

# DEATH AND GEHINNOM

## HOW THE SOUL EXITS THE BODY

The book Nishmat Chayim (Chapter 53) says: **When it is time for the soul to separate from the body, the big and terrible angel whose body is full of eyes comes, and when man sees him, his guts twist and turn around and his face pales out of fear. The angel holds a sword in his hand and a jar of poison, as brought in the Talmud (Avoda Zara, Page 20): It was told about him (the Malach Hamavet, the angel of death), that it is full of eyes. At the time man lies in bed dying, the angel stands at the head of the bed with his sword in his hand, and a sour drop hanging from the sword. When the sick man sees it, he opens his mouth and the drop falls onto it and with it he dies, with it he stinks and his face turns green.** Later, it says in the Gemara: MAR said with it he dies. The father of Shemuel does not agree, and says: The angel of death told me: If it were not for the relatives' presence, He would have beheaded him.

## IF THE PERSON DESERVES IT, HIS SOUL LEAVES HIM AS A STRAND OF HAIR TAKEN OUT OF A GLASS OF MILK

If the person has merits, his soul exits as a strand of hair taken out of a glass of milk. (See Berachot Page 8a) 903 classes of death were created in the world, and the best of all is death by a KISS, similar to taking a strand of hair out of a glass of milk (Rashi), and he is slaughtered with a Kosher knife, and the shechina comes to him together with Holy Tzaddikim and thousands of holy souls await impatiently his arrival...

**He** is brought in with chants, psalms of glory and praise, and he rises from garden to garden and from palace to palace until he deserves going back to his roots, the source where he was taken. He is included and joined in the bundle of life, as it is written: The soul of my Lord will be bound in the bundle of Life with The Lord (Shemuel Alef 25:29).

And if he does not deserve it, G-d forbid, the great, terrible and powerful angel full of eyes comes, the same one that seduced him to commit all kinds of sins, and tries to convince him to deny the G-d of Israel,

### **THE SATAN INCITES MAN TO DENY THE G-D OF ISRAEL BEFORE HE DIES**

When it is time for the soul to leave the body and this world, each pious person has to ask the G-d of Israel to keep him in full control of his senses, so that when the SATAN (the word SATAN means accuser in Hebrew) comes before his death and tells him to deny the G-d of Israel, to mislead him and steer him from the right path and away from the Holy One Blessed Be He, he will have the strength to reject the Satan's assault.

### **IT IS GOOD TO DECLARE WHILE ALIVE AND WITH ALL MENTAL FACULTIES INTACT THAT IF, G-D FORBID, HE IS CONVINCED BY THE SATAN, SUCH ACTION BE ANNULLED FROM NOW**

Many years ago I saw in the book Shevet Mussar something interesting about this subject and I thought it might be worth copying it in the first book I would write, but I never had the chance, and now with the help of G-d I am writing about the same subject. Before making this declaration, the person must do a complete Teshuva for all the sins and for all the mitzvot he transgressed from his youth until now, even if he had already done Teshuva, since it is possible that the Teshuva he had done was not complete, through this the declaration might become worthless. But now a complete Teshuva is needed. The whole text of the declaration is in that book, for any person to see it. It ends up saying: It is good to make the declaration in public, to bring merit to other Jews as well.

**My** brother, observe how good it is what the author of the Shevet Mussar did while healthy, he gathered ten adult men and read the text of the declaration in front of them. Of course this declaration does not mean he is already dying, but if after 120 years comes the time, it could happen that he could lose control over himself, chas Veshalom, and then the need for this declaration will be justified, voiding in advance any word against the Torah that he could say, because when the soul is leaving the body, the Satan stands by his side and tells him: Deny the G-d of Israel, and the soul does not obey, but it is possible that, by being confused by so much pain, he could give in (chas vechalila). So, with this declaration given with his full senses, anything said against the G-d of Israel and His Torah becomes null and void.

### **SEE HOW CRAFTY THE SATAN (ANGEL OF DEATH) REALLY IS**

**The Shevet Mussar tells us about a sick man that suffered desperately before he died, and trembled as he saw the angel of death. The Chachamim told him to say Shema Israel, and he answered: No way! I am not going to say Shema Israel, because the Satan (who is none other than the angel of death) was standing in front of him and telling him: If you say**

**Shema Israel, I am going to torment you and beat you with whips of fire, but if you don't say it, I will save you from the pain you are suffering.** This person did not say Shema Israel, his soul left ashamed, everybody left him alone because nobody wanted their clothing to get the impurity that this body emanated.

Think deeply about this story, and you will come to the conclusion that it is worth making that declaration while healthy, before the time of death, since nobody knows what can happen and G-d will bless us with a long life for the merit of having done complete Teshuva. See, my dear brother, and learn from this Tzaddik (the author of the Shevet Musar), so that everybody does as he did, the sooner the better, and at least in front of three people.

#### **HE WHO COMES TO PURIFY HIMSELF IS HELPED FROM ABOVE**

**He** need not be ashamed of anything or anybody, because if when the time comes he makes the slightest concession to the Satan because of his distress, without having given out the declaration before, he will lose his future world, G-d forbid. It is best to win his share in the world to come. And *HABA LEHITAHAR MESAYEIM LO* (He who comes to purify himself is helped from above).

While writing this, I was told by my father in law, Rabbi Yehoshua that once he was called by the Tzaddik Zeev Ziyev Z"l to be part of a Bet Din that would witness a declaration of annulment. This shows that many people do it, so it is very important for us to do it too, and not put off such an important Mitzvah. I also recommend all my descendants not to forget about the day of death, and with that Zechut (merit), the Shem Yitbarach with his kindness will make our days long to serve Him with devotion and integrity, amen.

#### **AND WHEN THE TIME COMES FOR THE SOUL TO LEAVE THE BODY, THE MAN IS BEHEADED WITH A BLEMISHED KNIFE AS IS DONE TO BEASTS, G-D FORBID**

See the Holy Zohar (Vayikra Page 29a and Tikune Page 59A) And the soul exits with great suffering and bitterness, very tightly as sheep wool, entangled and pulled back while being cut, that has to be pulled out with lots of effort, and around his bed thousands and millions of cruel and wild animals stand, millions of those Chitzonim (bad angels) that the person created with each sin that his evil instinct made him commit (when he was made believe that what was bitter was sweet instead), and those angels are waiting for him to die to punish him and calm the wrath of G-d; they make revenge theirs and do it very cruelly, beating him up again and again, each time harder than before.

*IT IS BETTER FOR A PERSON TO BE CONSIDERED A FOOL THROUGHOUT HIS ENTIRE LIFE BY MAN, THAN TO BE CONSIDERED WICKED FOR ONE MOMENT IN THE EYES OF G-D*

(MISHNA EDUYOT 5:6)

**HE WHO FEARS SIN IS CALLED ADAM (MAN)**

(ZOHAR 3, 145)

*The virtue of fear is not a small thing, since keeping yourself away from all that is bad depends on it.*

PELE YOETZ

**FORTUNATE IS THE PERSON WHO DESIRES TO LEARN ABOUT THE PUNISHMENTS OF GEHINOMM**

The holy book SHEVET MUSAR (Chapter 26) explains what happens in Gan Eden and in Gehinomm. It says:

YISMACH HAADAM VEYAGUEL HAROTZE (Let man rejoice and be happy if he desires) to know and find out about Gehinomm, so as to be ready to humiliate his uncircumcised heart and return to the paths of G-d.

**JUST AS THERE IS A GAN EDEN UNDER THE EARTH THERE IS A GEHINOMM THERE ALSO**

The book Avkat Rochel, says the following: You have to know that there is a Gehinomm located under the earth and it is equal to the Gehinomm from above. And just as there is a Gan Eden here inside the earth, with the same characteristics as the one above, there is a Gehinomm inside the earth called the Valley of the Sons of Hinom. That is why it is called Gehinomm. (For its Hebrew words – Ge Bnei Hinom)

### **MAN'S REWARD GOES ACCORDING TO HIS ACTS**

***KI HOLECH HAADAM EL BEIT OLAMO*** (Ecclesiastes 12:5) (Because Man goes for his everlasting home). The Talmud (Tractate Shabbat) interpreting this verse of Kohelet, comes to teach us that for each one of the Tzaddikim there is a place in Gan Eden according to his actions which he performed in this world while alive. Everybody dies just the same, but not every one gets the same reward, since rewards are given based upon actions performed in this world. Thus Rashi's explanation: for each one there is a house prepared, according to what he did and how he served His Maker.

### **SINS CREATE FILTHY CLOTHING (FROM THE BOOK TOTZAOT CHAYIM)**

Every Man must know that by his evil deeds he creates filthy clothing in which they clothe his soul in hell, as they explained on the verse, "And Yehoshua was dressed in filthy clothing." (Zechariah 3:3) In the Zohar they said, "Yehoshua was the High Priest What is written about him? 'And the Satan stood at his right side to accuse him' If this was true of Yehoshua, how much more so of everyone else in the world?" One must also repent so that his soul will not be kicked out when it ascends above, when it takes leave of the body. David prayed about this -Guard my soul," (Palms 25:20) do not give it into the hands of the accusers. How much more it is true of an individual who is full of sins; how much repentance and prayer does he require! And when a person imagines this thing in his mind while admitting [his wrongs] that he is aware that his soul ascends through the halls and [before entering] gives an account, and is kicked out, how much is it proper that he be anguished and weep. And if a person merits to do complete repentance, so that he dies by a [Divine] kiss, he is exempt from all the judgments of accounting;

### **PUNISHMENT IS NOT EQUAL FOR ALL MEN**

AND RABBI MENASHE BEN ISRAEL, in the book Nishmat Chayim (Chapter 53) wrote also about Gehinomm, saying: You need to know that, concerning hell, it can be compared to one that bought used kitchen utensils and wants to make them Kosher. Some only need to be washed, some need to be washed and boiled. Others may even require *LIBBUN* (to be burnt). While as for the utensils made of clay or porcelain that were used hot, there is no way of making them kosher, they have to be broken. The same happens with the punishment of the souls, since the soul is dirty with bad beliefs and bad actions. If that soul doesn't do Teshuva, and while alive it was not purified with the mitzvoth, his sin can not be purified, but in Gehinomm.

(note: You should know that Gehinomm is the final stage of cleansing sins, for when souls are undeserving there are many other ways of rectifying their sins and transgressions. There are reincarnations, the main vehicle for the soul to rectify its faults and many of these are much worse than Gehinomm for one can reincarnate not only in humans but also in animals, plants and minerals and these reincarnations are very painful for the souls.)

**THE HERETICS (THOSE WHO DENY ANY ASPECT OF THE TORAH) ARE  
PERMANENTLY PUNISHED, AS CLAY UTENSILS  
FOR WHICH THERE IS NO REPAIR**

About this category of sinners the prophet Isaiah (Chapter 66:24) says: "And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men who have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, nor shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be a loathing to all flesh".

**WOE TO THE EVILDOERS FOR THE INSULT TO THE TORAH**

And in the Holy Zohar (II 163a) it is written:

**Said R. Eleazar: `There are sinners who either neglect altogether the words of the Torah, or if they do cast an eye on them, think them mere foolishness. But in truth the foolishness is in their own minds, since all the words of the Torah are sublime and precious, and of every word it is written: "She is more precious than rubies; and all the things you can't desire are not to be compared with her" (Prov. III.). Woe to all these foolish and senseless people, when the Holy One, blessed be He, will demand an account from them for the insult done to the Torah and they will be punished for having rebelled against their Master...**

**IF YOU THINK THE TORAH IS AN EMPTY THING  
IT'S BECAUSE YOU ARE EMPTY**

**...So Scripture says: "For it is no empty thing for you" (Deut. XXXII, 47), implying that if it is an empty thing, its emptiness is from you yourselves, seeing that all the things one can desire are not to be compared with her. How can they say that the Torah is an empty thing seeing that Solomon said: "If thou art wise, thou art wise for thyself" (Prov. 9, 12), implying that whoever becomes wise in the Torah benefits himself thereby? Thus the Torah is filled with all riches and no one can add thereto even one letter. "But if thou**

scornest, thou alone shalt bear it" (Ibid.), since the worth of the Torah will be in no way diminished thereby, and the scorning will only recoil on the head of the scorner so as to cause him to perish in this world and in the world to come.

### **GEHINOMM INSIDE THE EARTH BROADENS A THE NUMBER OF RESHAIM GROWS**

The book Nishmat Chayim (Chapter 53) continues saying: About the Gehinomm below: It is a large place, capable of hosting millions, and as the number of evildoers multiplies, the place broadens to receive them. There are many levels there. One harder than the next one, where justice is administered according to the imposed punishment. It is located down here inside the surface of the earth, and it has three types of entrances. Through the sea, through the desert and through inhabited places, and each person enters through the gate that corresponds to his assigned punishment, because the suffering varies from one entrance to the other. The fire that burns there is seventy times stronger than the one that burns in this world, as we read in the Talmud (Berachot 7): "The fire of this world is one seventieth of the fire of Gehinomm, and the flames there are as high as mountains and hills. In the middle of Gehinomm, there are rivers of tar and sulfur that flow from the abyss (tehom).

### **GEHINOMM HAS ENOUGH SPACE TO ACCOMMODATE ALL EVILDOERS**

*The wicked think, "How many people can Gehinomm accommodate? Two million? Three million? How many evildoers are there in every generation? Gehinomm assuredly must run out of space and cease to accept new candidates." Responds G-d, "As many reshaim as there may be in the world, Gehinomm expands to accommodate you." This is enunciated by the prophet Yeshaya (30:33), "Gehinomm is prepared from the previous day; it is ready for kings, too; it is deepened; it is broadened; its furnace is full of fire and much fuel; G-d's breath is like a river of sulfur burning in it."*

*(Midrash Yalkut Shimoni 2:436)*

(Note: compare this to the lava that comes out of volcanoes, and with the distinctive sulfur smell of hot water springs)

### **THE DESTROYERS AND DAMAGING SPIRITS THAT PUNISH EVILDOERS ARE CREATED BY THEIR OWN ACTIONS**

**There is a whole variety of evil and destroying spirits, horrible and ugly whose mission is to punish and beat evildoers. They were created by the sinners with their sins and transgressions, as was said by our Rabbis in Pirke Avot (4:1): He who commits a sin creates a KATEGOR, an accusing angel.** And besides the ones evildoers create, there are the destroyers in charge of punishment since the day Gehinnom was created. These Reshaim are flagellated, hung, or strangled. They pull the eyes out of some of them, some of them are hung, and all depending on the sins and their severity.

### **THE REWARD FOR A SIN IS ANOTHER SIN**

There are bundles and bundles of sins. Our sages teach (Avot 4:2), "One sin brings on another." When a person does one sin, it then causes him to commit related offenses. The later sins are then responsible for still more related wrongs. Each sin draws along those related to it. All these then follow the first. Unrelated sins are not in that group. These are the bundles and bundles of sins.

The first sin along with the related ones following it, forms one package. Each following sin likewise forms its own package. In this manner, bundles and bundles of sins are created.

Each of these bundles of sins results in the creation of a troop of angels who destroy and accuse. These Destroyers and Accusers cry out, "Give us Life! Give us food!" They cry out to the one who committed the sin, who brought them into existence. He is literally their owner and is responsible for them. It is he who must provide them with food and sustenance. The first sin in the bundle was absolutely without coercion. The sinner must therefore sustain its resulting Destroyer and Accuser. But he must also sustain the other sins in the bundle.



**THE REMEDY TO ATONE FOR SINS IS TO SHOW MERCY  
TO ALL AND TO DO ACTS OF KINDNESS**

He may argue that these sins were forced onto him. They are resulted from his original, related sin. This is no excuse. The Destroyers and Accusers can argue that he should have immediately protected himself by observing one of the Torah's commandments. Since he did nothing to protect himself, he must sustain and nourish the entire troop.

The remedy for this is to learn and to observe the Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy. You must fulfill these Thirteen Attributes by displaying mercy and doing good deeds. When you do this, the revelation of the Thirteen Attributes within you stimulates the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy on high. They humble and eliminate the Destroyer bred by your sins...(Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom 89)

**SEE HOW YOUR ACTIONS AFFECT WHAT  
GOES ON IN HEAVEN**

And the Zohar (Tzav 131) says: As R. Hiya and R. Jose were once going from Usha to Tiberias, the latter said: 'It is written, "Ye shall sanctify yourselves and ye shall be holy" (Lev. xi). We know that if a man sanctifies himself here below, he is further sanctified from above, and that if he defiles himself here below, he is further defiled from above. Now that he should be sanctified from above is fit and proper, since the holiness of his Master rests upon him; but from whence is he defiled? From above? And is there, then, defilement above?' R. Hiya replied: '**This is the meaning of what we have learnt, that any activity below stimulates a corresponding activity above. If the activity below is one of holiness, it stimulates holiness above to rest upon the doer and sanctify him. And if the man defiles himself below, a spirit of defilement is aroused above and comes and rests upon him, defiling him further. For there is no good or evil, holiness or defilement, which has not its root and source above. And just as action below stimulates action above, so words below stimulate words above-that is to say, decision couched in words.** This word above is called "the word of the Lord"; for so we have learnt, that the word from below ascends and cleaves the firmaments until it reaches the place where it sets in motion either good or evil, according to its own character; hence it is written, "thou shalt keep yourself from every evil word (dabar)" (Deut. XXIII.).'

**HE WHO SAW THE TALMIDE CHACHAMIM (STUDENTS OF TORAH) SUFFER,  
AND DID NOT HAVE MERCY ON THEM, WILL SEE THEIR HONOR AND THEY  
WILL NOT HAVE MERCY ON HIM**

The book Nishmat Chayim (Chapter 53) continues saying: And If you say: Why is it that the punishment for looking bad at a Talmid Chacham is not received in Gehinomm, as with all other sins, but is given later at Gan Eden? The answer is that the method used by G-d in these cases is what is called *MIDDA KENEGUED MIDDA* (measure for measure). As he saw the Talmid Chacham in this world suffer and did not have mercy on him, he will see the high level and enjoyment of those who study Torah and they will not have mercy on him. As he did, so will be done to him.

**IN THE FUTURE GEHINOMM WILL CONSIST OF LOOKING AT THE PLEASURES  
OF THE TZADDIKIM WHILE NOT BEING ABLE TO ENJOY THEM**

**The** book Tzafenat Paneach writes: I have heard there will be no Gehinomm in the future. The Evildoers are put in Gan Eden, but it is not Paradise for them, because they hear those who study Torah with joy and pleasure but they don't feel any joy just as they did not enjoy it while alive. That causes pain and sadness to the Reshaim, which consumes them with shame, and that is their punishment.

**And** in the book Toldot Yaakov Joseph it says that the reshaim (evildoers) do not have worse hell than when they go into Gan Eden, where there is no food nor drink or any of the desires of this world. There are only Tzaddikim sitting with their crowns on their heads, and the reshaim, proud during their earthly life, when they see the ones they rejected enjoying honors and delighting with Torah and prayer, suffer greatly and this is the worst hell for them.

**THE SAGES DON'T WANT TO EXCHANGE COMFORT IN THIS WORLD FOR  
THEIR REWARD IN THE WORLD TO COME**

**In** the Midrash Rabba (PEKUDE 52), there is a story that happened to Rabbi Shimon Ben Chalafta, who was very poor and could barely make ends meet. Once, on the night before Shabbat, as he was on his way out to the synagogue, he prayed to G-d, and from the skies fell upon him a precious stone which he could sell and support himself with the proceeds. When he told his wife he had been sent a precious stone from heaven, she told him she did not want to make use of the stone, and asked him to return it. When Rabbi Shimon asked her why, she answered: Do you want your table in Olam Habba to be lame and the ones of your fellows to be

complete? Meaning, the equivalent of the stone that was sent to you to this world, will be missing from your table in Olam Habba.

### **THE WOMAN'S ARGUMENT IS SUPERIOR TO THAT OF RABBEINU HAKADOSH**

Rabbi Shimon went to visit Rabbi Hakadosh, his master, who had great concern about his student suffering of hunger. He told him: Go tell your wife that if your table is lame in Olam Habba, I will complete it from the part that will correspond to me. So he did, to what she replied that they should go together to see the Rabbi. They went together, and she asked: Can one see his colleague in Olam Habba? Doesn't each Tzaddik have a Chuppa to him alone? And so we say that *HAADAM HOLECH LEBET OLAMO* (each one goes to his own world). When the master heard her words, he agreed and Rabbi Shimon went to return the stone.

We see a similar story in the Talmud (Ta'anit 25a). Rabbi Chanina Ben Dosa asked the Master of the world to have pity on him and he was sent a leg of a table made of gold from heaven. His wife saw in her dreams that in the future Tzaddikim went to eat in Olam Habba in a table with three legs, while her husband had a table with two legs. Rabbi Chanina Ben Dosa asked from heaven to take back the leg of the table.

### **TWO LEVELS OF GAN EDEN**

In the Zohar, 227a, it is written: There is a Gan Eden above, and a Gan Eden below. Likewise, there is a Gehinomm above and one below.

**And in the Maamar Haikarim of the holy Rabby Moshe Chayim Luzzato, zt'l we read: For the soul that leaves the body at the time of death were prepared places at Olam Habba. If a person deserves it (according to his deeds in this world), his soul enters to rest until the time of the resurrection, in a rest place called Gan Eden.** And in Eden there are different levels. There is a Gan Eden Tachton (lower), and a Gan Eden Elyon (higher). In Gan Eden Hatachton, the souls have the same appearance they had while in this world. There are many kinds of pleasures there. Meanwhile, in the higher Gan Eden, the souls are there without a physical body, enjoying a great variety of pleasures of a higher and greater spiritual level than those of Gan Eden Hatachton. There are also different times and hours for the different kinds of pleasures. **Gehinomm is the place for those souls that have to be punished. There, they receive their punishment according to their actions. They get different kinds of suffering there, as there are different kinds of pleasures in Gan Eden.**

### **THE PROPHET ELIJAH TAKES RABBI YEHOShUA BEN LEVI TO THE GATES OF GEHINOMM TO SEE THE TERRIBLE PUNISHMENTS GIVEN TO EVILDOERS**

The book Nishmat Chayim (Chapter 53) says: It is written in Masechet Gehinomm, (Chapter II, Page 47a) the following: Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi said: Once, while walking, I came across Elijah the prophet, and he told me: Would you like to go to the gates of Gehinomm? I said yes. **There I saw some men hanging from their hands, some others from their feet. He showed me women hanging by their breasts; men who were fed their own flesh, and some others that were fed burning coals. I saw men that were still being eaten by worms. He told me about these (*Isaiah, Chapter 66*): *VETOLATAM LO TAMUT* (Their worms will not die). He showed me some others that were fed thin sand, so their teeth would brake. And the Holy One, Blessed Be He told them: Evildoers, when you ate what you stole, your mouth sweetened. And now you don't have the strength to eat? As the verse says: *VESHINE RESHAIM SHIBARTA* (You have broken the teeth of the wicked) (Psalms 3).**

### **GEHINOMM OF FIRE AND GEHINOMM OF ICE**

And I was shown some men that were tossed from fire to snow, and from snow to fire, like the shepherd that takes his flock from the mountain to the valley and back, about whom the verse (Psalms 49) says: *KATSON LISHOL MAVET YIREM* (As flocks of sheep they go to the sheol, death destroys them). And every Angel and Angel comes and punishes that man for each transgression done, one after another until the cleansing of the sins is complete. And in hell, half is fire and half is ice. (note: There is the Gehinomm of fire where sins committed with the fire of passion are atoned for and there is the Gehinomm of snow where the sins committed through indifference are cleansed)

### **IT IS UP TO EACH AND EVERY MAN TO CHOOSE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL**

**And you, son of man, see that I have laid in front of you the punishments of Gehinomm and the pleasures of Gan Eden, so you have two paths. One leads to death and the other to life. I will advice you to choose life so you can live and inherit your share in the garden of G-d. The choice is yours, since about you it has not been decided if you will be a Rasha or a Tzaddik, as our Rabbis said Z"L (Talmud NIDDA 31) that as soon as the drop of sperm joins**

the ovule, the angel takes it to its Maker, who states: this fetus will be smart or dumb, poor or rich, strong or weak, but about being Tzaddik or rasha, nothing is decreed.

### **EVERYTHING IS IN THE HANDS OF HEAVEN EXCEPT THE FEAR OF HEAVEN**

In the book Sefer Chassidim (Chapter 33) we read: "From the mouth of the Most High, evil and good will not emerge." (Lamentations 3:39) The Holy One, blessed be He, does not decree upon a person to be good or evil. So too, the Sages said: Everything is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven, as it says, "And now O Israel, what does the Lord your G-d ask of you? Only to fear...(Deuteronomy 10: 12) When a person is born, it is decreed regarding him whether he will be strong or weak, rich or poor, good-looking or ugly, tall or short but not whether he will be righteous or wicked. Rather, they set two paths before him, and he chooses one of them for himself. And because such a sinner destroys himself when he turns from the good path, abhors good and chooses evil, therefore he must weep and be contrite before his Maker because of what he has done to his soul, bestowing evil upon it. This is what it says afterward, "What should a living person mourn? A man for his sins." (Lamentations 3:39) Come and see: how many afflictions, fasts and entrities does one plead, while his soul is embittered upon him, when his child or his beloved friend is sick! How much more should one afflict oneself and mourn when he commits a sin! But repentance brings his soul back to both worlds.