

THE LIGHT OF THE ETERNAL PEOPLE  
Presented by Rabbi Shmuel Irons

Series VI Lecture #14

## HEAVEN AND EARTH

A GUIDE TO THE ESSENCE OF JUDAISM  
AS EXPRESSED IN OUR PRAYERS

**H** *HAKORAS HATOV* - GRATITUDE

**E** EXODUS - *YETZIAS MITZRAIM*

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**H** HEAVEN AND HELL

## I. The Men of the Great Assembly

## A.

(1) "לא מאסתים ולא געלתים לכלתם להפר בריתי אתם כי אני ד' א-להיהם." (ויקרא כו:מד) במתניתא תנא: לא מאסתים בימי כשדים, שהעמדתי להם דניאל חנניה מישאל ועזריה, ולא געלתים בימי יוונים, שהעמדתי להם שמעון הצדיק, וחשמונאי ובניו, ומתתיה כהן גדול, לכלתם בימי המן, שהעמדתי להם מרדכי ואסתר, להפר בריתי אתם, - בימי פרסיים, שהעמדתי להם של בית רבי וחכמי דורות, כי אני ד' א-להיהם - לעתיד לבוא, שאין כל אומה ולשון יכולה לשלוט בהם. מגילה יא.

"I did not reject them, neither did I abhor them to destroy them utterly, for I am the L-rd their G-d." (Leviticus 26:44) In a Braiisa it was taught: 'I have not rejected them' — in the days of the Chaldeans, when I raised up for them Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; 'neither did I abhor them' — in the days of the Greeks, when I raised up for them Shimon HaTzaddik (the Righteous) and Hasmonai and his sons, and Mattathias the High Priest; 'to destroy them utterly' — in the days of Haman, when I raised up for them Mordecai and Esther; 'to break My covenant with them' — in the days of the [Romans], when I raised up for them the members of the house of Rabbi [Yehudah HaNasi, the President of the Sanhedrin] and the Sages of the various generations. 'For I am the L-rd their G-d' — in the time to come, when no nation or people will be able to subject them. **Megilah 11a**

(2) אמר רבא: . . . הדור קבלוה בימי אחשורוש. דכתיב (אסתר ט) קימו וקבלו היהודים, קיימו מה שקיבלו כבר. שבת פח.

Rava said: . . . They re-accepted [the Torah] in the days of Ahasuerus, for it is written (Esther 9:27), "[The Jews] confirmed, and took upon them [etc.]: [i.e.,] they confirmed what they had accepted long before. **Shabbos 88a**

## B.

(1) משה קבל תורה מסיני. ומסרה ליהושע. ויהושע לזקנים. וזקנים לנביאים. ונביאים מסרוה לאנשי כנסת הגדולה. אבות א:א

Moshe received the Torah from Mount Sinai and transmitted it to Yehoshua. Yehoshua transmitted it to the Elders. The Elders to the Prophets. And the Prophets to the Men of the Great Assembly. **Avos 1:1**

(2) בית דינו של עזרא, הם הנקראין אנשי כנסת הגדולה. והם חגי זכריה ומלאכי, ודניאל חנניה מישאל ועזריה, ונחמיה בן חכליה, ומרדכי, וזרבל; והרבה חכמים עמהם, תשלום מאה ועשרים זקנים. האחרון מהם הוא שמעון הצדיק, והוא היה מכלל המאה ועשרים, וקבל תורה שבעל פה מכלן; והוא היה כוהן גדול, אחר עזרא. רמבם, הקדמה לס' משנה תורה

The members of Ezra's tribunal are called Men of the Great Assembly, namely: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, Nehemiah son of Hachaliah, Mordechai, Zerubavel, and many other scholars with them, totaling the number of an hundred and twenty Elders. The last surviving Elder of among them was Shimon HaTzakkik (the Just), who was included among the one hundred and twenty, and received the Oral Torah from all of them, and succeeded Ezra to the High Priesthood. **Rambam, Introduction to Mishneh Torah**

(3) הם אמרו שלשה דברים. הווי מתונים בדין. והעמידו תלמידים הרבה. ועשו סיג לתורה: אבות

The [Men of the Great Assembly] used to say three things: Be deliberate in judgement, establish many disciples, and make a fence around the Torah. **Avos 1:1**

(4) והעמידו תלמידים הרבה: שבית שמאי אומרים אל ישנה אדם אלא למי שהוא חכם ועניו ובן אבות ועשיר ובית הלל אומרים לכל אדם ישנה שהרבה פושעים היו בהם בישראל ונתקרב לתלמוד תורה ויצאו מהם צדיקים חסידים וכשרים: אבות דרבי נתן פרק ג

Establish many disciples: Bais Shamai said: One should only teach a student who is wise, humble, from a prominent family, and wealthy (self supporting). Bais Hillel said: One should teach everyone [without exception], for there were many sinners within Israel who became *tzakkidim*, righteous, *chassidim*, pious, and *keshairim*, proper, after being brought near to Torah study. **Avos d'Rabbi Nosson, Chapter 3**

(5) אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: למה נקרא שמן אנשי כנסת הגדולה - שהחזירו עטרה ליושנה. אתא משה אמר (דברים י) הא-ל הגדל הגבר והנורא, אתא ירמיה ואמר: נכרים מקרקרין - בהיכלו, איה נוראותיו? לא אמר נורא. אתא דניאל, אמר: נכרים משתעבדים בכנין, איה גבורותיו? לא אמר גבור. אתו אינהו ואמרו: אדרבה, זו היא גבורת גבורתו שכוּבש את יצרו, שנותן אך אפים לרשעים. ואלו הן נוראותיו - שאלמלא מוראו של הקדוש ברוך הוא היאך אומה אחת יכולה להתקיים בין האומות? יומא סט:

R. Yehoshua b. Levi said: Why were they called men of the Great Assembly? Because they restored the crown of the divine attributes to its ancient completeness. [For] Moses had come and said (Deuteronomy 10:17): The great G-d, the mighty, and the awesome. Then Jeremiah came and said: Foreigners are destroying His Temple. Where are, then, His awesome deeds? Hence he omitted [the attribute] the 'awesome'. (Jeremiah 32:17) Daniel came and said: Foreigners are enslaving his sons. Where are His mighty deeds? Hence he omitted the word 'mighty'. (Daniel 9:4) But they came and said: On the contrary! Therein lie His mighty deeds that He suppresses His wrath, that He extends long-suffering to the wicked. Therein lie His awesome powers: For but for the fear of Him, how could one [single] nation persist among the [many] nations! (Nehemiah 9:32) **Yoma 69b**

(6) (נחמיה ט) ויצעקו אל ד' א-להים בקול גדול מאי אמור? - אמר רב ואיתימא רבי יוחנן: בייא, בייא היינו האי דאחרביה למקדשא, וקליה להיכליה, וקטלינהו לכולהו צדיקי, ואגלינהו לישראל מארעהון, ועדיין מרקד בינן. כלום יהבתי לן אלא לקבולי ביה אגרא - לא איהו בעינן. ולא אגריה בעינן. נפל להו פיתקא מרקיעא, דהוה כתב בה אמת. אמר רב חנינא, שמע מינה: חותמו של הקדוש ברוך הוא אמת. אותיבו בתעניתא תלתא יומין ותלתא לילואתא, מסרוהו ניהליהו. נפק אתא כי גוריא דנורא מבית קדשי הקדשים. אמר להו נביא לישראל: היינו יצרא דעבודה זרה, שנאמר (זכריה ה) ויאמר זאת הרשעה. בהדי דתפסוה ליה אשתמיט ביניתא ממזייא, ורמא קלא, ואזל קליה ארבע מאה פרסי. אמרו: היכי נעביד? דילמא חס ושלו' מרחמי עליה מן שמיא. אמר להו נביא: שדיוהו בדודא דאברא, וחפיוהו לפומיה באברא, דאברא משאב שאיב קלא, שנאמר (זכריה ה) ויאמר זאת הרשעה וישלך אתה אל תוך האיפה וישלך את אבן העופרת אל פיה. יומא סט:

And [they] cried with a great [loud] voice unto the L-rd, their G-d. What did they cry? — Woe, woe, it is he (the *yetzer d'Avodah Zarah*, the evil desire of idolatry) who has destroyed the Sanctuary, burnt the Temple, killed all the righteous, driven all Israel into exile, and is still dancing around among us! You have surely given him to us so that we may receive reward through him. We want neither him, nor reward through him! Thereupon a tablet fell down from heaven for them, whereupon the word 'truth' was inscribed. (R. Hanina said: One may learn

therefrom that the seal of the Holy One, blessed be He, is truth). They ordered a fast of three days and three nights, whereupon he was surrendered to them. He came forth from the Holy of Holies like a young fiery lion. Thereupon the Prophet said to Israel: This is the evil desire of idolatry, as it is said (Zechariah 5:8), “And he said, ‘This is wickedness.’” As they took hold of him a hair of his beard fell out, he raised his voice and it went [was audible] four hundred parasangs. Thereupon they said: How shall we act? Perhaps, G-d forbid, they might have mercy upon him from heaven! — The prophet said unto them: Cast him into a leaden pot, closing its opening with lead. Because lead absorbs the voice, as it is said, “And he said, ‘This is wickedness.’” And he cast her down into the midst of the measure, and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof.” (Ibid.) **Yoma 69b**

(7) משהרגו היצר הרע בטלה הנבואה. פירוש הגר"א לסדר עולם

When they killed the *yetzer d'Avodah Zarah*, the evil desire of idolatry, prophecy came to an end. **Commentary of the Gaon of Vilna to Seder Olam**

C.

(1) אנשי כנסת הגדולה תקנו להם לישראל ברכות ותפלות קדושות והבדלות. ברכות לג.

The men of the Great Assembly established for the Jewish People the standard version of Benedictions, Prayers, Kiddush, and Havdalah. **Berochos 33a**

(2) מאה ועשרים זקנים ובהם כמה נביאים תיקנו שמונה עשרה ברכות על הסדר. מגילה יז:

One hundred and twenty elders, amongst them many Prophets, established the Eighteen Blessing in their proper order. **Megilla 17b**

(3) רבי שמואל בר נחמן בשם רבי יונתן שמונים וחמשה זקנים [ומהם שלשים] וכמה נביאים היו מצטערין על הדבר הזה . . . לא זזו משם נושאי' ונותנין בדבר עד שהאיר הקב"ה את עיניהם. תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת מגילה פרק א ה"ה

Rabbi Shmuel b. Nachman in the name of R. Yonasan said: Eighty five elders and [thirty] and many [other] prophets struggled regarding the [issue of instituting the recitation of Megilas Esther]. . . . They didn't leave [the assembly] after having debating the issue until the Holy One blessed be He, enlightened them. **Talmud Yerushalmi, Megilah 1:5**

(4) אנשי כנסת הגדולה כתבו יחזקאל ושנים עשר, דניאל ומגילת אסתר. בבא בתרא טו.

The Men of the Great Assembly wrote the book of Ezekiel, the Twelve Minor Prophets, Daniel and Megilas Esther. **Bava Basra 15a**

(5) רבי עקיבה שהתקין מדרש הלכות והגדות ויש אומרים אלו אנשי כנסת הגדולה. תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת שקלים פרק ה

Rabbi Akiva put the Midrash, Halachos (Mishna) and Agados, in their present form. Others say that it was the Men of the Great Assembly. **Talmud Yerushalmi, Shekalim 5:1**

(6) Now, for the Pharisees . . . They also believe that souls have an immortal rigor in them, and that under the earth there will be rewards or punishments, according as they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life; and the latter are to be detained in an everlasting prison, but

that the former shall have power to revive and live again . . . But the doctrine of the Sadducees is this: That souls die with the bodies . . . The doctrine of the Essenes is this: . . . They teach the immortality of souls . . . **Josephus, Antiquities, Book XVIII Chapter One**

7) [The Essene] doctrine is this: That bodies are corruptible, and that the matter they are made of is not permanent, but that the souls are immortal, and continue forever, and that they come out of the most subtle air, and are united to their bodies as in prisons, into which they are drawn by a certain natural enticement, but that when they are set free from the bonds of the flesh, they then, as released from a long bondage, rejoice and mount upward. And this is like the opinion of the Greeks, that good souls have their habitations beyond the ocean, in a region that is neither oppressed with storms of rain, or snow, or with intense heat, but that this place is such as is refreshed by the gentle breathing of a west wind that is perpetually blowing from the ocean; while they allot to bad souls a dark and tempestuous den, full of never-ceasing punishments. **Josephus, The Wars of the Jews II 8:2-13**

8) כל חותמי ברכות שבמקדש היו אומרים: עד העולם. משקלקלו המינים (הצדוקים) ואמרו אין עולם אלא אחד - התקינו שיהיו אומרים: מן העולם ועד העולם. ברכות (פרק ט משנה ח) נד.

At the conclusion of the benedictions that were said in the Temple they used to first say simply, “[Blessed are You Hashem, the G-d of Israel] forever.” When the heretics (Sadducees) preverted their ways and asserted that there was only one world, it was ordained that the response should be, “[Blessed are You, the G-d of Israel] forever (from this world) and ever (to the next world). **Berachos (Chapter 9 Mishna 8) 54a**

9) התקינו - עזרא וסיעתו שיהיו אומרים מן העולם ועד העולם, לומר ששני עולמות יש, להוציא מלב המינים (הצדוקים) הכופרים בתחיית המתים.

Ezra and his colleagues instituted that they say, “forever (from this world) and ever (to the next world),” to negate the beliefs of the heretics (Sadducees) who deny the belief in the resurrection of the dead. **Rashi, ibid.**

10) וַיֹּאמְרוּ הַלְוִיִּם יֵשׁוּעַ וְקַדְמִיאֵל בְּנֵי חֲשַׁבְנִיָּה שְׁרֵבִיָּה הוֹדִיָּה שְׁבַנְיָה פְתַחְיָה קוֹמוּ בְּרַכּוּ אֶת־ד' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִן־הָעוֹלָם עַד־הָעוֹלָם וַיְבָרְכוּ שֵׁם כְּבוֹדְךָ וּמְרוֹמֶם עַל־כָּל־בְּרָכָה וְתִהְיֶה: נחמיה פרק ט:ה

Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, Stand up and bless the L-rd your G-d for ever and ever. Blessed be Your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. **Nehemiah 9:5**

D.

1) שמעון הצדיק היה משירי כנסת הגדולה. הוא היה אומר על שלשה דברים העולם עומד. על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים: אבות א:ב

Shimon HaTzaddik (the Righteous) was one of the last of the Great Assembly. He used to say: The world is based upon three things: The Torah, Divine Service, and the practice of kindness. **Avos 1:2**

2) בעשרים וחמשה בטבת יום הר גריזים הוא דלא למספד יום שבקשו כותיים את בית אלקנו מאלכסנדרוס מוקדון להחריבו ונתן להם רשות באו והודיעו את שמעון הצדיק מה עשה לבש בגדי כהונה ונתעטף בבגדי כהונה ומיקירי ישראל עמו ואבוקה של אור בידיהן וכל הלילה הללו הולכים

מצד זה והללו הולכים מצד זה עד שעלה עמוד השחר כיון שעלה עמוד השחר אמר להם מי הללו אמרו לו יהודים שמרדו בך כיון שהגיע לאנטיפטרס זרחה חמה ופגעו זה בזה כיון שראה לשמעון הצדיק ירד ממרכבתו והשתחוה לפניו אמרו לו מלך גדול שכמותך ישתחוה ליהודי זה אמר להם דמות דיוקנו של זה מנצחת לפני בבית מלחמתי אמר להם למה באתם אמרו אפשר בית שמתפללים בו עליך ועל מלכותך שלא תחרב יתעוך עובדי כוכבים להחריבו אמר להם מי הללו אמרו לו כותיים הללו שעומדים לפניך אמר להם הרי הם מסורין בידכם מיד נקבום בעקבים ותלאום בזנבי סוסייהם והיו מגררין אותן על קוצים ועל ברקנים עד שהגיעו להר גריזים כיון שהגיעו להר גריזים חרשוהו וזרעוהו כרשינים כדרך שבקשו לעשות לבית אלקנו ואותו היום עשאוהו יו"ט. יומא סט.

The twenty fifth of Teves is celebrated as Mount Gerizzim day and is forbidden in eulogies. At that time the Cutheans (Samaritans) asked permission from Alexander (the Great) the Macedonian to destroy the Bais Hamikdash and he granted it to them. Shimeon HaTzaddik was informed of their plans. What did he do? He put on the priestly raiments and together with the most prestigious members of Jerusalem he walked by torch light. All night his group was walking from one direction while the Greek and Cuthean group was walking from the other direction. At daybreak, when Alexander caught sight of the Jews he asked the Cutheans: "who are these people?". They answered: "The Jews who have rebeled against you". By the time he reached Antipatras the sun rose and the two groups met. As soon as he saw Shimeon Hatzaddik, Alexander went down from his chariot and bowed down to him. Alexander's entourage asked him: "A king of your stature should bow down to a Jew?". He replied: " The apparition of that man was shown to me before my victory on the battlefield". Alexander asked the Jews: "Why have you come to me?" They replied: "How is it possible that pagans should entice you to demolish the Temple in which we pray that you and your kingdom shall not be destroyed". "Who are these people?", Alexander asked. "The Samaritans that stand before you", they replied. He said to them: "Behold you have the authority to do with them as you please". Immediately they pierced their heels and tied them to the tails of their horses and dragged them over thorns and brambles until they reached Mt. Gerizzim. As soon as they reached Mt. Gerizzim they plowed it under and planted it with horse bean just as they had intended to do to the Bais Hamikdash. That day was declared a holiday (in which fasting was forbidden). **Yoma 69a**

3) Now when Alexander, king of Macedon, had put an end to the dominion of the Persians, and had settled the affairs in Judea after the forementioned manner, he ended his life. And as his government fell among many, Antigonus obtained Asia, Seleucus Babylon; and of the other nations which were there, Lysimachus governed the Hellespont (Dardanelles), and Cassander possessed Macedonia; as did Ptolemy the son of Lagus seize upon Egypt. And while these princes ambitiously strove one against another, every one for his own principality, it came to pass that there were continual wars, and those lasting wars too; and the cities were sufferers, and lost a great many of their inhabitants in these times of distress, insomuch that all Syria, by the means of Ptolemy the son of Lagus, underwent the reverse of that denomination of Savior (Soter), which he then had. He also seized upon Jerusalem, and for that end made use of deceit and treachery; for as he came into the city on a Sabbath day, as if he would offer sacrifices he, without any trouble, gained the city, while the Jews did not oppose him, for they did not suspect him to be their enemy; and he gained it thus, because they were free from suspicion of him, and because on that day they were at rest and quietness; and when he had gained it, he ruled over it in a cruel manner. . . . But when Ptolemy had taken a great many captives, both from the mountainous parts of Judea, and from the places about Jerusalem and Samaria, and the places near Mount Gerizzim, he led them all into Egypt, and settled them there. **Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews Book XII Chapter I**

4) It was Simon, the son of Onias, the great priest, who in his lifetime repaired the House, and in his days strengthened the Sanctuary. He laid the foundation for the height of the double wall, the lofty substructure for the temple enclosure. In his days, a water cistern was hewed out, a reservoir in circumference like the sea. He took thought for his people to keep them from calamity and fortified the city against siege. **The Wisdom of Ben Sira 50: 1-4**

5) When Onias (the son of Yaddua) the high priest died, his son Simon (Shimon) became his successor. He was called Simon the Just (Shimon HaTzaddik) because of both his piety towards G-d and his kind disposition to those of his own nation. **Josephus Flavius, Antiquities of the Jews Book XII Chapter II:5**

E.

(1) אנטיגנוס איש סוכו קבל משמעון הצדיק. הוא היה אומר אל תהיו כעבדים המשמשין את הרב על מנת לקבל פרס. אלא הווי כעבדים המשמשין את הרב שלא על מנת לקבל פרס. ויהי מורא שמים עליכם: אבות א:ג

Antigonos the man (leader) of Socho received the oral tradition from Shimon HaTzaddik. He used to say: Be not like servants who serve the master in the expectation of receiving a reward. Rather be like servants who the Master without the expectations of receiving a reward. And the fear of Heaven should be upon you. **Avos 1:3**

(2) אנטיגנוס איש סוכו היו לו שני תלמידים שהיו שונים בדבריו והיו שונים לתלמידים ותלמידים לתלמידיהם. עמדו ודקדקו אחריהן ואמרו מה ראו אבותינו לומר דבר זה. אפשר שיעשה פועל מלאכה כל היום ולא יטול שכרו ערבית. אילו היו יודעין אבותינו שיש עולם אחר ויש תחית המתים לא היו אומרים כך. עמדו ופירשו מן התורה ונפרצו מהם שתי פרצות צדוקים וביתוסין. צדוקים על שום צדוק וביתוסין על שם ביתוס. והיו משתמשים בכלי כסף וכלי זהב כל ימיהם שהיתה דעתן גסה עליהם. היו הצדוקים אומרים מסורת ביד פירושים שהן מצערין עצמן בעוה"ז ובעולם הבא אין להם כלום. אבות דרבי נתן פרק ה' ב

Antigonos the man (leader) of Socho had two disciples who studied and repeated his words and repeated them to their disciples who in turn taught it to their disciples. They (the disciples) arose and analyzed their words and commented: "How could our forefathers ever make such a statement (that one should serve Hashem without the motivation of receiving reward)? Is it possible that a laborer should not receive his wages at night? If our forefathers were aware of another world and of the resurrection of the dead they would never have made such a statement." They arose and severed their ties to the Torah. Two breaches came out from them: Sadducees, the self styled disciples of Sadduc (one of Antigonos' disciples) and the Baithusim, the self styled disciples of Baithus (another disciple). Throughout their lives the Sadducees would use only the finest vessels of silver and gold. They were gross and arrogant people. They would often say that the Pharisees have a tradition to torment themselves in this world without having anything in the next. **Avos D'Rabbi Noson 5:2**

3) But the Sadducees are those that compose the second order, and take away fate entirely, and suppose that G-d is not concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil; and they say, that to act what is good, or what is evil, is at men's own choice, and that the one or the other belongs so to every one, that they may act as they please. They also take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards in Hades. Moreover, the Pharisees are friendly to one another, and are for the exercise of concord and regard for the public. But the

behavior of the Sadducees one towards another is in some degree wild; and their conversation with those that are of their own party is as barbarous as if they were strangers to them. And this is what I had to say concerning the philosophic sects among the Jews. **Josephus, The Wars of the Jews Book II Chapter 8**

4) What I would now explain is this, that the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the laws of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them, and say, that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written word, but are not to observe what are derived from the tradition of our forefathers. And concerning these things it is that great disputes and differences have arisen among them, while the Sadducees are able to persuade none but the rich, and have not the populace obsequious to them, but the Pharisees have the multitude on their side. **Josephus, Antiquities Book XIII Chap. 10**

5) When Alexander had reigned twelve years, and after him Ptolemy Soter forty years, Philadelphus then took the kingdom of Egypt, and held it forty years within one. He procured the law to be interpreted, and set free those that were come from Jerusalem into Egypt, and were in slavery there, who were a hundred and twenty thousand. The occasion was this: Demetrius Phalereus, who was library keeper to the king, was now endeavouring, if it were possible, to gather together all the books that were in the habitable earth, and buying whatsoever was any where valuable, or agreeable to the king's inclination, . . . But [Demetrius] said he had been informed that there were many books of laws among the Jews worthy of inquiring after, and worthy of the king's library, but which, being written in characters and in a dialect of their own, will cause no small pains in getting them translated into the Greek tongue; . . . So the king thought that Demetrius was very zealous to procure him an abundance of books, and that he suggested what was exceeding proper for him to do; and therefore he wrote to the Jewish high priest, that he should act accordingly. . . . [Consequently Ptolemy decreed,] "Let all those who were soldiers under our father, and who, when they overran Syria and Phoenicia, and laid waste Judaea, took the Jews captives, and made them slaves, and brought them into our cities, and into this country, and then sold them; as also all those that were in my kingdom before them, and if there be any that have been lately brought thither, - be made free by those that possess them; and let them accept of [a hundred and] twenty drachmas for every slave. And let the soldiers receive this redemption money with their pay, but the rest out of the king's treasury." . . . When this was over, what the king had decreed was quickly brought to a conclusion; and this in no more than seven days' time, the number of the talents paid for the captives being above four hundred and sixty, and this, because their masters required the [hundred and] twenty drachmas for the children also, the king having, in effect, commanded that these should be paid for, when he said in his decree, that they should receive the forementioned sum for every slave. . . . If then it please thee, O king, thou mayst write to the high priest of the Jews, to send six of the elders out of every tribe, and those such as are most skilful of the laws, that by their means we may learn the clear and agreeing sense of these books, and may obtain an accurate interpretation of their contents, and so may have such a collection of these as may be suitable to thy desire." **Antiquities Book XII**

6) כתב לך את הדברים האלה הה"ד (הושע) אכתוב לו רובי תורתי כמו זר נחשבו. בשעה שנגלה הקב"ה בסיני ליתן תורה לישראל אמרה למשה על הסדר מקרא ומשנה תלמוד ואגדה. שנאמר (שמות) וידבר אלקים את כל הדברים האלה. אפילו מה שהתלמיד שואל לרב אמר הקב"ה למשה באותה שעה. מאחר שלמדה מפי הקב"ה אמר לו למדה לישראל. אמר לפניו רבש"ע אכתוב אותה להם. אמר לו איני מבקש ליתנה להם בכתב מפני שגלוי לפני שעובדי כוכבים עתידים לשלוט



בהם וליטול אותה מהם ויהיו בזוים בעובדי כוכבים אלא המקרא אני נותן להם במכתב והמשנה והתלמוד והאגדה אני נותן להם על פה. שאם יבואו עובדי כוכבים וישתעבדו בהם יהיו מובדלים מהם. אמר לנביא אם אכתוב לו רובי תורתך כמו זר נחשבו. ומה אני עושה להם נותן את המקרא בכתב והמשנה והתלמוד והאגדה בעל פה. כתב זה המקרא. כי על פי הדברים האלה זו המשנה והתלמוד שהם מבדילים בין ישראל לבין העובדי כוכבים. שמות רבה מז:א

"Write down these words" (Shmos 34:27). This refers to the verse "Were I to write down the bulk of my Torah you would be (eventually) considered as a stranger." (Hoshea 8:12) At the time that Hashem revealed Himself to Moshe at Sinai to give the Torah to the Jews, He taught it in order: Scripture, Mishna, Talmud, and Agadah, as it is stated "Hashem said all these things".(Shmos 20:1) Even that which a student asks of his teacher did Hashem teach Moshe at that time. After He taught it to Moshe He told him: "Go teach it to the Jews". Moshe said to Hashem: "Let me write (all of) it down for them". Hashem replied: "I don't want to give it to them in writing because I know that eventually the non-Jews will dominate them and take the Torah away from them and the Jews will become despised by them. Only the Scripture will I give in writing but Mishna, Talmud, and Agada will be kept in an oral form. If the non-Jews come and subjugate them, the Oral Law will act as a separation. Therefore the Prophet said: "Were I to write down the bulk of the Torah you would be considered as strangers." What did I do for them? I give them the Scripture in writing but the Mishna, Talmud, and Agada I give them orally. "Write these words" (Shmos 34:27) refers to Scripture. "Because according to (the verbal interpretation of) these words did I make a covenant" (ibid) refers to the Mishna and Talmud that create a separation between the other nations and the Jews. **Midrash Shemos Rabbah 47:1**

## II. The Zugos

A. From Antiochos [III]: "Since the Jews, upon our first entrance on their country, demonstrated their friendship towards us; and when we came to their city (Jerusalem,) received us in a splendid manner, and came to meet us with their senate (sanhedrin), and gave abundance of provisions to our soldiers, and to the elephants, and joined with us in ejecting the garrison of the Egyptians that were in the citadel, we have thought fit to reward them, and to retrieve the condition of their city, which had been greatly depopulated by such accidents as have befallen its inhabitants, and to bring those that have been scattered abroad back to the city. **Antiquities Book XII Chapter 3**

### B.

(1) יוסי בן יועזר איש צרדה ויוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים קבלו מ[שמעון הצדיק ואניטגנוס איש סוכו. יהושע בן פרחיה ונתאי הארבלי קבלו מ[יוסי בן יועזר איש צרדה ויוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים]. יהודה בן טבאי ושמעון בן שטח קבלו מ[יהושע בן פרחיה ונתאי הארבלי] אבות א:ד,ו,ח

Yosei ben Yoezer, leader of Tzredah and Yosei ben Yochanan, leader of Jerusalem, received the oral tradition from [Shimon HaTzaddik and Antigonos]. Yehoshua ben Perachiah and Nitai HaArbeili received the oral tradition from [Yosei ben Yoezer and Yosei ben Yochanan], Yehudah be Tabai and Shimon ben Shetach received the oral tradition from [Yehoshua ben Perachiah and Nitai HaArbeili]. **Avos 1:4,6,8**

(2) תנן התם: משמת יוסף בן יועזר איש צרידה ויוסף בן יוחנן איש ירושלים בטלו האשכולות איש שהכל בו, ואמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל: כל אשכולות שעמדו להן לישראל מימות משה עד שמת יוסף בן יועזר היו למדין תורה כמשה רבינו, מכאן ואילך לא היו למדין תורה כמשה רבינו. והאמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל: שלשת אלפים הלכות נשתכחו בימי אבלו של משה דאישתכח להו -

אישתכח, ודגמירן להו - הוו גמירי כמשה רבינו. והא תניא: משמת משה, אם רבו מטמאין - טמאו, אם רבו טהורין - טיהרן ליבא דאימעט, מיגמר - הוו גמירי להו כמשה רבינו. במתניתא תנא: כל אשכולות שעמדו לישראל מימות משה עד שמת יוסף בן יועזר איש צרידה לא היה בהם שום דופי, מכאן ואילך היה בהן שום דופי. . . . אמר רב יוסף: דופי של סמיכה קתני. והא יוסף בן יועזר גופיה מיפליג פליג בסמיכה כי אפליג בה - בסוף שניה, דבצר ליבא. תמורה טו:

We have learned in a Mishna elsewhere: When Yosef b. Yo'ezer of Tzereda and Yosef b. Yochanan of Jerusalem died, the grape-clusters came to an end. What is the meaning of eshkoloth [grape-clusters]? — A man in whom all (Torah, fear of G-d, and loving kindness) is contained. R. Yehudah reported in the name of Shmuel: All the 'grape-clusters' who arose from the days of Moses until Yosef b. Yo'ezer learned Torah like Moshe our Teacher. From that time onward, they did not learn Torah like Moshe our Teacher. But did not Rav Yehudah report in the name of Shmuel: Three thousand halachos were forgotten during the period of mourning for Moshe? — Those laws which were forgotten were forgotten, but those which were learned they learned like Moshe, our Teacher. But has it not been taught: After the death of Moshe, if those who pronounced unclean were in the majority, they [the Rabbis] declared [the object] unclean, and if those who pronounced clean were in the majority, they [the Rabbis] declared [it] clean? — Their acumen diminished, but, what they had learned, they learned like Moshe our Teacher. It has been taught: All the 'grape-clusters' who arose in Israel from the days of Moshe until the death of Yosef b. Yo'ezer of Tzereda were free from all dofi [taint]. From that time onward, some matter of taint was found in them. . . . Said R. Yosef: [The word dofi here means] dispute, [e.g., the dispute] relating to 'laying on of hands' [on a sacrifice on Yom Tov]. But does not Yosef b. Yo'ezer himself differ with reference to the law of laying on of hands? — When he differed, it was in his latter years, when his mental powers declined. **Temurah 15b,16a**

C.

(1) 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 [simply] like ordinary donkeys. **Shabbos 112b**

(2) 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. Yochanan stated: The hearts of the ancients were like the doorway of the Ulam (Temple Hall), but that of the last generations was like the doorway of the Heichal (Temple Sanctuary), but ours is like the eye of a fine needle. R. Akiva is classed among the ancients; R. Elazar b. Shammua among the last generations. Others say: R. Elazar 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 to 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. **Eirubin 53a**

D.

מעשה בינאי המלך שהלך לכוחלית שבמדבר וכיבש שם ששים כרכים ובחזרתו היה שמח שמחה גדולה וקרא לכל חכמי ישראל אמר להם אבותינו היו אוכלים מלוחים בזמן שהיו עסוקים בבנין בית המקדש אף אנו נאכל מלוחים זכר לאבותינו והעלו מלוחים על שולחנות של זהב ואכלו והיה שם אחד איש לץ לב רע ובליעל ואלעזר בן פועירה שמו ויאמר אלעזר בן פועירה לינאי המלך ינאי המלך לבם של פרושים עליך ומה אעשה הקם להם בציץ שבין עיניך הקים להם בציץ שבין עיניו היה שם זקן אחד ויהודה בן גדידיה שמו ויאמר יהודה בן גדידיה לינאי המלך ינאי המלך רב לך כתר מלכות הנח כתר כהונה לזרעו של אהרן שהיו אומרים אמו נשבת במודיעים ויבוקש הדבר ולא נמצא ויבדלו חכמי ישראל בזעם ויאמר אלעזר בן פועירה לינאי המלך ינאי המלך הדיוט שבישראל כך הוא דינו ואתה מלך וכהן גדול כך הוא דינך ומה אעשה אם אתה שומע לעצתי רומסם. ותורה מה תהא עליה? הרי כרוכה ומונחת בקרן זוית כל הרוצה ללמוד יבוא וילמוד אמר רב נחמן בר יצחק מיד נזרקה בו אפיקורסות דהוה ליה למימר תינח תורה שבכתב תורה שבעל פה מאי מיד ותוצץ הרעה על ידי אלעזר בן פועירה ויהרגו כל חכמי ישראל והיה העולם משתומם עד שבא שמעון בן שטח והחזיר את התורה ליושנה. קדושין סו.

There was an incident with Yanai (Yochanon) the King who upon returning from a successful campaign at Cochlith in the desert, having conquered sixty cities, made a great celebration and invited all the sages of Israel. He said to them: "Our forefathers ate simple vegetables at the time they built the Bais HaMikdash. As a commemoration to them we should also. They brought the vegetables on golden tables. There was present a cynical evil man by the name of Eliezer ben Pueira. He said to Yanai: "King Yanai, in their hearts, the Pharisees are opposed to you." "What can I do to confirm this accusation", asked Yanai. "Put on the "Tzitz" (the golden frontlet worn by the High Priest) and see their reaction", answered Eliezer. One of the elders present when Yanai put on the "Tzitz", Yehudah ben Gedidiah, remarked to him: "King Yanai, it is enough that you have the position of king. Leave the priesthood to the true descendants of Aaron." This comment was based on testimony that Yanai's mother was taken captive by Antiochus' forces in Modi'in. A woman taken captive is considered unfit to marry a Cohen and the child of such a union is not considered to be a true Cohen. This testimony, however, was subsequently discredited and therefore untrue and an affront to the king. The sages as a result punished Yehuda ben Gedidia and excommunicated him. Eliezer provoked the king further and said: "Excommunication is a fit punishment when a commoner is falsely accused, but for a king and High Priest this punishment is not sufficient." "What shall I do?", asked the king. "If you would listen to my advice", Eliezer continued, "you should crush them (the sages)." "But what will become of the Torah?", asked Yanai. "The Torah is neatly rolled and sitting in the corner. Anyone who wants to avail themselves of it can do so", replied Eliezer. The evil sprouted through Eliezer ben Puierah and they (the Sadducees and Yanai) killed out the vast majority of the sages. The world was desolate until Shimon ben Shetach came and returned the Torah to its former greatness. **Kiddushin 66a**

E.

(1) תנו רבנן לעולם תהא שמאל דוחה וימין מקרבת. לא כאלישע שדחפו לגחזי בשתי ידיו ולא כיהושע בן פרחיה שדחפו ליש"ו הנוצרי בשתי ידיו. . . יהושע בן פרחיה מאי היא? כדהוה קא קטיל ינאי מלכא לרבנן שמעון בן שטח אטמינהו אחתיה רבי יהושע בן פרחיה אזל ערק לאלכסנדריא של מצרים. כי הוה שלמא שלח ליה שמעון בן שטח: מני ירושלים עיר הקודש לך אלכסנדריא של מצרים אחותי בעלי שרוי בתוכך ואני יושבת שוממה. אמר שמעון מינה הוה ליה שלמא. כי אתא איקלע לההוא אושפיזא. קם קמייהו ביקרא שפיר עבדי ליה יקרא טובא. יתיב וקא משתבח: כמה נאה

אכסניא זו! אמר ליה: רבי, עינייה טרוטות! אמר ליה: רשע! בכך אתה עוסק? אפיק ד' מאה שיפורי ושמתייה. כל יומא אתא לקמיה ולא קבליה. יומא חד הוה קרי ק"ש אתא לקמיה. הוה בדעתיה לקבוליה. אחוי ליה בידיה. סבר מידחא דחי ליה. אזל זקף לבינתא פלחא. א"ל חזר בך! א"ל כך מקובלני ממך כל החוטא ומחטיא את הרבים אין מספיקין בידו לעשות תשובה. דאמר מר: יש"ו [הנוצרי] כישף והסית והדיח והחטיא את ישראל. סוטה מז. סנהדרין קז: (חסרונות הש"ס)

Our Rabbis taught: Let the left hand repulse but the right hand always invite back: not as Elisha, who thrust Gehazi away with both hands, and not like Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perachiah who pushed away Yeshu HaNotzri with both hands. What was the story with R. Yehoshua ben Perachiah? — When King Yannai slew our Rabbis, R. Yehoshua ben Perachia (and Yeshu) fled to Alexandria of Egypt. On the resumption of peace, Shimon ben Shetach sent to him: 'From me, (Jerusalem) the holy city, to you, Alexandria of Egypt (my sister). My husband dwelleth within thee and I am desolate.' He arose, went, and found himself in a certain inn, where great honor was shown him. 'How beautiful is this Acsania!' (The word denotes both inn and innkeeper. R. Joshua used it in the first sense; the following answer assumes that the second was meant.) Thereupon (Yeshu) observed, 'Rabbi, her eyes are narrow.' 'Wretch,' he rebuked him, 'do you engage yourself in such things.' He sounded four hundred trumpets and excommunicated him. He (Yeshu) came before him many times pleading, 'Receive me!' But he would pay no heed to him. One day he (R. Yehoshua) was reciting the Shema, when Yeshu came before him. He intended to receive him and made a sign to him. He (Yeshu) thinking that it was to repel him, went, put up a brick, and worshipped it (a euphemism for a form of idolatry). 'Repent,' said he (R. Yehoshua) to him. He replied, 'I have learned from you: He who sins and causes others to sin is not afforded the means of repentance.' And a Master has said, 'Yeshu HaNotzri practiced magic and led Israel astray.' **Sanhedrin 107b (censored version)**

(2) תניא בערב הפסח תלאוהו ליש"ו [הנוצרי] והכרוז יוצא לפניו מ' יום קודם שהוא [ישו הנוצרי] יוצא ליסקל על שכישיף והסית והדיח את ישראל כל מי שיודע לו זכות יבא וילמד עליו ולא מצאו לו זכות ותלאוהו בערב פסח. סנהדרין מג. (חסרונות הש"ס)

It was taught in a Braiisa: On the eve of the Passover Yeshu [HaNotzri] was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going forth to be stoned because he has practised sorcery and enticed Israel to apostacy. Anyone who can say anything in his favor, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.' But since nothing was brought forward in his favor he was [stoned and] hanged on the eve of the Passover. **Sanhedrin 43a (censored version)**

#### F. The Teacher of Righteousness

1) "כִּי רָשָׁע מְכַתִּיר אֶת־הַצְדִּיק (חבקוק פרק א פסוק ד) "The wicked man encompasses the righteous man" (Habakkuk 1:4) The meaning is that the wicked man is the Wicked Priest and the righteous man is the Teacher of Righteousness. **Habakkuk Peshar**

2) "רְאוּ בְּגוֹיִם וְהִפְיִטוּ וְהִתְמָהוּ תְמָהוּ (חבקוק פרק א פסוק ה) "Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded." (Habakkuk 1:5) This means that those who acted treacherously together with the Man of the Lie at the end of days; that is, those who are ruthless against the covenant and do not believe when they hear all the things that are coming upon the last generation from the Priest into whose heart G-d put wisdom to explain all the words of His servants, the prophets, through whom G-d declared all the things that are coming upon his people and his congregation. **Habakkuk Peshar**

- 3). לָמָּה תִּבְיֹט בְּוֹגְדִים תַּחֲרִישׁ בְּבֹלַע רָשָׁע צְדִיק מִמֶּנּוּ: (חֲבַקּוּק פֶּרֶק א פְּסוּק יג) "Why do you look on faithless men, but you are silent at the swallowing by the wicked man of one more righteous than he?" (Habakkuk 1:13) This means the house of Absalom and the men of their party, who kept silent at the chastisement of the Teacher of Righteousness and did not help him against the Man of the Lie, who rejected the law in the midst of congregation." **Habakkuk Peshar**
- 4) Absalom, who was at once both uncle and father-in-law to Aristobulus (II) was taken captive [by Pompey at the time of the conquest of Jerusalem]. **Josephus, Antiquities XIV 4:4**
- 5) כְּתוּב חֲזוֹן וּבְאֵר עַל-הַלְקוֹת לְמַעַן יָרוּץ קוֹרֵא בּוֹ: (חֲבַקּוּק פֶּרֶק ב פְּסוּק ב) "Write the vision, and make it plain upon the tablets, that he may run [through it, he] who reads it." (Habakkuk 2:2) This refers to the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom G-d made known all the mysteries of the words of his servants the prophets." **Habakkuk Peshar**
- 6) "The Wicked Priest . . . put forth his hand against him who was teaching the Law aright in order to have him put to death and to make an end of the Covenant of the Law." **Peshar to Psalm 37**
- 7) So [Salome (SholomTzion) the sister of Shimon ben Shetach] made Hyrcanus high priest, because he was the elder, but much more because he cared not to meddle with politics, and permitted the Pharisees to do everything; to whom she also ordered the multitude to be obedient. She also restored again those practices which the Pharisees had introduced, according to the traditions of their forefathers, and which her father-in-law, Hyrcanus, had abrogated. So she had indeed the name of the Regent, but the Pharisees had the authority; for it was they who restored those who had been banished, and set those who were prisoners at liberty, and, to say all at once, they differed in nothing from lords. **Antiquities XIII 16:2**
- 8) . . . the Romans gave abundant evidence what great souls they (the Essenes) had in their trials, wherein, although they were tortured and distorted, burnt and torn to pieces, and went through all kinds of instruments of torment, that they might be forced **either to blaspheme their legislator**, or to eat what was forbidden them, yet could they not be made to do either of them, no, nor once to flatter their tormentors, or to shed a tear, but they smiled in their very pains, and laughed those to scorn who inflicted the torments upon them, and resigned up their souls with great alacrity, as expecting to receive them again. **Josephus, The Wars of the Jews II 8:2-13**