in contradiction to them, and contrary to the calculations and wishes of man.²⁵⁶

His right hand helped him

הוֹשִׁיעָה לוֹ יְמִינוֹ

And his holy arm

וַיִּזְרַע קִדְשׁוֹ:

At the time of the redemption from Egypt, God used only one hand, so to speak,

*Hashem is glorious in power; Your right hand, Hashem shatters the foe.*²⁵⁷

In the future, however, He will redeem His people with both hands (Ibn Yachya).²⁵⁸

Malbim explains that the **זרוע** refers to the upper arm, which moves the forearm and hand. The upper arm is the source of the hand’s strength.²⁵⁹

Scripture alludes to this relationship between the upper arm and the hand when describing God’s actions on behalf of Israel. When the Children of Israel are righteous enough to stimulate Divine action, they are described as **זרוע**, upper arm, and God’s performance is called **יד י-ה-ו-ה**, the hand of Hashem, which derives its strength from Israel’s merits. When Israel fails to merit Divine intervention, God’s deeds are termed, **זרוע י-ה-ו-ה**, the upper arm of Hashem, which derives its strength from God’s own mercy. In the redemption of the future, God will act with both the **יד** hand, and the **זרוע** arm of salvation, for all the power will emanate from God’s mercy, regardless of Israel’s merits.²⁶⁰

The Psalmist acclaims God’s pending wondrous acts when the time comes to reveal His might and glory (*His right hand and holy arm*). The poet speaks in the past tense, as if he already saw it happen.²⁶¹

Hashem has made known His salvation,

הוֹדִיעַ ייִ יְשׁוּעָתוֹ

256. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 188.

257. *Exodus* 15:6.

258. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1202-1203.

259. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1203.

260. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1203.

261. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer, Vol 2*, Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 17.

Before the salvation came, God made it known through His prophets, and now He has revealed His righteousness to everyone. (Mezudath David).²⁶²

At the time of redemption, Hashem will finally make known the precise date of the advent of the Messiah. From the earliest times, this date has been shrouded in secrecy,²⁶³

*Is it not secreted with Me, sealed up in My treasuries?*²⁶⁴

And the prophet Daniel confirms,

*These matters are obscured and sealed up.*²⁶⁵

This verse has a parallel passage in Isaiah,

*For my salvation is near to come and my righteousness is to be revealed.*²⁶⁶

This prophecy will be fulfilled by the Messiah (Malbim).²⁶⁷

In the sight of the people

לְעֵינֵי הַגּוֹיִם

He revealed His righteousness

גְּלָהּ צְדָקָתוֹ:

During the tragic exile of Israel, the persecuted Jews have sometimes been tempted to question God's equity and righteousness. But in the future it will be manifest that Israel deserved to be punished for its sins and that the redemption represents an act of pure Divine kindness (Sforno).²⁶⁸

He recalled His kindness

זָכַר חֶסֶדּוֹ

And His faithful pledge to the House of Israel

וְאַמּוֹנָתוֹ לְבַיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל

The kindness and the faith that He had promised the house of Israel, to take them out of exile. He took them out before the eyes of the world (Radak).²⁶⁹

262. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms, Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 375.

263. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1203.

264. *Deuteronomy* 32:34.

265. *Daniel* 12:9.

266. *Isaiah* 56:1.

267. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1203.

268. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1203.

269. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms, Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 375.

God is committed to Israel because of the merit of their forefathers, as stated in

*Give truth to Jacob, kindness to Abraham.*²⁷⁰

Harav Vidal HaTzorfati explains that God acted with kindness towards Abraham when He promised him the Holy Land. Once the promise was made, however, its fulfillment was not only a kindness, but also a matter of keeping faith with Jacob and his sons [who constitute the House of Israel].²⁷¹

The Lord remembered what He had wrought for the house of Israel in the past, and He remembered, too, that Israel's entire existence in world history is a result of His mercy and of His guiding faithfulness which have never forsaken His people either when it strayed or when it was faced by trouble. It is from this "remembering" that God's present loving-kindness stems. Since the sons of the "house" of Israel had been widely dispersed throughout the earth, every Jew who was thus restored to new life became a monument to God's providence, and all the ends of the earth beheld **את**,²⁷² the entire substance of the salvation of our God. They saw the fullness of salvation inherent in a situation where a person calls God his God, and God regards Himself as the Master of that Individual.²⁷³

All the ends of the earth have seen

רָאוּ כָּל אֶפְסֵי אֶרֶץ

The salvation of our God

אֵת יְשׁוּעַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ:

Ends of the earth means the entire earth, from one end to the other.

All the nations witnessed the wonders which God wrought, yet they refused to accept His sovereignty. Only the House of Israel acclaimed God's salvation, and for this reason God always remembered to treat them with kindness and faith (Kedushas Levi).²⁷⁴

During the long and dark galut (exile) the nations of the world mocked and derided the Jewish people, saying that God had forgotten and forsaken them, and they could therefore be oppressed and persecuted without fear of punishment. But those wicked nations are due to find out how wrong they were.²⁷⁵

270. *Micah* 7:20.

271. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1203-1204.

272. *Genesis* 1:1.

273. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 188.

274. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1204.

275. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 17.

Call out to Hashem all the earth

הִרְיֵעוּ לַיהוָה כָּל הָאָרֶץ

The verb **הִרְיֵעוּ**, here translated as call out, means to raise a sound of song, a joyful shout.

Even the gentile nations should call out for joy in recognition of Israel's salvation, because it is the salvation of the entire world as well. When Israel is allowed to live in peace, the hostilities which divide the nations will also cease, ushering in an era of universal harmony (Radak).²⁷⁶

Having told Israel that they should sing the new song extolling God's salvations already now. Moses now faces the gentile nations which include the four kingdoms which will host Israel during its various exiles, and tells them to give noisy recognition to God lest their fate become the same as that of the Egyptians who had abused Israel. Even though those nations may believe that they are executing God's will in exiling the Jewish people and keeping them from returning to their homeland, God has never authorized them to maltreat and abuse the Jews.²⁷⁷

Arizal points out that the initial letters of these four words form the acronym **הלכה** [halachah], Torah law. When all the earth becomes filled with the study and practice of halachah, the Messiah will be victorious (Noeh L'hodos).²⁷⁸

A Czarist official in Russia once asked the Netziv, rabbi of Volozhin, why many psalms call upon the nations to praise God for His salvation of Israel. It should be Israel, not its oppressors, who should praise Him!

The Netziv replied, "We have no way of knowing the extent of your conspiracies against us. Only you know how many times you have plotted against us, but have been thwarted by God. You are far more conscious than we are, therefore, of the magnitude of God's miraculous salvations. Only you can appreciate the full extent of His greatness."²⁷⁹

Make loud noise and sing joyous songs

פָּצְחוּ וְרַנְּנוּ

And play music

וַיִּמְרוּ:

Make loud noises of joyous song. The verb **פָּצְחוּ**, make a loud noise, in the kal conjugation is used in connection with singing only in poetic diction. The term probably refers specifically to the first few notes of a song which seem to explode out of silence.²⁸⁰

276. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1204.

277. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 736.

278. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1204.

279. Menachem Davis (ed.), *The Book of Psalms*, Mesorah Publications Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 275.

280. Amos Hakham, *The Bible Psalms Volume Two*, Mosad Harav Kook, Jerusalem, 2003, p. 420.

The events which took place in Israel's history and the wondrous acts wrought in Israel's behalf serve to call upon all inhabitants of the world to waken the homage of the Lord over all the earth, **פצחו**: not to restrain the joyous emotions which are stirred up within their hearts by what they have witnessed, and to express these emotions through the medium of melody.²⁸¹

Radak and Ibn Yachya perceive the word **פצחו** as cognate with **פתחו**, open up [For whereas the suffering of exile stifled Israel's ability to sing out to Hashem, the redemption will reopen the wellsprings of song.]²⁸²

The verb **זמר**, to sing praise, in biblical Hebrew refers to both vocal and instrumental music.²⁸³

Celebrate God's triumph in every way possible, like a joyous nations which goes forth to greet its victorious King (see Sforno).²⁸⁴

Play music to Hashem on a harp

זָמְרוּ לַיהוָה בְּכִנּוֹר

The noun **כנור**, is translated as either harp or lyre.

Alshich points out that this music is used as a means of paying homage to Hashem. Therefore the player starts on the harp whose soft, fluid notes inspire a mood of rapture which enables the audience to melt before the presence of God.²⁸⁵

With a harp and the sound of musical instruments

בְּכִנּוֹר וְקוֹל זְמֵרָה:

Later, after creating a quiet atmosphere of intimacy and submission to God, the musicians add a vast array of instruments, building to a thunderous crescendo of chanted song. At that point the listeners soar to the thrilling heights of ecstasy (Alshich)²⁸⁶

With trumpets and shofar sound

בְּחִצְצָרוֹת וְקוֹל שׁוֹפָר

Call out before the King, Hashem

הֲרִיעוּ לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ יְיָ:

חצצרות denotes that instrument which is employed to summon men to the aid of

281. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 189.

282. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1204.

283. Amos Hakham, *The Bible Psalms Volume Two*, Mosad Harav Kook, Jerusalem, 2003, p. 421.

284. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1204.

285. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1204.

286. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1205.

others, but particularly to call God to the aid and succor of mankind. The שופר is used by the Lord to call man to Himself, and man makes use of it in the name of God to summon himself and his fellows to follow God and to serve Him in loyal obedience.²⁸⁷

In the temple, the trumpets used to sound short blasts whereas the shofar, the ram's horn, was used to blow the longer notes. Both are employed when hailing a king. The reason only the sound of the shofar, קול שופר, is mentioned here and not the shofar itself, is, because the sound of the shofar will be heard long after the sound of the trumpet has ceased.²⁸⁸

This very blowing of the shofar, the ram's horn, helps temper God's justice with mercy, i.e. ״ המלך, though He acts as king, as judge, He does so by also employing His attribute Hashem. If you nations will relate to Him in this fashion, He will not have to relate to you with the fury of His anger.²⁸⁹

Inspired by the wonderful vision of the ultimate triumph of the Jewish people and of the new revelation of God's glory on earth, the Psalmist calls for shouts of joy and songs of praise to God.²⁹⁰

Come before God in His palace, the Holy Temple, and praise Him to the accompaniment of these powerful instruments (Radak).

Shaarei Chaim observes that the trumpets, are associated with joyous victory (as in Numbers 10:10) whereas the groaning or crying sound of the shofar, connotes fear (Rosh Hashanah 26a) for as Amos asks,

*It is possible that the shofar could be blown in the city and the nation not tremble?*²⁹¹

This verse teaches that man should harness all of his emotions, both fear and joy, in the service of God, because God is both the King who inspires dread and Hashem, the Dispenser of Kindness Who creates joy.²⁹²

The sea and its fullness will roar

יָרַעַם הַיָּם וּמְלֵאוֹ

The world and those who dwell therein

תִּבְּל וְיִשְׁבֵי בָהּ:

287. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 189.

288. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 737.

289. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 737.

290. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 18.

291. *Amos* 3:6.

292. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1205.

All will rejoice at the universal peace ushered in by the Messiah (Ibn Ezra).²⁹³

Kiflayim L'Tushia observes that in this verse the Psalmist associates the sea with the inhabited land because

*Hashem's is the earth and its fullness, the inhabited land and those who dwell in it. For He founded it upon the seas.*²⁹⁴

All civilization is dependent on bodies of water (Ibn Ezra).²⁹⁵

The rivers will clap hands in unity

בְּהִרְוֵת יַמֵּיהֶם יִרְצוּ יַחַד

Let the rivers clap hands, to make it known that the Lord is the king, as people do for human kings. Similarly (II Kings 11:12): “and they clapped their hands and said, Long live the King.” The third-person future form **יִרְצוּ** is used here as a third-person imperative, “may they clap hands,” like the verb **יִרְעַם** “may it roar” in the previous verse.²⁹⁶

The prophets spoke in a language that the ear can hear; not that the rivers have a hand, but it is an expression of joy and gladness (Rashi).²⁹⁷

Hand clapping is associated with welcoming a king as in

*They clapped their hands and proclaimed Long live the King.*²⁹⁸

At the time of the final redemption, the entire world will recognize and welcome Hashem as its King (Radak).²⁹⁹

Mountains will exult together

הַרִּים יִרְנְנוּ:

In the event of you nations acting in accordance with my suggestion, the rivers, i.e. the four kingdoms who have exiled Israel and who have reason to fear God's arrival when He comes to judge them, will clap their hands in joy together with the mountains, i.e. their respective princes and leaders, and they will jubilate.³⁰⁰

Here the Psalmist associates the mountains with the rivers as in

293. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1205.

294. *Psalm 24:1-2*.

295. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 297.

296. Amos Hakham, *The Bible Psalms Volume Two*, Mosad Harav Kook, Jerusalem, 2003, p. 422.

297. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 375.

298. *II Kings 11:12*.

299. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1206.

300. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 737.

*He sends forth the watersprings in the rivers, between the mountains they flow.*³⁰¹

Homiletically, this verse may be interpreted: *Rivers will clap hands together with mountains they will exult.* The mighty rivers are created from the confluence of small rivulets, formed by rain and melted snow, which flow down from the mountains. The water flow causes erosion of the rock formations and reshape the mountains. Thus, the mountains shape the rivers and the rivers in turn shape the mountains. Because of this symbiosis, when the rivers praise God they are joined by the mountains.³⁰²

When this King will enter the world in order to establish mankind upon His lawful order, and to found society upon such principles as are truly worthy of man, then men will know that they have sinned and the sea will surge toward mankind as if to prepare to execute God's sentence upon it. But the rivers and the mountains, whose fundamental factors which determine not destruction, but a rebuilding of all of man's world upon the sole basis is an expression indicating joy.³⁰³

Before Hashem, for He will have arrived

לְפָנַי יִי כִּי בָא

To judge the earth

לְשַׁפֵּט הָאָרֶץ

All will rejoice when God comes to bring justice to the earth (Ibn Ezra).³⁰⁴

There will be rejoicing before the Lord because He has come to judge (Mezudath David).³⁰⁵

This verse parallels 96:13 except that there **כִּי בָא** is mentioned twice. There the Psalmist alludes to the order and justice that God brought to the world during the eras of the First and Second Temples. Those reigns of justice were short-lived, however. Here, the Psalmist speaks to the era of the Third Temple, when God's reign of justice will be eternal (Chazah Zion).³⁰⁶

To judge the world with righteousness

יִשְׁפֹּט תִּבְלַבְּצָדִק

And the nations with fairness

וְעַמִּים בְּמִישָׁרִים:

301. *Psalms* 104:10.

302. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1206.

303. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 189-190.

304. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1206.

305. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 375.

306. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1206.

His judgment will be just and equitable, bestowing good upon the righteous and evil upon the wicked.³⁰⁷

Psalm 96:3 reads,

*He will judge the world with righteousness, and nations, with His faithful truth.*³⁰⁸

whereas this verse states that God will judge nations with fairness.

Shaarei Chaim explains that these two terms refer to the two stages of human acceptance of Divine judgement. At first man does not comprehend the equity of God's actions, yet he trusts in God's faithful truth, confident that God will not be treacherous.

However, as time progresses, events prove the equity and perfection of God's decisions and deeds. The climax of history will come when mankind recognizes that all of God's judgments were rendered with fairness. Then man will no longer need to rely on blind faith to accept Divine decrees, for their justice will be manifest to all.³⁰⁹

The last verse of Psalm 96 is virtually identical with this one except for the last word: That psalm ends **באמונתו**, with His truth. Malbim explains that the word **אמונתו**, truth or faith, is a reference to the functioning of nature, as if to say that natural law is unyielding and unchanging, like a person who is totally faithful and reliable. There, in Psalm 96, the Psalmist refers to punishments of the wicked which would be effected through natural means. This verse, however, describes the Divine, miraculous judgment; though it will supersede the laws of nature, it will be carried out with absolute fairness.³¹⁰

Since **לפני יי**, they find themselves before Hashem, i.e. the merciful God, who has come to judge the earth. He will judge the earth bearing in mind **צדק**, righteousness, charity, and He will judge the nations **במישרים**, on the basis of **ישר**, that what is right must also appear to be right, i.e. applying a yardstick commonly known as more elastic, making allowances for human frailties.³¹¹

307. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 375.

308. *Psalms* 96:3.

309. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1206.

310. Menachem Davis (ed.), *The Book of Psalms*, Mesorah Publications Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 275-276.

311. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 738.

Psalm 99

Psalm 99 has three sections: the first section relates to God's holiness, sitting upon the Cherubim, as His throne. The second section describes God's holiness, a holiness that manifests itself by His kingship, a kingship founded on equity, justice and righteousness. The third section describes God's holiness in that He is close to the ones such as Moses, Aaron, and Samuel who call upon Him, meaning they maintain God consciousness and observe all the commandments in the Torah.

Psalm 99 is a continuation of the preceding psalm. In Psalm 98 we are told that when we call upon God, we should not so much stress what we hope to receive from Him, but, above all, bear in mind what God expects of us. Psalm 99 is devoted primarily to those requirements which God imposes upon all the nations of the earth. No one can be in doubt concerning the content of these requirements. The Law upon which God has chosen to establish His throne for mankind's new future is the same Law that has long reposed beneath the pinions of the Cherubim. To render homage to God means to regard as binding this Law of His and its social legislation concerning justice, duty and human conduct. This is the Law which God had implemented in the nation of Jacob, a nation which hitherto had been held in contempt. It is a law for fairness, integrity and justice. It is the law which is now to be adopted by all mankind. All humanity, therefore, is repeatedly summoned to recognize and to acknowledge God not only as the One Who is exalted far above all else, but also as the "Holy One" Who, because He is holy, accepts only one form of worship as true Divine service, namely the sanctification of human life on both the individual and the communal level. And men and nations alike may come near to Him only by way of holy endeavors; that is such endeavors as are morally pure.³¹²

This psalm speaks of the future Day of Judgment, when God will call all of the depraved nations to task (Sforno). The cataclysmic war of God and Magog will take place during this period of judgment and retribution. (Rashi, Radak). At that time, Hashem will establish His universal reign, unchallenged by any nation on earth.³¹³

Ibn Yachay explains that Moses dedicated this psalm to the tribe of Dan. Moses blessed Dan saying: Dan is a young [and powerful] lion, who leaps up from Bashan (Deuteronomy 33:22), for when Hashem will reign, nations will tremble, and Dan will have the opportunity to conquer them in God's Name.³¹⁴

When Hashem will reign, nations will tremble,

יְיָ מֶלֶךְ יִרְגְּזוּ עַמִּים

312. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 190-191.

313. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1207.

314. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1207.

This verse is written in the past tense which means that this is exactly the way it will happen.

The awareness that God is indeed a Supreme Sovereign causes the nations to tremble, for before Him all other power and grandeur melt away.³¹⁵

Hashem's reign will begin at the war of God and Magog, when the nations will tremble before God's might. Then Hashem will fix the earth on the foundations of justice, and the earth will exult (Radak).³¹⁶

This epoch will also be the era of the Day of Judgment when the wicked will receive their recompense (Sforno).³¹⁷

Before Him Who is enthroned on Cherubim,

יָשֵׁב כְּרוּבִים

This refers to the Divine Presence (the Shechinah) which, in the time of the Bet Hamikdash, was especially evident in the Holy of Holies. It was there that the Holy Ark (containing the Tablets with the Ten Commandments) reposed, its cover (kapporet) having two winged figures of cherubim with the faces of children hammered out of gold, shielding the kapporet. It was from there that God's voice went out to Mosheh Rabbeinu (See Exodus 25:22).³¹⁸

Then He will dwell between the cherubim, for He will restore His Shechinah to Zion in the Temple.³¹⁹

The earth will quake.

תְּנוּטָה הָאָרֶץ:

Once the earth is aware that God sits enthroned over the wings of the Cherubim that are spread over the "Law," it becomes unsettled and gives way. For it becomes evident that, judging by the standards set by this Law, nothing now existing on earth really has the right to go on living. נוט is an intensified form of נוד, "to totter," "to give way."³²⁰

The earth is no longer settled and stable, as Midrash Shocheh Tov comments: as long as Israel is in exile, God's sovereignty is incomplete, and the nations are powerful. When Israel is redeemed, however, God's dominion will be firmly established,

315. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 191.

316. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1208.

317. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1208.

318. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 19.

319. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 376.

320. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 191.

nations will waver on the brink of doom.³²¹

Before Hashem Who is great in Zion,

יְיָ בְּצִיּוֹן גָּדוֹל

Something גדול, great, resembles a מגדול, tower, which rises to the sky but is based on earth. Thus does the Jewish people (Zion) view God. He is great and lofty, yet He is also involved in this mundane world.³²²

גדול, “great” is that which is far-reaching in scope. God’s greatness is demonstrated in Zion, for there is no aspect of life in Zion, be it individual or communal, great or small, that has not received its form and impress from God Himself.³²³

Then He will be great in Zion for there He will be magnified over all the peoples when He executes justice upon the wicked.³²⁴

And Who is exalted above all nations,

וְרָם הוּא עַל כָּל הָעַמִּים:

The word רם, exalted, refers to an elevated object such as a soaring bird which is completely divorced from the earth. Thus do gentile nations conceive of God; He is deemed aloof and remote. In the future, however, the nations will recognize that God is indeed involved in earthly affairs. Therefore, He is described as a great King over all the earth.³²⁵

רם, “high” denotes that which is exalted far above all other things. The same God, Whose greatness had hitherto been revealed in Zion, now stands on high, exalted above all the nations which, therefore, now must also be prepared to make room for Him in every facet of their lives, both as individuals and as national entities (cf. Psalm 24: 7-9).³²⁶

They will gratefully praise Your name

יִזְדּוּ שִׂמְחָה גְדוֹל

Great and awesome, it is holy!

וְנוֹרָא קְדוֹשׁ הוּא:

When the Torah speaks of God’s “name,” it should be understood in a similar sense to that of a person’s name; the name is not the person himself, but something by which he is identified. When we hear a familiar name, we immediately recall a familiar person; his face, appearance, voice and all that we know about that person and his conduct. But all

321. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1208.

322. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1208.

323. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 191.

324. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 376.

325. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1208.

326. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 191.

these things are really external characteristics, as we perceive them with our senses; they do not tell us much about the person's inner soul and its hidden qualities.

In a similar way, when the Torah speaks of God's "Name," it speaks about the Divine qualities ("attributes") by which God makes Himself known to us, His creatures. This is all that we can know about God. In other words, we can know something about God from His works, but we cannot know God Himself. Or to put in another way: we can know [some aspects of] what God does, but not what God is.

This, then, is the meaning of such expressions as God is "great, awesome, holy," and the like. They all speak of God's powers which are revealed to us through His works, which are great, awesome, holy and so forth.

But we must bear in mind that even to know God from His works is not a simple matter. A man's works can be seen almost at a glance, but God's works are timeless, where the past, present and future merge into one moment. For, man's lifespan -- even if a person lives to 120 years -- is very short compared with the eternity of the soul, which has life also before and after its lifespan on earth. No one but God knows what happened to it before, and what will happen to it later. Thus it is written

*For a thousand years is in Your eyes but like yesterday.*³²⁷

This statement also is only a manner of speaking, or, as our Sages tell us, "the Torah speaks in the language of man." It is meant to give us some idea about the difference between what time is to us, and what it is to God. It is also meant to tell us that better than we can know what happened yesterday, God knows everything that happened in a thousand years (and countless thousands) in the past or will happen in the future. It further reminds us that our knowledge is not like God's knowledge. For a human being, even the wisest, can know, more or less, what happened yesterday, but he cannot know what will happen tomorrow. But for God, yesterday, today and tomorrow are all the same. This is why we cannot properly understand God's works and God's ways, as the prophet has already cautioned us:

*For My thoughts are not like your thoughts and My ways are not like your ways, says God.*³²⁸

With the above in mind we can better understand what is meant by the words, God's Name is great and awesome. God's Name is great in the sense that He can extend His benevolent powers endlessly; God's Name is awesome (inspiring awe and fear) in the sense that He can withhold and contract His powers endlessly.³²⁹

The nations may have had some previous notion of the concept of greatness and awe. But now they must also think in terms of "holiness," namely in terms of

327. *Psalms* 90:4.

328. *Isaiah* 55:8.

329. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 19-21.

absolute moral freedom and purity of life and ambition. It is from the קדושה, [holiness], which in its absolute form is found only in God Himself, that man's own ability and duty to strive for קדושה emanate. The sanctification of man emanates from God's own holiness.³³⁰

Mighty is the King Who loves justice,

וְעַז מְלֶכֶךְ מִשְׁפָּט אֱהָב

Then His might will be manifest, and it will be apparent that He is King over the entire universe, and all will acknowledge that He loves justice.³³¹

You founded fairness,

אַתָּה כּוֹנֵנֶת מִישָׁרִים

The invincible power of God loves lawful order; He takes pleasure in seeing justice become a living reality on earth. Awesome though God appears in His grandeur, men need only render homage to justice, practice it, and arrange their affairs in accordance with it in order to have in His invincible might not an opponent to be feared, but a true friend. His invincible power loves justice, and desires nothing more than that justice be made a living reality on earth. Only he who would trample justice underfoot need dread God's might (cf. Isaiah 27:4,5), and men cannot be in doubt as to what it is that the Lord requires of them.³³²

A man who wields great power often regards himself as being above the law and tends to abuse his power by injuring others. However, the Holy One, Blessed is He, loves justice; therefore, He uses His might to enforce the strict letter of the law.³³³

The justice and righteousness of Jacob,

מִשְׁפָּט וְצְדָקָה בְּיַעֲקֹב

You have made

אַתָּה עָשִׂיתָ:

According to one view this verse means that God will display His Divine justice when He redeems Jacob [i.e. the Jews] from exile. However, others maintain that the verse refers to God's justice and righteousness that was most evident when He gave the Torah to Jacob [i.e. the Jews] at Mount Sinai (Radak).³³⁴

Exalt Hashem our God,

רוֹמְמוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

This exhortation is addressed to the exiles: Publicize our wondrous redemption

330. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 191.

331. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 376.

332. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 191-192.

333. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1208-1209.

334. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1209.

throughout the entire world and encourage everyone to join you in praising God (Sforno).³³⁵

And prostrate before His footstool;

וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְהַדָּם רַגְלָיו

He is holy!

קְדוֹשׁ הוּא:

Prostrate literally means to be stretched out with face on the ground in adoration or submission. But here it can be understood in a metaphorical meaning. When we are fair, honest, act with integrity, do not take selfish advantage of another, but instead respect and honor the holiness that each person carries, we in effect prostrate before his footstool.

רגליו, “His footstool” is the point on earth at which He lets His sovereign Presence repose; it is a metaphor for the Sanctuary of His Law. It is explicitly stated by King David,

*Hear me, my brothers and my people! I had in my heart to build a house of rest for the Ark of the Covenant of Hashem, as a footstool for our God, and I prepared to build. But God said to me, You shall not build a Temple for My name because you are a man of wars and have shed blood.*³³⁶

When we act fairly, honestly, with integrity and do not take advantage of other people, then we make manifest God’s presence.

If the nations of the world truly acknowledge the majesty of our God, then they can demonstrate their acceptance of Him only through complete devotion to His Law, which reposes in His Sanctuary. There is only one intermediary between ourselves and God, and that is His Law. For God is קְדוֹשׁ, and only those who strive for moral sanctification may come near Him. Indeed, the closer a human being is to Him, the more unsullied must be the purity of his character and conduct.³³⁷

Not only is God holy in heaven above, but also on earth below (Alshich).³³⁸

Alternatively, God’s footstool alludes to the Temple [see Isaiah 66:1] and He made it holy with His Presence (Sforno).³³⁹

Moshe and Aaron were among His priests

מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן בְּכֹהֲנָיו

Radak and Sforno interpret בכֹהֲנָיו [were] among His priests, to mean Moses and

335. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1209.

336. I Chronicles 28: 2-3.

337. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 192.

338. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1209.

339. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1209.

Aaron were the chosen and foremost among God's priests.³⁴⁰

And Samuel among those who invoke His Name וְשִׁמוּאֵל בְּקִרְאֵי שְׁמוֹ

The Psalmist singles out Samuel because in certain respects his stature matched that of Moses and Aaron. These brothers were the greatest priests [and prophets] of their age, just as Samuel may have been the greatest prophet of all time after Moses, as Jeremiah states:

*If Moses and Samuel should stand before Me*³⁴¹

[i.e. in that order]. According to one Talmudic opinion (Berachos 31b) Samuel's stature was equal to that of Moses and Aaron [in certain respects].

The Talmud (Taanis 5b) observes that all of Moses' accomplishments were enduring: none were destroyed in his lifetime. Similarly, Samuel's greatest achievement, the anointment of King Saul, was not destroyed in his lifetime, for although Saul deserved to lose his crown, he did not die until after Samuel's death.

Furthermore, Moses' strength derived from the fact that he was completely selfless in his service to the Jewish people. Moses never derived any personal profit or advantage from his position of leadership [see Numbers 16:15]. Similarly, Samuel's authority was above reproach because he took nothing from the people in return for his service [see I Samuel 12:3] (Midrash Yelamdeinu).

Moses and Aaron kept the testimonies and statutes that He gave them to transmit to Israel without adding or subtracting from them. Certainly they kept the commandments given expressly for them, such as Moses's instructions for the seven days of inauguration and Aaron's instructions for the priestly watches. Samuel, too, kept His testimonies. He instructed Israel and brought them back to the commandments, as it is written, *and served the Lord alone.*³⁴² (Radak)³⁴³

Finally, Samuel was a Levite, a descendant of the same family as Moses and Aaron (Radak).³⁴⁴

There is something very deep here. Moses, Aaron, and Samuel are called out because they each excelled in humility. A person with humility cannot be unfair, cannot be dishonest, cannot act with no integrity, and cannot take advantage of another person. A person with humility acts in accordance with the law, not because they subjugate themselves to the law, but because they become a living expression of the law. The outward expression they make

340. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1209.

341. *Jeremiah* 15:1.

342. *I Samuel* 7:4.

343. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 377.

344. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1210.

is totally aligned with their inward spirit. Their actions are an expression of their spirit and all is consistent with the law of perfect justice and righteousness.

They called upon Hashem
And He answered them.

קָרְאוּ אֶל יי
וְהוּא יַעֲנֵם:

This is read like קרים, derived from קרה, “to meet.” These leaders in Israel were so close to God and could so well identify with the ways of Divine providence that they always “met” with the Divine intentions in whatever it was that they asked of God. They did not ask Him for anything that was not in accordance with His purposes, and this is the reason why their prayers were always heard.³⁴⁵

God Himself intervened and answered the prayers of these three great men, rather than delegating an intermediary to fulfill their requests (Alshich).³⁴⁶

One can argue that even if God is found in Heaven and on earth simultaneously, His Presence on earth is confined to the temple, opposite the celestial sanctuary. But this does not prove that His Presence extends also to other places on earth. To counter this argument, the Psalmist declares that various human beings have called upon God at different spots on earth, and have been answered promptly. Not only did God answer Moses and Aaron when they prayed to Him amidst the tribes, but even when alone, Samuel was answered by God immediately, without having had recourse to an intermediary.³⁴⁷

In a pillar of cloud He spoke to them;

בְּעַמּוּד עָנָן יְדַבֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם

Ibn Ezra maintains that this refers only to Moses and Aaron, to whom God spoke in the wilderness through a pillar of cloud. Radak (based on Midrash Shocher Tov and Pesikta Rabbos 14) explains that God also spoke to Samuel through a pillar of cloud.³⁴⁸

Scripture relates (I Samuel 9:10-12) that Saul was searching for Samuel, who was known as the seer. A group of young girls pointed out Samuel’s house to Saul. It was obvious that this was the prophet’s home because a pillar of cloud hovered over Samuel’s door [i.e. his home was so consecrated that it resembled the Tabernacle, where God’s Spirit dwelled in a cloud].³⁴⁹

345. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 193.

346. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1211.

347. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 741.

348. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1211.

349. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1211.

Rav Saddaiah Gaon points out that the clouds provide a sign to the prophet that all that he sees and hears is truly a prophetic message. When God speaks to the prophet, the entire expanse of the sky is perfectly clear, save for a single pillar of cloud which stands before the prophet's eyes [symbolizing God's presence].³⁵⁰

They obeyed His testimonies

שָׁמְרוּ עֲדוֹתָיו

And whatever decree He gave them.

וְחֶק נָתַן לָמוֹ:

God revealed the entirety of His testimonies and statutes to Israel through Moses and Aaron who faithfully transmitted the Divine teaches without the slightest deviation (Ibn Ezra; Rav Saadiah Gaon).³⁵¹

Hashem, our God,

יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

You answered them

אָתָּה עֲנִיתָם

Whenever Moses and Aaron prostrated themselves before You and begged You to forgive the children of Israel, You did not refuse their request (Ibn Ezra).³⁵²

A forgiving God were You to them

אֵל נְשִׂא הַיִּתָּ לָהֶם

Israel sinned with the Golden Calf and they sinned again by believing the evil report of the spies. In both instances, Moses invoked Divine compassion and God responded affirmatively.³⁵³

But an Avenger for their iniquities

וְנֹקֵם עַל עֲלִילוֹתָם:

This refers to the Moses and Aaron and the incident at the rock in the wilderness of Kadesh (Numbers 20:12) and to the wrong that Samuel did in being too lenient with his sons (I Samuel 8:3). Samuel's premature death (he only attained the age of fifty-two) is ascribed to this error on his part. The fact that God did not overlook even the slightest misstep of our great men who acted as His messengers seems to the Psalmist to be of such great consequence and significance for the divine nature of their mission.³⁵⁴

Chazah Zion explains: Despite the fact that You forgave the sins of Israel for the sake of their great leaders, You, O God, were very strict and unforgiving towards the leaders

350. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1211.

351. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1211.

352. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1211.

353. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1211.

354. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 194.

themselves. Moses and Aaron were punished because of the incident at Merivah, where Moses smote the rock instead of commanding it to give water (See Numbers 20:11.)

The two elder sons of Aaron were killed for the transgression which they committed in God's sanctuary (Leviticus 10:1-2). The prophet Samuel was punished for having made a single statement which God deemed presumptuous. Samuel had described himself with the words, *I am the Seer*.³⁵⁵

Therefore God later demonstrated to Samuel that his vision was unclear. All of these incidents bear testimony to the statement made in verse 4:

Mighty is the King Who loves justice. You founded fairness. The justice and righteousness of Jacob, You have made.

Chazah Zion concludes that during the Messianic era, God will also exercise this type of Strict Justice towards the wicked nations who persecuted the exiled Jews. God will take revenge for the suffering which they caused to the Jews while the Jews themselves will be redeemed with glory and triumph as they were when God liberated them from Egypt.³⁵⁶

Exalt Hashem, our God

רוֹמְמוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

And prostrate before His holy mountain

וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְהַר קְדִשׁוֹ

This stitch is a duplicate of the first stitch of verse 5, except that there it says *and bow to His footstool*. For, in that verse, the Psalmist only demonstrated that God's spirit dwells in the Temple. In the succeeding verses, the Psalmist proves that the Tabernacle and the Temple are actually the sources whence holiness emanates throughout the world. The vehicles for the dissemination of this sanctity are holy men such as Moses, Aaron and Samuel, who were deeply influenced by the sacred environment of the Tabernacle. Consequently, the Psalmist now describes the Tabernacle/Temple as His Holy mountain, i.e., the source from which His holiness emanates.³⁵⁷

There is ample justification then for exalting God not only in the Heavens and prostrating oneself before Him not only in the temple which is called "his footstool", but *להר קדשו*, any place because He is holy. He will not fail to manifest Himself even on mountains which are not temple mounts.³⁵⁸

For holy is Hashem, our God

כִּי קְדוֹשׁ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

355. *I Samuel* 9:19.

356. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1212-1213.

357. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1213.

358. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 742-743.

The place where God's holy presence dwells is awesome and holy, as *My sanctuary you shall revere*.³⁵⁹ When a person is awestruck by God's holy dwelling place, he will eventually learn reverence for God Himself (Radak).³⁶⁰

Reverence is inspired by the realization that Hashem, our God, is holy and that although the righteous men who serve Him are holy God treats them with strict justice. When this is recognized, God's holiness will be promulgated throughout the entire world (Rashi).³⁶¹

359. *Leviticus* 19:30.

360. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1213.

361. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1213.

Psalm 29

This psalm is of special interest in that it repeats “give unto the Lord” three times; it contains God’s Name eighteen times; it mentions the “voice of God” seven times.

The Talmud³⁶² sees in the threefold repetition of “*Give unto the Lord*” an allusion to the first three blessings of the Amidah, known as avot (patriarchs), gevurot (mighty deeds) and kedushot (holiness). Avot is implied in the first *Give*, where “children of Isaac and Jacob, who are characterized as ילים, elim (“mighty,” or God-like”) The second blessing, gevurot, is contained in *Give ... glory and strength,*” The third, kedushot, in *Give... beauty and holiness.*

Elsewhere in the Talmud³⁶³ Rabbi Hillel, the son of R. Shmuel bar Nachmani, explained that the eighteen benedictions of the Amidah correspond other eighteen times God’s Name יהוה is mentioned in the psalm.

The seven repetitions of the words יי קול, Hashem’s voice, we are told, correspond to the seven days of Creation, when everything was created by God’s word. They also correspond to the seven Divine attributes by which God has created the world and rules it. Thus, *the voice of God is upon the waters* refers to the Divine attribute of loving kindness (chesed), symbolized by flowing water; *the voice of God is powerful* refers to the attribute of gevurah, and so forth.

The three “*Give unto the Lord*” and the seven “*The voice of the Lord*” are the ten Sefirot of the Tree of Life. The three “*Give unto the Lord*” verses go with Keter, Hochmah, and Binah. The seven “*The voice of the Lord*” go with Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferet, Netzach, Hod, Yesod, and Malchut. The verses are all in metaphor. They give us directions as to how to extend the lovingkindness consciousness that we have on Shabbat to the rest of the days of the week. They tell us that we have within us the resources to do this using the description of God’s glory and invincibility.

Our Sages also see in the seven repetitions of קול, voice, a symbolic reminder of the Giving of the Torah at Sinai, when the words קול or קולות are again mentioned seven times.³⁶⁴

קול י-ה-ו-ה is always employed to denote only the voice of the Lord speaking to or for man. It is never used in connection with a loud sound occurring in nature, such as thunder which could be ascribed to Him indirectly. We believe, therefore, that here too, קול י-ה-ו-ה should be understood to mean the voice of the Lord speaking to

362. Rosh Hashanah 32a; Megillah 17a.

363. Berachot 28b.

364. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 24-25.

us through the medium of His Law which reposes in the Sanctuary.³⁶⁵

Kabbalistically, Psalm 29 give us a map of spiritual and material reality. This map is cast with the characteristics of the ten Sefirot of the Tree of Life. A map provides information about how to get from one place to another. The map of Psalm 29 tells us how to move the spiritual to the material. And it tells us how we will feel and how our internal state of being will be when that movement has been successful. Thereby it tells us how to recognize when we are successful.

A Psalm of David,
Give to Hashem, children of God

מְזִמּוֹר לְדָוִד
הָבּוּ לַיהוָה בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים

The first verse commands us, the children of God, that we must give. We know that we are the children of God from the verse

*Ye are the children of the Lord your God.*³⁶⁶

We must give back to God. This must be the central focus, the crown of our will. We must will Divine Service. We must be of Divine Service. Thus the first verse is associated with Sefirah Keter.

Rabbi Hirsch writes:

This is a call to all those who are endowed with strength or who feel that they are so endowed, to ascribe to the Lord alone whatever power may be within them or whatever forces they may behold and admire in the world of nature. Or, more precisely stated, since they know that even with all their strength and faculties they are still dependent upon God, they may consider themselves **בני אלים**, but certainly not **אלים**.³⁶⁷

Give to Hashem honor and strength

הָבּוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד וְעֹז:

The second verse commands us to give honor and strength to God. Translations typically render **הבו** as *ascribe* which means to associate with God honor and strength. Such a translation suggests that we just acknowledge God's honor and strength. But if we take the first verse as meaning that the central focus of our will is to be of Divine Service then the second verse means that it is our honor and strength that we must give to God. It is our

365. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book One*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 206.

366. *Deuteronomy* 14:1.

367. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book One*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 205.

honor and strength that is devoted to Divine Service. And this is Hochmah, wisdom.

Rabbi Hirsch writes:

Bring to the Lord, ascribe to Him everything that reveals itself to you in greatness and in glory, and all that appears to you indestructible and invincible and eternal. Ascribe it to Him, the sole Being Who is in truth great, glorious and eternal, and Whose work and sovereignty is shown in everything that seems to us lofty, splendid and mighty.³⁶⁸

Supporting this is the use of the word **יָצַח**, strength in the verse:

And by his strength He brought on the south wind.³⁶⁹

The direction south is associated with the Sefirah Chesed and Chesed is below Hochmah. So from this we can infer that "by His strength" refers to Hochmah. And "He brought on the south wind" refers to the fact that Chesed is a derivative of Hochmah.

Also supporting this is the verse:

Turn to the Lord, to His strength,
Seek His presence continually.³⁷⁰

By turning toward God and seeking His wisdom, seeking His presence continually, His strength, we connect to His wisdom. By His wisdom do we come to know how to accomplish the mitzvot by which our honor and strength becomes devoted to Divine Service.

Rabbi Moshe Alschech writes:

יָצַח are the good deeds performed by man, as we see from Micah 3:8 and Talmud Berachot 5, where our good deeds are described as giving additional power to God. This is the very reverse of the effect of our evil actions (see Deuteronomy 32:18).³⁷¹

Give to Hashem honor due to his name

הָבוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ

Above all, give to Him that glory which it is seemly that you render unto His "Name," Let the understanding that His Name has brought you prove its power in your own life first and foremost. Let the Name which basically expresses the creation and shaping of the future, the calling into life of all that is to be -- work its

368. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book One*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 205.

369. *Psalms* 78:26.

370. *Psalms* 105:4.

371. Moshe Alschech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol I, p. 192.

wondrous creative, transfiguring power upon you.³⁷²

The third verse commands us to bring into physical reality thoughts, speech, and actions that glorify the name of God. Here the symbolism of name of God means God as manifested in physical reality. It means the immanence of God.

God is immanent. We are the agents of God's immanence. Therefore, we are the ones who God calls upon to reveal the hidden sparks of Godliness. And when we discover these hidden sparks of Godliness and reveal them by our thoughts, speech, and action, then we give unto the Lord the glory due unto His Name. This is Binah, understanding.

These three commands are no trivial matter. They are of essence. They tell us what holiness is. Next Psalm 29 tells us how we will know that we are successfully living according to:

Give unto the Lord, children of God!
Give unto the Lord honor and strength!
Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name!

Psalm 29 gives us a checkpoint. It tells us that we will so respect and revere what this holiness is that we will feel and we will will ourselves to

Bow down to the Lord
In the splendor of holiness

הִשְׁתַּחֲוּ לַיהוָה
בְּהַדְרַת קֹדֶשׁ:

[King] David asks for us to enable the Shechinah to come out of exile through our penitence. By doing so, you will be able to prostrate yourself before Him in the beauty of holiness i.e. in the rebuilt temple.

At this stage, -- even if you prostrate yourselves in the temple, it is only a building made of stone, the Shechinah is hidden from your eyes. In the eventual temple, a predominantly spiritual structure, it will be different. The sanctity will not be concealed from the beholder. David exhorts the people not to forego this inspirational experience by delaying their repentance and good deeds.³⁷³

And above all, place yourselves entirely at His service, give Him your devotion, “prostrate” yourselves before Him **בְּהַדְרַת קֹדֶשׁ**. That is, accept the demands made upon you by His Sanctuary so that it may rule over you and transfigure you. Under His guidance, eliminate from every aspect of your lives, private, public, individual and social, everything and anything that is “unlovely,” anything that is not worthy of

372. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book One*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 206.

373. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol I, p. 193.

you and of your relationship with God. If you act thusly, then you yourselves shall become an expression of His **כבוד ועוז**.³⁷⁴

The next verses use the word voice. They tell us about the lower seven Sefirot. In reference to Psalm 29, the Bahir says:

These are the voices regarding of which King David spoke.³⁷⁵

As explained in the Bahir,³⁷⁶ the seven voices the people saw at the giving of the Torah are the voices of Psalm 29

*And all the people saw the voices
And the lightnings,
And the sound of the shofar,
And the mountain smoking:
And when the people saw it,
They were shaken,
And stood far off.*³⁷⁷

We read in the Zohar,

We have been told that at the revelation on Mount Sinai, when the Torah was given to Israel in Ten Words, each Word became a voice, and every voice was divided into seventy voices, all of which shone and sparkled before the eyes of all Israel, so that they saw eye to eye the splendor of His Glory, as it is written:

*And all the people saw the voices*³⁷⁸

Yea, verily, they saw. The voice so formed warned each individual Israelite, saying:

Wilt thou accept me with all the commandments implicit in me?

To which the reply came:

Yes.

Then the voice circled round his head once more, asking:

Wilt thou accept me with all the penalties attached to me in the Law?

374. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book One, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 206.

375. *The Bahir*, trans. and comm. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1995), p. 15.

376. *The Bahir*, trans. and comm. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1995), p. 15-16.

377. *Exodus* 20:15.

378. *Exodus* 20:15.

And again he answered

Yes.

Then the voice turned and kissed him on the mouth, as it is written:

*Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.*³⁷⁹

The Zohar explains:³⁸⁰

In Psalm 29, the *voice of the Lord* is mentioned seven times, and R. Jose explained them thus:

The voice of the Lord is on the waters; this is Abraham.

The voice of the Lord is in strength; this is Isaac.

The voice of the Lord is in beauty; this is Jacob.

The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; this is Nezach (Victory).

The voice of the Lord heweth flames of fire; this is Hod (Majesty).

The voice of the Lord causeth the wilderness to tremble; this is Zaddik (Righteous One).

And all bring blessings on to the world from the replenishment which they themselves receive.

The Voice of Hashem is upon the waters

קול יי על המים

As the Zohar explains³⁸¹, these waters are the waters of the first day of creation when,

*The spirit of God hovered on the face of the water.*³⁸²

The God of glory thunders

אל הכבוד הרעים

Hashem is over many waters

יי על מים רבים:

The Zohar continues. Rabbi Eleazar came forward first and expounded the verse:

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters:

The God of glory thundereth,

379. *Song of Songs*, 1:2.

380. *The Zohar*, vol. 4, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (London: The Soncino Press, 1978), p. 386.

381. *The Zohar*, vol. 1 trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (London: The Soncino Press, 1978), p. 68.

382. *Genesis* 1:2.

*Even the Lord upon many waters.*³⁸³

He said,

The voice of the Lord is the supernal voice presiding over the waters, which flow from grade to grade until they are all collected in one place and form one gathering. It is this voice which sends them forth each in its course, like a gardener who conducts water through various channels to the requisite spots.

The God of glory thundereth: this is the side that issues from Gevurah (Force), as it is written,

Who can understand the thunder of his mighty deeds?³⁸⁴ *The Lord upon many waters*: this is the supernal Wisdom, which is called ׀, and which is *upon the many waters*, the secret source that issues therefrom.³⁸⁵

Chesed is on the right column of the tree which is the column of water. Water has the characteristic that it fills a vessel. A properly made vessel will hold water. This is how lovingkindness should be manifested. All the vessels which come into our circle we fill with lovingkindness.

Now it may seem that lovingkindness is weak, flowing all over and having no fixed form of its own. But here we learn that lovingkindness is not inherently weak. For *The God of glory thunders, The Lord is over the great waters*.

Another reference to the strength of the right column occurs in the song which Moses and the children of Israel sing after the horses, chariots and army of Pharaoh were drowned after the parted Red Sea returned to its normal condition.

*Thy right hand O Lord, glorious in power,
Thy right hand O Lord has dashed the enemy in pieces.*³⁸⁶

Lovingkindness inherently contains within itself an overpowering strength to do what needs to be done to manifest lovingkindness.

Since the impression that the four lettered name of God represents only the attribute of mercy is widespread, David points out that it too contains elements of דין, justice. Therefore the word הרעים, *thunders*. This was demonstrated when the four lettered name of God split the sea and drowned the Egyptians (Exodus chapter 14). Should

383. *Psalms* 29:3.

384. *Job* 26:14.

385. *The Zohar, vol. 1*, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (London: The Soncino Press, 1978), pp. 118.

386. *Exodus* 15:6.

you reason that since Israel described God at that time as a great warrior **גבור מלחמה**, i.e. a name for the **מדת הדין**, the attribute of justice, the answer is that this was not so.

Yalkut Shimoni on Parshat Yitro item 286, explains that the reason God describes Himself both as **י-ה-ו-ה** and **אלוהיך** at the beginning of the decalogue is, that God did not want the gentiles to be able to say that there are two domains shared by two different deities. He made it plain therefore, that the same attribute of God that had sweetened the waters at Marah (Exodus 15:23-36) was also at work when the Egyptians drowned (Exodus chapter 14).³⁸⁷

Radak cites the opinion of the Sages that this verse depicts the great voice of God which descended from heaven on the day the Torah was given at Sinai, first travelling over the vast waters. Radak concludes with his own opinion that the Psalm describes the Messianic era. The gentile nations are likened to the seas because in this world they are as calm and placid as the peaceful sea, lulled contentedly by abundance and covering the earth like the vast oceans. This serenity will cease in Messianic times.³⁸⁸

The next Sefirah is Gevurah, Strength, It is situated on the left column, the column of fire, and sits below Binah.

The voice of Hashem is within [every] power

קול יי בְּכֹחַ

Power, is a synonym for Gevurah. All forces that fill the world constitute the voice of God.

On the second day of creation, God separated between the upper and lower waters. More than any other attribute of God, this separation required God's strength.

The Bahir associates this verse with:³⁸⁹

*With the power of my hands have I made them.*³⁹⁰

It is likewise written

*Also My hand has founded the earth.*³⁹¹

The verse continues:

387. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol I, p. 193.

388. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 350.

389. *The Bahir*, trans. and comm. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1995), p. 16.

390. *Isaiah* 10:13.

391. *Isaiah* 48:13.

*And my right hand spanned the heaven.*³⁹²

These verses are telling us that the hand that founded the earth is the left hand and the hand that spanned the heaven is the right hand. By calling attention to the first verse, the Bahir is telling us that the reference to hand is to the left hand. On the Tree of Life, the left hand is associated with Gevurah.

Power is sometimes thought of as power over some other person. But this is not the essence of the power of Gevurah. The power of Gevurah is our ability to properly limit and bound our lovingkindness so that all may be in balance. Unlimited lovingkindness will bring into reality an unbalancedness that will eventually have to be corrected by a power-over kind of action. So Gevurah is the hidden side of Chesed.

The Rashbam writes:

This alludes to the second day of Creation when God separated between the upper and lower waters thus beginning the precipitation cycle. Because the rains are always described as **גבורות נשמים** ‘the might of the rain’ [Ta’anis 2a] the verse says, *The voice of Hashem is strength.*³⁹³

According to Rashi and Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 5:9, 29:1, 34:1) this describes God’s revelation at Sinai when He taught Israel the Torah. If it had said **קול יי בנחו**, the voice of Hashem is in its (full) strength, then the people would surely have perished, for they cannot withstand such force. Now that it says simply ‘in strength’, it means that God modulated His voice (and the intensity of the revelation) in accordance with the capacity of each individual: Old men according to their strength, young men according to theirs, women according to their strength and pregnant ones according to theirs. Suckling infants heard on their level and even Moses himself heard according to his unique capacity. But God then said to Israel, “Just because you have heard many voices, do not be misled into thinking that there are many gods. Know that **אנכי יי אלהיך**, *I [alone] am Hashem your God.*³⁹⁴ From here we learn that Hashem never overwhelms His creations with excessive demands; He considers their individual abilities in assigning them their individual missions.³⁹⁵

The next Sefirah is Tiferet, Beauty. It is situated on the middle column, the column of balance and harmony.

The voice of Hashem is within [everything] splendidous **קול יי בְּהַדָּר:**

392. *Isaiah* 48:14.

393. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 350.

394. *Exodus* 20:5.

395. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 350.

Splendor is a synonym for Tiferet, which is associated with the third day of creation. On the third day of creation, the vast numbers plants began to bloom creating a garden of splendor. This garden of splendor is the splendor of God's voice. Indeed, all the beauty that fills the world constitutes the voice of God.

The Bahir associates this voice with the verse:³⁹⁶

*Glory and splendor [והדר] are His works.
His righteousness stands forever.*³⁹⁷

The verse continues with:

*Remember his miraculous works. Gracious and compassionate is the Lord.*³⁹⁸

This tells us that this verse is associated with Tiferet because Tiferet is the middle column and the middle column is the column of compassion.³⁹⁹ When a balanced harmony is achieved between lovingkindness and the discipline of strength which bounds it there is compassion manifested as splendor, majesty, glory, and beauty.

This voice of the Lord, through His Law, charges you to develop all your moral potentialities and harmoniously to perfect all your talents and faculties. It is this same voice, too, that speaks to you wherever you perceive a show of strength of harmonious beauty in nature. That law which through God's almighty will, immutable fulfills itself by unfolding strength and beauty in every creature, is the same law which the Lord has sent to you with his voice, speaking to you through His Law, so that it may guide you in shaping and developing your human personality.⁴⁰⁰

The Rashbam writes:

God's voice was heard in splendor on the third day of creation when plant growth began to bloom in infinite varieties.⁴⁰¹

Radak comments that these words describe the deadly voice of God which will destroy our enemies in the future Messianic War of Gog and Magog. But at the very same time, the voice will leave Israel completely unharmed. Thus the very same voice which is בכח, in [devastating] strength for our enemies will be בהדר, in

396. *The Bahir*, trans. and comm. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1995), p. 16.

397. *Psalms* 111:3.

398. *Psalms* 111:4.

399. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan mistakenly says that the Bahir associates this verse of Psalm 29 with the Sefirah Hod because the word **הוה** is used in the support verse from Psalm 111. However, upon reading the following verses of Psalm 111 we see the clear association with Tiferet.

400. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book One*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 206.

401. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 351.

splendor [and salvation] for us.⁴⁰²

The next Sefirah is Netzach, Victory. It is associated with the fourth day of creation. God created the stars, the planets and the moon on the sixth day of creation. It is on the right column below Chesed.

The voice of Hashem breaks cedars

קוֹל יְיָ שֶׁבַר אֲרָזִים

Netzach is related to our determination and commitment to manifest lovingkindness. So we show Netzach in our enthusiasm, our eagerness, and our zealousness. These emotions have such strength that they can overcome any resistance; they can break the cedars of Lebanon. And even if we are attacked by another's bad intents, which here are symbolized by the opposing forces of Lebanon and Syria, our Netzach can make them dance like young buffalos. A shuffling tapdance step is called a buffalo step. To buffalo someone is to baffle, confuse, or mystify them.

The Bahir says of this voice:

This is the bow that breaks the cypress and cedar trees⁴⁰³.

The bow here is the archer's bow which sends forth the arrow. The arrow is the spiritual energy of Netzach, the spiritual energy that enables us to overcome. When the bow sends forth the arrow, the arrow breaks the cypress and cedar trees in its path.

The Zohar tells us that the cedars of Lebanon refer to the Sefirot.

R. Jose propounded the question: 'What are the "six days of בְּרֵאשִׁית" of which the Rabbis speak so often?' R. Simeon answered: 'These are, in truth, "the cedars of Lebanon which he has planted." As the cedars spring from Lebanon, so these six days spring from בְּרֵאשִׁית. These are the six supernal days which are specified in the verse:⁴⁰⁴

לְךָ יְהוָה הַגְּדֹלָה וְהַגְּבוּרָה וְהַתְּפֹאֶרֶת וְהַנִּצְח וְהַהוֹד כִּי־כֹל בַּשָּׁמַיִם
וּבָאָרֶץ

To you O God, (Keter, Hochmah, and Binah) is the greatness⁴⁰⁵ (Chesed) and the strength (Gevurah) and the beauty (Tiferet) and the victory (Netzach) and the glory (Hod) for all (Yesod) in heaven (Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferet, Netzach, Hod, and Yesod) and in earth (Malchut).

402. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 351.

403. *The Bahir*, trans. and comm. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1995), p. 16.

404. *Chronicles I* 29:11.

405. Greatness is an older name for the Sefirah Chesed.

The words “for all” refer to the Zaddik (righteous one), **יִסּוּד**, who is the foundation of the world.⁴⁰⁶

The Ramsham writes:

On the third day of Creation the first trees sprang up, and so the voice of Hashem could now ‘break the cedars’.⁴⁰⁷

Rashi comments that this refers to the high and mighty monarchs, the enemies of Hashem. At Sinai, Israel heard God’s voice [each according to his capacity] and lived. But the gentiles who heard, died. We also find that God smashed the Philistine host with His voice:

*And Hashem thundered at them with a great noise.*⁴⁰⁸

He slew the army of Sennacherib with His voice,

*From the voice of Hashem Assyria trembles.*⁴⁰⁹

Hashem will shatter the cedars of Lebanon **וַיִּשְׁבֵּר יי אֶת אֲרָזֵי הַלְבָּנוֹן,**

Those who, like cedars, will attempt to resist His power, have cause to fear His voice, for it will destroy them, just as, in the realm of nature, the might of the Lord shatters cedars and moves mountains.⁴¹⁰

God can break even the giants, i.e. powerful kings, -- especially when they oppress Israel with undue cruelty.⁴¹¹

He made them dance like a calf **וַיִּרְקִידֵם כְּמוֹ עֵגֶל**

The young calf is exceptionally light on its feet, constantly running and skipping (Radak). The cedars and the mountains which came to witness and hear the giving of the Torah shook at that time (Rashi).⁴¹²

406. *The Zohar, Vol I*, Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon translators, (London, The Soncino Press, 1978) pp.118-119.

407. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 351.

408. *I Samuel* 7:10.

409. *Isaiah* 30:32.

410. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book One*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 206.

411. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol I, p. 194.

412. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 352.

Lebanon and Sirion like young wild oxen **לְבָנוֹן וְשִׁרְיוֹן כְּמוֹ בֶן רְאֵמִים,**

There are various translations for **רְאֵמִים**. These include oxen, buffaloes, rhinoceroses, and unicorns. These are all horned beasts that are exceptionally powerful.

Lebanon and Sirion refer to the mountains in those places. These mountains represent the mighty kings who will be deposed from their positions just as the calf always jumps from its place (Radak; Mezudas David).⁴¹³

Sirion is a reference to Sichon, who also attacked Israel prematurely (Numbers 21:23). He was also known as Chermon, a part of Lebanon (Psalms 42:7). His attack was not only like **עגל** but like **בן ראמים**. (See Yalkut Shimoni on Numbers 23:22).⁴¹⁴

בן ראמים, according to Rashi on Avodah Zarah 3, is a gigantic beast. Sichon's attack on Israel is compared to that of a gigantic beast, i.e. more frightening than the attack of the five kings on Joshua and his army.⁴¹⁵

Do not be faint hearted if you see mighty countries launch an unprovoked attack on you. Do not conclude that this is proof that their celestial counterparts assist them. The five kings including the king of Jerusalem have done likewise in the days of Joshua (Joshua 10:3) and this has not prevented God from smashing them. He made them dance like a calf, i.e. He inspired them not to wait till Israel arrived at their borders, but to attack already by meeting Israel outside their borders. This gave God a chance to destroy them simultaneously, instead of one at a time.⁴¹⁶

The next Sefirah is Hod, Glory. It is associated with the fifth day of creation. God created fish and winged fowls on the fifth day of creation.

The voice of Hashem chisels flames of fire **קוֹל יי חִצֵּב לְהַבּוֹת אֵשׁ,**

Hod is on left column below Gevurah. The left column is the column of fire. **חִצֵּב** is the present tense of the root **חצב**, which means to hew, cut, split, dig, carve, engrave, or chisel. The noun **חִצֵּב** means a stonecutter or a stonemason. Sefer Yetzirah uses the verb **חצב** in the meaning of carve or engrave.

Ten ineffable Sefirot: One is the spirit of the blessed living God. And blessed is His name belonging to the life of the worlds. Voice of spirit and word and this is spirit of

413. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 352.

414. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol I, p. 195.

415. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol I, p. 195.

416. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol I, p. 195.

the holiness.⁴¹⁷

Two is air from spirit. He hollowed out and carved in her twenty-two foundation letters, three mothers and seven doubles and twelve simples and one spirit in them.⁴¹⁸

Three is water from air. He hollowed out and engraved in them formlessness and emptiness. Mud and clay: He hollowed them out making them resemble a furrowed garden. He stood them up making them resemble a wall. He wove them together making them resemble a chipped stone concrete roof.⁴¹⁹

Four is fire from water. He hollowed out and carved out in it the Throne of Glory, Seraphim, and Ophanim, and the Chayot (Living Creatures) of Holiness, and His Ministering Angels. And from the three of them He founded His dwelling as it is said: He is making His angels of directions, His ministers of burning fire.⁴²⁰

Sepher Yetzirah refers to the twenty-two Hebrew letters as stones.

Two stones build 2 houses. Three stones build 6 houses. Four stones build 24 houses. Five stones build 120 houses. Six stones build 620 houses. Seven stones build 5040 houses. From here on go out and calculate that which the mouth cannot speak and the ear cannot hear.⁴²¹

So splitting or chiseling the flames of fire means cutting or chiseling out letters in stone. Recall the tablets containing the ten commandments. This was the way in which truth was expressed permanently. So exercising and expressing our rationality for the purpose of expressing truth is equivalent to chiseling and splitting flames of fire.

What does fire do? Fire transforms by purifying that which has gotten impure. When our Yetzer Hara is acting up and we are ready to act out like what we feel from the Yetzer Hara, and we are ready to push away, hurt someone's feelings, express anger, we have become impure. But we have an opportunity to use the fire of rationality, submitting our actions to rational thought, asking what would be the effect if we acted by ego emotional reaction, and when we realize that our actions would put us in a mode not of Divine service, we submit ourselves to our analysis and hold back our acting out. This is the transforming purifying fire.

When Moses is summarizing what has happened to the Israelites, he says:

Out of heaven He made thee hear His voice that he might instruct thee. And upon earth He showed thee his great fire. And thou didst hear His words out of the midst

417. *Sefer Yetzirah*, chapter 1, verse 9.

418. *Sefer Yetzirah*, chapter 1 verse 10.

419. *Sefer Yetzirah*, chapter 1 verse 11.

420. *Sefer Yetzirah*, chapter 1 verse 12.

421. *Sefer Yetzirah*, chapter 4 verse 12.

of the fire.⁴²²

Here we see that words, which are made up of letters, are associated with fire.

When God spoke at Sinai, each commandment came forth from His mouth as a flame in the shape of visible letters and words. These letters penetrated the stone tablets and engraved themselves on the stone (Rashi).⁴²³

God struck first, **להבות אש**, at the celestial representatives of the five kings [who attacked Joshua] prior to Joshua defeating them.⁴²⁴

In the future, God's wrath will pour down upon His enemies like a bolt of fiery lightning which rends the air asunder (Radak).⁴²⁵

The Bahir associates this verse with Hod since it writes:⁴²⁶

This is what makes peace between water and fire. It draws out the power of the fire and prevents it from evaporating the water. It also prevents [the water] from extinguishing [the fire].⁴²⁷

The Bahir is telling us how this voice, the voice associated with Hod, acts to limit the effect that water can have on fire and that fire can have on water. The principal virtue of Hod is rationality. Rationality is associated with the sword, the instrument that is designed to split and cut. By rational reasoning, we can project what would happen if we act with excessive lovingkindness or with not enough lovingkindness. And we can project what would happen if we act with excessive strength or with not enough strength. Excessive lovingkindness corresponds to excessive water which would extinguish the fire. Not enough lovingkindness would permit the fire to get too hot and we would burn those exposed to it. Excessive strength corresponds to too much fire which would evaporate the water and we would make those exposed to it thirsty. Not enough strength would correspond to a weak fire. The fire would not be able to make the water hot. The food would not cook.

This moderating action of Hod is actually a mode of discipline in which there is a submission to reason. If my purpose is to act so that my act will be completely received by the other, meaning that the Divinity in me meets the Divinity in the other in a mutual recognition of Divinity, then it may be better for me not to react quickly, not to act with the

422. Deuteronomy 4:36.

423. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 352.

424. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol I, p. 195.

425. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 352.

426. Rabbi Kaplan mistakenly interprets the Bahir as associating this voice with Tiferet, since Tiferet leads the balance between the left and right. Tiferet is associated with peace. But upon recognizing the role that Hod plays, we can understand how it is that the Bahir is really associating this verse with Hod.

427. *The Bahir*, trans. and comm. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1995), p. 16.

for the receiving of the light. Trembling or shaking is what physical reality does as it begins to return the light it receives.

The Bahir says:⁴³⁰

It is thus written

*He does kindness to his Messiah, to David and his descendents until eternity.*⁴³¹

חיל is “labor,” the act of giving birth. **יחיל** is a Hilphil form. Thus even today, the voice of the Lord, which speaks to us through His Law still transforms any state of **מזדבר** of deprivation, isolation or danger, into the “birth-pangs” of a better and truer life. The Lord still allows that “travail” which began in the wilderness of Kadesh to continue in our own day. His voice is the instrument of this continued, life-giving process. The contempt which the people had for this voice, was the cause of the punishment which was decreed for Israel at Kadesh. The ultimate goal of that decree has ever been, and will ever be, that man should eventually render completely devoted obedience to this voice.⁴³²

Rashi comments that **יחיל** describes the writhing and convulsing of a woman in labor, as in **יחולל אילות** *convulsions like a woman in labor*⁴³³ Since the wilderness is flat and open, without visual obstructions, one can more readily observe the convulsions of the earth there (Radak).⁴³⁴

This voice and the next one describe the birth of animal life on the fifth day of creation (Rashbam).⁴³⁵

קדש was the border outpost of the wilderness from which the scouts were sent into the land of Canaan and from which the people of Israel could have entered the Promised Land immediately, had the sin of these emissaries not caused the entire nation to be condemned to 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. Since the journey of the children of Israel from Egypt up to that point accounted for two years of wandering, they still had to spend 38 years in the desert before they could enter the land. **קדש** was the place where Israel had sinned, and there they sojourned for a period of 19 years, within sight of the Holy Land which that generation had forfeited by its transgression. At no other place in the desert did they remain for so long a period of time, and thus **קדש** was the place in which the penitent parents raised and

430. *The Bahir*, trans. and comm. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1995), p. 16.

431. *Psalms* 18:51.

432. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book One*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 209.

433. *Psalms* 48:7.

434. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 352.

435. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 352.

trained a new generation which was to be worthy of a better future and of the Divinely ordained inheritance of the Promised Land. **מדבר קדש**, therefore, is the name which most vividly calls to mind the memories of the wilderness and their significance of Israel's moral training and maturing for its destiny. This significance of the **מדבר קדש** extends even to our own day and far into the future. Our own period of exile and wandering in the **מדבר העמים** "wilderness of the nations," as the prophet calls it, was ordained when the Lord decided at **קדש**, that the particular generation then alive had forfeited its inheritance of the Holy Land. Its children must be raised to maturity in the desert so that they might be fit to take possession of the Land once the older, unworthy generation would have passed on.⁴³⁶

Malchut the Sefirah of Kingdom is associated with King David. On the Tree of Life, Malchut is connected to the other Sefirot through Yesod. God's spiritual bountifulness comes to Malchut through Yesod parallels the verse's reference to God's kindness to King David, the shepherd of Malchut.

The final Sefirah is Malchut, Kingdom. It is associated with the seventh day of creation.

The voice of Hashem twists the terebinth trees

קוֹל יְיָ יַחֲלֹל אֵילֹת

And strips the forest bare

וַיַּחֲשֵׁף יַעֲרֹת

Even while it wreaks havoc upon forests, a thunderstorm also fulfills the constructive function of helping hinds calve through the fright it has caused them, and of putting man into the mood for worship in God's temples. So the voice of the Lord, too, speaking to us through His Law, brings us renewed life and a new understanding of God even while it destroys all such forms of life as oppose His will.⁴³⁷

According to Rashi it is the bark of the trees which will be stripped bare. However, Radak interprets this to mean that all of the trees in the forest will be toppled, thus striping the entire wooded area and leaving it bare.⁴³⁸

*I destroyed the Amorite from before them -- whose height was like the height of cedar trees and who were mighty as oaks.*⁴³⁹

The gentiles, who are compared to mighty cedar forests, will be stripped of their

436. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book One, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 208-209.

437. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book One, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 209.

438. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 353.

439. *Amos* 2:9.

power and pride (Rashi).⁴⁴⁰

One of the functions of a display of ״ כול, the voice of God, is to produce the Messiah. He has to denude the trees.⁴⁴¹

It is in the kingdom that all is brought together and manifests. These verses contain sublime secrets. Our actions are not unimportant. It is not the case that they have little effect in the physical and spiritual worlds. Our actions are earthshaking. They have the force of hurricanes and tornadoes that twist the trees and blow all their leaves off, leaving a forest of bare trees. Even more so is God's response to what we bring into reality. Reality is in a sense His temple. And in His temple each of God's actions proclaims the glory of God. And each of us is a Divine temple. In each temple all proclaim glory. Glory means divine manifestation. And this situation was, is, and will always be. For the Lord sits enthroned as king forever.

The Bahir associates this verse with:⁴⁴²

I impose an oath on you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles, or by the hinds of the field: that you never awaken nor arouse love until it is ripe.⁴⁴³

The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes leaping upon the mountains skipping upon the hills.⁴⁴⁴

Here we understand what is to happen in Malchut. There is a love. This love enables the union of Malchut to occur with Tiferet. This is the union of daughter with son, the union of \adni\ with \tetra.

The Bahir is telling us that we should not attempt to carry out or stir up action to accomplish this union until our desires and our spiritual state is ripe. And when we are ripe, the voice of our beloved will come leaping upon the mountains and skipping upon the hills. These mountains and these hills are the Sefirot of the Tree of Life. Leaping upon the mountains and skipping upon the hills corresponds to the activation of the Sefirot Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferet, Netzach, Hod, Yesod, and Malchuth. When activated, the seven voices of Psalm 29 will come leaping upon us and we will see them.

The Bahir summarizes:⁴⁴⁵

So it is taught that the Torah was given with seven voices.
And in each of them was the Master of the universe revealed to them

440. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 353.

441. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol I, p. 196.

442. *The Bahir*, trans. and comm. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1995), p. 16.

443. *Song of Songs* 2:7.

444. *Song of Songs* 2:8.

445. *The Bahir*, trans. and comm. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1995), p. 16.

and they saw Him. It is exactly what is written,

*And all the people saw the voices.*⁴⁴⁶

In His temple all that is His proclaims glory וּבְהִיכָלוֹ כָּלוּ אִמֵּר כְּבוֹד:

All that is the Lord's, every product of His creation and of His Sovereignty, serves to proclaim His greatness and to declare His glory. All that is His speaks; proclaiming His presence and declaring His glory in the physical world.⁴⁴⁷

All those who will visit the Temple will exclaim, 'Behold, now we truly see God's glory!' (Mezudas David; Rashi).⁴⁴⁸

Hashem sat enthroned over the flood יי לַמַּבּוּל יָשָׁב

יֵשֵׁב ל may be used to denote space, "to sit near" an object as in

*Asher lived by the shores of the seas*⁴⁴⁹ אֲשֶׁר יָשַׁב לְחוּף יַמִּים
*She sits at the door of her house, on a chair at the city heights.*⁴⁵⁰ וַיֵּשְׁבָה לְפֶתַח בֵּיתָהּ עַל כִּסֵּה מֵרָמֵי קֶרֶת

or it may refer to a goal, "to sit in expectation" of a person or event as in

*On the roads you awaited for them*⁴⁵¹ עַל דַּרְכֵימָם יֵשְׁבָת לָהֶם

*And I said to her, Wait for me for many days*⁴⁵² יֵאמֶר אֵלַיָּהּ יָמִים רַבִּים תֵּשְׁבִי לִי

At the time of the great Flood in Noah's days, God sat alone on high (Rashi).

When God is described as יֵשֵׁב, sitting enthroned, it means that He is permanent and unchanged. Therefore, the Psalmist says *Hashem sat at the flood*, despite the cataclysmic upheaval of the earth below, God remained unchanged above (Rambam, Moreh 1:11).⁴⁵³

And Hashem will sit enthroned as King forever וַיֵּשְׁבַּ יי מֶלֶךְ לְעוֹלָם:

446. *Exodus* 20:15.

447. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book One*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 209.

448. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 353.

449. *Judges* 5:17.

450. *Proverbs* 9:14.

451. *Jeremiah* 3:2.

452. *Hosea* 3:3.

453. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 353-354.

Despite the disobedience of His people, which caused Him to decree their punishment at Kadesh, the Lord neither changed nor abandoned the goals and plans He had originally set for Israel. Instead, He caused that entire generation of sinners to perish and waited calmly for the rise of a new generation that would better serve His aims. In the same manner, the Lord had sat unchanged and unshaken upon the throne of His Sovereignty even in the face of the corruption of all mankind at the time of the Flood. The degenerate have perished, but God and the goals of His rule have endured. He allowed one entire sinful generation of men to perish by the flood so that the goals of His rule might be brought to fruition by that one man who had remained true and loyal to Him. This man and his family would preserve these goals for the future through the new generation of men that was to be descended from him. **וַיֵּשֶׁב יְיָ-וְהָ-מֶלֶךְ לְעוֹלָם** even at that time the Lord had already revealed Himself in the might of His eternal, unchangeable ways over men and in His dealings with them. No nation on earth, in fact, not even all of mankind, has the power to alter the will of God. Men have only two alternatives. Either they submit to the will of God and freely and joyously devote themselves to His service in moral purity and respect for the right, or else they shall be irretrievably lost in the course of His rule as it moves on inexorably to bring about the fulfillment of God's will among men.⁴⁵⁴

Hashem will give strength to His people

יְיָ עֹז לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן

Hashem will bless his people with peace

יְיָ יְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם:

Finally Psalm 29 closes with declaration of what are the consequences to engage the process in accordance with the initial three commands.

*Give unto the Lord, children of God!
Give unto the Lord honor and strength!
Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His Name.*

The consequences are:

*Hashem will give strength to His people;
Hashem will bless His people with peace.*

This is our checkpoint. This is how we will know that we have properly connected the spiritual and physical by our actions.

The Zohar tells us that in these last two verses

454. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book One*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 209-210.

``Strength" signifies the Torah, as it is written:⁴⁵⁵

The Lord gives strength to his people; He blesses his people with peace. Blessed be the Lord for ever. Amen and Amen.

For as long as they are faithful students of the Torah the ``Right Hand" is powerful and breaks down the domination of the heathen, and therefore the Torah is called ``Strength."⁴⁵⁶

Strength means the light of eternal life, as Rabbi Ashlag explains

The light of eternal life, that is contained in the entire chain of creation, is called ``strength," and the verse assures us that the Almighty will surely give us this strength.⁴⁵⁷

How are we assured of the eternity of the light called strength? The next verse says:

The Lord will bless His people with peace.

Rabbi Ashlag explains

It was for this reason that our Sages of blessed memory stated

The Holy One Blessed be He could not find any vessel that could hold the blessing for Israel except for peace.

For just as His blessing is eternal, those who receive it must also be eternal.⁴⁵⁸

About peace Rabbi Schneerson teaches that

``The whole Torah was given to make peace in the world": peace within oneself, between one's good and bad inclinations -- and as a result, the possibility to introduce peace into one's environment and into the whole world.⁴⁵⁹

The key to a person's success is inner peace. When a person is not disturbed by internal discord, and his disposition is characterized instead by harmonious calm, he is able to handle his life tasks with strength and success. And when one begins one's

455. *The Zohar*, vol. 3, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (London: The Soncino Press, 1978), p. 281.

456. *The Zohar*, vol. 3, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (London: The Soncino Press, 1978), p. 181.

457. Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, *An Entrance to the Tree of Life*, comp. and ed. Philip S. Berg, (Jerusalem, Research Centre of Kabbalah, 1977), p. 119.

458. Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, *An Entrance to the Tree of Life*, comp. and ed. Philip S. Berg, (Jerusalem, Research Centre of Kabbalah, 1977), pp. 119-120.

459. Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, *Sichos in English*, vol. 21 (Brooklyn, NY: Sichos in English, 1984), p. 64.

day in a harmonious frame of mind, it remains with him throughout the day.⁴⁶⁰

Thus peace is the vessel that can contain all blessings. And this peace is the peace of the seventh day, the peace of Shabbos.

The Lord showed **י**, the invincible and changeless power and might of His will and of His standards to all of mankind (therefore His Law is also referred to as **י** Psalm 78:61, 132:8) at the time of the Flood, and to Israel in the wilderness of Kadesh. In both these instances He demonstrated His **י** by causing those generations who opposed His will to perish from the earth. But the same God Who uproots the wicked allows those who obey His will as revealed to them, to partake in His eternal, invincible strength and majesty. Those who with their obedience demonstrate that they are indeed **י**, [his people] and who serve the only goals that are sure to win the final victory over all opposing forces, will themselves have a part in the fruits of this victorious perseverance. They subordinate all of their being and all their aspirations to the will of the Lord as shown them by His Law. Therefore, whatever they do and desire is in full accord with those ends for which the Lord laid His physical world at mankind's feet. These ends are the goal toward which God's ways have led throughout the ages; namely, to stamp all the relationships of men and nations with the eternal brand of His rule. Those men who submit to the will of the Lord, shall alone receive the true blessing of peace for all their desires and achievements, even if a whole world should stand against them.⁴⁶¹

Our Sages of the Talmud declare that by **י**, strength King David alludes to the Mitzvah of tefillin, for it is in reference to tefillin that the Torah says: "*and all the nations of the world will see that the Name of God is called upon you, and they will fear you.*"⁴⁶² This is to say that the Mitzvah of tefillin has a special quality of giving the Jewish people divine power, inspiring awe and fear in the hearts of their enemies so that they would not dare harm them. Thus *God will bless His people with peace.*⁴⁶³

י, our Sages also say, refers to the Torah itself, indeed, the Targum translates this verse "God gives the Torah to the Jewish people." In giving us the Torah, God has given us the possibility to attach ourselves to Him through the study and the observance of the Mitzvot -- the source of our real strength.⁴⁶⁴

The idolators will vanish but those who serve God will grow even mightier and will be blessed with peace (Rashi).

460. Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, *Sichos in English*, vol. 47 (Brooklyn, NY: Sichos in English, 1991), p. 217.

461. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book One*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 210.
462. *Deuteronomy* 28:10.

463. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer, Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 26.

464. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer, Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 26.

עו also means audacity, stubbornness, toughness. This trait is a prime prerequisite in maintaining the faith, as the Talmud (Beitza 25b) says: ‘The Torah was given to Israel only because they are עזים. The Shulchan Aruch, the Code of Jewish Law, opens with the famous statement of Rabbi Yehudah ben Tema in Avos 5:20, “Be always עז כנמר, “bold and tough as a leopard” to do the will of you father in heaven.⁴⁶⁵

Perhaps experiencing too much of God’s goodness will prove corrosive to man’s character, and man would become arrogant and act hotheadedly towards his fellow man. Although it is true that the cause of our exile has been primarily the lack of harmony and our constantly strife ridden lifestyle, this will change, says the Psalmist. By granting עז, strength instead of weakness, God will also bless Israel with peace and harmony so that there will be no pride which is the source of divisiveness.⁴⁶⁶

It is noteworthy that the Mishnayot (the Torah-shebe’al Peh) concludes with the quotation of the final verse of the psalm. Rabbi Shimon ben Halafta said, the Holy One blessed be He, found no vessel that could contain blessings of the Jewish people except peace, for so it is written, God will give strength to His people, God will bless his people with peace. Peace is the vessel that contains all blessing.⁴⁶⁷

After the advent of Messiah there will no longer be wars (Radak). This corresponds to the very last benediction of Shemoneh Esrei which is המברך את עמו ישראל בשלום who blesses His nation Israel with peace.⁴⁶⁸

465. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 354.

466. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol I, p. 197.

467. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 26.

468. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 354-355.

Ana B'Koach

This prayer -- ascribed to the Tanna Rabbi Nechunia ben Hakanah, a Mishnah teacher of the 1st century CE -- has profound mystical significance. It is an eloquent prayer that God save Israel from exile. It contains forty-two words, the initials of which form the secret forty-two letter Name of God. Moreover, the six initials of each of its seven verses form Divine Names.⁴⁶⁹

According to the Kabbalah, the hymn Ana Bekoach is associated with the motif of elevation. We recite six psalms, one for each day of the week, and then, we recite this hymn to elevate these days to the holiness of the Sabbath.⁴⁷⁰

The forty-two words are also understood to correspond to the forty-two days beginning from the first day after the end of Pesach until the first day of Shavuot - six weeks. The 42 days of these six weeks are the seven verses with six words per verse. These forty-two words also correspond to the 42 stages in our spiritual development. These are also the forty two encampments of the Israelites.

Praying Ana Bekoach has the power to remove evil thoughts.

Each of the seven verses corresponds with one of the lower seven sefirot in the order of Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferet, Yesod Nezach, Hod, Malchut.

As the prayer has the forty-two letter name of Hashem, after the prayer is said, we bless the name of His glorious Kingdom for ever and ever.

Chesed

We beg you, with the strength
Of the right hand's greatness
Untie the bundled sins

אָנָּה בְּכֹחַ
גְּדֹלַת יְמִינְךָ
תִּפְתֹּר צְרוּרָה:

The right hand is the right hand of God who with His right hand released the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt.

*Your right hand, Hashem, is glorified with strength; Your right hand Hashem smashes the enemy.*⁴⁷¹

469. *The Complete Artscroll Sidur*, p. 315.

470. *The Siddur Ya'avetz*, Ya'akov Emden, Touger, trans., Feldheim Publishers, New York, 2004, p 27.

471. *Exodus* 15:6.

The Hebrew word צְרוּרָה literally means bundle. Many translations translate it as captive, so that the last two words mean release the captive. Some insight can be obtained by looking at the root. The related two letter noun is צַר, meaning enemy. As an adjective צָר means narrow. The three letter noun צָרָה means trouble, affliction, misfortune. This verse then implores Hashem to help release us from the troubles that are tying us down. What ties us down is internal: the way we hold consciousness of our physicality. When we understand the physical in a way that is not aligned with the spiritual, our consciousness ties us down into narrow straights. The narrow straights hold us captive for in those instances we are not God conscious and not manifesting loving kindness as much as we should. This corresponds to Chesed since Chesed is the sefirah of loving kindness.

This is the prayer of Abraham, the shepherd of the Sefirah of Chesed, loving-kindness. In his day, Abraham was the leader of people toward a one God and away from the multiple deities of the idols. The people of his generation had accumulated many sins for their idol worship. Abraham prays for them: *We beg you with the strength of your right hand untie the bundled sins.*

This verse corresponds to the right hand, which is Chesed. The Zohar suggests that right hand is an allusion to the Messianic times. Listen to how the Zohar teaches this. And it is all in this manner: *You have (lit. 'will') overthrown them that rose up against You.*⁴⁷² It is not written, "You have overthrown," but literally, 'You will overthrow,' and similarly, "You did (lit. 'will') send forth Your anger, which consumed them as stubble" (Ibid.). It is all in the time to come. *Your right hand, Hashem, is glorious in power*⁴⁷³ is in this time, in this world. *Your right hand, Hashem, will dash the enemy in pieces*⁴⁷⁴, refers to the time of King Messiah. *And in the greatness of Your excellency You have overthrown them that rose up against You*⁴⁷⁵, refers to the coming of Gog and Magog (Armageddon). *You will send forth Your anger, which will consume them as stubble*, refers to the resurrection of the dead, as written: *And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*⁴⁷⁶

In Hebrew, hand is יָד. It has gematria of 14. There are three hands one from the right, one from the left and one that is central. The Zohar tells us, On Pesach, the Shechinah is the great hand from the aspect of Chesed. On Rosh Hashanah She is the mighty hand from the aspect of Gevurah. At the giving of the Torah She is a high hand from the aspect of the Central Column, which is Tiferet. Three times 14 equals 42.⁴⁷⁷

472. Exodus 15:7.

473. Exodus 15:6.

474. Exodus 15:7.

475. Exodus 15:7.

476. Daniel 12:2.

477. Zohar, Parashah Ki Tetze.

Thus right hand is designated to strike with power against the enemy. *Your right hand, Hashem, is glorified with strength. Your right hand, Hashem smashes the enemy.*⁴⁷⁸ In this prayer, the enemy is our sins that we have not yet made a correction for. It is these sins that separate us from Hashem. *But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God.*⁴⁷⁹ Therefore, we plead with Hashem to use his right hand to help us correct for our sins and give to us salvation. *Your right hand shows itself only in works of salvation.*⁴⁸⁰ The right hand is, therefore, capable of untying the confined sins which separate us from Hashem just as we read *Save with Your right hand and answer me*⁴⁸¹ since when the right hand is exalted, Yisrael that cleave to it are exalted and crowned through it.⁴⁸²

Gevurah

Accept the prayer

Of your nation, uplift us,

Purify us, O Awesome One

קִבַּל רִנָּת

עַמְּךָ שְׂגַבְנוּ

טְהַרְנוּ נוֹרָא:

This verse corresponds to the left hand which is the Sefirah Gevurah, strength. This is the Sefirah of discipline, limitation and judgment. The left hand is designated to receive and be on guard. In this verse we plead with God to receive our prayer and **שגבנו** uplift us. This same root **שגב** is used in *Your salvation, O God, shall set me up on high.*⁴⁸³ When we are separated from Hashem because of our sins we are spiritually afflicted and miserable. We are spiritually low. When we look deep inside to discover why we are spiritually low, we will discover that there is something in us that is not pure. This verse asks Hashem to help purify in us what is not pure.

The same God Who had laid His hand so heavily upon me, can raise me up on high far above all this misery.. It is He that gives me the strength and courage and the serene confidence with which to endure my pain. It is He that has endowed me with the fortitude to preserve my unique character and nature even in the midst of all my misery, to live on and develop my personality in accordance with my moral and spiritual destiny.⁴⁸⁴

*I am my beloved his desire is towards me.*⁴⁸⁵ is based on the understanding that the

478. Exodus 15:6.

479. Isaiah 59:2.

480. Psalms 60:7.

481. Psalms 60:5.

482. Zohar, Parashah Shimini.

483. Psalms 69:30.

484. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Two*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 480.

485. *Song of Songs* 6:3.

Shechinah does not reside among the wicked. As soon as a person desires to purify himself and come close to the Holy One, blessed be He, only then does the Shechinah rest upon him. Therefore it is written: *I am my beloved's first, and then, his desire is towards me.* Because when a person comes to be purified, he is purified.⁴⁸⁶

This is the prayer of Isaac, the shepherd of the Sefirah of Gevurah, strength. Isaac devoted himself to purity and piety. Isaac was at home with the Awesomeness of Hashem. Isaac prays: *Accept the prayer of your nation. Uplift us, purify us, o Awesome One.*

Tiferet

Please O Strong One

Those who foster your Oneness

Guard them like the pupil of the eye.

נָא גְבוּר

דּוֹרְשֵׁי יְחִוּדְךָ

כְּבֵבַת שְׁמַרְם:

This verse corresponds to the middle of Chesed and Gevurah. This is the Sefirah of Tiferet, Beauty, characterized by humbleness. In Tiferet the proper balance of the Chesed and Gevurah emotions is created. For the world cannot be sustained with only Chesed or only Gevurah. Proper balance makes for true harmony and compassion. In proper balance there is strength.

This is the prayer of Jacob, the shepherd of the Sefirah of Tiferet. Jacob was the patriarch who had multiple troubles. Recall that he met Rachel at the well. The well had a heavy stone. The heavy stone could only be rolled off by many shepherds. When he saw Rachel come with the flock of sheep, by his great strength, he rolled off the stone.

He had troubles with Esau, then with Laban. He had troubles wrestling with an angel and then he had troubles in Schechem. He thought his favorite son Joseph was lost and dead for many years. Jacob wanted rest and peace, but until the last years of his life he was working through his troubles. Jacob's way of handling trouble was to see the harmony and the Oneness in all.

In the moments before his death, Jacob blesses each of his 12 sons. When he comes to Joseph he says that Joseph's *arms were gilded from the hands of the mighty power of Jacob.*⁴⁸⁷

So he prays: *Please O strong One, for those who foster your Oneness, guard them like the pupil of the eye.*

486. Zohar, Parashah Lech Lecha.

487. Genesis 49:24

Yesod

Bless them, purify them,

Be compassionate to them with your righteousness

Always recompense them.

בְּרַכְם טְהַרְם
רַחֲמֵם צְדָקְתֶךָ
תַּמִּיד גְּמֹלִים:

Yesod is the Sefirah of foundation: order and purity. This is where the balanced emotions of drawing toward and pushing away, the rational intellect, and ability to overcome all resistance meet for the final steps which is the action in the realm of Malchut. The order is a planning that reflects the determination to manifest the feelings of Chesed and Gevurah. The planning is not a clever scheming. The planning is done with righteousness and purity of heart.

This is the prayer of Joseph, the shepherd of the Sefirah of Yesod. Recall that Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt. He was purchased by Potiphar who appointed him superintendent of his household. Potiphar's wife was obsessed with Joseph's beauty and lusted after him. But Joseph stayed pure and repulsed her. For that she brought an accusation against him and this landed him in prison. Eventually, he correctly interpreted Pharaoh's dream and became the vicar of Egypt. Joseph was the pure one, the righteous one. Joseph prays: Bless them, purify them, be compassionate to them with your righteousness. Always recompense them.

Netzach

Powerful Holy One,

With Your abundant goodness

Guide Your congregation.

חֲסִין קָדוֹשׁ
בְּרוּב טוֹבָךָ
נְהַל עַדְתְּךָ:

Netzach is the Sefirah of victory, eternity, and dedicateness, of overcoming any resistance that might be encountered on the path of the holy work of bestowing goodness on and to those we encounter. Netzach is the determination to manifest the feelings of Chesed. Netzach reflects confidence in what is being done and is going to be expressed in action. For us this is the meaning of the word , powerful one⁴⁸⁸ We celebrate Hashem's abundant goodness⁴⁸⁹. In the song of Moses, the Israelites sing: *With your kindness You guided this people that You redeemed. You led with your might to Your holy abode.*⁴⁹⁰

This is the prayer of Moses, the shepherd of the Sefirah of Netzach. Moses was the leader who for forty years lead the Israelites in the desert. Moses knew that after he died the Israelites would go astray. He foretold the terrible things that would happen to them. His

488. *Psalms* 89: 9.

489. *Psalms* 145: 7.

490. *Exodus* 15:13.

prayer is: Powerful Holy One, *With Your abundant goodness, Guide Your congregation.*

Hod

One and only Exalted One

יְחִיד גְּאֻה

Turn toward your people

לְעַמְּךָ פְּנֵה

Who remember your Holiness

זוֹכְרֵי קִדְּשְׁתֶּךָ:

Hod is the Sefirah of splendor. It is on the left side of the headed by Binah, Hod is the Sefirah of acknowledgement, thankfulness, and rationality. In the song of Moses, the Israelites sing: *I shall sing to Hashem for He is exalted.*⁴⁹¹ The word for turn, פְּנֵה, is a cognate of the word for his face or his countenance, פָּנָיו, as in the blessing that Hashem, tells to Moses to tell to Aaron: *May Hashem illuminate his countenance for you and be gracious unto you. May Hashem lift his countenance for you and establish peace for you.*

This is the prayer of Aaron, the shepherd of the Sefirah of Hod. Aaron was the high priest. While Moses was receiving the tablets, the Israelites thought he died on Mount Sinai for by their calculation he did not return on time. Many people petitioned Aaron to have a ceremony to install a new leader -- the Golden Calf. These people had already forgotten about their experience in Egypt and the wonders which God revealed to them. So Aaron prays: *One and only Exalted One. Turn toward your people who remember your Holiness.*

Malchut

Accept our entreaty

שׁוּעֵתֵינוּ קַבֵּל

Hear our cry

וּשְׁמַע צַעֲקֹתֵנוּ

Knower of mysteries

יֹדֵעַ תַּעֲלָמוֹת:

Malchut is the Sefirah of Kingdom. In the kingdom there is a King, there is a palace of the King, and there are subjects of the King. Materiality, our physical world is the palace of the King. We are His subjects. The King is the knower of mysteries, the knower of hidden things. In the world of Assiyah, which is Malchut, God's presence is hidden, at least from a surface look at things. But when we cry out, God hears our cry and accepts our plea to draw near to Him.

Malchut is indeed a mysterious part of existence. In Malchut, that which conceals Hashem is that which reveals Hashem. Whether we become aware of the concealment or whether we become aware of the revealment depends on our own state of consciousness.

In Malchut, we can see only the surface, the appearance, or we can see into the essence.

491. *Exodus* 15:1.

When we discover that we are not encountering holiness, that we are seeing only the surface, we lose our closeness to Hashem. Then we can err; we can sin. Hashem becomes concealed. In such a moment of realizing we are only seeing the appearance, we have to make a change in ourselves, adopt a different higher point of view and then the holiness of what we encountered can become revealed. We become the helper of Hashem.

This is the prayer of Kind David, the shepherd of Malchut. King David is the writer of most of the Psalms. He always tried to maintain his closeness with Hashem. Whenever he failed in keeping this closeness he admitted his failure and prayed. In Psalm 86 he prays: *Give ear, Hashem, to my prayer, and heed the sound of my supplications.*⁴⁹² In Psalm 51 he prays: *According to Your vast compassion erase my transgressions.*⁴⁹³ Finally, Kind David prays *Hashem has heard my plea, Hashem will accept my prayer.*⁴⁹⁴ These prayers were part of his own process of changing himself and adopting a higher point of view. *Here he prays Accept our entreaty; Hear our cry, knower of mysteries.*

Blessed is the name
Of His glorious Kingdom
Forever and ever

בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם
כְּבוֹד מְלְכוּתוֹ
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

The word name here means God immanent. This is related to King David's prayer: *Blessed is Hashem, God, the God of Israel, Who alone does wondrous things. Blessed is His glorious Name forever; and may all the earth be filled with His glory.*⁴⁹⁵ This is the prayer that gives wings to the lines of the previous prayers. That the glory of Hashem, which fills all of earth, be openly recognized forever and ever

492. *Psalms* 86:6.

493. *Psalms* 51: 3.

494. *Psalms* 6:10.

495. *Psalms* 72: 18-19.

Lecha Dodi

We are all familiar with this beautiful and inspiring hymn of the Friday night service. It was composed by the saintly Kabbalist, Rabbi Shlomo Halevi Alkabetz, who died in Safed, in the Holy Land, in about the year 1580. He was one of the leading Kabbalists in Safed, a contemporary of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero (his brother-in-law and disciple), Rabbi Moshe Alshich and Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, founder of the Lurianic Kabbalah. It was due to the great authority of the last named that the hymn Lecha Dodi was adopted and included in Kabbalat Shabbat in both Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities all over the world.⁴⁹⁶

Of all the hymns that were written, this one hymn has been adopted by all Jewish communities because it is the only one to have received the special endorsement of Rabbi Isaac Luria, the great master of Kabbalist lore. The author is Solomon Alkabetz HaLevi שלמה הלוי (about 1540) whose name appears in the hymn itself, in the form of an acrostic composed of the initial letter of each verse. It is a festive song to usher in the Sabbath, which is called the “Bride” of the people of Israel.⁴⁹⁷

The refrain of this hymn, “Lecha Dodi” and indeed the entire motif of the hymn, in which the Shabbat is represented as a “Queen” whom we go out to welcome, is based on a Talmudic source, where we are told how two great Sages welcomed the Shabbat. Rabbi Chanina used to dress himself in honor of Shabbat and say (to his disciples): “Come, let us go out to welcome the Shabbat Queen.” Rabbi Yannai, dressed in his Shabbat clothes, would announce:⁴⁹⁸ “Bo’i Kallah, bo’i Kallah -- Come in, Bride; come in, Bride.

An earlier source, quotes Rabbin Shimon ben Yochai (author of the Zohar) as follows:

“When God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day, which He blessed and made holy, Shabbat appeared before the Holy One, blessed be He, and complained: ‘Master of the universe, each day of the week has a mate, but I am the odd one, without a mate!’⁴⁹⁹ Replied God: “The Jewish people will be your mate.” Thus, when God gave His Torah to the Jewish people at Sinai, He began the Fifth Commandment with the word, “Remember the Shabbat day to keep it holy,” as if to say, “Remember the promise I made to the Shabbat that the Jewish people will be its mate.”

It should be noted that the word l’kadsho, “to keep it holy,” also means “to betroth it” -- an allusion to the special relationship between the Jewish people and the Shabbat as that of “bride” and “groom.”

496. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 26.

497. Elie Munk, *The World of Prayer Vol 2*, Feldheim Publishers, New York, 1963, p. 6.

498. *Shabbat* 119a.

499. The seven days of the week may be divided into three pairs of days, each pair adding up to seven (one and six; two and five; three and four), leaving the seventh day as a single day.

Thus, the great Sage and father of the Kabbalists, Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai, tells us in his quaint way that from the beginning of the Creation of the world, the Shabbat and the Jewish people were destined for each other and bound together with bonds of devotion, loyalty and joy.

This theme of bride and groom -- symbolic also of the mutual affection and devotion between the Jewish people and God, as well as between the Jewish people and the Torah, permeates the Song of Songs (Shir HaShirim) composed by King Solomon. Indeed, it is from this holy book (one of the five Megillot of T'NaCh) that the name of the hymn and its refrain -- "Lecha Dodi" -- is derived. This is also the reason why in some communities it is customary to recite Shir HaShirim on Friday afternoon, before ushering in the Shabbat bride.⁵⁰⁰

Come out my Beloved, the Bride to meet;

לְכֵה דוּדִי לְקִרְאֵת בְּלֵה.

The inner light of Shabbat, let us greet.

פְּנֵי שַׁבַּת נִקְבְּלָה:

These first two lines are the chorus of the song. It is sung ten times corresponding to the ten Sefirot. Its first phrase has 15 letters and its second phrase has 11 letters. The gematria of יה is 15 and the gematria of ה is 11. The total is the eternal great name of Hashem יהוה which has gematria of 26. These are the 26 letters of the chorus.

The chorus is followed by nine verses. The chorus is sung ten times corresponding to the ten Sefirot on the Tree of Life. The chorus itself is Keter. The nine verses correspond to Hochmah, Binah, Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferet, Netzach, Hod, Yesod, and Malchut, respectively. Malchut also corresponds to the Shechinah.

The verb לְכֵה usually means to go, to go forth, to leave, but in this verse it is almost universally translated as come. In this verse, the stronger sense of go out is actually better. To understand why, we must first understand who is the beloved and who is the bride.

If we are the speakers of the verse as we sing it, then when each of us says "my beloved" we mean our Neshama, our soul. We are telling our soul to come out and meet the inner light of the Shabbat, the bride of Hashem.

Another possibility is that if we are the speakers of the verse, then my beloved is God and we are inviting God to go with us to meet the Bride which is the Shabbat.

We can also understand that the beloved is the beloved of God. The beloved is the outer side of the Creation.. His bride is the inner side of the Creation. But the Kabbalistic sense of this verse is not that the outer side creation, physical reality, should come out. Rather it means that we must come out to meet the Creation. So we might think that we meet the

500. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 27-28.

Creation every weekday, why are we being told to go out and meet the Creation just before Shabbat. The answer is in the second line of the verse. We are going out to meet the inside of the Creation, the Shabbat. That inside is here translated as *inner light*, inner coming from the meaning of פְּנֵי, literally the face of Shabbat. The face reveals the inner most depths of a person. Therefore, we are being told to go out and greet the inner most depths of the Creation. The inner most depths of the Creation is Shabbat. But to greet Creation as the inner most depth of Creation, we have to elevate the Creation in our own consciousness, by giving the Creation a Shabbat. Therefore, it is we who go out, which means we leave our usual place, we leave our usual consciousness and become transformed with our special consciousness, we meet the Creation as Shabbat.

If we are the speakers of the verse as we sing it, then when each of us says “my beloved” we mean our Neshama, our soul. We are telling our soul to come out and meet the inner light of the Shabbat, the bride of Hashem.

"Observe" and "Remember" in a single word, שְׁמוֹר וְזָכֹר בְּדָבוּר אֶחָד,

Our Sages⁵⁰¹ explain that the two versions of the Fourth Commandment: זָכֹר, *Remember the Shabbat day to keep it holy*⁵⁰² and שְׁמוֹר, *Keep the Shabbat day holy*⁵⁰³ were pronounced simultaneously by God at Mount Sinai, yet both were clearly heard by all the people. This was a double miracle, since no human being can utter two different syllables at the same time, nor can one make sense of any two words coming simultaneously from two persons. But then the entire Divine Revelation at Sinai, when the whole Jewish people heard the voice of God coming through the flame and cloud enveloping the mountain, was a series of wonderful miracles, never before and never since experienced in the history of mankind.

The fact that the Shabbat commandment was given in such a miraculous way emphasizes the very nature of Shabbat itself, which is supernatural and miraculous.

Our Sages explain that the first, זָכֹר, refers to and includes all the positive precepts (Mitzvot-asseh), the “do’s” connected with Shabbat observance, such as kiddush, prayer, Torah-study, as well as such “material” things as changing into Shabbat clothes, having special Shabbat meals -- in short all the things we do for the honor and holiness of the Shabbat day. The second, שְׁמוֹר, keep [observe] (literally “beware of”) refers to all the “do not’s” connected with Shabbat observance, namely not do to any of the thirty-nine kinds of actions defined as “word,” with all their offshoots. These have nothing to do with the actual effort involved, for it is a desecration of Shabbat to turn on the electric light as it is to plow the field.

501. *Mechilta* on Exodus 20:8, *Shevuot* 20b.

502. *Exodus* 20:8.

503. *Deuteronomy* 5:12.

Furthermore, noting that **זכור** and **שמור** were pronounced in a single utterance, our Sages of the Talmud explain that it was not to demonstrate that God can perform miracles. It was to indicate that both kinds of Mitzvot, the “do’s” and the “do not’s,” relating to Shabbat, apply equally to both men and women. For usually only the prohibitions (lo ta’aseh) of the Torah apply to both men and women, while many of the positive precepts involving a time-element (such as tzitzit, which are limited to daytime; succah and many others) are not binding on women. Accordingly at first glance one might have thought that the “do’s” of Shabbat would not apply to women. Therefore, by pronouncing **זכור** and **שמור** in one utterance, God made it clear that the “do’s” and the “do not’s” of Shabbat apply equally to men and women.

There is one great and beautiful Mitzvah which has been made the privilege of the woman, namely, the lighting of the candles (at least 18 minutes before sunset on the eve of Shabbat). It is customary for the wife to light at least two candles, one for and one for . Our Sages speak with extraordinary reverence and in mystical terms of this great Mitzvah and special privilege of the Jewish woman. They point out that by lighting the Shabbat candles Jewish women help spread the “tabernacle of peace” (succot-shalom) over our people, and illuminate the souls that are the “lights” of the world. Moreover, in the merit of this great Mitzvah, the wife is blessed with fine children, shining with the light of Torah. She also brings the blessing of long life to her husband. No other Mitzvah by man or woman is more rewarding than that of lighting the Shabbat candles by the wife and mother, in recognition of her being the **אכרת הבית**, the [crown] foundation of the Jewish home and the House of Jacob.⁵⁰⁴

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, has strongly urged that unmarried women and little girls old enough to be trained in Jewish customs and Mitzvot, from about the age of three years and older, should also light their own candle before Shabbat and recite the blessing over it. He has declared that this is especially vital now that the peace of the world in general, and of our people in particular, is so gravely threatened. “In a world plunged in darkness,” he has said, “each and every Jewish girl lighting a Shabbat candle helps bring a little more pure light into the home and into the world, and all God’s blessings that go with it.”⁵⁰⁵

Observe and Remember: "Observe" precedes "remember" here, even though the sequence written in the Torah is the opposite; this is because fear of Heaven must precede cleaving to G-d. Furthermore, "observe" is particularly pertinent at night, and "remember" during the day.

He caused us to hear, the One and Only Lord. **הַשְׁמִיעֵנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי הַמִּיחָד.**

The One and Only Lord: One of the commentaries on Sefer Yetzira states that G-d's ability

504. *Zohar*, Bereishit 48b.

505. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 29-31.

to fuse opposites is indicated by the description "meyuchad", which we have translated here as "One and Only." Here this refers to "remember" and "observe" that were uttered simultaneously.

G-d is One and His Name is One,

יהוה אֶחָד וְשְׁמוֹ אֶחָד.

The words “God is One and His name is One” seem repetitious, having already referred to the “only God.” However, having said that **שְׁמוֹ** and **זְכוֹר** came from God in a single utterance, the poet seems to allude to the mystery of this particular miracle. God is one perfect Unity, and just as He is capable of creating the whole world, with so many different things, without it affecting His Unity, so He is, of course, capable of uttering two or more words simultaneously. A human being, like all other things God has created, is necessarily limited in all his faculties, senses and capacities. But God is unlimited in His actions.

God is One, but He has many names, each one indicative of a particular Divine attribute or action, as it is revealed to us, His creatures. But all His names are really one, since His attributes and actions do not affect His perfect unity in the slightest. This, too, is something no human being can fathom because human intellectual capacity is limited.⁵⁰⁶

The phrase **יהוה אֶחָד** means that God transcendent is one. The phrase **וְשְׁמוֹ אֶחָד** means God immanent is one. One here means in unity and as well means that God immanent and God transcendent are the one and the same God.

This reminds us of the message of the Shema: **שמע ישראל יהוה אלוהנו יהוה אחד** Listen Israel, Hashem, our God, Hashem is One. One of the meanings of this declaration is that Hashem, God transcendent beyond this world, and our God, God immanent in this world is One. The two most divergent understandings we have about Hashem are actually the same understanding. The two poles of infinity are actually the identical infinity.

On the Shabbat, malchut, [the physical Creation], is united within the mystery of Oneness, so that the Oneness of the higher worlds may rest upon her. This takes place during the evening prayer of the Shabbat eve, for then the holy Throne of Glory [the life-force which brings all of Creation into being and sustains it] merges into the mystery of Oneness, and is ready for the holy transcendent King to rest upon it, i.e., for the transcendent revelation of God to be illuminated in the lower worlds (Zohar vol II 135a-b).⁵⁰⁷

For renown, for glory and for praise.

לְשֵׁם וּלְתִפְאָרֶת וּלְתִהְלָה:

506. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 31-32..

507. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_2.asp.

The words, “for renown, glory and praise,” are taken from the verse: “*to observe all (God’s) commandments ... for praise renown, and glory.*”⁵⁰⁸ All God’s commandments and especially the Shabbat, are the eternal values that distinguish the Jewish people from the nations of the world. It is in these sacred laws of the Torah, which we observe in our daily life, that we rightfully take pride, and it is in these Divine laws, which make for a holy and truly worthy life, that the “chosenness” of our people is expressed.⁵⁰⁹

Literally, **לְשֵׁם** in this context means *for the name*. With regard to consciousness, what is named is what in consciousness is recognized as being manifested. What has no name is not yet recognized in consciousness as manifested. The previous verse is about the unity inherent in that our Transcendent God is our manifested God; they are One. For the name in the next verse then means that this unity is to be manifested in our consciousness. When it is, our consciousness is filled with beauty, splendor and glory, **וּלְתִפְאֵרֶת**, and song and praise **וּלְתִהְלֵה**.

To welcome the Shabbat, let us progress, **לְקִרְאֵת שַׁבָּת לְכוּ וְנִלְכָה.**
 For that is the source, from which to bless. **כִּי הִיא מְקוֹר הַבְּרָכָה.**

The poet reminds us that the Shabbat is the source of blessings. The Zohar quotes the sage Rabbi Yitzchak, who referring to the verse *And God blessed the seventh day*⁵¹⁰ declares that “all the blessings of the upper and lower worlds derive from the seventh day,” and that “all the six days of the week are blessed through this seventh day, Shabbat.”⁵¹¹ Many other sages quoted in the Zohar and in the Talmud speak of Shabbat as the source and wellspring of all God’s blessings, both spiritual and material. Rabbi Yehuda sums it up: “He who delights in the Shabbat sees all his heart’s desires fulfilled.”⁵¹²

Throughout the ages, no matter how difficult it was to keep the Shabbat, Jews considered it no sacrifice to close their businesses and abstain from work on this holy day. Knowing that Shabbat was the source of all blessings for the six days of the week, they realized that it would be foolish to desecrate it. For not only would the money gained so wrongfully be of no lasting value, it would also deprive the other six days of God’s blessings. So the sensible Jew always tries to train for the kind of job or open the kind of business and live in the kind of environment where he can fully observe Shabbat and Yom Tov.⁵¹³

508. Deuteronomy 26:19.

509. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 32.

510. Genesis 2:3.

511. *Zohar*, Beshallah 63b; Yitro 88b

512. *Shabbat* 118a.

513. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 32-33.

That is the source, from which to bless: The Zohar (vol. II, 63b) explains that the Shabbat blesses all the days of the following week. Furthermore, the 620 (the numerical value of keter) columns of light which extend forth from keter to chochma and bina (and to all of the sefirot), plus the 32 Paths of Wisdom (thirty-two channels through which the light of chochma infuses Creation) plus the 50 Gates of Understanding (which represents the full development of the seven emotional attributes within bina) together produce the numerical value of 702, the same as the numerical value of the word "Shabbat", again indicating that Shabbat is the source of blessing for all of Creation.⁵¹⁴

The verse says that the Shabbat is the source of blessing. This wording suggests that the Shabbat is out there, external to us, as the source of blessing. But there is a deeper sense. It is the Shabbat in our consciousness that is the source of blessing. We have to bring our consciousness to the state of Shabbat. This means that however halachically complete our outward observance of the Shabbat is, if on Shabbat we are thinking about business deals, financial deals, legal deals, transportation deals, etc., our consciousness is not in the state of Shabbat. If our consciousness is not in the state of Shabbat, then Shabbat cannot be the source of blessing.

So completely must our consciousness be in the state of Shabbat, that it is not sufficient to leave our Melachah, our weekly work, in the office or in the business. This leaving is just separating ourselves from it. Rather, we must bring our Melachah, our weekly work, into Shabbat with us. We must give our work a Shabbat. There is no external difference between leaving our weekly work alone on Shabbat versus giving our weekly work a Shabbat. The difference is internal. Passively leaving our weekly work alone, leaves an opening for it to pop up into our consciousness which in part is still attached to the work. But if our consciousness gives our weekly work a Shabbat, just as we give ourselves a Shabbat, then our weekly work is regarded as being completed. From whatever stage our weekly work is, we elevate it to Shabbat as we elevate ourselves to Shabbat. Therefore, our weekly work is indeed completed, from the point of view of our consciousness, even if during the week that follows Shabbat we must spend more time with it. When we elevate our weekly work to Shabbat as we elevate ourselves to Shabbat, it is our Shabbat state of consciousness that becomes the source of blessing. We are then in a state of beauty, splendor, glory, song and praise.

From the beginning, chosen before time,

מֵרֵאשִׁית מִקֶּדֶם נְסֻכָּה.

The poet goes on to say that the special nature of Shabbat -- its being blessed and bestowing blessing, and its being holy and bestowing holiness -- was ordained by God from the beginning of creation, when Shabbat was נְסֻכָּה, "anointed" as Queen. And although Shabbat came last in creation for it was proclaimed by God as the holy day of rest after all things had been created during the preceding six days, it was, however, first in Divine

514. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_3.asp.

thought. The Midrash⁵¹⁵ explains it by the following illustration: “ A king prepared a beautiful canopy, and decorated it lavishly. What remained to complete it? The bride, of course.” Clearly while the king was making the canopy and decorating it, he had in mind the bride he had chosen. And so it was with the King of the Universe, who created the whole world for the Shabbat queen.

Thus the Jew works and toils during six days of the week in order to prepare for Shabbat and be able to enjoy it and delight in it. From the first day of the week he already looks forward to it and counts the days to Shabbat. This is why we say before reciting the daily psalm (שיר של יום) “Today is the first day in Shabbat” or “Today is the second day in Shabbat,” and so on. We do not say בשבוע, in the week. In this way we not only remember the Shabbat every day of the week and look forward to it, but we also realize that the whole week is called “Shabbat” in the sense that Shabbat gives meaning and content to each day of the week, is its source of blessing, and, indeed, its very soul; or, as the poet expresses it, “first in thought.”⁵¹⁶

From the beginning is מראש in the original Hebrew. When each letter of the word ראש is substituted with the letter that follows it in the Hebrew alphabet, the word "Shabbat" שבת is formed. This alludes to the ascent of malchut, which is called Shabbat, to the level of "the beginning." Technically speaking, malchut, which is also called Chochma Tata'a (Lower Chochma), which G-d used in creating the world, rises and bonds with Chochma Illa'a (Upper Chochma) the chochma of Torah. Thus, Creation fulfills its ultimate purpose, as the Zohar states: "The world was created with the Torah and for the sake of Torah. As long as the Jewish people occupy themselves with Torah, the world will continue to exist." This is the essence of Shabbat. Accordingly, the letters of ראש and שבת, together with a י representing the Jewish People, combine to form the word בראשית "In the beginning," the first word of the Torah.⁵¹⁷

Chosen before time: Based on the verse in Proverbs 8:23, this refers to the Torah, which preceded time and is referred to as the blueprint from which the world was created.⁵¹⁸

Last in deed, but in thought - prime.

סוף מעשה במחשבה תחילה:

Last in deed, but in thought - prime: Although malchut is the last of the ten sefirot,

515. *Bereshit Rabbah* 10:9.

516. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 33-34.

517. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_3.asp.

518. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_3.asp.

corresponding to the faculty of speech, it is nevertheless preeminent in thought, i.e., in God's Will (the level of keter), which transcends chochma. For it is only the permutation of words that have their source in chochma, as the Zohar states, "Abba (the father - chochma) establishes brata (the daughter - malchut). However, the power of speech is rooted in keter, transcending the level of chochma."⁵¹⁹

In order for our consciousness to have the possibility of being elevated to a state of Shabbat, prior to the elevation it must be in a state that is not Shabbat. The six days of creation correspond to this prior state of not Shabbat in the same way that our consciousness during our six days of weekly work is not in the state of Shabbat. These six days of weekly work constitute part of our preparation for Shabbat. The money earned during the week permits us to not need to labor to earn money on Shabbat. Therefore, our weekly work is a requirement for our consciousness to have the ability to change to the consciousness of Shabbat on Shabbat. So although the Shabbat comes last, it is always first in deed.

Sanctuary of the King, city royal,

מִקְדָּשׁ מֶלֶךְ עִיר מְלוּכָה.

In this stanza, as in all the following, the poet addresses himself to the Holy City, Jerusalem, which personifies the Jewish people. He speaks of the restoration and glory of Jerusalem which will come with the final redemption of our people through our righteous Mashiach, as God had promised through His holy prophets.

The "Sanctuary of the King" (Mikdash Melech) -- Jerusalem -- is a title borrowed from the prophet Amos. It is also called "regal city" for the same reason, namely, because in it the presence of God, our Supreme King, was particularly felt, especially in the Bet Hamikdash, the very "heart" of the Holy City. Jerusalem was also the royal residence of the House of David, and will again be the residence of the Melech HaMashiach.⁵²⁰

Sanctuary of the King, city royal: This refers to Jerusalem, as in the verse in Amos 7:12. Although Jerusalem is also the royal capital, where the palace of King David and King Solomon were located, the sanctuary of the King referred to here is the Beit Hamikdash (the Holy Temple) in which the Shechina (Divine Presence) resides, as in the verse, "You shall make me a Sanctuary and I will dwell within it" (Ex. 25:8).⁵²¹

Arise, go out from amidst the turmoil.

קוּמִי צְאִי מִתּוֹךְ הַהִפְכָּה.

519. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_3.asp..

520. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 34-35.

521. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_4.asp.

Go out from amidst the turmoil: As in the verse regarding Lot, "When G-d destroyed the cities [of Sodom and Gomorrah] He sent Lot from amidst the turmoil" (Gen.19:29). Since Mashiach descended from Lot through Ruth the Moabite, this also alludes to the Messianic redemption of the future.⁵²²

The "upheaval" refers to the galut (exile), also called the valley of weeping.⁵²³ Many tears have we shed in the lands of our dispersion, in exile among hostile nations; tears not only of suffering, but also of longing for our homeland and for our reunion with the Divine Shechinah in the "Sanctuary of our King."⁵²⁴

This phrase also refers to the ascent of malchut from its involvement in the world during the workdays of the week. Since it is involved with mundane activities, it also comes into contact with the "Other Side," the opposite of holiness.⁵²⁵

As the Shabbat arrives, she merges into Oneness, and is separated from the side of unholiness, and all strict judgments are severed from her. She remains in unity with the holy light, and crowns herself with many crowns for the holy King. Then all powers of negativity and all adversaries flee from her and vanish, and no other power reigns in any of the worlds. (Zohar vol. II, 135 a-b).⁵²⁶

In the vale of tears too long you have dwelt, רב לך יְשֻׁבֶת בְּעֵמֶק הַבְּכָא.

The vale of tears: This is an allusion to the long and bitter exile that the Jewish people have suffered through since the destruction of the second Temple (see Psalms 84:7). The exile of the Jewish people is also the exile of the Shechina.⁵²⁷

עמק הבכה ("valley of weeping") also means "valley of confusion (or perplexity)," according to Rashi on Isaiah 9:17, being derived from the same root as nevuachim ("perplexed") in Exodus 14:3. Maimonides called his famous philosophical work "More Nevuachim" (Guide for the Perplexed).

Both meaning, "weeping" and "confusion," accurately describe our galut.

To understand more deeply the expressions used by our poet-Kabbalist, Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz, in this stanza, we have to refer to the Kabbalah concept of our world as three-dimensional. They call the three dimensions **עולם, שנה, נפש**, which freely translated mean space, time, and life. In each of them, God sep apart an especially holy and unique

522. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_4.asp.

523. Psalm 84:7..

524. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 35.

525. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_4.asp.

526. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_4.asp.

527. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_4.asp.

element; in time -- the Shabbat; in space -- the Holy Land, especially Jerusalem; and in life -- the Jewish people (by virtue of the Torah and Mitzvot).

Briefly, the term 'royalty' in the Kabbalah is generally understood also in the sense of "influence," just as a king rules by his influence, which extends from his royal person to each and every subject in his kingdom. It is in this sense that Shabbat is called "Queen," because its influence extends to each and every day of the week. Similarly, Jerusalem is called "Regal City" [Royal City] -- because its influence is felt in every corner of the world, and the Jewish people is called a "kingdom of priests" -- because of its spiritual influence on all humanity.

Each of the three -- Shabbat, Jerusalem, the people of Israel -- derives its royalty and holiness from the King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, our God and Creator, by reason of God's choice and appointment. It is just as a king chooses and appoints his ministers because of their special fitness for the particular service, and then bestows upon them special honor and power to rule in the king's name and by his authority.

In order of appearance, Shabbat came first, for it was the seventh day of creation that God made into a holy day of rest.

The holiness and royalty of the Jewish people was established when the Jewish people received the Torah and Mitzvot at Mount Sinai, seven weeks after their liberation from Egyptian bondage.

The Holy Land came forty years later, when the Jewish people took possession of the Promised Land, previously called the land of Canaan. Jerusalem became the Holy City when God chose it as the site for the Bet Hamikdash.

Thus the three chosen ones -- Shabbat, Jerusalem and the Jewish people -- became inseparably linked together. Shabbat without the Jewish people is as unthinkable as the Jewish people without Shabbat, and Jerusalem is as empty without Jews as the Jewish people would be empty without all that Jerusalem stands for.

However, in the present era of the galut, where darkness and confusion reign supreme, this unity is sometimes blurred, or even disrupted. This is why the poet calls the galut "upheaval" , a word first used in the Torah in connection with the upheaval of Sodom⁵²⁸ when Sodom and its three sister cities were turned upside down. Such is the upheaval of the galut that instead of honoring the Jewish people and feeling deeply grateful for all it has done for mankind through the ages, the nations of the world hate, despise and persecute the Jewish people, with not infrequent outbursts of horrible cruelty and inhumanity, and the worst enemy of the Jews can become the greatest hero and leader among the nations.

Moreover, such is the darkness and confusion of the galut that Jews, too, sometimes

528. *Genesis* 19:29.

find themselves quite perplexed, and act in a contrary manner. Some Jews try to copy non-Jews in every way: they do not realize that by neglecting the Jewish way of life, the way of Torah and Mitzvot, they turn their life upside down. Even some who have faith in God, can yet do things that are contrary to God's Will, like the thief who hopes to make a successful burglary "with the help of God."⁵²⁹

In all this confusion and darkness of the galut, a Jew has only to turn to the Torah and Mitzvot to light up his path, as it is written, "A Mitzvah is a lamp, and the Torah is light."⁵³⁰ Shabbat is particularly effective in dispelling the darkness and confusion of the galut, as this is symbolized also by the lighting of the Shabbat candles. This meaningful and great Mitzvah, which is the personal privilege of the Jewish mother and daughter, truly lights up the Jewish home and life. But Shabbat observance goes even further than that. Not only does it help sweep away the darkness of the galut, but also the Galut itself. Thus, our Sages declared, "if the entire Jewish people would only observe two Shabbatot properly, they would immediately be redeemed."⁵³¹ Then with the appearance of our Righteous Redeemer, all the Jewish exiles will be gathered into the Holy Land, and the Bet Hamikdash will be rebuilt on its former site in Jerusalem. The unity of the three "dimensions" -- Shabbat, Jerusalem and the Jewish people -- will then be restored and fully realized in actual life. This will bring about the perfect worlds, what our Sages call "a world which is all Shabbat"⁵³² -- the ultimate fulfillment of Creation.⁵³³

He will show

You [the] compassion [He always felt].

וְהוּא יַחֲמוּל
עַלְיָדָּךְ חֶמְלָה:

He will show you the compassion He felt: G-d's compassion for His people is ever-present, albeit concealed at times, as the verse states, "In all of their anguish, He suffers" (Isaiah 63:9). In the future, this compassion will be fully revealed.⁵³⁴

We may wonder, what is this verse of going forth from the ruins and dwelling so long in the valley of tears have to do with Shabbat, the day of delight. When our consciousness is not in the state of Shabbat, and is concerned with all the serious things that we have to be involved in and take care in the world of the weekday, we can easily lose consciousness of God. Things go wrong. Things happen that we do not expect and do not want to happen. Things happen that are not for us or at least that do not have the appearance of being for us. In these times of darkness, we are wretched, so wretched that it may not even come into our

529. *Berachot* 63a.

530. *Proverbs* 6:29.

531. *Shabbat* 188b.

532. *Mishnah*, end of Talmud.

533. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 35-38.

534. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_4.asp.

minds to seek the presence of God in our ruins. But God is present and if we move our consciousness to that presence, we will have a sense of God's compassion to us.

Arise, now, shake off the dust,

הַתְּנַעֲרִי מֵעָפָר קוּמִי.

Addressing himself to Jerusalem as a symbol of the Jewish people, the poet calls upon it to, in the words of our prophet Isaiah, "Shake off the dust and get up,"⁵³⁵ as one would to a person who has fallen or has been humbled to the dust. It is a figure of speech indicating a complete recovery from a humiliating situation -- in this case, the destruction of Jerusalem and the humiliating exile of the Jewish people.⁵³⁶

Arise, shake off the dust: This is as in the verse in Isaiah 52:2. This is, like previous verses in Lecha Dodi, addressed to malchut - instructing her to rise up even higher and free herself from all the restraints encumbering her, so that she can be elevated to her original source in keter.⁵³⁷

These restraints are her involvement in the mundane world; in addition, even the limits imposed upon the world of Beriya, are referred to here as "dust" by comparison with the abundant light of the world of Atzilut. Alternatively, this is addressed to the soul, which must shake itself free from the element of earth, the source of laziness and depression, in order to begin to shine.⁵³⁸

Don your robes of glory

לְבָשִׁי בְּגֵדֵי תְּפָאֲרֹתַיִךְ

My people - you must.

עַמִּי:

In a deeper sense, the poet may be speaking not only of the physical restoration of Jerusalem, but also of the spiritual recovery of the Jewish people. For, when the Jews were dispersed in exile among heathen and otherwise morally backward peoples, it was inevitable that some Jews would pick up un-Jewish traits and habits. This is the "dust" of the galut that clings to some Jews, trying slavishly to imitate their non-Jewish neighbors. Sometimes this layer of dust is so heavy that one can hardly recognize the Jew beneath it. Yet, it is only a superficial layer, which can only hide, but not extinguish, the Jewish spark that always remains alive in a Jew. All that is therefore necessary is to shake off this "dust," and the real person, the real Jew, emerges and reveals himself in all his glory. This is also the meaning of the poet's call, again in the words of Isaiah: "Put on your clothes of glory, O my people," In other words, be my people, be your old self again!

535. *Isaiah 52:2.*

536. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 38.

537. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_5.asp.

538. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_5.asp.

What are the Jew's "clothes of glory?" These are the Mitzvot which the Jew performs in his everyday life. As has been mentioned before, the study of the Torah nourishes the soul, while the performance of its Mitzvot "clothes" the soul.⁵³⁹

Commitment to the Torah and Mitzvot is a necessary preparation for the coming of Mashiach, who will be a descendant of David the son of Yishai of Bet Lechem. This prompts the poet to utter a short prayer to God: "Come close to my soul, redeem it," Thus the geula (redemption) that Mashiach will bring will be complete, both the the Jewish people as a whole, and for each and every Jew individually.

Don your robes of glory: This refers to the city of Jerusalem, expressing the prayer that Jerusalem will don its clothes of glory - the Jewish people. In a deeper sense, it refers to the encompassing lights (orot makifim) of Atzilut that illuminate malchut by virtue of the mitzvot the Jewish people perform. Mitzvot are called "garments" or "robes" because they envelop the soul, allowing it to experience the spiritual delight of the Garden of Eden.⁵⁴⁰

Through the son of Yishai, the Bethlemite, עַל יַד בֶּן יִשָּׂי בֵּית הַלְּחֶמִי.

The son of Yishai, the Bethlemite: The obvious allusion is to King David. But it also refers to Mashiach, who is a descendant of King David.⁵⁴¹

Draw near to my soul, קָרְבָה אֶל נַפְשִׁי
Set her free [from her plight]. גְּאֻלָּהּ:

Commitment to the Torah and Mitzvot is a necessary preparation for the coming of Mashiach, who will be a descendant of David the son of Yishai of Bet Lechem. This prompts the poet to utter a short prayer to God: "Come close to my soul, redeem it," Thus the geula (redemption) that Mashiach will bring will be complete, both the the Jewish people as a whole, and for each and every Jew individually.⁵⁴²

Draw near to my soul, set her free: This is as in Psalms 69:19. This may be interpreted in two ways: 1) as an exhortation to G-d to set our souls free with the final redemption, as we have rendered it here - or 2) as if the redemption has already come with the advent of the Shabbat, which is compared to the Redemption. (The stanza would then be translated: "You have drawn near to my soul; You have set her free).⁵⁴³

539. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 38-39.

540. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_5.asp.

541. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_5.asp.

542. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 39.

543. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_5.asp.

This verse is a continuation of the previous verse. If we have to shake off the dust, our situation is static. We are not moving. The earthly dust comes along and settles on top of us. Moving, here has to do with consciousness. It means a moving of our consciousness, a changing of our consciousness. If our consciousness is not moving toward God consciousness, it is static. If we are static in consciousness, our reality will be static, without life. It will be dark. When we realize that we have dust on ourselves, we must shake it off. We must change our clothes. We must put on our royal garments, showing our connection to God. When we do that, we move our consciousness toward the consciousness of the Messianic Era. By doing so, we can reveal one piece of our part in the Messianic Era. In this context, our soul is set free as she connects to God.

Wake up, wake up,

הַתְּעוֹרְרִי הַתְּעוֹרְרִי.

Wake up, wake up: As in the verse Isaiah 51:16. This is process of spiritual awakening is referred to in Kabbalah as haalat mayin nukvin (ma'n), literally, "arousing the female waters."⁵⁴⁴

This rousing call to an awakening and an exciting welcome of the geula, which the poet presses here so vividly, has the familiar ring of Isaiah's geula prophecies.⁵⁴⁵

Echoing the words of the prophet, the poet calls upon the Jewish people to wake up from its sleep, the galut. The use of "sleep" as a metaphor for the exile is meaningful in many ways. Sleep is a state of suspended animation. While a person sleeps, he is unconscious of what is happening around him. His mind is asleep, as is his ability to understand and reason. With his rational faculties at rest, imagination takes over, giving rise to dreams and fancies.

But, one will ask, if there are such beastly nations and individuals who are capable of such atrocities towards a defenseless minority in their midst, why did not God protect the Jews? The answer is that God's protection of the Jewish people is inseparable from the Jew's adherence to the Torah and Mitzvot. The Torah and Mitzvot are the Divine protective shield for Jews against their enemies. When Jewish adherence to Torah and Mitzvot weakens, this shield weakens and wears thin. This happens when, under the influence of the long galut-night, some Jews become drowsy, or "fall asleep," in matters of Torah and Mitzvot.

And so the poet calls upon the Jewish people to wake up from its sleep, since the night of the galut is about over, and the dawn of the geula is about to break through the gloom.⁵⁴⁶

Your light has come, rise and shine.

כִּי בָּא אֹרֶךְ קוֹמִי אֲוִרִי.

544. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_6.asp.

545. *Isaiah* 51:17, 52:1, 60:1.

546. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 39-40.

Your light has come, rise and shine: As in the verse Isaiah 60:1. "Your light has come" refers to the light of the soul; "rise and shine" signifies the soul's task to illuminate the body (it was for precisely this purpose that the soul was brought down from its lofty perch). The fulfillment of this task serves as a preparation for an even greater revelation of light - the light of the final redemption. The entire concept is particularly significant on Shabbat eve, when every Jew receives an additional soul, and thus an additional measure of light, for the duration of the Shabbat.⁵⁴⁷

Awaken, awaken; sing a melody,

עוֹרֵי עוֹרֵי שִׁיר דְּבָרֵי.

Sing a melody: See Judges 5:12. Song is an expression of the soul's delight and has the power to elicit an even greater measure of revelation from above. Hence, "the glory of G-d will be revealed upon thee," face-to-face, so to speak.⁵⁴⁸

It is time to wake up and sing the song of the geula just as Mosheh Rabbeinu and the children of Israel sang the song of salvation after their liberation from the Egyptian galut.⁵⁴⁹

The glory of God will be revealed upon thee.

כְּבוֹד יְיָ עָלֶיךָ נִגְלָה:

The entire stanza is a paraphrase of Isaiah's prophecies, particularly the verse,⁵⁵⁰

*Arise, shine forth, for your light is come, and the glory of God has shone upon you.*⁵⁵¹

This is the third verse dealing with our consciousness being with ruins, tears and dust. We are being told to arouse and waken our consciousness, for the time of arousal is now, the present. When our consciousness has awakened and is in the state of God consciousness, we will see light, not darkness. We will sing for the presence of God will be in us. If we do not do this during the week, what better time to do it than in our transition to Shabbat?

Jeanette Bland interprets this verse which begins with התעוררי התעוררי as follows:

Collectively now the time has come to see great light and to also shine as does this light. This light is personal. It approaches immediately. Be ready for it. Not only get up for this light, but also wake up for it. Shine like the light itself. Sing. Now death consumes the dust of indecision. Light shines from within and from without.

547. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_6.asp.

548. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_6.asp.

549. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 40.

550. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 40.

551. Isaiah 60:1.

The light is everywhere.⁵⁵²

Be not ashamed, nor confounded,

לֹא תִבּוֹשׁוּ וְלֹא תִכְלָמוּ.

Continuing the theme of the final redemption, the poet assures the Jewish people that they shall never be ashamed or disgraced again. This, too, is a paraphrase of the words of the prophet Isaiah:

*Fear not, for you shall not be ashamed.*⁵⁵³

The nature of this fear is that in past redemptions -- from Egypt and from the Babylonian exile -- painful reverses were later suffered by our people. The redemptions were not everlasting for, after the geula from Egypt, there was the exile into Babylon, and after the return from Babylon, Jerusalem was destroyed a second time, and there was exile and dispersion, the long and bitter galut which is still upon us. But after the next geula, being the final and complete redemption, the poet assures us, there will never again be any disappointment, or any fear of being put to shame and disgrace again.

Why are you downcast, why astounded?

מַה תִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶי וּמַה תִּהְיֶמָּה.

There is no reason, therefore, to be “cast down” and “disquieted” -- a phrase borrowed from Psalm 41:12.⁵⁵⁴

Why are you downcast: Malchut is reduced to a state of spiritual immaturity (katnut) in order to enliven the lowly levels of Beriya, Yetzira, and Asiya.

Be not ashamed, nor confounded: As in the verse Isaiah 54:4. The author again addresses malchut, synonymous with the Jewish people, telling it not to be ashamed of, or confused by, the darkness and gloom of kelipat noga into which it has descended in order to elevate the embedded sparks of holiness.⁵⁵⁵

In you, refuge for My poor people will be found,

בְּךָ יִחְסוּ עַנְיֵי עַמִּי,

According to Rashi, “the poor of His people” include also the ten tribes (who had been exiled by Shalmaneser of Assyria some 133 years before the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon).⁵⁵⁶

552. Jeanette Bland, *Kabbalistic and Depth Psychological Motifs In Lecha Dodi: A Hermeneutical Analysis of a Jewish Poem*. Doctoral Dissertation, Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2014, UMI 3628547, p.82.

553. *Isaiah 54:4*.

554. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 41.

555. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_7.asp.

556. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 41-42.

In you, refuge ... will be found: Since your source is preeminent in G-d's Will (the level of keter), as explained previously.⁵⁵⁷

The city will be rebuilt on its former mound.

וְנִבְנְתָה עִיר עַל תְּלָהּ:

This is the fourth verse dealing with dust, and ruins. It adds the terms being downcast, agitated and confused. When our consciousness is without a hint of God, the picture of reality that our conscious creates causes us to be downcast, agitated and confused. That happens because the reality picture in our consciousness confronts us with change that we do not want and which we regard as not for us. The way to change that consciousness is to transcend it. We do that with our recognition and connection to God. The city that will be rebuilt on the one hand is Jerusalem, the city of complete awe, peace and completeness. On the other hand, the city that will be rebuilt is the city inside of our consciousness. When we lose God consciousness, the consciousness of awe, peace, and completeness evaporates. When that happens we have to transcend where we are to rebuild the city on its former mound.

The last line of the stanza is taken from Yirmiyahu:⁵⁵⁸

Thus says God: Behold, I will bring back the captivity of Jacob's tents and have mercy upon his dwelling places, and the City shall be rebuilt on its mount⁵⁵⁹ and the Palace⁵⁶⁰ shall be restored as of old.⁵⁶¹

Addressing himself to Jerusalem, the poet assures the Holy City that it will again be a safe and trustworthy haven for Jews returning to it from all parts of the world. This line (the third of the stanza) is also taken from Isaiah, which reads,

God has founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust (i.e. find safe have) in it.⁵⁶²

May your plunderers be treated the same way,

וְהָיוּ לְמִשְׁפָּה שְׂאֵסִיךְ

And all who would devour you be kept at bay.

וְרָחֲקוּ כָּל מְבַלְעֵיךְ.

This stanza, too, like the others, is constructed of quotations from the prophets Isaiah and Yirmiyahu.

557. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi_Stanza_7.asp.

558. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 42.

559. On its former site.

560. The Bet Hamikdash.

561. *Jeremiah* 30:18.

562. *Isaiah* 14:32.

Yirmiyahu declares:

*They that spoil (plunder) you shall be a spoil, and all that plunder you I will put to plunder.*⁵⁶³

Isaiah, addressing himself to Zion (Jerusalem), declares:

*Your ruins and your desolate places, and your destroyed land, shall now become crowded with inhabitants, and all your destroyers shall be far away.*⁵⁶⁴

Jerusalem had been destroyed and plundered many times, and the Holy Land had been laid waste. But God assured us, through His holy prophets, that not only will Jerusalem be rebuilt on its former site, but that all the waste and desolate cities and villages of our land will be rebuilt and, indeed, will become more crowded than ever before by Jews returning to their homeland from all corners of the earth.⁵⁶⁵

Over you Your G-d will rejoice,

יְשִׁישׁ עָלֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ.

As a groom exults in his bride [of choice].

כְּמִשׁוֹשׁ חַתָּן עַל כַּלָּה:

These are taken from Isaiah, where the prophet describes the joy of the Jews' return to their land, and of the new attachment between God and His people as the joy of a bride and bridegroom.⁵⁶⁶ The famed commentator Rabbi David Kimchi (Radak) makes a penetrating observation of this analogy. He says that just as a bridegroom and bride are most faithful to each other, to the exclusion of anyone else, so the land of Israel, when it was laid waste by other nations, never accepted other inhabitants, and remained waste and desolate for many centuries. Only the Jewish people, its true children, are welcomed by it, and to Jews alone does the land readily respond, rejoicing with them like a bride and bridegroom that belong to each other.⁵⁶⁷

As a groom exults in the bride: Groom and bride allude to Zeir Anpin and malchut. At present, malchut receives her light from Zeir Anpin, just as the moon receives its light from the sun. But in the future Zeir Anpin will receive from malchut. This will be achieved by virtue of the mitzvot performed by the Jewish people, who are the expression of malchut in this world. This is the meaning of "as a groom exults in the bride."⁵⁶⁸

From the point of view of consciousness, those who despoil you are the values, beliefs, and habits we have that let us dwell in a consciousness that is devoid of God. Fix those beliefs,

563. *Jeremiah* 30:18.

564. *Isaiah* 49:19.

565. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 42.

566. *Isaiah* 62:5.

567. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 43.

568. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_8.asp.

values, and habits by transcending and we will discover that God rejoices over us the same way that a bridegroom rejoices over his bride.

To right and left you'll spread abroad, יְמִין וְיְשְׁמַאל תִּפְרוּצִי.

To right and left you'll spread abroad: During the six days of the week malchut receives from netzach and hod of Zeir Anpin. On Shabbat malchut breaks through her limitations and receives directly from the right and left - from chesed and gevura. Alternatively, this refers to the rectification of Paran (Ishmael), the chesed of the kelipa - and Seir (Esau), the gevura of the kelipa in the future.⁵⁶⁹

And the Eternal One you shall laud. וְאֶת־יְיָ תַעֲרִיצִי.

Like the previous stanzas, this too consists of fragments from the geula prophecies of Isaiah. The first line is taken from Isaiah which reads:

*For you shall spread forth to the right hand and to the left, and your seed shall inherit nations, and shall inhabit (hitherto) desolate cities.*⁵⁷⁰

The poet assures us in the words of the prophet that when the time of the Geula comes, the Jewish people will break through the constraints and blockades set up by our enemies on the right and on the left, and so great will be the miraculous victory that it will call forth a spirit of reverence for God.⁵⁷¹

To right and left you'll spread abroad: As in Isaiah 54:3. The word **תפרוצי** has the connotation of bursting forth, rather than merely spreading out. It derives from the same root as the name Peretz, the son of Judah, who "burst forth" from the womb of his mother (see Gen. 38:29). The Talmud (Shabbat 118a) remarks that this signifies the limitless inheritance that we will receive in the future by virtue of Jacob, who embodies the attribute of tiferet. Tiferet unites chesed and gevura, referred to as right and left in kabbalah.⁵⁷²

At present all holiness is nourished by the right column only, whereas unholiness sucks energy from the left column. In the future, however, through the Divine service represented by Jacob and his attribute of tiferet, the left column will also nourish holiness. Thus, the inheritance will be unlimited, since it will not be constricted by gevura. This is also why G-d's promises specifically Jacob, "You shall

569. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_9asp.

570. *Isaiah* 54:3.

571. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 43.

572. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_9.asp.

burst forth to west and to the east, to north and to the south" (Gen. 28:14).⁵⁷³

Through the man from Peretz's family,

עַל יַד אִישׁ בֶּן פֶּרֶצִי.

The man from Peretz's family: This refers to Mashiach, who descends from the tribe of Judah through Judah's son Peretz. Mashiach is also referred to as "haporetz" (Micah 2:13) - one who breaks through.⁵⁷⁴

The redeemer -- Mashiach -- is here referred to as "an offspring of Peretz." Peretz and Zerach were twin sons of Yehuda, Jacob's leading son, whom Jacob blessed to be like a lion, the symbol of royalty. The Torah tells us that Peretz "broke through" (this is why he was called Peretz) and was born first.⁵⁷⁵ The poet gives us here a beautiful play on words -- תַּעֲרִיצִי (you shall spread forth, literally break through) and בֶּן פֶּרֶצִי (offspring of Peretz). King David, the son of Yishai, was a descendant of Peretz, as the line of descent is given at the end of the Book of Ruth, and Mashiach will be a descendant of the Royal House of David. The expression בֶּן פֶּרֶצִי in reference to Mashiach is already found in the Midrash Bereishit Rabbah 12:5.⁵⁷⁶

We shall rejoice and sing happily.

וְנִשְׂמְחָה וְנִגְיָלָה:

We shall rejoice and be glad is also a part of a well-known verse:⁵⁷⁷

*And it shall be said on that day, behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him and He will save us; this is our Lord for whom we have waited, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.*⁵⁷⁸

We shall rejoice and sing happily: Joy and happiness is not only the result or celebration of redemption. Rather it is the joy itself that breaks through the boundaries of limitation and exile.⁵⁷⁹

Come in peace,

בְּאוֹי בְּשָׁלוֹם

The word בְּשָׁלוֹם, in peace, can also, and perhaps even better, be rendered "with peace," and this would be more in keeping with the words in the second line ("also with joyous song," etc). Shabbat brings peace, our Sages say -- peace in the upper

573. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_9.asp.

574. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_9.asp.

575. Genesis 38:29.

576. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 44.

577. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 44.

578. *Isaiah* 25:9.

579. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_9.asp.

worlds as well as peace in this (lowest) world of ours. It brings a holy, blissful peace, as well as peace of mind, such as cannot be felt in the mundane days of the week. This is why the Shabbat is also referred to as the “tabernacle of peace” , **סכת שלום**.⁵⁸⁰

Come in peace: It is while reciting this stanza specifically that a person receives the additional soul given to every Jew on the Shabbat, as mentioned above. This should be one's intention when reciting this stanza. Accordingly, it should be said with tremendous joy.⁵⁸¹

Crown of the Master,

עֵטֶרֶת בְּעֵלְהָ.

A good Jewish wife is also called in Scripture the “crown of her husband,” as it is written, “A woman of worth is the crown of her husband.” But so great is the devotion and love of the Jewish people for the Shabbat that we continue to call her endearingly “Bride,” as if we had just “married” her.⁵⁸²

According to a further interpretation (in the Zohar and Kabbalah), this “welcome” is extended also to the Shechinah, the Divine essence, which accompanies the Shabbat, for the Shechinah and the Jewish people are also called bride and groom. This is a particularly meaningful thought, since with the coming of Shabbat every Jew receives a neshamah yeteirah, an extra soul” an extra measure of Godliness and holiness. The special Shabbat soul dwells in us for the duration of the Shabbat, and departs at havdalah, with the departure of the Shabbat. It enables us to absorb the extra measure of holiness that comes to each of us with the holy Shabbat.⁵⁸³

Crown of pride: This is the Shabbat, which is a source of pride to the Holy One, Blessed be He, as the Talmud (Shabbat 10b) states, "A wonderful gift I have in My treasure-house, and Shabbat is its name."

The Master is Hashem. The crown of the Master is Malchut, our physical reality. Come with **בְּשָׁלוֹם** is typically translated as Come with Peace. But **שָׁלוֹם** means more than peace. It also means completeness. We must let our physical reality come with peace and completeness.

How physical reality comes is up to us. Physical reality is the crown of Hashem. It is the place where Hashem is revealed and the place that Hashem is concealed. Revealed or concealed is dependent on how we receive it. If we receive it in its peace and completeness, we will discover that physical reality reveals the glory of God. If we do not receive it in its completeness, we will discover that physical reality conceals the glory of God.

580. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 45.

581. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_10.asp.

582. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 45.

583. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 45.

Where does the revealment or concealment take place? It takes place in our consciousness. If our intent is to receive physical reality in its completeness, then our consciousness will become aware of the glory of God. If our intent is not to receive physical reality in its completeness, then our consciousness will become aware of the concealment of the glory of God.

Physical reality means all earth, plants, animals, and people that come into our circle. Physical reality means all the situations that involve us. Physical reality means all the words and deeds that others do that involve us. For with respect to us, each is part of physical reality.

Physical reality is the messenger of Hashem. Whether physical reality has the appearance of good or bad as the culture might interpret it, it always carries the song of Hashem. Our thoughts, speech, and action become the song we sing back to Hashem. When our intent is to receive physical reality in its completeness, then the song we sing back to Hashem resonates with the song Hashem is singing to us. The resonating songs intertwine and become one unity. We find ourselves drawn to Hashem. There is unification, fullness, joy, and happiness. Indeed, when we do receive physical reality with completeness, what happens is told in the next part of the verse

Also with rejoicing

גַּם בְּשִׂמְחָה

we become filled with both happiness and exultation.

With rejoicing: Some have the custom to say "with rejoicing" on Shabbat as well, instead of "with song." However, Siddur HaArizal states that one should say "with rejoicing" only on Festival days.

And good cheer,

וּבְצִהְלָה.

When our intent is not to receive physical reality in its completeness, we push part of it away from us. So we become incomplete. And the song we sing back to Hashem becomes dissonant and incomplete, missing its leg or arm or missing its heart or brain. The songs do not resonate. The intertwining is incomplete. There is deformation, even destruction.

Kabbalistically, to us physical reality is feminine. But Kabbalistically, our receiving of physical reality is also feminine. Grammatically **בִּיאִי** is an imperative form spoken to a female. So there is a double interpretation. We call on the Crown of Hashem to come to us so that we can receive it. And we call upon ourselves to fully receive that Crown.

There is yet another level of interpretation. Our Wife or Husband, is part of our reality.

Thus they are also the Crown of Hashem. When they come to us and we come to them, we must come in peace and completeness. For this is love. This is the unification of loving.

At the deepest level, we must remember that Shalom, **שְׁלוֹם** is a name of Hashem. Come with Shalom, then means come with your connection to Hashem. Come with the part of God that is in you. I will come with the part of God that is in me. Then everything becomes filled with Hashem. Everything becomes filled with Hashem.

Among the faithful of the people so dear **תּוֹדָתְךָ אֱמוּנֵי עַם סִגְלָהּ.**

Thus both the Shabbat and the Shechinah are welcomed into the midst of the treasured people **עַם סִגְלָהּ**. This is the designation that God gave our Jewish people when we accepted the Torah.⁵⁸⁴ Mosheh Rabbeinu reminded the people again when he took leave of them:

*For you are a holy nation unto God your God; it is you that God your God chose to be unto Him a **עַם סִגְלָהּ** treasured people from among all the nations on the face of the earth.*⁵⁸⁵

Here the Torah clearly states the nature of our “chosenness” -- not for power, not for riches, not for dominion over other nations, but to be a holy nation, to lead a holy life in the service of God in every detail of our daily life.⁵⁸⁶

Enter O Bride, enter O Bride; **בּוֹאֵי כְלָהּ, בּוֹאֵי כְלָהּ:**

It is customary when saying, **בּוֹאֵי כְלָהּ בּוֹאֵי כְלָהּ** to bow to the left and again to the right, as if bowing in reverence to a royal person.⁵⁸⁷

Enter O Bride, enter O Bride: As one says the words "enter O Bride" one should have the intention (kavana) that at this point one receives the additional Shabbat soul.⁵⁸⁸

"Enter O Bride" under the wedding canopy; "enter O Bride" to the home of her husband, the Jewish people. Some have the custom to repeat the phrase "enter O Bride" three times. According to the Talmud (Bava Kama 32b) and Tikunei Zohar, Tikun 24, it should only be said twice. However, Shaar HaKavanot and Pri Etz Chaim state that it should be said a third time quietly (adding the words "Shabbat Queen"). The reason for whispering the final phrase is because it corresponds to the sefira of daat, which is generally not counted among the ten sefirot, whereas "enter

584. Exodus 19:5.

585. Deuteronomy 7:6.

586. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 45-46.

587. Nissan Mindel, *My Prayer Vol 2*, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc, New York 1989, p. 46.

588. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_10.asp.

O Bride" recited twice correspond to chochma and bina.⁵⁸⁹

May the Sabbath, then, thus enter into our midst and find harmonious response in every heart and spirit; may it be welcomed as the crowning glory of the nation that is wed to it. And even as we delight in the Sabbath, so may the Sabbath, too, have cause to rejoice in us, and may it find a secure place in the midst of God's own chosen nation. While chanting these words, the congregation turns to the west, to the door of the House of God, as if to give reverent welcome to a beloved guest that is about to enter, and bows westward as it says **בוי כלה בוי כלה**. But immediately thereafter the worshippers turn eastward once again and bow in the direction of the Holy Ark.⁵⁹⁰

When the Shabbat, synonymous here with the Shechina, first begins to enter, it is referred to as "the bride". At this point, when the Shechina enters under the bridal canopy and becomes "married" to the Jewish people, who are compared to a king, she is called the "Shabbat Queen".⁵⁹¹

589. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_10.asp.

590. Elie Munk, *The World of Prayer Vol 2*, Feldheim Publishers, New York, 1963, p. 7.

591. Moshe Miller, www.kabbalaonline.org/Meditations/shabbatprayers/Lecha_Dodi;_Stanza_10.asp.

Psalm 92

On the seventh day of the first week of creation, on the Sabbath, Adam surveyed God's completed work and he was stirred to sing of the marvelous perfection which his eyes beheld. Similarly, when the panorama of human history is completed, the seventh millennium will be ushered in as the **יום שכולו שבת**, the day of everlasting Sabbath. At that time all Adam's descendants will look back and admire God's completed masterpiece.⁵⁹²

Moses⁵⁹³ dedicated this psalm [the third in the series of eleven] to the tribe of **יהודה**, Judah. Judah had been named by his mother, Leah, for she said: *This time let me gratefully thank Hashem.*⁵⁹⁴

Psalm 92 and its continuation Psalm 93 conclude the ceremony of welcome for the Sabbath. Psalm 92, expressly written for the Sabbath Day, is not a song of praise of the works of God as shown in the process of Creation which culminated in the Sabbath. Instead, it proclaims the might of the Lord as revealed in His sovereignty, of which the Sabbath has been appointed the hallowed bearer and instrument, a reign which has extended from Creation down to the present day and which will endure throughout future generations, training and guiding mankind forever. Thus, from the vantage point of the Sabbath of Creation, this psalm looks to that Universal, world-wide Sabbath when, by virtue of the downfall of evil and the rise and growth of all that is good, the Sabbath will have attained its original purpose.⁵⁹⁵

Psalm 92 is dedicated to that institution which is to accompany Israel in all its wanderings through the ages like a spiritual Well of Miriam from which Israel would ever draw in deep draughts that perception and that serene trust and peace of mind which it needs in order to discharge its mission. This institution is none other than the **שבת**, "the most precious pearls," as our Sages put it, which was given to Moses to bring to his people from God and whose message Moses now puts into words in order to impart it to the hearts and minds of his people.⁵⁹⁶

Although this psalm is identified as belonging particularly to the theme of the Sabbath -- indeed, it was the Levite's song for the Sabbath Temple service -- the text contains not a single direct reference to the Sabbath. What is the connection? Many explanations are given. Among them are the explanations of Rashi.

Rashi explains that his psalm refers not to the weekly Sabbath, but to the World to Come, when man will achieve the spiritual perfection we only glimpse during the

592. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1145.

593. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1147.

594. *Genesis* 29:35.

595. Elie Munk, *The World of Prayer Vol 2*, Feldheim Publishers, New York, 1963, p. 8.

596. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 152.

Sabbath. The psalm is thus well suited to the Sabbath which is a semblance of that future spiritual perfection.⁵⁹⁷

The psalm speaks about divine supervision in this world. Although everything appears to follow the pattern of nature, nevertheless, the eye of intellect perceives divine supervision. It sees that the wicked are punished and the righteous are rewarded, notwithstanding that God has concealed His supervision in order to preserve man's freedom of choice. This is related to the Sabbath day. For the Sabbath attests to the providential pattern and the world is not subject to chance.⁵⁹⁸

A psalm, A song; for the sabbath day

מְזִמּוֹר שִׁיר לְיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת:

Psalm 92, with its basic theme, the supremacy of God which is demonstrated anew with every Sabbath day, sings of the victory of the righteous which will endure beyond all else. Therefore the Sages state that this **מְזִמּוֹר שִׁיר לְיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת** looks toward the perfect Sabbath of the future, **לְיוֹם שְׂכֵלו שַׁבָּת**. Even as the first Sabbath day marked the completion of physical Creation, so that “perfect Sabbath of mankind” shall mark the time when the moral moulding of man shall have reached its goal of perfection. It will signify the culmination of a process which had only begun with the first Sabbath of Creation, and which was served and advanced by the institution of the Sabbath. Thus the “Sabbath of Creation” has as its purpose and goal the attainment of the “perfect Sabbath of mankind.”⁵⁹⁹

The Pesikta notes that the initial letters of these four words form [can be rearranged to form] **לְמִשָּׁה**, by Moses, for this is the third of the eleven psalms which he composed. ... Many other sources attribute this psalm to Adam. Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer reconciles both opinions; he maintains that after Adam composed the psalm, it was forgotten for many generations, until Moses rediscovered it.⁶⁰⁰

There are those who ascribe this hymn to Adam, who would have died right after he sinned if the Sabbath, which was about to make its entrance, had not intervened on his behalf, (before he could do teshuvah) as is explained in Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer chapter 19. The Sabbath pointed out to God that no creature had died, i.e. been killed during the 6 days of creation, and it did not want to be the first day on which death as retribution occurred. Adam was saved from gehinnom, purgatory due to this intervention. He immediately composed this hymn as a response.⁶⁰¹

In Genesis we read:

597. Menachem Davis (ed.), *The Book of Psalms*, Mesorah Publications Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 261.

598. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 28.

599. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 160.

600. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1146.

601. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 702-703.

*They heard the voice of the Lord walking in the garden, by the spirit of the day.*⁶⁰²

This is understood to mean that the voice of God's mercy came to urge Adam to accept his punishment so that he would not have to die immediately. **רוח היום**, [spirit of the day] in this instance refers to the sanctity of the Sabbath which began to extend its influence on the remainder of the 6th day. Adam therefore owed a dept of gratitude to the Sabbath and to God who had accepted the advocacy of the Sabbath on Adam's behalf. Adam's survival became possible through God withdrawing to the first of the 7 celestial regions. (Alshich on the Torah). Adam therefore thanked both the Sabbath and God. So as not to appear ungrateful, he introduced the hymn by saying "I have to acknowledge my debt to the Sabbath, by dedicating this hymn; at the same time I must thank God who granted me life, enabling me to thank Him, since one cannot thank God from the grave."⁶⁰³

The word **שבת** can be related to **שב**, to return or repent, and the letters of **השבת** can be re-arranged to form the word **תשובה**, repentance. Sabbath is the day for introspection and improvement.⁶⁰⁴

It is good to praise Hashem

And to sing hymns to your name, O Most High

טוב להודות לַיְיָ
וּלְזַמֵּר לְשִׁמְךָ עֲלֵינוּ:

להודות is to "pay homage," to make manifest the manner in which we recognize and conceive of the relationship of God to us and ours to Him. The Sabbath is one demonstration of such homage to the Lord. Every **יום שבת** represents a twenty-four hour period of tribute which we pay God by actually laying our very selves and our world at His feet. He Whose supremacy above all things was made known through the homage rendered Him by the institution of the Sabbath, at the same time revealed Himself to us, through the knowledge thus given us of His wishes and of His providence, as the One Who is ever near, indeed, as the One Who is ever nearest of all. His rule and His will speak to us through each phenomenon of nature and through every event of history, and within man's spirit and through his emotions they are shaped into joyous inspired song.

This solemnity of the homage **להודות** which we render Him **ולומר** [and to sing hymns] and this godly emotion which the **יום השבת** imparts to us are **טוב** "good." They constitute that "good" which is worthy of man's effort and after which he must strive. To attain this great "good" through a week spent in tireless toil, but also in

602. *Genesis* 3:8.

603. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 703.

604. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1154.

the faithful execution of our duty throughout, is well worth the effort.⁶⁰⁵

It is particularly good to thank Hashem on the Sabbath. Throughout the week man is preoccupied with mundane pursuits which prevent him from concentrating on God's wonders. But on the day of rest, man's soul is liberated from its weekday shackles. Cleansed and purified, it can meditate upon the wonders of God's providence and His system of reward and punishment (Radak; Meiri; Rashbam).⁶⁰⁶

The word **להדות** may also be translated "to confess." When Adam repented his sin, he composed this psalm to teach all future generations that it is good to confess to Hashem in order to achieve atonement and to be saved from Gehinnom (Midrash Shocher Tov; Pirkei D' Rabbi Eliezer).⁶⁰⁷

To proclaim Your lovingkindness in the morning,

להגיד בַּבֶּקֶר חֶסְדְּךָ

He [Adam] must not tarry in thanking God, but do so in the morning, for he did not know whether he would still be alive by evening, since God had said "on the day you eat from it you will die." Once he had seen that he did not die at the onset of night, he considered the possibility of the word "day" having meant a 24 hour period (which would not be complete until the morning of the seventh day). If he would still be alive by morning he would give thanks and proclaim God's kindness.⁶⁰⁸

Adam sinned late in the afternoon of the sixth day. Suddenly he noticed the sun sinking beneath the horizon. He cried out bitterly. "Woe unto me! Because I sinned, God is plunging the world into eternal gloom!" The following morning (on the Sabbath), as Adam saw the light rising over the horizon, he was filled with tremendous joy, and gratefully offered sacrifices to God. Legions of ministering angels descended and sang songs of praise to the Sabbath, emphasizing man's obligation to relate to Your kindness in the morning, i.e., for the sun which arose at dawn and illuminated the terrifying darkness of night. Adam survived only because he was sustained by God's faithfulness which brought him from darkness to light (Avos D' Rabbai Nassan 1).⁶⁰⁹

Dawn [in the morning] is an allusion to redemption, while night symbolizes exile. We express our faith that even though there were times when God made us suffer, those too, were manifestations of His kindness, because He did it for our ultimate benefit. Thus we relate His kindness, whether it was as clear and pleasant as the bright dawn or whether it was as hard to accept as the dark night. During the harsh night of exile, we call it **אמונתך** our faith, because our faith, more than our intellect,

605. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 153.

606. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1147.

607. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1147.

608. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 703-704.

609. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1147.

testified to His goodness.⁶¹⁰

In the morning is the time of the day a man's belly is devoid of food and drink. What is more, the women and children are asleep and do not interrupt.⁶¹¹

And your faithfulness during the nights

וְאִמּוּנַתְךָ בַּלַּיְלוֹת:

The nights, when God's faithfulness is to be acknowledged, are the nights of the future, i.e. the time of David, who had all the stringed instruments mentioned at his disposal. Being the reincarnate of Adam, David endeavored to rehabilitate his ancestor by his reference to God's withdrawal to the celestial regions, i.e. elyon, highest after Adam's sin. David's hymns are designed to bring God back. The playing of the lyre itself, took place at nighttime, the strings being activated by the north wind (Berachot 3). This is what is meant by **וְאִמּוּנַתְךָ בַּלַּיְלוֹת**, Your faithfulness at night, i.e. God gave Adam extra years. If not for that, Seth, David's ancestor, (Adams 3rd son) would not have been born. Adam commenced his own rehabilitation process. It was completed by David preparing the ground for the eventual Messiah.

This verse also refers metaphorically to the stark contrast between the gloom of exile and the bright dawn of redemption. [Moses encouraged the oppressed Jews not to be overwhelmed by their bondage, but to keep faith in the day-break of liberation.] Subsequent generations of Jewish exiles are encouraged to maintain their faith, in God, Who will surely usher in the light of redemption in the glorious Messianic age (Rashi, Avos D'Rabbai Nassan).⁶¹²

Regardless of what our situation is as the Sabbath enters into our midst, whether it finds us **בבקר**, at the dawn of better times, or **בלילות**, in utter darkness, reeling off night after night without hope of a morning -- our song will sound forth with the same joy each Sabbath. It will tell of God's loving-kindness in the morning and of His faithfulness in the nights.

Sabbath eves are a good time to talk about the true principles of our faith in God.⁶¹³

Upon a ten-stringed instrument

עָלֵי עֶשְׂוֹר

The Sages teach that the lyre of Messianic times will be ten stringed, representing a

610. Menachem Davis (ed.), *The Book of Psalms*, Mesorah Publications Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 261.

611. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 29.

612. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1147.

613. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 29.

beautiful enhancement of music, which is not limited to the octave of eight notes. Every period in life calls for its own unique expression of praise, just as each day has its own song of praise and each part of creation serves God in its own way. The enhanced spirituality of Messianic times will demand a heightened form of song (Sfas Emes).⁶¹⁴

And upon a lyre

וְעַלֵי נָבֶל

We assume that the נבל (derived from נבל “to wither,” to become limp”) is mentioned here as opposed to the עשור. The נבל is the instrument whose strains correspond to the “fading away” which comes at the end of life.⁶¹⁵

With singing accompanied by a harp

עַלֵי הַגִּיּוֹן בְּכִנּוֹר:

The Psalmist refers to the use of instruments in praising God because music arouses the inner spirit of the intellect and enhances its faculties (Radak).⁶¹⁶

The Talmud (Arachin 13b) says that the כנור, harp, of the Temple had seven strings, in Messianic times it will have eight, and in the World to Come, ten. ... It explains: ‘That which is now a seven-stringed כנור will become a ten-stringed עשור, of a beauty rivaling that of the hitherto unsurpassed נבל.’⁶¹⁷

Literally, הגייון pertains to the verbal expression. Here it describes the lyrics of the songs of praise which will be sung to God, to the accompaniment of musical instruments (Radak; Midrash Shocheh Tov).⁶¹⁸

The word הגייון also describes meditation and deep thought. When a person immerses his mind in Torah study, this concentration produces rapturous melodies in praise of God. These melodies are even more beautiful than those of the harp (Tehillos Hashem).⁶¹⁹

הגייון is vigorous thought and meditation which clamors for expression. Irrespective of the mood in which the Sabbath may find us as it enters our dwellings, regardless of whether what we feel at the time matches the full stringed tone of joy or the plaintive strain of the נבל, the Sabbath will always inspire in our minds, הגייון that mediation which is symbolized by the tones of the harp.⁶²⁰

614. Menachem Davis (ed.), *The Book of Psalms*, Mesorah Publications Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 261.

615. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 154.

616. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 395.

617. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 395.

618. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1148.

619. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1148.

620. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 154.

This listing of musical instruments alludes to the Song of the Sea, which was chanted to musical accompaniment.⁶²¹

For Hashem has gladdened me

כִּי שִׂמְחָתַנִּי יי

Only on the Sabbath, the seventh day, were all of God's creative accomplishments evident. On that day, when the body rested, the mind could meditate upon the wonders of nature which God created. The symmetry and harmony of nature is a splendid spectacle which gladdens the heart (Radak; Ibn Ezra).⁶²²

On the Sabbath there is time to look deeply into Creation and to rejoice in the works of God, the heavens and their host. As it says,

*When I behold Your heavens, the works of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have established.*⁶²³

On the Sabbath day, You made me happy when I studied Your works and the works of Your hands. which are the world and that which is within it. On the Sabbath, when I have time to meditate upon this matter, I am happy (Radak).⁶²⁴

In Your deeds and in the works of Your hands

בְּפַעְלֶךָ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ

I will sing joyfully

אֲרִינֶן:

The Zohar (Bereishis 45) explains that this refers to Adam, who was formed by God's own hands. God displayed before Adam's eyes the scholars, leaders and kings of each successive generation. When Adam saw that David was predestined to die immediately after his birth, Adam gave seventy years of his own life to David as a present. Therefore, David says here that he will sing glad song because of God's handiwork, referring to Adam, the one who was fashioned by God's hands and who gave David the gift of life.⁶²⁵

This verse was also recited when the construction of the **משכן**, Tabernacle, was completed, for this was Hashem's splendid accomplishment. Similarly, the construction of the **בית המקדש**, Holy Temple, is called God's handiwork over which Israel rejoices (Midrash Tanchuma, Pikudei).⁶²⁶

621. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 30.

622. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1149.

623. *Psalms* 8:4.

624. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 360.

625. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1149.

626. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1149.

The Sabbath teaches us each time anew to understand the entire world with its manifold phenomena as one work of the One God. This thought, even as it is uplifting in its grandeur, also makes us joyfully aware of the harmonious unity of all the contrasting phenomena of the universe, contrasts which would rend the world asunder, were it not for the fact that they all represent the work of One Creator.⁶²⁷

When I meditate on it [the works of Your hands] and achieve a certain degree of knowledge, I rejoice and exult in my heart. Since this exultation is relative to each individual sage according to his own achievement, the singular form is used.⁶²⁸

The following story is recounted about a student of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai who went into business and prospered. Thereafter, whenever he would come to visit his teacher, the other students were distressed. What did Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai do? He marched all his students into a valley and pronounced, "Valley, valley, become filled with gold coins!" The valley was immediately filled. He turned to his students. "Let each one take as his portion as much as he desires. But know that whatever you take, you deduct from your reward in the World to Come." Hearing this they all withdrew their hands and began to chant, *For You Lord, have made me glad through Your work.*

How great are Your deeds Hashem

מה גדלו מעשיך ??

God's deeds are the tangible parts of Creation and the events we perceive with our senses.⁶²⁹

The scope of all that God has wrought in both nature and history reaches far beyond any existing human conception of wisdom and might.⁶³⁰

*How great are Your deeds Hashem, and how wondrous! How difficult they are to fathom, demanding deep contemplation.*⁶³¹

Our intellect cannot comprehend the manner in which we will be rehabilitated through gilgulim, transmigration of souls etc., since these matters belong to גדלו מעשיך, Your great works.⁶³²

The Rabbis taught that although there are myriad species of animals, birds, and fish, no two species sound, look, or taste exactly alike (Sanhedrin 37a). This endless

627. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 154.

628. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 360.

629. Menachem Davis (ed.), *The Book of Psalms*, Mesorah Publications Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 262.

630. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 154.

631. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 31.

632. Menachem Davis (ed.), *The Book of Psalms*, Mesorah Publications Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 262.

diversity proclaims the greatness of the King of kings, the Holy One, Blessed is He. When a man mints coins from a mold, they are all identical, but although the King of kings minted all men in the mold of Adam, no two men look exactly alike. Therefore Scripture attests, *How great are Your deeds, Hashem.*⁶³³

Said R. Shimon bar Yochai: There are immense creatures in the sea which are not sustained on land, and there are immense creatures on land which are not sustained in the sea. If those in the sea would go up on land, they would not survive; and if those on land would descend into the sea, they would not survive, Jonah descended into the sea and lived, and the fish went up on the land and lived. There are also creatures which are sustained in (by) the air, and others are sustained in (by) fire. If those in the air ventured into the fire, they would not survive. Chanania, Mishael and Azzaria were cast into the furnace and they came out. *How great are Your works, O Lord!*⁶³⁴

Exceedingly profound are Your thoughts

מֵאֵד עֲמֻקּוֹ מִחֻשְׁבֵּתֶיךָ:

His thoughts are His purposes and goals; they are profound beyond human comprehension.⁶³⁵

It is not possible to understand them. One can only marvel at the observed results.⁶³⁶

But surpassing even this [Hashem's deeds] in grandeur is the profoundness of God's thoughts which are at the basis of all the phenomena of nature and of all the events of history. This is always true, even in those instances where we think ourselves capable of surmising the thoughts of God. These "thoughts" are the consequences, the aims, purposes and intentions which God seeks to fulfill through everything that He has created or has brought to pass and which represent the results of the combined impact of everything that happens in the world. And as for the ability to understand and regard both the realm of nature and the events of history as a world of divine thoughts and aims that are real and turned into living actualities, this is a gift given us by the שבת, a gift of which we are made aware by the thought expressed in the passage beginning with ויכלו, which we read as we usher in the Day of Rest.⁶³⁷

When I contemplate [on the Sabbath day] the magnitude of creation, I realize How

633. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1149.

634. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 32.

635. Menachem Davis (ed.), *The Book of Psalms*, Mesorah Publications Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 262.

636. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 31.

637. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 154-155.

great are Your deeds. They are truly beyond my comprehension. Moreover, exceedingly profound are Your thoughts. I cannot fathom the reason for many phenomena. One perplexing question is why the Almighty created the world when He did, rather than earlier or later. The only answer for such a query is that God's will is utterly beyond our grasp (Radak).⁶³⁸

God is constantly supervising and controlling every detail of creation, yet He has designed the universe so that all of His actions are hidden deep beneath a cloak of nature. Since God's hand is invisible, events appear to happen by themselves. This is all part of God's deep design for this world; it is a test to determine whether man will strive to detect God beneath His concealment and to live his life in accordance with the Divine plan (Malbim).⁶³⁹

A boor cannot know

אִישׁ בְּעֵר לֹא יָדַע

בְּעֵר is the “man of bare reason” who, like the beast, is motivated in his acts only by tangible, physical impressions.⁶⁴⁰

The בְּעֵר is one who is completely devoid of knowledge and resembles the בעיר, beast, as in Psalm 73:22: *I am senseless and know nothing, like a beast was I with You.*⁶⁴¹

The בְּעֵר is oblivious to all the wonders of Hashem (Rashi).⁶⁴²

Although such a person may appear to be an איש, a man of dignity and stature in business and community affairs, he is nevertheless totally ignorant of God's designs (Norah Tehillos; Rabbeinu Bachya).⁶⁴³

And a fool cannot understand this:

וּכְסִיל לֹא יָבִין אֶת זֹאת:

כְּסִיל is the “conceited fool” who tenaciously adheres to his views even if they are utterly unjustifiable.⁶⁴⁴

Neither [the boor or the fool] is capable of responding to teaching - the בְּעֵר because of his inability to learn, and the כְּסִיל because of his foolish conceit. The institution of the Sabbath presupposes that we are neither בוערים nor כסילים; it is presumed that

638. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1149.

639. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1149-1150.

640. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 155.

641. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1150.

642. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1150.

643. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1150.

644. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 155.

we do not rely exclusively upon sensual impressions for guidance, and that we are not filled with conceit to the exclusion of all else. For if either were the case, then the lesson which the Sabbath is designed to teach would be entirely lost upon us.⁶⁴⁵

It is strange that God's profound thoughts **עמקו מחשבתוך**, is contrasted with **כסיל**, the fool, instead of with a man of great intellect. After all what is so strange if an ignorant man **איש בער**, cannot comprehend the thought processes of God? However, since Adam had praised death as **טוב**, good, since it enables eventual purification and refinement of resurrected man, he says that if he cannot even understand the **מעשיך**, Your revealed actions, how much less can we understand **מחשהתוך**, Your thought processes, the results of which have not even become manifest? **איש**, i.e. even a man of distinction, an intellectual, is merely **בער**, ignorant by comparison to Your intellect.⁶⁴⁶

There is a marked difference between the **כסיל**, fool, and the **בער**, boor. The **כסיל** is not unintelligent; he may in fact, have a brilliant mind. However, he is not interested in delving deeply into any subject. All his study is superficial (Rashbam, Ibn Yachya), because his intelligence is utilized to serve his insatiable lusts and desires. He despises moral and ethical wisdom, for he fears that such knowledge will deprive him of his pleasures.⁶⁴⁷

Whenever his studies or observations of nature lead the **כסיל** to a truth which will force him to recognize God's binding authority, and to thus restrict his actions and deny himself pleasure, he seeks to distort this truth. The **כסיל** cleverly seeks out one detail which he claims makes no sense; he uses this bogus problem as a pretext to discredit the preponderance of evidence before him. The Psalmist brilliantly exposes this ruse, saying, nor can a fool understand **זאת**, this, i.e. this one point which he claims is untenable. On the basis of this single question, the **כסיל** casts aspersion on everything.⁶⁴⁸

King Solomon disclosed this subterfuge in **אולת כסילים מרמה**, *the folly of the fools is [in reality] deceit*⁶⁴⁹ (Shiurei Daas of Telshe, Vol 1, footnote to p. 87).⁶⁵⁰

When the wicked sprout like grass

בְּפִרְחָם רִשְׁעִים כְּמוֹ עֵשֶׂב

The wicked are likened to grass in two ways. For one, grass grows quickly. Secondly, grass flourishes without the expenditure of effort to plant the seeds, to

645. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 155.

646. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 705-706.

647. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1150.

648. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1150.

649. *Proverbs* 14:8.

650. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1150.

supply the water, plus all the other tasks involved in nurturing the growth of a tree.⁶⁵¹

Another phenomenon that a *boor cannot know, nor can a fool understand* is the apparent success of the wicked in this world (Radak). Fools do not realize that the wicked prosper so that God can compensate them for their few merits before He destroys them (Rashi). God requites the good and bad done by every individual. These rewards and punishments may be meted out in this world or in the World to Come. However, God often rewards the wicked for their good deeds in this world deferring their punishments for the eternal World of Truth.⁶⁵²

Most people can find no answer to the eternal human dilemma: Why do the wicked prosper? If only these questioners could look beyond what their senses tell them, they would realize [what the next verse states]⁶⁵³

And all the doers of evil blossom

וַיִּצְיָצוּ כָּל פְּעֻלֵי אֵוֹן

רשעים are those who look down upon the moral law with contempt, and who render homage only to sensual pleasures and seek only personal advantage. **און** is the misuse of power, and **פעלי און** are men in position of power who abuse their authority and whose only ambition is to increase their own might.⁶⁵⁴

The wicked rise to success swiftly, like grass which sprouts overnight. Their existence is fleeting, however, and they are soon overtaken by death. The progress of the righteous man is slower and much less dramatic. The Psalmist notes, that *he shall flourish like a date palm* (verse 13) for the palm requires a long period of time for its growth, but its roots are solid and permanent (Maharam Markado).⁶⁵⁵

The verse mentions *blooming* and *flourishing*. The wicked do not actually produce fruits. They bloom, they flourish with leaves and buds. But they do not reach the stage of producing complete fruit, the usual purpose of blooming and flourishing.⁶⁵⁶

Just as grass is quick to blossom, so will they perish quickly. The evildoers, on account of their lack of perfection, are quick to bloom -- to prosper -- in this world, even as grass grows quickly. But, like grass, they will also wilt quickly.⁶⁵⁷

651. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 33.

652. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1150-1151.

653. Menachem Davis (ed.), *The Book of Psalms*, Mesorah Publications Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 262.

654. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 155-156.

655. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1151.

656. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 33.

657. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 33.

Maharal infers that the duration of the period required for the maturation of any creature is in direct proportion to its distinction and value. Since the wicked have almost no value, they prosper quickly and fade quickly, passing into oblivion after the short span of a life time in this world. But the value of the righteous man is immeasurable. Throughout his lifetime, he is engaged in developing his unique qualities and his latent abilities. In fact, the righteous man does not even complete his development in this world; his spiritual growth continues in the World to Come. [This fascinating corollary explains why [many] insects are almost fully mature at birth and why many animals and birds can care for themselves within a few days or weeks of birth, whereas a human being is not self-sufficient until his teens. Since the human intellect far surpasses that of the beast, it requires a much longer maturation period.]⁶⁵⁸

It is to destroy them till eternity

לְהַשְׁמֵדָם עַד־עַד:

Destroyed forever means that they lose their portion in the World to Come (Ibn Yachya).⁶⁵⁹

God gives temporal success and happiness to the wicked as reward for whatever good deeds they may have done. Having been recompensed, they will sing to destruction, while the righteous gain eternal reward (Rashi).⁶⁶⁰

Should a person express doubt about God's justice, when he sees the wicked flourish, the Psalmist reassures such doubters by saying that such apparent flourishing will result in the wicked being destroyed utterly when they die. Their persons will never be resurrected.⁶⁶¹

The **בַּעַר** who believes only in that which he can see or touch, as well as the **כַּסִּיל** who forms his opinion on the basis of superficial appearances and clings to it tenaciously, regard any momentary flourishing and success of evil and violence as refutation of the truth of the Sabbath's lesson concerning the world rulership and guidance of One free and almighty Power Who alone is God. The spirit of the Sabbath, however, teaches us that, in the end, violence will perish at the hands of evil, and evil through violence. Since the one thus automatically brings about the ruin of the other, no special act of Divine intervention into the course of events is even necessary to eradicate evil and violence.⁶⁶²

658. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1151.

659. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1151.

660. Menachem Davis (ed.), *The Book of Psalms*, Mesorah Publications Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 262.

661. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 707.

662. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 155.

And You Hashem, remain exalted forever

וְאַתָּה מְרוֹם לְעַלְמֵי יְיָ

Although the wicked appear successful in this world, this does not mean that God is not watching and controlling His creation. In the future, God will demonstrate how He recorded and judged every human action. At that time God will recompense every man in accordance with his deeds and reveal His presence to all men (Radak).⁶⁶³

*You are on high -- too high- for the brutish man to know Your secret way.*⁶⁶⁴

Despite the fact that the wicked prosper, let no man say that there is no divine supervision and God does not see. The non-believers say this: as it says, *The Lord does not see us*⁶⁶⁵ But truly You O Lord, are on high forever, and You see everything.⁶⁶⁶

Thus Solomon said:

*For one higher than the high watches, and there are yet higher than they.*⁶⁶⁷

The appointed time comes for every one. As Malachi said,

*You have said: It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge? ... Then you will return, and see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God and him that does not serve Him.*⁶⁶⁸

This will take place in the Days of the Messiah.⁶⁶⁹

For behold your enemies, Hashem,

כִּי הִנֵּה אֵיבֵיךָ יְיָ

For behold your enemies shall perish

כִּי הִנֵּה אֵיבֵיךָ לֵאבְדוֹ

The day will come when the wicked will receive their just punishment, because they are Your enemies (Radak).⁶⁷⁰

In the end, the enemy evildoers will be scattered by a divine decree that transcends

663. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1151.

664. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 34.

665. Ezekiel 8:12.

666. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 34.

667. *Ecclesiastes* 5:7.

668. *Malachi* 3:14,18.

669. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 34.

670. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1152.

the natural, as happened to the Flood Generation and the Babel Generation.⁶⁷¹

A number of reasons are offered for the repetition of this prediction:

- The repetition strengthens the credibility of the prediction (Radak).
- We have heard what Hashem did to His enemies in the past, and we have even seen the punishment He metes out to evildoers (Ibn Ezra).
- This Divine destruction will be visited not only upon those enemies who have spoken against God, but also against those who have silently plotted against Him (Ibn Yachya).
- Both the enemies who destroyed the First Temple and those who devastated the Second Temple will perish (Chazah Zion).⁶⁷²

All doers of evil shall be dispersed

יִתְפָּרְדּוּ כָּל פְּעֻלֵי אֱוֹן:

יִתְפָּרְדּוּ, like the Niphal form **הִפְרֵד נָא מֵעַלִי** in (Gen. 13:9) means “to part from one another.” For it is natural that alliances contracted between men who misuse the powers given them cannot long endure; such allies will eventually “part from one another,” then proceed to fight each other, and finally bring about each other’s destruction. But it is most likely that there is another meaning inherent in **הִתְפָּרַד**; namely, “to lose one’s inner support and cohesion,” i.e. “to disintegrate,” “to break up.”⁶⁷³

The despisers of morality as well as those who have only contempt for what is right -- all of them are the Lord’s enemies since they are the foes of God’s kingdom on earth. For God’s kingdom is based upon the supremacy of His Law, a Law which, demanding as it does, the moral sanctification of life, respect for the right and the active demonstration of brotherly love, elevates the lives of both individuals and nations to the level of ultimate, permanent salvation. This divine Law does not tolerate excesses and tyranny, and therefore all the **רשעים** and **פועלי און** by their very nature are hostile to the thought that such a world order should reign supreme. However, he who is imbued with the truth taught by the Sabbath constantly has before his mind’s eye the certainty that both **רשעים** and **פועלי און** will eventually perish.⁶⁷⁴

These are the villains who not only think and speak of evil, but who actually execute it (Ibn Yachya).⁶⁷⁵

671. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me’am Lo’ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 34.

672. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1152.

673. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 157.

674. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 156-157.

675. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1152.

They will have no part in the World to Come, and thus they will be eternally separated from the company of the righteous (Targum).⁶⁷⁶

All who cleave to Him live; as it says,

*But you that cleave to the Lord your God are alive every one of you this day.*⁶⁷⁷

But he who separates from Him will die. For even as the heart is the center of life, that is what must happen to him who separates himself from God. It is as if he separated himself from his own heart and perished.⁶⁷⁸

You raised my horn like that of the Re'eim

וַתִּרְם כְּרַאִים קַרְנֵי

Many English translations have been offered for the word רַאִים. Ox, bison, buffalo, unicorn and reindeer are among the most popular. One thing is clear, the רַאִים derives its name from its majestic horns which are its most precious asset. The horns are 'most high, exalted', taller than those of all other animals (this would make reindeer a very appropriate identity for the mysterious re'eim).⁶⁷⁹

The height of the re'eim's horn is used here as a measure of great exaltation.⁶⁸⁰

The Psalmist now speaks in first person, testifying for every devout believer who has lived to see the downfall of his enemies. He thanks God for giving him a horn, i.e., a symbol of pride and strength, (Radak)⁶⁸¹ as in

*The horns of the re'eim are his his horns, with them he will gore the nations.*⁶⁸²

Just as the re'eim lifts its lowered horn with a single sudden jerk, so does Israel's salvation arise suddenly, without hesitation or delay (Baal HaTanya).⁶⁸³

This verse refers to the Israelite's triumphant Exodus from Egypt, which proved that the oppression of the righteous at the hands of the wicked does eventually end and that the righteous ultimately receive their just reward. Thus all encouraging promises which Moses had made to Israel throughout the terrible bondage (and especially on the Sabbath day of rest) came to pass. This triumph is recorded twice

676. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1152.

677. *Deuteronomy* 4:4.

678. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 35.

679. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 280.

680. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1152.

681. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1152.

682. *Deuteronomy* 33:17.

683. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1152.

in the Torah,⁶⁸⁴

*God has brought them out of Egypt, He has exhibited the strength of the re'eim.*⁶⁸⁵

Both the victory of the good man who has no defender, and his survival beyond all else through the moral and spiritual buoyancy within him are very much demonstrations of extraordinary Divine providence. God's enemies perish of themselves, without Divine interference, but it is God Himself Who has raised up the "horn" of Israel, strong and victorious like the horn of the Re'eim. Every time an enemy of God's kingdom goes down to ruin, the principle cherished by Israel through history, that it is man's duty to consecrate his life in subordination to God, comes one step nearer to universal recognition and supremacy.⁶⁸⁶

I outlive them with oil that was ever fresh

בְּלַתִּי בְּשֶׁמֶן רֵעֵנִי:

Oil is a common Scriptural metaphor for blessing, prosperity, and supremacy.⁶⁸⁷

In accordance with its form, **בתלי** could be the preterite Kal of **בלל**, and, because **בלל** ordinarily occurs in conjunction with **שמן**, as it does here, this interpretation would seem plausible in this instance. However, **בלל שמן** does not mean "to brush an object with oil," or "to anoint," but rather to commingle (a substance) with oil, "to mix," "to knead in," and, of course, such an interpretation would be entirely out of place in this instance. It would seem, therefore, that, instead of being derived from **בלל**, **בתלי** is the infinitive Piel of **בלה**, which in the Piel form means "to outlive" a person or situation.⁶⁸⁸

I want to reach old age in order to *gaze upon my watchful foes*, and to *hear of the downfall of the evildoers who rise up against me.*⁶⁸⁹

Whenever oil has been blended into another substance, it is said to be **בלולה בשמן** saturated with oil (Leviticus 2:5, et al; Rashi). Here it is used figuratively to describe the euphoria of the righteous man who is completely satisfied body and soul, with his triumph (Radak; Metzudas David).⁶⁹⁰

This is an illusion to the blossoming of the horn of the House of David in messianic

684. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1152.

685. *Numbers* 23:22, 24:8.

686. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 157.

687. Menachem Davis (ed.), *The Book of Psalms*, Mesorah Publications Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 263.

688. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 157.

689. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 35.

690. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1152-1153.

times.⁶⁹¹

My eyes have seen the downfall of my foes

וּתְבַט עֵינַי בְּשׁוֹרֵי

Ibn Ezra renders: I have witnessed their downfall.⁶⁹²

The word שורי (Radak)⁶⁹³ is derived from שור, watching closely as in אשורנו ולא קרוב,

*I watch him closely, but he is not near*⁶⁹⁴

These are my enemies who watch me carefully, hoping that I will betray You and cause You to desert me.⁶⁹⁵

שור could be the infinitive form of שור, “to look out.” If the infinitive would ever occur in the plural, then שורי could be interpreted to mean “my experiences,” “the many things I have seen,” and ותבט עיני בשורי would then mean, “Because my eye has beheld this (the preceding), on account of the many things I have seen, therefore my ears will hear ... “ etc. The occurrence of an infinitive form in the plural would not be in any manner extraordinary since the infinitive may be interpreted as a substantive. But, in practice, there is hardly an instance where the infinitive is found in the plural. Therefore, there seems to be no other alternative but to interpret שורי as having the same meaning as שוררי, which is more commonly used to denote “those that lie in wait.” ... In view of the above, the thought of verse 12 would therefore be as follows: “... Since my eyes have beheld this in the case of those that lie in wait for me; since I have always beheld in the case of my own adversaries the destruction that must come to all evil, and the persevering survival of the good, therefore whenever men shall stand up against me because they are evildoers, my ears will hear it⁶⁹⁶

When those who would harm me rise up against me

בְּקָמִים עָלַי מְרַעִים

My ears will hear it

תִּשְׁמָעֵנָה אָזְנִי:

I have been informed of their downfall (Radak). Rashi comments: My ears heard a heavenly voice proclaim that no matter how they try, those who rise against me will

691. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 35.

692. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1153.

693. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1153.

694. *Numbers* 24:17.

695. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 97.

696. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 158.

never annihilate me.⁶⁹⁷

The Sefer Halkkarim explains this homiletically: The wise man pays attention to all the criticism leveled against him, even if it comes from his avowed enemies, because he knows that there must be a measure of truth in their accusations. Thus the Psalmist wisely gazes upon himself through the eyes of his vigilant foes, and when evildoers raise criticism against him, his ears listen closely. Then he rectifies his faults and errors, so that eventually his enemies can find nothing to criticize.⁶⁹⁸

A righteous man will flourish like a date palm

צַדִּיק כַּתְּמָר יִפְרֹחַ

The Psalmist contrast the wicked, who are like withered grass (verse 8), and the righteous, who resemble thriving trees.

The Rabbis enumerate the many distinctive properties which make the palm tree a symbol of virtue and righteousness:

- (1) The palm grows very straight, without bending, just as the righteous man remains upright and honest.
- (2) The wood of the palm is free of knots, just as the righteous man is free of flaws.
- (3) The palm's shady leaves and frond are far off the ground, at the very top of the tree. Similarly, the reward promised the righteous is not immediate, but reserved for the distant future of the World to Come.
- (4) Every part of the palm is useful: its fruits are eaten, its leaves and fronds are used in thatching, and its wood is used for construction. Similarly, each righteous Jew fulfills a special purpose (Bereishis Rabbah 41:1)⁶⁹⁹

Like a cedar in Lebanon he will grow tall

כַּאֲרוֹ בְּלִבְנוֹן יִשְׁגָּה:

The cedar also symbolizes virtue and righteousness. Furthermore, the unique properties of the cedar compensate for any deficiencies in the palm tree:

The wood of the palm is unsuitable for furniture and utensils, whereas the wood of the cedar is excellent for these purposes (Midrash Shocher Tov). Similarly, the righteous man is admirably suited to be a vessel dedicated to the service of God.

When the palm tree is cut down, its trunk dries in the ground. When the cedar is felled, however, its roots and stump remain alive, and a new cedar shoot will sprout in its place (Taanis 25a). Similarly, righteousness is indestructible; if a righteous man is harmed, he will only grow stronger. If he is cut down, another righteous man

697. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1153.

698. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1153.

699. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1153.

will rise to take his place.

However, the cedar lacks several of the palm tree's good qualities. Unlike the palm, the cedar does not grow straight and erect; it does not produce fruit; it has knots; its shade is near the ground, and not every part of the cedar can be used. Thus the righteous possess virtues which resemble the best features of both the palm and the cedar.⁷⁰⁰

The date palm can bear fruit, but lacks the lasting strength and stamina of the cedar. The cedar is mighty, but it cannot bear fruit. The "righteous man," who lives his life in loyalty to his duty, is depicted here allegorically as being endowed with the advantages of both.⁷⁰¹

Evil sprouts up quickly, like grass (verse 8), but it is swiftly cut down. The righteous man, like the palm tree will grow more slowly in size, but is for this reason that, like the cedar, he will also grow to become strong and enduring.⁷⁰²

The tzaddik will be as fruitful as a date palm, and as sturdy in health as a cedar.⁷⁰³

In the beginning the righteous man bears suffering, but in the end the righteous man will flourish like the palm tree and produce abundant fruit. Similarly, the palm tree does not produce fruit except after a long time has passed: seventy years. Then he will grow higher and higher, *like a cedar in Lebanon*.⁷⁰⁴

Contrary to the wicked, who wither, the tzaddik who flourishes like the palm tree will stand many years, *like a cedar in Lebanon* growing high.⁷⁰⁵

The palm tree remains forever straight, even when its fruit are plentiful. Similarly, the tzaddik stands upright and does not become bent through indulgence in passions. He struggles constantly against his physical impulse.⁷⁰⁶

This indicates that just as the palm tree brings forth fruit after seventy years, so also the tzaddik is rewarded after his death (after having lived seventy years).⁷⁰⁷

700. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1154.

701. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 159.

702. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 159.

703. Menachem Davis (ed.), *The Book of Psalms*, Mesorah Publications Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 263.

704. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez*, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 36.

705. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez*, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 36.

706. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez*, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 36.

707. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez*, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 36.

The Talmud says: Why is it written, *The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree; he will grow like a cedar in Lebanon?* If it says a cedar, why say a palm tree; and if it says a palm tree, why say a cedar? However, if it would say a palm tree and not say a cedar, I might infer: Just as the palm tree does not change its trunk, so the tzaddik does not change his trunk (basic nature). And, if it would say a cedar and not say a palm tree. I might infer: Just as the cedar does not produce fruit, so the tzaddik does not produce fruit. Accordingly it mentions both the palm tree and the cedar.⁷⁰⁸

For the sake of my eventual offspring the righteous, David whose life span is also 70 years will flourish like a palm which blossoms after 70 years. He in turn will produce Solomon who will flourish and grow tall *like a cedar in Lebanon*.⁷⁰⁹

Planted in the house of Hashem

שְׁתוּלִים בְּבַיִת יי

The quality of a tree -- described in the previous verse -- is only half the formula for success; for maximum benefit it must be planted in luxuriant soil. The righteous will be firmly rooted in the spiritual riches of God's House. There they will blossom without limit (Radak).⁷¹⁰

In one significant respect, however, the righteous man differs from the palm tree and from the cedar, for these trees are rooted in the earth and grow upward, whereas the righteous man is rooted in the heavens and grows downward. The base of the human tree is the soul, which is hewn from God's celestial glory. The limbs of the body resemble the branches of a tree.⁷¹¹

Midrash Shocheh Tov observes that this refers to the very young children who are carefully planted in God's house, the house of study and prayer, so that they will grow in Torah scholarship.⁷¹²

This world is compared to a פרוזדור, corridor, or a חצר, courtyard, which serves as an entrance to an edifice, the spiritual World to Come. Therefore, the verse continues, in the courtyards of our God they will flourish; i.e., the righteous who are rooted in Hashem's celestial House, will flourish on earth, which is the entrance to His House (Nefutzos Yehudah; Norah Tehillos).⁷¹³

Having likened the righteous to trees, the Singer now goes on to say that in the Days

708. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 36.

709. Moshe Alshech, *The Book of Psalms with Romemot El*, Vol II, p. 709.

710. Menachem Davis (ed.), *The Book of Psalms*, Mesorah Publications Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 263.

711. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1154.

712. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1154.

713. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1154.

of the Messiah they will be planted in the House of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will be greatly accomplished in Torah learning and wisdom; the Cohanim-priests and Levites will be in the House of God, and the Israelites will be in the courts of our God. That is to say, they will devote themselves to the attainment of wisdom and to knowledge of God. As it says,⁷¹⁴

*For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.*⁷¹⁵

They will flourish in the courtyards of our God **בְּחִצְרוֹת אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִפְרִיחוּ:**

Grass grows by itself and can sprout up anywhere. But the palm and the cedar, to both of which the righteous man is compared here (therefore the plural), are planted deliberately and on purpose (see Psalm 1:3) in the house of the Lord. It is there, in the Sanctuary of God's Law, that they have their roots; it is from there that they derive all their vigor and strength, and **בְּחִצְרוֹת אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִפְרִיחוּ**. They have their roots in the house of the Lord, but their fruit does not blossom forth there. The fruit which they bear is evident rather in all the aspects of their everyday lives and in all the conditions that constitute the "environment of the House of the Lord." These conditions are shaped outside the Sanctuary, but they emanate from the House of the Lord, which is always their central point.⁷¹⁶

The righteous will always stay there [in the courtyards of our God] because the sages and the teachers will be there. Then the wicked will be destroyed, and only the righteous will remain and be engaged in wisdom to know the Lord (Radak).⁷¹⁷

This verse also describes the priests and Levites who flourish in the service which they render to God in the Temple courtyards. It is as if they give forth **פְּרוּחִים**, flowers, for their service makes manifest the beauty of God's ways (Targum; Ibn Ezra).

Similarly, in the future, the righteous and the true scholars will dwell in the environs of the Holy Temple, where their comprehension of the Divine design will blossom (Radak).⁷¹⁸

Still will they be fruitful even in old age **עוֹד יִנְבוֹן בְּשֵׁיבָה**

714. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 37.

715. *Isaiah* 11:9.

716. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 159.

717. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 361.

718. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1154.

The Mishnah (Kannim 3:6) teaches that as an **עם הארץ**, an ignorant man, gets older, his mind becomes more confused. As a Torah sage gets older, however, his mind becomes clearer and more settled. Job 12:12 states: *With elders there is wisdom, and the length of days brings understanding.*

Rambam explains there that the pursuit of physical comfort and gratification interferes with the development of the mind. As the ignorant man grows older, the demands of his body become more intense. Consequently, he increasingly neglects his mind more and becomes confused. But as the wise man ages, his body grows weaker and he ignores its desires all the more. As a result, his mind and soul improve, yielding abundant fruit (see Sforno; Gevul Binyamin).⁷¹⁹

Vigorous and fresh they will be

דְּשֵׁנִים וְרַעֲנָנִים יִהְיוּ:

Radak comments that this verse describes the Messianic age, when the Jews will achieve longevity. The time of life which is now considered old age will then be regarded as youth. The prophet Isaiah (65:20) predicts that at that time, if someone dies at the age of one hundred, people will say, that he died young. In the Messianic era, as people grow older they will simultaneously grow stronger and healthier.⁷²⁰

To declare that Hashem is upright

לְהַגִּיד כִּי יָשָׁר יי

God controls and directs all events of human history for but one purpose; that in the future His Providence and guidance will become manifest and that men will then declare that Hashem is just.

In this world, men hesitate to make a total commitment to God because they are confused by the suffering of the righteous and by the seeming success of the wicked. But, in the time of Messiah, all apparent iniquity and evil will be purged. The world will then achieve a purity like that of carefully refined metal. When the righteous cease to suffer and the wicked no longer succeed, it will be evident that God is upright. Then God's ways will not only be just, they will be perceived as just -- and we will join in declaring them to be so (Radak).⁷²¹

My rock, there is no wrong in Him

צוּרִי וְלֹא עוֹלָתָהּ בּוֹ.

Applied to God, **צור** is the allegorical expression for the unchangeable and the absolute power of overcoming everything. He is the absolute origin of all existence and of every manner of existence. What He has decided to exist finds in Him its

719. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1154-1155.

720. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1155.

721. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1155.

eternal hold and support and every from that He intends it to take becomes realized with absolute certainty.⁷²²

The word **עולתה**, wrong, is written deficiently, without the letter **ו**. Thus the written form is **עולתה**. The two forms of the word are equivalent, and the deficient spelling can also be found in Job 5:16: **ועלתה קפצה פיה**, *And wrongdoing shut its mouth* (see also 58:3).⁷²³

In this world it often appears as if God's judgments and designs are wrong and unfair, but in the future, it will be clear that He never betrayed the righteous. He was always their Rock and controlled all their affairs equitably (Radak).⁷²⁴

Sefer Chassidim offers a concluding statement on this psalm: Moses died on the Sabbath, and David died on the Sabbath. Moses wrote the five books of the Torah, and David wrote the five books of the Psalms to strengthen the Jew's faith in Torah. Both Moses and David excelled in their recognition that God's judgment is completely righteous and fair. Thus both could declare with full confidence that *there is no wrong in Him*.⁷²⁵

The eternally youthful vigor of the righteous man, as opposed to the destruction of the lawless and unjust, should make man understand that the Divine providence which trains mankind pursues a straight and upright path. The eventual ruin of evil and the survival of the good are both based upon one and the same foundation and lead to the same goal. And if God has proven to be **צורי**, the Rock which has shaped and protected and supported Israel in particular throughout the ages, then **לא עולתה בו**, there is no **עול במשפת**, no partiality, no injustice in the Providence. For it is His desire to be the same Rock of protection and support for all men, if only they will render Him homage and allow all their lives and ambitions to be guided by His Law. ... The thought of verse 16, then, is as follows: "Not only is there no injustice in His Providence, but, as a matter of fact, the 'first cause' is not even with Him. It rather rests with mankind itself. Only mankind does not yet understand how to use this divine gift of freedom of will for the advancement of its own true, permanent salvation by entering, of its own free will, into the service of its God."⁷²⁶

At the time of the Messiah, when everyone will see the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked, they will all declare that the Lord is upright, my Rock in whom I trust. They will acknowledge that there is no unrighteousness in Him and all His deeds are faithfully done.⁷²⁷

722. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Pentateuch Vol 5*, Judaica Press, Ltd. Gatehead, 1989, p. 631.

723. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1155.

724. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1155.

725. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1155-1156.

726. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 159-160.

727. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New

Today some hearts are divided with doubt when they see the wicked prosper in this world. But in the Future everyone will recognize that *the Lord is upright, my Rock, and there is no unrighteous in Him*. He does everything with faithfulness.⁷²⁸

York, 1991, p. 38.

728. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 38.

Psalm 93

Rashi explains that this psalm is dedicated to the Messianic era, when all men will again recognize God's majesty.

This psalm is a direct continuation of Psalm 92, which concluded with the prediction that in the Messianic era men will declare that Hashem is just, *My Rock in Whom there is no wrong* (92:16). At that time men will recognize that Hashem alone reigns over all of creation and that He alone, **גאות לבש**, will have donned grandeur.

Unlike the arrogant gentile monarchs such as Pharaoh of Egypt, Nebuchadnezar of Babylon, and Sennacherib of Assyria -- who considered themselves to be gods and who brazenly defied the Almighty -- Messiah will be a monarch noted for his humility (Radak).

The psalm is the Song of the Day for the sixth day of the week (Rosh Hashanah 31a) because on that day God completed His work and donned the grandeur of His creation (Avos D'Rabbi Nassan 1:8).

Indeed, comments Rav Yaakov Emden, this psalm describes God as robing Himself in grandeur like one dressing in His Sabbath finery. Thus this work was designated as the Song for Friday when the footsteps of Sabbath begin to be heard.

On the sixth day Adam was created. God blew a breath of life into his nostrils and invested him with a Divine soul. When Adam stood and scrutinized God's amazing creation, he realized how awesome and wonderful it was. As he sang God's praises, Adam truly looked Divine, because he was a reflection of God's image. The creatures of the earth were filled with awe, for they imagined that Adam was their creator. When they gathered to bow to him in submission, however, Adam was incredulous. "Why do you bow to me?" he asked: "Let us go together to pay homage to Hashem, Who truly reigns. Let us robe the Creator in majesty." Then Adam led all the creatures in this song, Hashem ... reigned. He ... donned majesty (Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer 11).⁷²⁹

Hashem has reigned

יְיָ מֶלֶךְ

The verb to reign is in the past tense. In prophecy that which is worded in the past tense must be considered as surely as happening.

The psalm sings of the era when the enduring kingdom of God, which erring

729. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1157.

mankind had so long resisted, will at last begin on earth.⁷³⁰

Because then the entire world will recognize that God is upright and that He rules over all. They will no longer be proud before Him as the heathen kings were -- like Nebuchadnezzar, Pharaoh, the king of Assyria, and the king of Tyre, as portrayed by the prophets. Then, everyone will recognize that no kingdom may attire itself with majesty except for God's for the kingdom is His alone (Radak).⁷³¹

Grandeur has he donned

גְּאוּת לְבִישׁ

A man of flesh and blood will on his coronation day clothe himself in garments of strength and majesty to install awe of kingship in his subjects. By analogy it thus says,

*The Lord reigns; He is clothed in majesty -- robes (manifestations) of majesty.*⁷³²

Now He no longer is simple "the One on High," now His majesty is acknowledged even here below, in the midst of mankind.⁷³³

Originally there was no physical matter; there was only the Spiritual essence of the Divine. God chose to cloak the spirit in a material robe. At each progressive stage of Creation, God donned an additional 'robe' of matter, which concealed His inner spirit. Simultaneously, however, new creatures were being fashioned and subjected to Hashem's reign. Thus each additional material 'robe' added another outward manifestation of God's majesty (Baal Ha Tanya).⁷³⁴

Hashem is robed

לְבִישׁ יי

Hashem in and of Himself cannot be seen, felt, heard, touched or tasted. Only the actions that Hashem does in this physical world can be sensed. Therefore, the metaphor employed here is that Hashem who cannot be sensed in and of Himself, can be sensed when He is robed by his actions in the physical world.

Because the Lord cannot be seen, many had failed to recognize Him. More specifically, they did not understand that He is Hashem, the sole Being capable of bringing about man's salvation. But now, through the events of history, He has so effectively demonstrated His wishes and His providence that He has been

730. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 160-161.

731. A.J. Rosenberg, *Psalms Vol. 3*, Judaica Press Inc., New York 1991, p. 362.

732. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 39.

733. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 161.

734. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1158.

recognized by all men for all time to come.⁷³⁵

He is girded with strength

עוֹ הַתְּאֵזָר

The **לבוש**, robe, is the outward manifestation of God's glory. He displays (the) fact that *He ... donned might and girded Himself with the strength* to control all of nature and to subdue His foes. Indeed, God's strength is that He controls the course of world history. When Israel is in exile, this strength is concealed; when Israel is redeemed, however, God girds Himself and reveals His Strength (see Sforno).⁷³⁶

And now He stands revealed before man in all the invincible strength of His will, and it is clear that His goals cannot simply be dismissed as unimportant.⁷³⁷

The world stands firm; it cannot be shaken

אַף תִּכּוֹן תֵּיבֵל בִּלְתַּמּוּט:

Even when Hashem will have girded Himself with strength and violently cast the wicked out of the land, He will not let the earth falter into utter chaos and destruction (Sforno).⁷³⁸

Heretofore it was only the world of nature that pursued a regulated course; the world of men was dominated by human tyranny and plagued by eternal vacillation. But once all aspects of individual and communal life have been subordinated to the will of God, all vacillation will cease and, at long last, the development of mankind will also enter upon the definite, steady path along which it must move.⁷³⁹

At present, the fate of the inhabited land is uncertain. Beset by countless threats and dangers, it totters on the brink of disaster. But when the King Messiah reigns, stability will return to the land and it will bring joy in its wake (see Rashi).⁷⁴⁰

Your throne stands firm from of old

נִכּוֹן כִּסֵּאֲךָ מֵאָז

When the world is set firm (verse 1) in the Messianic era, then all will realize that *Your throne* [i.e. your permanent control of the universe] *was established from of old* [i.e. from the first moment of Creation] (Radak) and that Your kingdom is not a new phenomenon.⁷⁴¹

735. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 161.

736. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1158.

737. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 161.

738. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1158.

739. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 161.

740. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1158.

741. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1158.

Unlike a king of flesh and blood whose reign has a beginning, You are King of the world “of old.” You are the Creator of the world, and hence Your Kingship continues from before you created Your world.⁷⁴²

Everyone will then recognize that Your throne is established of old. It existed prior to the creation of the world, and has existed since the creation of the world. Your Kingship is not something new, for you have been King of old. It is just that now Your Kingship will become known to everyone.⁷⁴³

Since Creation, Your dominion has not changed at all; from times of old, Your sovereignty has endured (Norah Tehillos).⁷⁴⁴

It is only from that moment on that the throne of the Kingdom of God shall be firmly established on earth. True, even before, men had laid the entire universe at God’s feet, but they still held back from Him one tribute -- that of their own selves, the small handbreadth of their own hearts. At most, they acknowledged that the Lord was God indeed, but they did not conceive of Him as their God. He had indeed been God “from everlasting,” but His “throne,” the recognition of His supremacy among mankind, has become established only now.⁷⁴⁵

You are eternal

מֵעוֹלָם אֶתָּה:

Indeed, Your existence predates the dawn of time at Creation; for You, O God, are eternal (Radak).⁷⁴⁶

Thus, all we see of God is the physical ‘garment’ He donned when time began at the dawn of Creation. No matter how much of God’s greatness we think we understand, our limited intellect grasps but the minutest fraction of His infinite and eternal greatness, which transcends time and space.⁷⁴⁷

Rivers shall raise, Hashem

נְשֹׂאוּ נְהָרוֹת יי

“Floods” [rivers] are a simile for powerful nations that swell with pride and work destruction.⁷⁴⁸

742. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me’am Lo’ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 40.

743. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me’am Lo’ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 40.

744. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1158-1159.

745. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 161.

746. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1159.

747. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1159.

748. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 161.

Specifically, this (Radak) refers to the gentile nations who will gather outside the gates of Jerusalem for the final war of Gog and Magog. Their tumult will resemble the mighty roar of the river torrent, as the prophet declares:⁷⁴⁹

*Now, therefore, behold my Lord raises up against them the waters of the river, powerful and abundant the king of Assyria and his splendor, and he shall overflow all his channels and overwhelm all his banks.*⁷⁵⁰

Rivers raised their voices

נְשֹׂאוּ נְהָרוֹת קוֹלָם

Rivers is a metaphor for the enemy hordes who seek to sweep Israel away. They raise their voices and threaten Israel with extinction (Rashi).⁷⁵¹

It has repeatedly occurred in history that powerful nations hostile to God's supremacy have noisily raised their voices.⁷⁵²

Rivers shall raise their destructiveness

יִשְׂאוּ נְהָרוֹת דְּכִיָּם:

The term **דכי** connotes degradation and a submissive spirit. The waves rush towards the shore where they are smashed and forced to recede shamefaced. Similarly, *All Your billows משבריך and Your waves are gone over me*⁷⁵³ conveys a break-up **שברון**.⁷⁵⁴

The word **דכים** derives from **דכא**, broken, shattered. The enemy nations will raise up their forces to crash against Israel in an effort to shatter our nation (Radak).⁷⁵⁵

The form **דכי** or **דְּכִי**, from which **דכים** is derived, is an intransitive Kal form and indicates a blow, not given to another, but sustained by oneself. It is the state or condition of **דך**. Water will roar only if it strikes some resistance, or if it plunges down from some height. The thought of Verse 3 briefly, is as follows: Falls are the noisiest torrents of all. True, nations, have also lifted up their voices against God, loud and roaring, but even as the noisy roaring of floods precedes the phenomenon of a water fall, so the “lifting up” of the nations’s voices is only a prelude to their decline.⁷⁵⁶

749. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1159.

750. *Isaiah* 8:7.

751. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1159.

752. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 161.

753. *Psalms* 42:8.

754. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 41.

755. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1159.

756. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms* Book Three, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 162.

Some say that the verse speaks figuratively of God and Magog, the two kings who will gather to wage war against Jerusalem. They will come rushing like mighty rivers that roar as they come. The sound of marching armies is likened to the sound of water; as it was said prophetically about the king of Assyria,

*Now therefore, behold the Lord brings upon them the waters of the river, strong and abundant.*⁷⁵⁷

The present verse says that those nations will lift up their voice and their roaring against the people of Israel.⁷⁵⁸

In the time of God and Magog, when they come together to wage war against Jerusalem, their roaring will be as the roaring at the time of the destruction of the First and Second Temples. They roared at the destruction of the First Temple; as it says,

*They have made a noise in the House of the Lord, as in the appointed day of assembly.*⁷⁵⁹

There was also roaring at the destruction of the Second Temple, as it says,⁷⁶⁰

*Your adversaries have roared in the midst of Your meeting place.*⁷⁶¹

More than the roars of many waters

מְקוֹלוֹת מַיִם רַבִּים

You, O God, are above the sounds of great waters, i.e., the threatening cries of the hostile nations who wish to drown us.⁷⁶²

Mightier than the waves of the sea

אֲדִירִים מִשִּׁבְּרֵי יָם

You [O God,] are stronger than the *powerful breakers of the sea*, i.e., the mighty forces of evil among the nations who wish to crush us.⁷⁶³

Majestic on high is Hashem

אֲדִיר בְּמָרוֹם יְיָ

757. *Isaiah* 8:7.

758. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 41.

759. *Lamentations* 2:7.

760. Shmuel Yerushalmi, *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 41.

761. *Psalms* 74:4.

762. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1159.

763. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1160.

[The Roman Emperor] Hadrian tried to learn how the waters praise the Holy One, Blessed is He. He put men into glass chests and lowered the chests into the ocean. When the divers came up, they reported: ‘We have heard the waters of the ocean sing the praise of the Holy One, Blessed is He, saying, “You are mighty on high, Hashem.”’⁷⁶⁴

God dwells “above,” beyond human perception, in a lofty realm that is higher than man’s comprehension. However, due to the *voices of many waters, the mighty breakers of the sea*, it is made known to everyone that the Lord on high is mighty. God is overwhelmingly powerful in His realm on high.⁷⁶⁵

Your decrees are indeed enduring

עֲדֹתֶיךָ נְאֻמָּנוּ מֵאֲדָם

Thy testimonies, among which the Sabbath stands out first and foremost, are infinitely faithful. They accompany the individual throughout his stay on earth, through all the changes life may bring, and serve as faithful companions to all of mankind throughout the centuries.⁷⁶⁶

Your trustworthy prophets have attested to the truth of Your promise to rebuild Your House (i.e. the Holy Temple) and to fill it with the proper sanctity (Rashi; Radak).⁷⁶⁷

Holiness befits Your house

לְבֵיתֶךָ נְאֻוָּה קֹדֶשׁ

In truth, Thy house is deserving of the designation of “sanctuary,” for the Law to which it is consecrated, and the spirit which is nurtured there, prove its sanctifying power in our lives. It elevates us above all that is base and ignoble, and constantly inspires and strengthens us so that we may do that which is good and true.⁷⁶⁸

True, the fascinating and wondrous sounds of nature attest to the power of the Creator. Yet, if one only hears God in the *sounds of the great waters*, he fails to sense the immediacy of the Divine Presence. When the Temple is rebuilt, however, God’s sacred presence will be manifested so miraculously that it will become evident that God’s holiness pervades every inch of this earth. This *sanctity* thus *befits* God, for it displays His Omnipresence (Malbim).

According to this interpretation, the word **נְאֻוָּה** is, synonymous with **נְאֻוָּה**, befitting,

764. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1160.

765. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me’am Lo’ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 42.

766. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 163.

767. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1161.

768. Samuel Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Psalms Book Three*, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1997, p. 163.

pleasing. Radak, however, translates **נאווה** as cognate with **תאווה**, desire. He renders: In the future, all men will desire that Your house be filled with sanctity for all time.⁷⁶⁹

Hashem for all days

יְיָ לְאָרְךָ יָמִים:

This psalm closes with a plea that when the exceedingly trustworthy prophecies about the Third Temple are finally fulfilled, may it stand *for lengthy days*, i.e. *for all time* (Radak).

Regarding the Days of the Messiah, the Singer says:⁷⁷⁰ *Your testimonies are very sure.* The testimonies of the prophets attesting to Your Kingship, will then be vindicated. No man will doubt it. *Holiness becomes Your House, O Lord, for all the length of days.* Everyone will then yearn for Your House; as it says,

*The mountain of the Lord's House will be established on the top of the mountains, and it will be exalted above the hills; and all the peoples will flow into it.*⁷⁷¹

Thus he also says there,

*All flesh will come to bow down to the ground before Me, says the Lord.*⁷⁷²

In his commentary to 91:1, Radak cites the view of Midrash Shocher Tov that Moses dedicated this psalm to the tribe of Benjamin, which dwelled in the shelter of Hashem, the King of the world. The Holy Temple, Beis HaMikdash was built on the territory of Benjamin, in fulfillment of Moses' farewell blessing to this tribe.⁷⁷³

*Beloved of Hashem! he shall dwell in security near Him, He shall cover him all the time, and he shall dwell between His shoulders.*⁷⁷⁴

769. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1161.

770. Shmuel Yerushalmi, Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, *The Book of Tehillim IV*, Moznaim Publishing Corp. New York, 1991, p. 43.

771. *Isaiah* 2:2.

772. *Isaiah* 66:23.

773. Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, New York, 2001, p. 1161.

774. *Deuteronomy* 33:12.

The Secret of Shabbat

רָזָא דְשַׁבַּת, אִיהִי שַׁבַּת דְּאִתְאַחַדַת בְּרָזָא דְאַחַד, לְמִשְׁרֵי עֲלָה רָזָא
דְאַחַד, צְלוּתָא דְמַעְלֵי שַׁבַּתָא, דְהָא אִתְאַחַדַת כּוּרְסִיָא יְקִירָא
קְדִישָׁא בְרָזָא דְאַחַד, וְאִתְתַּקְנַת לְמִשְׁרֵי עֲלָה מְלַכָּא קְדִישָׁא עֲלָה,
כַּד עֵיל שַׁבַּתָא, אִיהִי אִתְיַחַדַת וְאִתְפְּרַשַׁת מְסֻטְרָא אַחְרָא. וְכָל דִּינִין
מִתְעַבְרִין מִנָּה, וְאִיהִי אֲשַׁתְּאֲרַת בְּיַחוּדָא דְנְהִירוֹ קְדִישָׁא, וְאִתְעַטְרַת
בְּכַמָּה עֲטָרִין, לְגַבֵּי מְלַכָּא קְדִישָׁא. וְכָל שׁוּלְטָנֵי רוּגְזִין וּמְאִרֵי דְדִינָא
בְּלָהוּ עֲרֻקִין, וְאִתְעַבְרוּ מִנָּה. וְלִית שׁוּלְטָנָא עֲלָה אַחְרָא בְּכָלְהוּ
עֲלָמִין (בַּר מְנָה). וְאַנְפָּהָא נְהִירִין בְּנְהִירוֹ עֲלָה, וְאִתְעַטְרַת לְתַתָּא
בְּעַמָּא קְדִישָׁא. וְכָלְהוּן מִתְעַטְרִין בְּנִשְׁמָתִין חֲדָתִין. כַּדִּין שִׁירוּתָא
דְצְלוּתָא, לְבִרְכָא לָהּ בְּחֻדְוָה בְּנְהִירוֹ דְאַנְפִּין.

The secret of Shabbat: On Shabbat She is united within the secret of Oneness so that the supernal mystery of Oneness may rest upon her.

[This takes place during the Maariv] Prayer for the entrance of Shabbat , for then the Holy Throne of Glory merges into the mystery of Oneness and is ready for the Holy transcendent King to rest upon it. As Shabbat arrives, She merges into Oneness and is separated from the other side and all strict judgments are severed from her. And she remains unified in holy radiance, adorned with many crowns for the Holy King. Then all powers of wrath and all adversaries flee from her and vanish and no other power reigns in any of the worlds. Her face shines with supernal radiance and she is adorned below by the holy people, all of whom are adorned with new souls. Then the beginning of the prayer is to bless her with joy and beaming faces.⁷⁷⁵

775. Zohar 135a-b.

The Secret of Shabbat: Commentary

The secret of Shabbat is a short Zohar commentary on the Shechinah.

There are many ways by which we refer to God. When we refer to God in His aspect of immanence, being present in our world and giving life to all things, we use the term Shechinah, whose literal meaning is the indwelling presence of God. By contrast, when we refer to God in His aspect of transcendent creator of the cosmos, being absolutely beyond existence and all things, we use the term The Holy One, blessed be He, or God, King of the universe. These two ways of reference are two open and wide windows by which we can think about God. They are different terms for the same One God. In kabbalah, the God immanent is feminine and God transcendent is masculine.

The Shechinah, the indwelling, immanent light of the Creator, is always present in our world. But especially during the weekdays, we may not be conscious of it. So for us the Shechinah is in exile. When Shabbat comes and we turn our thoughts away from the mundane, away from work, away from business and transactions, we can become more conscious of the Shechinah, the indwelling presence of God. We ritualize this through the ceremony of the Kabbalat Shabbat service. We welcome the Queen of Shabbat, the Shechinah into our consciousness.

This is the secret of Shabbat: that we can effect a shift of consciousness in ourselves so that in each of us the Shechinah can rest in the supernal mystery of the Oneness of God, as the Shechinah returns from its exile. In our exile of the Shechinah, the Shechinah becomes attached to the other side, attached to the Klippahs of materialism, money, judgment and ego, all of which are necessary to be successful in our weekday work. Therefore, the Zohar tells us that on Shabbat, the Shechinah separates herself from the other side and separates herself from the particulars of judgments the judgments that cause separation. Non judgmental consciousness promotes unity. But in work we must judge, we must separate and this shatters any possibility for us to be aware of the Supernal Oneness.

Therefore on Shabbat, when the Shechinah is separated from Klippahs, we can

become more aware of the immanence of God. The Shechinah is unified in holy radiance and adorned with many crowns for the Holy King. This unifying which occurs below initiates a unifying above. And in this Oneness, there is a wedding celebration: She marries and couples with the Holy King. The coupling brings about the additional souls that accompany each of us during the Shabbat. Thus she is adorned above and we are adorned below.

**Acrylic on Canvas, 90 by 60 cm
2008, Abigail Sarah Bagraim**



The Sabbath Queen

