

**CAN YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS?**

1. Under what circumstances does the Torah demand that a person should rely upon his own judgement and rational faculties?
2. Under what circumstances does the Torah deem a person's judgment to be limited and unreliable?
3. What is the Torah's view of human progress?
4. What was the Enlightenment's view regarding the brotherhood of mankind? What is the Torah's view?
5. Are all the virtuous members of humanity guaranteed a portion in the World to Come? Explain.

This and much more will be addressed in the fifth lecture of this series:  
**"The Enlightenment and Emancipation"**

To derive maximum benefit from this lecture, keep these questions in mind as you listen to the lecture and read through the outline. Go back to these questions once again at the end of the lecture and see how well you answer them.

PLEASE NOTE: This outline and source book were designed as a powerful tool to help you appreciate and understand the basis of Jewish History. Although the lectures can be listened to without the use of the outline, we advise you to read the outline to enhance your comprehension. Use it, as well, as a handy reference guide and for quick review.

**This lecture is dedicated to the memory and *Li-ilui Nishmas***

ר' חיים דוד בן הרב פרץ ע"ה

**Mr. David Weiss of blessed memory.**

THE EPIC OF THE ETERNAL PEOPLE  
Presented by Rabbi Shmuel Irons

Series XVIII Lecture #5

THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND EMANCIPATION

I. Reason and Natural Law

A.

לְבַד רָאָה זֶה מִצָּאתִי אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם יָשָׁר וְהֵמָּה בִקְשׁוּ חֲשִׁבֹנוֹת רַבִּים: קהלת ז:כט (1)

Behold, only this have I found, that G-d has made man upright; but they have sought out many schemes. **Ecclesiastes 7:29**

לא נבראו בני אדם להיות רשעים אלא צדיקים וכן הוא אומר (קהלת ז כט) לבד ראה זה מצאתי אשר עשה האל-להים את האדם ישר והמה בקשו חשבונות רבים. ספרי דברים פסקא שז

Mankind was not created in order that they turn into evil creatures but rather in order for them to become righteous individuals. Similarly it is stated in Scripture (Ecclesiastes 7:29) "Behold, only this have I found, that G-d has made man upright; but they have sought out many schemes." **Sifrei Devarim Piska 307**

ראה זה מצאתי אשר עשה האל-להים את האדם ישר (קהלת ז) לא בראו הקב"ה שנקרא צדיק וישר את האדם בצלמו אלא כדי להיות צדיק וישר כמוהו. מדרש תנחומא (ורשא) בראשית סימן ז (3)

"Behold, only this have I found, that G-d has made man upright; but they have sought out many schemes." (Ecclesiastes 7:29) The Holy One, blessed be He, who is referred to as being "righteous and upright" (Deuteronomy 32:4), solely created man for the purpose of becoming righteous and upright like Himself. **Midrash Tanchuma Parshas Bereishis 7**

B.

אמר רבי יוחנן: אילמלא לא ניתנה תורה היינו למידין צניעות מחתול וגזל מנמלה ועריות מיונה. דרך ארץ מתרנגול שמפייס ואחר כך בועל. עירובין ק:

R. Yohanan observed: If the Torah had not been given, we could have learned modesty from the cat, honesty from the ant, chastity from the dove, and good manners from the rooster who first coaxes and then mates. **Eirubin 100b**

תנו רבנן: (ויקרא יח) את משפטי תעשו דברים שאלמלא כתבו דין הוא שיכתבו ואלו הן: עבודה זרה וגלוי עריות ושפיכות דמים וגזל וברכת השם. ואת חקתי תשמרו דברים שהשטן ואומות העולם משיבים עליהן ואלו הן: אכילת חזיר ולבישת שעטנז וחליצת יבמה וטהרת מצורע ושעיר המשתלח. ושמא תאמר מעשה תוהו הם תלמוד לומר (ויקרא יח) אני ד' אני ד' חקתיו ואין לך רשות להרהר בהן. יומא סז: (2)

Our Rabbis taught: "You shall do my judgments," (Leviticus 18:4) refers to such commandments which, if they were not written [in Scripture], they should by right have been written and these are they: [the laws concerning] idolatry [star-worship], immorality and bloodshed, robbery and blasphemy. "And keep my ordinances," (ibid.) refers to such commandments to which Satan objects, they are [those relating to] the putting on of sha'atnez, the halizah [performed] by a sister-in-law, the purification of the leper, and the he-goat-to-be-sent-away. And perhaps you might think these are vain things, therefore Scripture says: "I am the L-rd," (ibid.) i.e., I, the L-rd, have made it a statute and you have no right to criticize it. **Yoma 67b**

(3) למה לי (לא צריך) קרא סברא הוא. פסחים כא, כתובות כב, ב"ק מו, גדה כה:

There is no need for Scripture to teach us this, as the matter can be derived logically. **Pesachim 21b, Kesubos 22a, Bava Kama 46b, Nidah 25b**

(4) כל המצות שהן תלויין בסברא ובאובנתא דליבא כבר הכל מתחייבים בהן מן היום אשר ברא א-להים אדם על הארץ עליו ועל זרעו אחריו לדורי דורים. הקדמה לפי רבינו נסים גאון על התלמוד

From the very day of G-d's creation, all of mankind has been expected to fulfill all those commandments (mitzvos) which can be derived through reason and logical intuition (lit. understanding of the heart). It was incumbent upon Adam to fulfill them as well as upon all his descendants for all generations. **Preface to Rabbainu Nissim's Commentary to the Talmud**

(5) ודאי מי שנשבע לאחר. זה הסברא מכרעת שמחוייב לקיים וא"צ לזה שום אזהרה והיינו שבועת אברהם ויצחק ואליעזר כו' וה"ה הנשבע להקב"ה. שו"ת אבני נזר חלק יו"ד סימן שו

In a case of one person swearing [to uphold some commitment] to another, reason dictates that he is required to fulfill his oath. There is certainly no need for there to be any explicit commandment [to fulfill the oath]. This was the case with the oaths of Avraham, Yitzchak, Eliezer, etc. and it equally applies when one makes an oath to the Holy One, blessed be He. **Teshuvav Avnei Nezer Yoreh Deah 306**

C. I place my full and unreserved trust in G-d, who, in His omnipotence, *could* endow man with the faculty to discover for himself, independent of the dictum of the authority, those truths that constitute the basis for human salvation. And I feel a child's confidence in Him who, in His lovingkindness, *would* endow man with this faculty. Fortified by this unfaltering faith, I seek enlightenment, and through it [a reasoned] conviction, wherever I may find them. And - praised be my Creator's saving grace and goodness! - I think I have found both. Moreover, I am sure that any man can find them if only he undertakes his search with open eyes instead of shielding them from all rays of light. **Mendelssohn, pamphlet written shortly before his death entitled, Lessing's Friends**

D. I recognize no eternal verities but those that can be grasped by the human reason and demonstrated as well as validated by the human intellect. . . . In Judaism there is no conflict between religion and reason, no revolt of natural cognition against suppression by faith. Judaism has no revealed religion in the Christian interpretation of the term. It has Divine laws, commandments, precepts, maxims, instructions about the will of G-d, but it has no dogmas, no doctrines, no universal truths. These the Eternal revealed to the Israelites in the same manner as He does to all other men - by nature and fact, never by word or letter. **Gessamelte Schriften Vol. III p. 164**

## II. The Limitations of Reason

## A

(1) לֹא תִטֶּה מִשְׁפָּט לֹא תִכְיֶר פְּנִים וְלֹא תִקַּח שֹׁחַד כִּי הַשֹּׁחַד יְעוֹר עֵינֵי חֲכָמִים וְיִסְלֹף דְּבָרֵי צְדִיקִים: דברים טז:א

You shall not pervert judgment; you shall not respect persons, nor take a bribe; for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise, and perverts the words of the righteous. **Deuteronomy 16:19**

(2) אמר רבא: מאי טעמא דשוחדא כיון דקביל ליה שוחדא מיניה איקרבא ליה דעתיה לגביה והוי כגופיה ואין אדם רואה חובה לעצמו. מאי שוחד שהוא חד. א"ר פפא: לא לידון איניש דינא למאן דרחים ליה ולא למאן דסני ליה לא חזי ליה חובה דסני ליה לא חזי ליה זכותא. ת"ר: (שמות כ"ג) ושוחד לא תקח אינו צריך לומר שוחד ממון אלא אפילו שוחד דברים נמי אסור מדלא כתיב בצע לא תקח. היכי דמי שוחד דברים כי הא דשמואל הוה עבר במברא אתא ההוא גברא יהיב ליה ידיה אמר ליה: מאי עבידתיך אמר ליה: דינא אית לי א"ל: פסילנא לך לדינא. אממר הוה יתיב וקא דאין דינא פרח גדפא ארישיה אתא ההוא גברא שקליה א"ל: מאי עבידתיך א"ל: דינא אית לי אמר ליה: פסילנא לך לדינא. כתובות קה:

Rava stated: What is the reason for [the prohibition against taking] a gift? Because as soon as a man receives a gift from another he becomes so well disposed towards him that he becomes like his own person, and no man sees himself in the wrong. What [is the meaning of] shohad? She-hu had (he becomes as one). R. Papa said: A man should not act as a judge either for one whom he loves or for one whom he hates; for no man can see the guilt of one whom he loves or the merit of one whom he hates. . . . Our Rabbis taught: And you shall take no gift (bribe); (Exodus 23:8) there was no need to speak of [the prohibition of] a gift of money, but [this was meant:] Even a bribe of words is also forbidden, for Scripture does not write, "And you shall take no gain." What is to be understood by, "a bribe of words"? As the bribe offered to Shmuel. He was once crossing [a river] on a [rickety] bridge when a man came up and offered him his hand. "What," [Shmuel] asked him, "is your business here?" "I have a lawsuit," the other replied. He responded, "I am disqualified from serving as a judge in your suit." Amemar was once engaged in a trial when a bird's feather landed down upon his head. Thereupon, a man approached him and removed it. "What is your business here?" [Amemar] asked him. "I have a lawsuit," the other replied. He responded, "I am disqualified from serving as a judge in your suit." **Kesubos 105b**

## B.

(1) תנו רבנן: הרואה אוכלוסי ישראל אומר: ברוך חכם הרזים. שאין דעתם דומה זה לזה, ואין פרצופיהן דומים זה לזה. ברכות נח.

Our Rabbis taught: If one sees a crowd of Jews, he says, Blessed is He who discerns secrets, for the mind of each is different from that of the other, just as the face of each is different from that of the other. **Berachos 58a**

(2) דעתו של אדם קצרה ולא כל הדעות יכולין להשיג האמת על בוריו, ואם ימשך כל אדם אחר מחשבות לבו נמצא מחריב את העולם לפי קוצר דעתו. . . . רמב"ם הלכות עבודת כוכבים פרק ב הלכה ג

The mind of a person is limited and not all minds are capable of grasping the truth in all its clarity. If a man were to be drawn to wherever his heart leads him, he would destroy the world due to the limitations of his intellect. . . . **Rambam, Hilchos Avodah Zarah, Chapter 2:3.**

(3) ותכלית היות האדם לצייר לנפשו המושכלות. ואם כן מדוע המציא הקב"ה כל האנשים אשר לא יציירו מושכל לנפשם. ואנו רואים שרוב בני אדם ערומים מן הערמה וריקים מן החכמה מבקשים התאוה. ושהאיש החכם המואס בעולם הוא יחיד בין רבים. הקדמה לפירוש המשניות להרמב"ם

The purpose of man's existence is to impress upon his spirit the intellectual truths. If so, why did the Holy One, blessed be He, produce all those people would don't do this. In fact, we see that most people are deficient intellectually and are bereft of wisdom and desire pleasure. Rare is the man of intelligence who despises the pleasures of this world. **Preface to Rambam's Commentary of the Mishna**

### III. The Torah and Human Progress

#### A.

כל הנאמר בנבואה ממעשה מרכבה ומעשה בראשית והמקובל בהם לחכמים תולדות עם ארבע הכתות שבתחתונים כח המחצבים וכח צמח האדמה ונפש התנועה והנפש המדברת, בכלם נאמר למשה רבינו בריאתם וכחותם ומהותם ומעשיהם ואפיסת הנפסדים מהם, והכל נכתב בתורה בפירוש או ברמז וכבר אמרו רבותינו חמשים שערי בינה נבראו בעולם וכלם נמסרו למשה חוץ מאחד שנאמר ותחסרהו מעט מא-להים. . . . ואפשר שיהיה השער הזה בידיעת הבורא יתב' שלא נמסר לנברא. . . . וכל הנמסר למשה רבינו בשערי הבינה הכל נכתב בתורה בפירוש או שרמוזה בתיבות או בגימטריאות או בצורת האותיות הכתובות כהלכתן או המשתנות בצורה כגון הלפופות והעקומות וזולתן או בקוצי האותיות ובכתריהם. הקדמה לפירוש הרמב"ן על התורה

All that is contained in the Prophetic works regarding *Maaseh Merkavah* (the Divine Chariot in the Book of Ezekiel) and *Maaseh Beraishis* (the secrets of Creation) and that which is accepted to be true by the sages: that which is produced by the four groups in the lower world, i.e. mineral, plant, the animal soul, and human soul, their potential, their essence, their actions and the negation of those things that harm them, were all taught to Moshe Rabbainu and were all written in the Torah, either expressly or subtly. Our Sages have already stated (Rosh Hashanah 21b) that fifty gates of understanding were created in the world and all of them were given over to Moshe with the exception of only one, as it is stated (Psalms 8:6), "For you have made him a little lower than G-d." . . . It is possible that this [fiftieth] gate is referring to the knowledge of the blessed Creator, which was not given over to any created being. . . . All the knowledge that is contained within these gates of wisdom that was given to Moshe Rabbainu was written in the Torah expressly or through hints through words or *gematrias* or through the form of the letters, both those written normally or abnormally, or through the protrusions or crowns on the letters. **Preface to the commentary of the Ramban to the Torah**

#### B.

והכלל כי כל מה שהיה והוה ויהיה עד עולם הכל כלול בתורה מבראשית עד לעיני כל ישראל ולא הכללים בלבד אלא אפילו פרטיו של כל מין ומין ושל כל אדם בפרט וכל מה שאירע לו מיום הולדו עד סופו וכל גלגוליו וכל פרטי פרטיו וכן של כל בהמה וחיה וכל בעל חי שבעולם וכל עשב וצומח ודומם וכל פרטיהם פרטי פרטיהם בכל מין ומין ואישי המינים, ומה שיאירע להם ושרשם וכן כל מה שכתוב באבות ומשה וישראל כלם הן בכל דור ודור שכולם מתגלגלים ניצוצותיהם בכל דור ודור כידוע, וכן כל מעשיהם מאדם הראשון עד סוף התורה הוא בכל דור ודור כידוע למבין, וכן הוא בכל אדם ואדם לבד. באור הגר"א לספרא דצניעותא פרק ה'

It is a fundamental principle that all that is, was and will be for eternity is included in the Torah from *Beraishis* until *L'Ainei Kol Yisrael*. Not just the general pattern, but even the particulars of every specie and every individual person, every event from the day he was born until the day he dies, all of his reincarnations and all his particulars. This equally applies to every domesticated and wild animal and any living creature in the world and every grass and form of vegetation. Similarly, all that is written regarding the Patriarchs and Moshe and [Klal] Yisrael is all repeated throughout every generation, for the sparks of their spirituality are incarnated in every generation. Similarly, every act which is recorded from the time of Adam until the end of the Torah is actually recurring in every generation, as an astute person knows. It also occurs to every single person as well. **The Gaon's Commentary to Sifra D'Tzniusa, Chapter 5**

C.

(1) אמר רבי יוחנן: לבן של ראשונים כפתחו של אולם ושל אחרונים כפתחו של היכל ואנו כמלא נקב מחט סידקית. ראשונים רבי עקיבא אחרונים רבי אלעזר בן שמוע. איכא דאמרי: ראשונים רבי אלעזר בן שמוע אחרונים רבי אושעיא בריבי. ואנו כמלא נקב מחט סידקית. אמר אביי: ואנן כי סיכתא בגודא לגמרא. אמר רבא: ואנן כי אצבעתא בקירא לסברא אמר רב אשי: אנן כי אצבעתא בבירא לשכחה. עירובין נג.

R. Yohanan further stated: The hearts of the ancients were like the door of the Ulam (the hallway of the Temple whose doorway was 40 cubits tall and 20 cubits wide), but that of the last generations was like the door of the Heikhal (the main building of the Temple whose doorway was 20 cubits tall and 10 cubits wide), but ours is like the eye of a fine needle. R. Akiva is classed among the ancients; R. Eleazar b. Shammua among the last generations. Others say: R. Eleazar b. Shammua is classed among the ancients and R. Oshaia Beribi among the last generations. But ours is like the eye of a fine needle. And we, said Abaye, are like a peg in a wall in respect of Gemara. And we, said Rava, are like a finger in wax as regards logical argument. We, said R. Ashi, are like a finger in a pit as regards forgetfulness. **Eiruvin 53a**

(2) אמר רבי זירא אמר רבא בר זימונא: אם ראשונים בני מלאכים אנו בני אנשים ואם ראשונים בני אנשים אנו כחמורים ולא כחמורו של רבי חנינא בן דוסא ושל רבי פנחס בן יאיר אלא כשאר חמורים. שבת קיב:

R. Zera said in Raba b. Zimuna's name: If the earlier [scholars] were sons of angels, we are sons of men; and if the earlier [scholars] were sons of men, we are like donkeys, and not [even] like the donkeys of R. Hanina b. Dosa and R. Phinehas b. Jair, but like regular donkeys. **Shabbos 112b**

D. I, for my part, have no concept of the education of humanity. . . . Progress is for the individual human being whom Providence has destined to pass a portion of his eternity on earth. . . . But that also the whole, humanity here below, should, in the course of time, ever move forward and perfect itself, this, it seems to me, was not the intent of Providence. . . . **Jerusalem Gesammelte Schriften III 317-318**

## IV. The Intellect and the Heart

A.

אמר רבי יצחק: מאי דכתיב (ישעיהו ל"ג) איה ספר איה שקל איה ספר את המגדלים איה ספר כל אותיות שבתורה איה שקל ששוקל כל קלים וחמורים שבתורה איה ספר את המגדלים שהיה סופר שלש מאות הלכות פסוקות במגדל הפורה באויר. אמר רבי: ארבע מאה בעייתא בעו דואג ואחיתופל במגדל הפורה באויר [ולא איפשט להו חד]. אמר רבא: רבותא למבעי בעיי בשני דרב יהודה כולי תנויי בניקיין ואנן קא מתנינן טובא בעוקצין. וכי הוה מטי רב יהודה אשה שכוּבשת ירק בקדירה ואמרי לה זיתים שכבשן בטרפיהן טהורים אמר: הויות דרב ושמואל קא חזינא הכא. ואנן קא מתנינן בעוקצין תלת סרי מתיבתא ורב יהודה שליף מסאני ואתא מטרא ואנן צוחינן וליכא דמשגח בן. אלא הקדוש ברוך הוא ליבא בעי דכתיב (שמואל א' ט"ז) וד' יראה ללבב. סנהדרין קו:

R. Yitzchak said: What is meant by the verse (Isaiah 33:18), "Where is the enumerator, where is the weigher! Where is he that counted the towers!" Where is he who enumerated all the letters of the Torah? Where is he who weighed all the light [comparatively unimportant] and heavy [important] [precepts] of the Torah [in order to logically infer one from the other]? Where is he that counted the towers refers to he who counted three hundred fixed laws on a "tower flying (or standing) in the air" [regarding its halachic status]. R. Ammi said: Doeg and Ahitophel propounded four hundred problems with respect to a tower flying (or standing) in the air, and not one was solved. Rava observed: Is there any greatness in propounding problems? In the years of Rav Yehudah the whole study was confined to Nezikin (the laws of torts and civil law), while we study a great deal even of "Uktzin"; but when Rav Yehudah came to the law, "If a woman preserves vegetables in a pot" or as others say, "olives which were preserved with their leaves are ritually clean," he observed, I see here [that this is a subject worthy of] the discussion of Rav and Shmuel. We, on the other hand, have studied Uktzin in thirteen versions (or at thirteen academies), yet Rav Yehudah merely took off his shoes, and the rain came down, while we cry out [in supplication] but there is none to heed us. But it is because the Holy One, blessed be He, requires the heart, as it is written (Samuel I 16:7), "But the L-rd looks into the heart." **Sanhedrin 106b**

B.

(1) תניא: (דברים י"א) לאהבה את ד' א-להיכם ולעבדו בכל לבבכם איזו היא עבודה שהיא בלב הוי אומר זו תפלה. תענית ב.

It has been taught: To love the L-rd your G-d and to serve Him with all your heart. (Deuteronomy 11:13) What is meant by "service of the heart"? This refers to prayer. **Taanis 2a**

(2) עבדו אֶת ד' בְּשִׂמְחָה בְּאוֹרְפְּנֵי בְּרִנָּה: תהלים קיב

Serve the L-rd with joy; come before His presence with singing. **Psalms 100:2**

(3) אין שכינה שורה לא מתוך עצבות ולא מתוך עצלות ולא מתוך שחוק ולא מתוך קלות ראש ולא מתוך שיחה ולא מתוך דברים בטלים, אלא מתוך דבר שמחה של מצוה, שנאמר (מלכים ב:ג) ועתה קחו לי מנגן והיה כנגן המנגן ותהי עליו יד ד'. אמר רב יהודה: וכן לדבר הלכה. שבת ל:

The Divine Presence rests [upon] man] neither through gloom, nor through sloth, nor through frivolity, nor through levity, nor through talk, nor through idle chatter, only through a matter of

joy in connection with a precept, as it is said (Kings II 3:15), “But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the L-rd came upon him.” Rav Yehudah said: And it is likewise thus for a matter of halachah. **Shabbos 30b**

C.

תּוֹרַת ד' תְּמִימָה מְשִׁיבַת נֶפֶשׁ עֲדוּת ד' נֶאֱמָנָה מְחַכֵּמַת פְּתִי: פְּקוּדֵי ד' יִשְׂרָאֵל מְשִׁמְחֵי לֵב מִצְוֹת ד' בְּרָה מְאִירַת עֵינַיִם: יִרְאַת ד' | טְהוֹרָה עוֹמְדַת לְעַד מְשִׁפְטֵי ד' אֵמֶת צְדָקוֹ יַחֲדוּ: הַנְּחַמְדִּים מְזַהֵב וּמְפַז רַב וּמְתוֹקִים מְדַבֵּשׁ וְנֹפֶת צוּפִים: תְּהִלִּים יֵט-ח-יֵא

The Torah of the L-rd is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the L-rd is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the L-rd are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the L-rd is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the L-rd is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the L-rd are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even very fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. **Psalms 19:8-11**

D.

אֶהְבֵּת עוֹלָם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ אֶהְבֵּת. תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים אוֹתָנוּ לְמַדְתָּ. עַל כֵּן ד' א-לֵהֲיִנוּ בְּשִׂכְבְּנוּ וּבְקוּמָנוּ נִשְׁיַח בְּחֻקֶיךָ. וְנִשְׂמַח בְּדַבְרֵי תוֹרָתְךָ וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד: כִּי הֵם חַיֵּינוּ וְאֶרְךְ יָמֵינוּ וּבְהֵם נִהְגָּה יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה: תְּפִלַּת מְעִרֵיב

Your love of Your people, Israel, is eternal, [for] You have taught us Torah, commandments, statutes and laws. Therefore, Hashem (the L-rd), our G-d, we will speak of your statutes when we lay down and when we arise and we will rejoice in the words of Your Torah and commandments for ever, for they are our very life and the length of our days and we will ponder upon them day and night. **Evening Prayer**

E. If you but knew that we have just had eight holidays during which, as you know, one does not feel inclined to do anything except to be depressed. . . . **Letter to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Berlin. April 29, 1757, Gessamelte Schriften Vol. V p. 89**

F. I rejoice in every religious custom which does not lead to intolerance and misanthropy; rejoice, like my children, in every ceremony that has something true and good for its basis; endeavor, as far as possible, to eliminate the false and abolish nothing until I am able to replace its good effect by something better. **Letter to Sophie Becker, an intimate friend and admirer, written shortly before his death (Jan. 4 1786). Gessamelte Schriften Vol. V p. 648-649**

V. The Brotherhood and Destiny of Mankind

A.

לפִּיכֶךְ נִבְרָא אָדָם יְחִידִי . . . מִפְּנֵי שְׁלוֹ הַבְּרִיּוֹת שֶׁלֹּא יֵאמַר אָדָם לְחַבִּירוֹ אֲבָא גְדוֹל מֵאֲבִיךָ . . . סְנֵהֲדֵרִין לִּו.

The reason that only a single man was created . . . was in order to maintain harmony amongst humankind so that no one can say to his fellow man, “My ancestor was greater than your’s. **Sanhedrin 37a**



B.

(1) כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא שנאמר (ישעיהו ס) ועמך כלם צדיקים לעולם יירשו ארץ נצר מטעי מעשה ידי להתפאר. . . . ארבעה הדיוטות [אין להם חלק לעולם הבא]: בלעם ודואג ואחיתופל, וגחזי. סנהדרין צ.

All of Israel has a portion in the World to Come, as it says (Isaiah 60:21), "Your people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified." . . . The following four commoners don't have a portion in the World to Come, "Balaam, Doeg, Ahitophel, and Gehazi." **Sanhedrin 90a**

(2) בלעם הוא דלא אתי לעלמא דאתי הא אחריני אתו. מתניתין מני רבי יהושע היא. דתניא רבי אליעזר אומר: (תהלים ט') ישובו רשעים לשאולה כל גוים שכחי א-להים, ישובו רשעים לשאולה אלו פושעי ישראל כל גוים שכחי א-להים אלו פושעי גוים דברי רבי אליעזר. אמר לו רבי יהושע: וכי נאמר בכל גוים והלא לא נאמר אלא כל גוים שכחי א-להים. אלא: (תהלים ט') ישובו רשעים לשאולה מאן נינהו כל גוים שכחי א-להים. סנהדרין קה.

Now [the Mishna states that regarding non-Jews] only Balaam will not enter [the future world], but [it can be inferred that] other [non-Jews] will enter. Who is the author of the Mishnah? R. Yehoshua. For it has been taught: R. Eliezer said, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget G-d:" (Psalms 9:17) "The wicked shall be turned into hell" is referring to transgressors among Israel; "and all the nations that forget G-d" is referring to non-Jews who are [generally] transgressors. This is R. Eliezer's view. But R. Yehoshua said to him: Is it stated, "and all of the nations"? Surely all the nations that forget G-d is written! But [interpret thus:] The wicked shall be turned into hell, and who are they? "all [those amongst] the nations that forget G-d." **Sanhedrin 105a**

C.

(1) תני רב יוסף: (חבקוק ג) עמד וימודד ארץ ראה ויתר גוים, מאי ראה? ראה ז' מצות שקבלו עליהן בני נח ולא קיימום, כיון שלא קיימום עמד והתירן להן. איתגורי איתגור? א"כ מצינו חוטא נשכך אמר מר בריה דרבינא: לומר, שאף על פי שמקיימין אותן אין מקבלין עליהם שכר. ולא והתניא, היה רבי מאיר אומר: מנין שאפילו עובד כוכבים ועוסק בתורה שהוא ככהן גדול תלמוד לומר: (ויקרא יח) אשר יעשה אותם האדם וחי בהם, כהנים לויים וישראלים לא נאמר אלא האדם, הא למדת, שאפילו עובד כוכבים ועוסק בתורה הרי הוא ככהן גדול אלא לומר לך שאין מקבלין עליהם שכר כמצווה ועושה אלא כמי שאינו מצווה ועושה דאמר ר' חנינא: גדול המצווה ועושה יותר משאינו מצווה ועושה. עבודה זרה ב:ג.

R. Yosef taught . "He stands, and shakes the earth; He beholds, and causes the nations to tremble (or loosens the nations); and the everlasting mountains are dashed in pieces, the everlasting hills bow; His ways are as of old." (Habakuk 3:6) What did He behold? He beheld that the nations did not observe even the seven precepts which the sons of Noah had taken upon themselves, and seeing that they did not observe them, He stood up and released them therefrom. Then they benefited by it; according to this it pays to be a sinner! Said Mar the son of Ravina: The release from those commands only means that even if they observed them they would not be rewarded. But why should they not? Is it not taught: R. Meir used to say. Wherefrom do we know that even a non-Jew who studies the Torah is equal to a High Priest? From the following verse: "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My ordinances which, if a man do, he shall live by them." (Leviticus 18:5) It does not say "If a Priest, Levite, or Israelite do, he shall live by them," but "a

man"; here, then, you can learn that even a non-Jew who studies the Torah is equal to a High Priest! What is meant, then, is that they are rewarded not as greatly as one who does a thing which he is bidden to do, but as one who does a thing unbidden. For, R. Hanina said: He who is commanded and does, stands higher than he who is not commanded and does. **Avodah Zarah 2b-3a**

(2) וחי בהם. לעולם הבא. שאם תאמר בעולם הזה והלא סופו הוא מת: רש"י לויקרא יח:ה

**“He shall live by them” (Leviticus 18:5)** This is referring to the life of the World to Come. If it would be referring to the life of this world, [it would be a very limited blessing] as we are destined to die. **Rashi to Leviticus 18:5**

D.

גר תושב הוא שקבל בב"ד של ישראל לקיים שבע מצות שנצטוו בני נח כדאיתא בע"א ובזה מותר להתיישב בינינו ולזה נקרא תושב. וכיון שקבלן בב"ד הוא נקרא בשבע מצות אלו מצווה ועושה וכי הא אנו מצווין להחיותו כדכתיב וחי אחיך עמך ואין צריך לומר שאסור לנו לגרום לו שום קטלה וכ"ש להורידו לבור. ובן נח הוא שלא קבלם בב"ד אלא דקים [לן] שמקיים אותם מעצמו והוא נדון במי שאינו מצווה ועושה מדכתיב עמד וימודד ארץ ראה ויתר גוים כדאיתא בב"ק וע"ז. וכי הא אין אנו מצווין להחיותו וגם אין לנו להורידו בידים ולא לגרום בו שום קטלה כיון דסוף סוף עושה אותם שאף שאינו מצווה ועושה שכר יש לו קצת כדאיתא התם. ריטב"א מכות ט.

A *Ger toshav* (a resident alien - or sojourner) is a person who, in the presence of a Jewish *Bais Din* (court) accepts upon himself the fulfillment of the seven *mitzvos* (commandments) that were commanded to Noah, as it is stated in the tractate *Avodah Zarah* (64b). Only after going through this rite is he granted the privilege to dwell in our midst. For this reason he is referred to as a *Ger Toshav* (a **resident** alien or sojourner). As soon as he has accepted upon himself the fulfillment of these seven *mitzvos*, he is considered vis-a-vis these *mitzvos* as a *metzuva v'osseh* (one who fulfills a *mitzva* which he is commanded to fulfill). We are required to provide support for such a person, as it says (Leviticus 25:35-36), “And if your brother has become poor, and his means fail with you; then you shall relieve him; though he may be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with you. Take no interest from him, or increase; but fear your G-d; that your brother may live with you.” It goes without saying that it is forbidden to indirectly cause him the loss of his life and most certainly one is not allowed to lower him into a pit. [and thus kill him directly]. A *Ben Noah* (a non-Jew) who has not accepted upon himself the fulfillment of the seven Noahide laws in the presence of a *Bais Din*, but of whom we are certain does fulfill those laws on his own, is considered to be of an equivalent status of an *aino metzuva v'osseh* (one who fulfills a *mitzva* which he was not commanded), as it is written (Habakuk 3:6) “He stands, and shakes the earth; He beholds, and causes the nations to tremble (or loosens the nations from their bond of the *mitzvos*);” as it is stated in the tractates *Bava Kama* (38a) and *Avodah Zarah* (2b-3a). We are not required to support him (maintain his life) but we are also not allowed to directly lower him into a pit, nor even indirectly cause him anything that would result in the loss of his life, since, after all, he is fulfilling the *mitzvos*. Even though he is viewed as someone who is an *aino metzuva v'osseh* (one who fulfills a *mitzva* which he is not commanded to fulfill), nevertheless some reward he does receive, as it is stated there (*Avodah Zara* 3a). **Ritva Makkos 9a**

E.

משה רבינו לא הנחיל התורה והמצוות אלא לישראל שנאמר מורשה קהלת יעקב ולכל הרוצה להתגייר משאר האומות שנאמר ככם כגר אבל מי שלא רצה אין כופין אותו לקבל תורה ומצוות וכן צוה משה רבינו מפי הגבורה לכוף את כל באי העולם לקבל מצוות שנצטוו בני נח וכל מי שלא יקבל יהרג והמקבל אותם הוא הנקרא גר תושב בכל מקום וצריך לקבל עליו בפני שלשה חכרים וכל המקבל עליו למול ועברו עליו שנים עשר חדש ולא מל הרי זה כמין האומות: כל המקבל שבע מצוות ונזהר לעשותן הרי זה מחסידי אומות העולם ויש לו חלק לעולם הבא והוא שיקבל אותן ויעשה אותן מפני שצוה בהן הקב"ה בתורה והודיענו על ידי משה רבינו שבני נח מקודם נצטוו בהן אבל אם עשאן מפני הכרע הדעת אין זה גר תושב ואינו מחסידי אומות העולם ולא מחכמיהם: רמב"ם יד החזקה הלכות מלכים ה:י-יא

[Although] Moshe Rabbainu gave the Torah and Mitzvos as an inheritance only to the Jewish people, as it says (Deuteronomy 33:4), "Moses commanded us a Torah, the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob," anyone of the other nations, however, can come and become a convert (*ger*), as it says (Numbers 15:15), "As you are, so shall the stranger (*ger*) be before the L-rd." If a non-Jew does not want to become a convert, we do not force him to accept upon himself Torah and Mitzvos. Similarly, Moshe Rabbainu, acting as an emissary of the Al-mighty commanded us to force every human being to accept upon himself the mitzvos that the descendants of Noah were commanded to fulfill. Anyone who does not accept this upon himself is put to death. One who accepts this upon himself is widely referred to as a *Ger Toshav* (a **resident** alien or sojourner). He must make this acceptance in the presence of three *chaveirim* (Torah scholars). One who originally accepted upon himself to be circumcised (become Jewish) and then, after a twelve month period still did not undergo circumcision, is to be considered as a regular non-Jew. Anyone who accepts upon himself the seven *mitzvos* and is careful to fulfill them is considered to be one of the *chasidei umos haolam* (the pious amongst the non-Jewish world) and has a portion in the world to come, provided that he accepts them upon himself because the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded them in the Torah and informed us, through Moshe Rabbainu, that the B'nai Noah were already commanded to fulfill them. However, if he did them solely based on logic, he is not considered to be a *Ger Toshav* and nor is he considered to be one of the *chasidei umos haolam* (the pious amongst the non-Jewish world). He is [*not even*] considered to be one of their sages. **Rambam Hilchos Melachim 8:10-11**

F. Are we to assume that all the inhabitants of the earth, from sunrise to sunset, are condemned to perdition if they do not believe in the Torah, which has been granted solely as the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob? . . . What then are those peoples to do that are not reached by the radiant rays of the Torah? . . . Does G-d act like a tyrant when he deals with his creatures, destroying them and extirpating their name, even though they have done no wrong? **Moses Mendelssohn, Letter to HaRav HaGaon R. Yaakov Emden, Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläum Ausgabe Vol. XVI p. 178**