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# The Zohar

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*FIVE VOLUMES*  
IV

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pleasure in absorbing in itself the souls with all their good deeds and Torah studies performed during the past day. The souls then re-emerge, that is to say, they are born anew, each soul being fresh and new as at its former birth. This is the inner meaning of the words, "They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness" (Lam. III, 23). That is to say, "they (the souls) are new every morning", [214a] because "great is thy faithfulness" to absorb them and then let them out as newly-born. Happy are the righteous in this world and in the world to come.'

By now day had broken, and R. Abba said: 'Let us rise and offer up praise to the Master of the World.' Then, after having recited their prayers, the Companions returned to him and said: 'Let him who began the discourse conclude it. Happy is our portion that we have been privileged to adorn the Holy One, blessed be He, with the crown of the recondite teachings of Wisdom.' R. Abba then began the following discourse:

AND BEZALEL MADE THE ARK OF ACACIA WOOD, ETC. 'The Holy Assembly', he said, 'have, indeed, already expounded the esoteric aspect of the Tabernacle. Yet there is still much here to ponder on, as its inner meaning is adorned with many mysteries of the teaching of Wisdom. The ark is one vessel with six sides, and it contains and conceals in its interior the Written Law that reaches out into the six directions of the creation. Again, the ark consists of five boards and an ark-cover, to symbolize the five books of the Pentateuch with the one grade that pervades them all, called the mystery of the covenant. Together, the six-sided ark and the Torah represent the inwardness of the nine grades that are summed up in the two Divine Names—*YHVH*, *ELoHYM*—whilst the ark-cover represents the most high heaven that surrounds all, covers up all, so that the whole remains undisclosed. Now we have to investigate the recondite significance of the ark. For there is ark and ark, one the opposite of the other. In connection with one,' continued R. Abba, 'it is written: "All this did Araunah the king give to the king", etc. (2 Sam. xxiv, 23). Now, even if we

allow that Araunah was a king, yet seeing that David conquered Jerusalem and made it his own, as it says, "David took the stronghold of Zion", etc. (*Ibid.* v, 7-8), why did he need to buy the spot from Araunah with money? A simple explanation would be that although David was the ruler of Jerusalem, that spot was the heritage of Araunah, and so it could only be taken from him by his consent; in the same way as Ahab, although king and ruler in Israel, in order to acquire the vineyard of Naboth the Jesreelite, had first to obtain the latter's consent. But a deeper explanation is that Araunah indeed was king and ruler of that spot, and when the time came for it to pass out of his possession, this could only be effected at the cost of much blood and slaughter to Israel. Subsequently, when the Destroying Angel in the execution of his work of slaughter reached that spot he could not prevail there, and his strength was exhausted. It was, indeed, the spot where Isaac was bound on the altar that Abraham built; and so, when the Holy One looked at that place He was filled with compassion, as we read, "and as he was about to destroy, the Lord beheld, and he repented him of the evil" (1 Chron. xxi, 15), meaning that He beheld there the binding of Isaac, and so had compassion on them, and straightway said to the Destroying Angel: "It is enough", etc. (*Ibid.*); the words, "it is enough", have the same import as the similar words in the passage, "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain" (Deut. 1, 5), as much as to say: "This place has been long enough in thy possession; thou hast had it for many years, now return it to its rightful master." And for all that it could only be taken from him at a great sacrifice of life and money. What is the significance of the name "Araunah"? The same name is also written "Ornan" (1 Chron. xxi, 15). So long as that place was in his possession he was called Araunah, a word of five letters, for in the case of such a niggard who represents the "other side", the addition of a letter implies a degradation, whereas for the side of holiness the diminution of the letters implies an added holiness. [214b] Observe now that the *holy side* is called the ark (*aron*) of the covenant, and such an ark is appropriate for the placing therein of the bodily remains of a

man. For this reason, when the holy and pious depart this world their bodies are placed in an ark, since the "other side" has not been provided with a body and has nothing in common with the body of Man. Of Joseph we find it written, "and he was put in a coffin (*aron*) in Egypt" (Gen. L, 26), where the word *vayyisem* (and he was put) is written with a double *yod*. For what reason? Because he kept unimpaired the symbol of the holy covenant and therefore merited to be put into the ark. R. Abba here wept, saying: 'Woe to mankind, that they are unaware of this disgrace! Alas, for their offence, in that everyone who wishes is placed in an ark! For this privilege should be reserved for those who are conscious that never in their lives have they transgressed against the sign of the covenant. To put anyone else into an ark is to desecrate it. There is a certain symbolism in this connection which makes it fitting for him and for no other; and woe to him who, notwithstanding his abuse of the sign of the covenant, is admitted into the ark—woe to him who abused it during life, woe to him who now abuses it when dead, woe to him for impairing the sign and the ark of the holy covenant, woe for the punishment to be exacted from him for his wrongs committed in this world and for that abuse of the ark! To this Scripture alludes in the words: "For the rod of wickedness shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous" (Ps. cxxv, 3). That is to say, when such a one comes up for judgement in the other world, and it is found that in addition to having impaired the sign of the holy covenant stamped on his body he also impaired the ark in the other world, he is excluded from any lot among the righteous and is put outside the category of man, and consequently of all those destined for everlasting life, and is delivered into

<sup>1</sup> Al. Observe that the "holy side" is called "ark of the covenant", that ark being a pit wherein is a receptacle for the Torah in its esoteric aspect, which aspect is the mystery of the image of the pure celestial Body. Corresponding to this, in the terrestrial world an ark has been provided wherein to place the earthly body that symbolizes Man, to wit, the body of him who has preserved the purity of the sign of the holy covenant. Hence the bodies of the holy and pious are placed in an ark, which is fitting only for such a one. Thus in connection with Joseph it is written: "and he was put in a coffin (*aron*)", etc.

etc. (*Ibid.* 19). The following is an alternate comment. What is the difference between "path" (*orah*) and "way" (*derekh*)? A "path" is newly opened and still little trodden, whereas a "way" is a well-worn track, already traversed by many feet. Hence that whereon the righteous walk is called "path", since they are the pioneers who open up a new path for themselves; and even though others have preceded them, yet when they walk on it it becomes a new path, as though never trodden on by any before. For they metamorphose it in virtue of the many sublime and holy teachings with which they delight the Holy One. Moreover, the Shekinah now goes in that path, which she did not before. But "way", on the other hand, is a common road, open to all and trodden on, even by the wicked. This is hinted in the words, "Who maketh a way (*derekh*) in the sea" (*Ibid.* XLIII, 16), the word "way" being used because it is accessible to the "other side", the unwanted influence that exerts its power to defile the Tabernacle, and so the righteous are left to themselves, to rule over the region called "path" (*orah*), as already said. "Way" is thus open for all, for this "side" and its opposite, and you, O exalted saints, concluded R. Simeon, 'you have entertained the heavenly Visitor (*oreah*), and sublime expositions have been uttered and displayed by you in the presence of the Ancient of Days. Happy is your portion!'

R. Simeon further discoursed, citing the verse: "And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him" (Deut. xxxiv, 9). 'In many places we have laid down', he said, 'that the face of Moses was as the face of the sun, whilst that of Joshua was like that of the moon. For the moon has no light of its own, but receives its light by reflection from the sun until it becomes full, when it may be said to reach its state of completeness. The completeness of the moon is when it is called "reflection" (*d'muth*), in relation to the supernal Sun called *YHVH*, for it receives this name only when it is complete, for it has many names according to its various manifestations. So when it is complete on all sides it is called *YHVH*, its completeness corresponding to the higher completeness. The Daughter, as it were, is the heiress of the

Mother. This is the case on the fifteenth day of the month, and thus, "On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the feast of Tabernacles" (Lev. xxiv, 34). It is also written, "Howbeit on the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of Atonement" (*Ibid.* 27), which has the same allusion. When the World-to-be is symbolized by all the Ten Utterances, and centred in this month, it is first named "ten", and afterwards when the moon is joined with them in completeness it is named "fifteen", the *He* (=5) joining the *Yod* (=10), both forming the Divine Name *YH*. In the completed name *YHVH* there is a second *He* added, the first *He* being associated with the supernal mystery, and the second symbolizing the Providence that provides the lower world with its sustenance. The moon is thus in its completeness, a completeness embracing the upper and the lower worlds, through the inner meaning of the Divine Name, all forming a unity of perfection. Joshua is the symbol of the fulness of the moon, he truly being the son of Nun, as the letter *Nun* is expressive of the recondite significance of the moon. And so "Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom", full in the completeness of the Divine Name. For the Supreme Point, identical with the letter *Yod*, expanded and produced a Spirit, which Spirit produced a Temple. That Spirit then expanded further, and so became six directions. Having expanded through all these, it filled out and caused to come into being the Lower Temple. Thus [215b] the Divine Name became manifest in a unity of completeness. "Joshua", then, "was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him", that is, he poured out blessings upon him, and the well, so to speak became filled through him. And you,' concluded R. Simeon, 'you exalted saints, each one of you is filled with the spirit of wisdom and has attained the full phase of the mystic wisdom, inasmuch as the Holy One, blessed be He, found delight in you and had laid His hands upon you. Happy is my portion in that my eyes have seen this, to wit, the fulness of the spirit of wisdom that is in you.'

R. Simeon further discoursed, citing the verse: "Ye shall not eat with the blood; neither shall ye practise divination nor

soothsaying" (Lev. XIX, 26). "The esoteric teaching of this verse", he said, "is that if a man eats before he has prayed, as it were, for his blood, it is as though he were practising divination and soothsaying. For in the night man's soul mounts up into heaven to gaze upon the mystery of the Divine Glory, each one according to its merits, and the body is thus left deriving its life-force solely from the blood. And although alive, the man has then a foretaste of death, that life-force being too sluggish to be reawakened on the return of the soul, so as to be able to receive it. For when man awakens from his sleep he is not in a state of purity, because, as explained elsewhere, the "other side" has sway wherever the soul is absent. He has first to purify himself with water, but even then, and although he may have been engaged in studying the Torah, the soul does not resume its former place and sway, and he is still sustained by the blood life-force alone, the force called *nefesh* (soul), which permeates the blood. It is only when he worships his Master in prayer that the blood-force resumes its normal position so that the soul regains its control in its own sphere. It is thus that man attains his proper and perfect condition, with the vital force (*nefesh*) beneath and the soul above. Hence, if a man prays before he eats he puts himself in a proper condition, but if he eats before he prays for his blood to resume its proper sphere, it is as though he were practising divination and soothsaying, seeing that it is the way of the diviner to elevate the "other side", and to degrade the side of holiness. The term *m'naresh* (diviner) is related to *nahash* (serpent), and the diviner is so called because he gives himself over to the Serpent in order to obtain from him power and strength. Such a man is like one serving other gods, and so likewise is he who eats before prayer, worshipping the blood life-force instead of worshipping the Almighty in order to fortify the side of the soul, the side of holiness. Happy is your portion, O exalted saints', continued R. Simeon, 'in that through prayer man's body and soul are edified so that he becomes complete.

'Prayer works a fourfold process of upbuilding which is in essence one. First, it builds up him who prays; secondly,

it builds up this world; there comes, third, the upbuilding of the upper world with all the heavenly hosts; the fourth process of upbuilding is wrought on the Divine Name, so that all the upper and lower regions are embraced in one edifying process, in the manner appropriate. First, as to man himself, it is incumbent on everyone to edify himself by means of meritorious action and holiness and sacrifices and burnt offerings. The upbuilding of this world is then effected when we recite the works of creation, praising the Almighty for each separate work through our reading of the Hallelujah Psalms, such as "Praise him, all ye stars of light, praise him, ye heavens of heavens", etc. (Ps. *CLVIII*, 3-4). This is for the sustaining of this world. The third process is wrought on the [216a] upper world with all its hosts upon hosts and legions upon legions. We thus recite: "Creator of ministering spirits . . . And the Ophanim and the holy Hayoth. . . ." Finally comes the fourth process, wrought, as it were, on the Divine Name, which, by means of our prayer, becomes perfected. Happy is your portion', concluded R. Simeon, 'in this world and in the world to come. This is truly the effect of those precepts which you carry out by means of prayer.'

He further discoursed as follows. 'It is written: "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God" (Deut. x, 20), and also, "and thou shalt fear thy God (*m'elohekha*, lit. from thy God)" (Lev. xix, 14). Why in the latter passage is it written, "from thy God" and not simply "thy God", as in the former passage? The preposition "from", however, points to the place which is attached to the "brain" and surrounds it. That spot is the central fire that surrounds the innermost fire. For there are three varieties of fire in that connection. The first is the fire that receives fire with joy, the two meeting each other in love and joy; the second is that of which it is written, "and there was brightness (*nogah*) to the fire" (Ezek. i, 13); it is the inmost fire which is joyful at the presence of the other fire. Then comes the third fire which surrounds that brightness, and wherein resides the terror of Severity for the punishment of the wicked. Indeed, there is also a teaching that speaks of four varieties of fire—four



that are in essence one. However, it is in the aforementioned fire that the terror of Severity resides. Hence "thou shalt fear (that which comes) from thy God", meaning: "Thy fear shall start from, or be inspired by, His punishment." Furthermore, we should combine fear with love, fear on one side and love on the other. We have to fear on account of the punishment that proceeds from the one side for the transgression of the precepts of the Torah—for once this is begun, the side that inflicts it never relaxes until the transgressor is exterminated from this world and from the world to come. Man has thus to fear that fire which is the seat of fear. That fire spreads out into another fire outside, belonging to another object of fear, in regard to which it is written, "ye shall not fear the gods of the Amorites" (Judges vi, 10). But the aforementioned fire belongs to the holy side, and is the one that surrounds that brightness (*nogah*) mentioned before. The other and extraneous fire at times joins this fire, and at other times moves away from it. When it does join, it turns into darkness so as to darken and shut out the light of the other fires. After fear comes love. This is esoterically expressed by saying: "After fear has hovered over a man's head there awakens love, which belongs to the right side." For he who worships out of love attaches himself to a very sublime region and to the holiness of the "World-to-be", by reason of love ascending to the "right side" for its attachment and adornment. Think not, however, that worship coming from the side of fear is no worship at all. In truth it is worship highly to be prized. It does not ascend, however, so as to join the highest part of the supernal sphere. This is reserved for worship inspired by love, and he who worships in a spirit of love is the man destined for the future world. Happy is the portion of such a one in that he exercises dominion over the region of fear, love being the sole power dominating fear in virtue of its belonging to the recondite influence of the right. It is further essential in the performance of our worship to avow the unity of the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, and to avow the oneness of the upper and lower members and grades, and to combine them all in the spot to which they fittingly converge. This

is the recondite significance of the declaration: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deut. vi, 4). The term *SHeMa'* (hear) is esoterically analysed into *SHeM* (name) and the letter 'Ain (= 70), that is, one Name comprising seventy names whilst remaining a unity. "Israel" here signifies "Ancient Israel", in contrast to "Little Israel", of whom it is written: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him" (Hos. xi, 1). "Ancient Israel" symbolizes the union of the Shekinah with her Spouse, and in pronouncing that name we have to concentrate our mind on the principle of unity, [216b] on the union of the two habitations; we have to put all our being, all the members of our body, our complete devotion, into that thought so as to rise and attach ourselves to the *En-sof* (Infinite), and thus achieve the oneness of the upper and the lower worlds. The words, "the Lord our God" are to reunite all the Members to the place from which they issued, which is the innermost Sanctuary. The same thought is continued in the words, "the Lord is one", in the recital of which we have to make our thoughts range throughout all the grades up to the Infinite (*En-sof*) in love and fear. This is the method of avowing the unity of God practised by Rab Hamnuna the Venerable, who learnt it from his father, who had it from his master, and so on, till it came from the mouth of Elijah. And it is the correct and proper method. The same Rab Hamnuna further said, that to concentrate the whole idea of unification in the term "one" (*ehad*) is a still better way; and it is for this reason that we dwell long over the enunciation of the word "one" (*ehad*), during which we effect the fusion into one of the upper and the lower worlds. As we have learnt, "one" alludes to above, below, and the four quarters of the universe, these being the supernal Chariot, so that all are embraced in a single unity reaching out to the *En-sof* (Infinite). After the recital of "Hear, O Israel . . .", we have to recite the section containing mention of the Exodus from Egypt (Num. xv, 37-41), for the reason that the Shekinah was in the Egyptian exile, and as long as She is in exile there is no union between the upper and the lower worlds. But the redemption from Egypt, attended by all those signs and

wonders, set Her free; and that redemption has to be mentioned by us to show that though She was in chains She is now free, so as to join her heavenly Spouse. It is hence incumbent on us to let the recital of the Redemption be followed closely by our petitionary prayers, as a sign of perfect unity (between the divine aspects) without a rift and without any separation whatever. The mnemonic for this is: "neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband" (Lev. xxi, 7). But, you may say, is She not at present in exile, and so put away? This is not so. She is indeed in exile, but only for the sake of Israel, so as to dwell with them and to shield them, but She is not put away. Now the Shekinah appeared neither during the first Temple nor during the second Temple. In the second Temple, before Israel were driven into exile, She ascended on high, and only after the exile did She make Her abode with them. But She was never put away. Hence the importance of the first redemption, the one from Egypt which comprehended all the four redemptions. The esoteric exposition of the matter is as follows. When the Shekinah left the exile of Egypt, She besought the Holy One, blessed be He, that She might there and then be redeemed with a fourfold redemption, corresponding to the four exiles, so that She might remain free and not be put away any more. This request was granted and the exodus thus embraced for the Shekinah all the four redemptions. At the moment, therefore, of Her union with Her heavenly Spouse there is need for the display, so to speak, of the redemption from Egypt, comprehending as it does the four redemptions. Hence, we have, [217a] in the recital of that redemption, to repeat four times the term "true" before we reach the portion beginning with "Thou hast been the help of our fathers . . .", a prayer which is a firm support for all Israel. Then, in the course of the recital, "Thou hast been . . .", the term "true" recurs again four times, whereby we fortify, confirm and corroborate, as it were, the same four redemptions with the seal and signet of the King. Were not the four redemptions comprehended within the Exodus during the whole of the exile She would not obtain Her adornments so as to manifest the unity of the

Divine Name. We have thus to make mention of the redemption from Egypt in every recital of Sanctification offered to the Holy One, blessed be He, for ever and to all eternity. The inward significance of the Sanctification recitals is, as already stated, that thereby both the upper and the lower worlds, all grades, all the upper and lower legions, become sanctified. Herein are involved sublime mysteries through which the initiated discern the holiness of their Master. Happy is their portion! Happy is your portion," concluded R. Simeon, "and happy my eyes that they have witnessed the awakening of these holy words in this world, inasmuch as they are all inscribed in the world on high before the Holy King.'

He next discoursed on the verse: "Then they that fear the Lord spoke one with another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that fear the Lord, and that thought upon his name" (Malachi III, 16). "This verse", he said, 'presents a difficulty in using the word *nidb'ru* (lit. they were spoken) instead of *dibbru* (they spoke). What it signifies, however, is the repetition of the words spoken on earth in the upper world, by all the sacred hosts and legions. For the words of the holy Law spoken here below ascend on high, where multitudes come to meet them to take them up and present them before the Holy King, there to be adorned with many crowns woven of the supernal radiances. All these words, then, are *self-spoken*, as it were, before the Most High King. Whoever saw such joy, whoever witnessed such praises, as mount up into all those heavens at the moment those words ascend, whilst the Holy King looks on them and crowns Himself with them! They spring up and down, they settle, as it were, on His bosom for Him to disport Himself with them, whence they ascend toward His head and are woven there into a crown. Hence the words spoken by the Torah: "and I would be playing always before him" (Prov. VIII, 30). In the verse cited there is twice mention of "them that fear the Lord"; the first indicates the men themselves as they are here below, and the second their images as reflected in their words that ascend on high. This esoteric doctrine is

the meal that the righteous Boaz pronounced, and thus we read, "and his heart was merry". Why pronounce a blessing? It is because the sustenance of man is troublesome, so to speak, for the Almighty, but when the words of the benediction pronounced by a man after eating and drinking ascend on high, that place derives an enjoyment from those words, and so benefit is drawn from the food, both below and above. This is a recondite teaching known to the Companions. Furthermore, on weekdays "that region" enjoys only the words of the after-meal benediction that ascend on high. On Sabbath days, however, there is an enjoying on high of the very food enjoyed on earth by man in virtue of this being part of the holy joy of the Sabbath. There is thus here a merging of the heavenly and the earthly. This recondite teaching is indicated in the passage, "for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee" (1 Chron. xxix, 14), alluding to the enjoyment in heaven of the holy joy in the Sabbath repasts partaken of below. Whoever pronounces the after-meal benediction must do so devotedly, and in a joyful mood unmingled with any tinge of sadness, inasmuch as in giving thanks he is giving of his own to someone else; and thus, as he gives thanks joyfully and unstintedly, so will sustenance be given to him joyfully and unstintedly. By the benedictions, each commencing with "Blessed art Thou", are sustained the four legions that rule over the four corners of the world. Hence we ought to recite them with heartiness. So Scripture says: "He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed, for he giveth of his bread to the poor" (Prov. xxii, 9), [218b] where the term *yeborakh* (shall be blessed) can be read *yebarekh* (shall—or does—bless); and the verse thus amounts to saying that we should pronounce the after-meal blessing in a bountiful spirit, for through that blessing and our joyousness in uttering it we provide, as it were, sustenance for the poor, to wit, for that region<sup>1</sup> that possesses naught of itself, but draws its sustenance from all sides and is made up from all sides. Now, these teachings have only been transmitted to the initiated who are conversant with the sublime mystical doctrines and with the paths of

<sup>1</sup> *Malkuth*.

the Torah. Observe now that Boaz was bountiful of heart and free from all presumptuousness. It is thus written of him: "he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn" (Ruth III, 7). This is esoterically elucidated by the passage: "Thy belly is like a heap of wheat" (S.S. VII, 3), and so we learn from here that whoever pronounces the after-meal grace joyfully and with devotion, when he quits this world there is a place prepared for him in the sacred and mysterious mansions. Happy is the man who gives heed to the precepts of his Master and knows their recondite significance, since there is no precept in the Torah but contains manifold sublime recondite teachings and radiances and resplendencies; but the sons of men know not nor give they heed to the glory of their Master. Happy is the portion of the righteous who are assiduous in the study of the Torah; happy are they in this world and in the world to come.

'Our sages have said that the arrogant and shameless have no portion in this world nor in the world to come. All the arrogant of Israel, when they gazed on the Plate, became contrite of heart and looked inwardly into their own deeds. For the Plate possessed miraculous powers, and thus was the means of making all who looked on it feel ashamed of their misdeeds. In this way the Plate secured atonement for the arrogant and the insolent. The letters of the Divine Name engraved on it stood out shining and flashing, and whoever looked at that flashing had to cast down his eyes in fear, and become contrite of heart, and thus the Plate effected their atonement. Of a similar potency was the Incense. For whoever smelled the smoke of the pillar that ascended from the "smoke-raiser"<sup>1</sup> became cleansed of heart and intent on worshipping his Master: the taint of the evil spirit disappeared from him, leaving him to serve with single heart his Father in heaven. The Incense thus possessed the potency of breaking completely the evil spirit in man. As the Plate possessed miraculous powers, so did the Incense, nothing in the world having power to crush the "other side" like the Incense. Thus we read: "Take thy fire-pan, and put fire therein from off the altar, and lay incense thereon . . . for

<sup>1</sup> One of the ingredients of the incense.

there is wrath gone out from the Lord: the plague is begun" (Num. xvii, 11). For there is nothing so beloved by the Holy One, blessed be He, as the Incense. It is able to banish sorcery and all evil influences from the house. Seeing that perfumes prepared by men possess the virtue to counteract, by their odour and fumes, the ill-effects of evil things, how much more so the Incense! It is a firmly established ordinance of the Holy One, blessed be He, that whoever reflects on and recites daily the section of the Incense will be saved from all evil things and sorceries in the world, from all mishaps and evil imaginings, from evil decrees and from death; and no harm will befall him that day, as the "other side" has no power over him. But it must be read with devotion.' R. Simeon remarked: 'Were people to know how precious the offering of the Incense is to the Holy One, blessed be He, they would take every word of the passage where it is enjoined and make it into a crown for their heads, as it were, a crown of gold. And whoever studies it ought to reflect deeply on the way it was carried out; and through the reciting of it daily with devotion a man merits a portion in this world and in the world to come, and keeps away death from himself and from the world, and is saved from all punishments in this world, from the "evil sides", from the punishment of Gehinnom, and from strange powers. When the pillar of smoke ascended from the burning Incense, the priest used to see the mystical letters of the Divine Name [219a] ascending on high in that pillar. Then numerous holy legions would surround the pillar on all sides until it rose in the midst of light and gladness to the region where it diffused joy and knitted together the upper world and the lower world in a complete unity, thereby achieving atonement for the evil spirit in man and for idolatry, which is of the "other side".'

R. Simeon further discoursed on the verse: "And thou shalt make an altar (*mizbeah*) to burn incense upon" (Ex. xxx, 1). 'This verse', he said, 'raises a problem, for we find that there were two altars, namely, the altar of burnt-offering and the altar of incense, the former the outer altar and the latter the inner one. Now, why was the altar of incense called

*mizbeah* (lit. slaughtering-place), seeing that it had no connection with animal slaughter? The explanation is that this altar was efficacious in defeating and subduing the numerous powers of the "other side", so as to make them powerless and unable to act as accusers. Hence the name *mizbeah* (place of slaughter). The "evil side", when it beheld the smoke of the incense ascending in a pillar, was subdued, and fled, and was quite unable to approach the Tabernacle. Now, because that joy was shared by no one beside the Holy One, blessed be He, by reason of this offering being so precious in His sight, that altar was placed in the innermost part of the Tabernacle, for it was the repository of blessings, and was therefore hidden from the eye of man. In regard to this, it is written: "And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed" (Num. xvii, 13). For Aaron put the Angel of Death in chains so that he could not exercise dominion nor execute any judgement. It is a traditional teaching that wherever people recite with heartfelt devotion the portion relating to the incense there will be immunity from death and from injury; nor will any other nation have power over that place. The name, "altar to burn incense upon", further tells us that the altar had to be consecrated by the burning of incense. It further teaches us, in accordance with the Chaldaic rendering, that it is forbidden to burn incense anywhere save on coals of fire taken with the censer from this altar. Observe that whoever is pursued by Rigour needs the remedy of incense-burning to save him, as also repentance before his Master, this helping greatly to keep chastisement away from him. That will assuredly result if the man is accustomed to recite the incense-ordinance twice a day, in the morning and in the evening, corresponding to the precept, "And Aaron shall burn thereon incense of sweet spices; every morning . . . at dusk, he shall burn it" (Ex. xxx, 7-8). And this service, moreover, perpetually upholds the world, as is indicated in the phrase, "a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations" (*Ibid.* 8); truly it is a means of upholding both the lower world and the upper world. Where the daily recital of the incense-burning does not take place, there heavenly judgements impend, many



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 people die there, and other nations obtain dominion. Thus Scripture says, "a perpetual incense before the Lord" (*Ibid.*), indicating that it abides in the presence of the Lord, more than all other modes of worship, it being the most precious and beloved to the Holy One, blessed be He. Prayer, indeed, is the highest service of all, yet is incense-burning dear and acceptable to the Almighty. Observe the difference between prayer and incense-offering. Prayer has been instituted to take the place of the sacrifices that Israel used to offer, but none of the sacrifices had the same value as the incense. There is, further, this difference between the two. Prayer repairs damage which has been done, but incense does more—it strengthens, it binds together, it is the greatest light-bringer. It was incense that removed the evil taint (*zuh'ma*) and purified the Tabernacle, so that the whole was illumined, renewed, and knitted together into a combined whole. Hence the incense-recital must always precede our daily prayer as a means of removing the evil taint from the world, inasmuch as it acts as a daily therapeutic like the offering itself, in which God delighted. Now we find it written of Moses: "And the Lord said unto Moses: Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte", etc. (*Ibid.* xxx, 34). Why specifically in this place "unto thee"? It means "for thy sake", that is, "for thy satisfaction and gain". The purification of a woman redounds to the satisfaction of her husband. So, esoterically, we have thus to read that ordinance as saying: "Take unto thee sweet spice for the purpose of removing the evil taint, that the Shekinah and Her Spouse may be joined in sanctified union." Happy thus the portion [219b] of Moses! Similarly do we read: "Take thee a bull calf for a sin offering" (Lev. ix, 2), an ordinance meant personally for Aaron to atone for the sin of the golden calf which he brought upon Israel. So here Moses was bidden "Take unto thee", that is, "take for thy benefit and use" the incense (*q'toreth*), which is potent to bind together (*qatar*), to illumine and to remove the evil taint. The *Daleth* is linked to the *He*, the *He* to the *Vau*, the *Vau* ascends and is adorned with the *He*, the *He* is illumined by the *Yod*, and the whole ascends, reaching out to the *En-sof* (Infinite, Illimitable), so that there results one organic

incense

whole, interrelated under one principle, the most exalted of all. From thence and upward the whole is adorned as with a crown by the ineffableness of the *En-sof*; and the Divine Name in its mysteriousness is illumined and is adorned on all sides, and the worlds are all wrapt in joy, the lamps radiate their lights, and sustenance and blessing pour down on all the worlds. All this follows the hidden virtue of the incense, without which the evil taint would not be removed. All thus depends on it. Observe that the offering of the incense used to precede all other services, and hence its recital should be a prelude to our service of hymns and praises, as these latter do not ascend, nor is the required readjustment and unity achieved until the evil taint is removed. So Scripture says: "And he shall make atonement for the holy place . . . and because of their transgressions, even all their sins" (Lev. xvi, 16), first "atonement for the holy place" and then for "their transgressions". We, too, thus have first to remove the evil taint and purge the holy place, and then engage in song and hymn and prayer, as already said. Happy are Israel in this world and in the world to come, inasmuch as they know how to effect adjustment on high and below; to achieve adjustment from the lower world upwards until the whole is bound together in the most sublime union. The process of adjustment performed in the lower world is by means of the impressed letters of the Ineffable Name by which the Holy One, blessed be He, is named.'

R. Simeon and R. Eleazar his son were one night sitting together studying the Torah. Said R. Eleazar to his father, R. Simeon: 'It is written: "Unto the woman he said: I will greatly multiply thy pain and thy travail, in pain thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband", etc. (Gen. iii, 16). We have learned that this passage contains a profound mystical teaching. One may comprehend this passage in its terrestrial significance, but what corresponds in the supernal world?' R. Simeon cited the verse: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks", etc. (Ps. xlii, 2). "This verse has already been expounded," he said. "There is, however, a certain female animal that has under her daily charge

the power of the "other side", the side which has no kinship with the mystery of the body of Man. When he is delivered into the power of that side, woe to him, since he is thrown into Gehinnom, whence he will not come out for all eternity. In allusion to such it is written: "And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have rebelled against me", etc. (Isa. LXVI, 24). This doom, however, is only meted out to those who have not turned with a full repentance sufficient to wipe out all their misdeeds. But even after full repentance it is better for such a one not to be put into the ark, because as long as the body is in being the soul is under sentence and may not enter into its own place. But this is not so with the pious who are worthy to ascend, even whilst their bodies endure. Happy is their portion in this world and in the world to come. As regards the aforementioned sinners, there is no sin so grievous in the sight of the Holy One as the sin of perverting and impairing the sign of the holy covenant; and he who commits such an offence is excluded from the sight of the Shekinah.

'It is written here: "And Bezalel made the ark." Why did the wise men who made the Tabernacle not make the ark as well? The reason is that Bezalel represented the final part of the body, the symbol of the holy covenant which he kept pure, and hence it was his part to make the ark, which was, as it were, his own portion.' All the Companions then came near and kissed R. Abba. When they came to R. Simeon and repeated to him all the expositions they had heard during that walk he quoted the verse: "But the path of the righteous is as the light of dawn, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. iv, 18). [215a] "This verse", he said, 'has been already expounded in a way, but there is still a deeper truth underlying it. "The path of the righteous" is the path of truth, the path the Holy One, blessed be He, delights in, the path along which the righteous proceed, with the Almighty, as it were, leading the way whilst all the heavenly legions come down to listen to their expositions and teachings; "as the light of dawn", that is, as a light that continues without ever fading, unlike the path of the wicked, of which it says: "The way of the wicked is as darkness"