BASED ON R' SHLOMO BUBER'S EDITION

מדרש תהלים

שוחר טוב

MIDRASH TEHILLIM

WITH INTRALINEAR TRANSLATION, ELUCIDATION
AND CLASSICAL COMMENTARIES ON BOOK OF PSALMS
ILLUMINATED BY CHASSIDIC INSIGHTS

VOLUME I · PSALMS 1–41
כרך א · מזמורים א–מא

Kesser Shem Tov
PUBLISHING

Midrash Tehillim — The Midrash on Psalms
Volume I · Psalms 1–41

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The Hebrew text of the midrash follows the edition of R' Shlomo Buber (Vilna, 1891).
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English translation, elucidation, and Chassidic notes are original to this edition.

ISBN 9798162343134

Version 1.00
First edition

Kesser Shem Tov
PUBLISHING

www.kstpublishing.com

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המברכים ומתברכים,

אריה וזוגתו **לאה** שיחיו

ניסקי

Psalm 1

The praiseworthy man who shuns the wicked and delights in Torah, read in turn about Dovid, Adam, Noach, Avraham, Levi, the sons of Korach, and the Torah scholar, set against the chaff-like wicked who will not stand in judgment

Summary

The midrash on the first psalm serves as a gateway to the whole of *Tehillim*. Its *pesicha*, "He who seeks good seeks favor" (*Mishlei* 11:27), gives the collection its name, *Shocher Tov*, and casts Dovid as the one who sought the welfare of the Jewish people. He arranged the priestly and Levitical watches, and he prayed for the holy spirit so that he could bless them with "Praiseworthy is the man." Dovid stands as the counterpart of Moshe. Moshe gave five books of Torah and Dovid five books of psalms, and where Moshe closed his blessing with *ashrecha*, Dovid opened with *ashrei*. The midrash places this within a chain of blessers, each of whom opened where his predecessor had closed. It also notes that Dovid, imitating his Creator, who avoids an unseemly word, began his book with praise rather than a curse. Further passages discuss the ten authors and ten kinds of song in *Tehillim*, explain why the whole book bears the name of "the sweet singer of Israel," and record Dovid's plea that his psalms be studied like Torah.

The midrash then reads the psalm's portrait of the righteous man again and again, applying it to Adam, Noach, Avraham, the tribe of Levi, and the sons of Korach. Each resisted the corrupt counsel of his surroundings, held fast to the Torah he had, and was "transplanted" to flourish, while the serpent, the generation of the Flood, Nimrod, and the scoffer Korach serve as the wicked. The second half turns to the Torah scholar. Torah that a person toils in comes to bear his own name. "Day and night" is fulfilled through the Shema and steady review. Torah is like water and like the tree of life, and even the ordinary talk of scholars has value. Through the image of the rose of Sharon and the chaff of the mountains, the midrash contrasts the enduring righteous with the wicked. The wicked deny the Creator, kindle their own Gehinom, and will have no footing in judgment, while Hashem walks with the Jewish people through the fire. The homiletical point is clear: true happiness lies in turning away from evil and actively clinging to Torah, and this is the foundation on which the entire book of praise is built.

א "He who seeks good seeks favor": Dovid, the seeker of the Jewish people's welfare

אַשְׁרֵי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא הָלַךְ בַּעֲצַת רְשָׁעִים וגו'. "Praiseworthy is the man who did not walk in the counsel of the wicked, etc." (Tehillim 1:1). זֶהוּ שֶׁאָמַר הַכָּתוּב שׁוֹחֵר טוֹב יְבַקֶּשׁ רָצוֹן (משלי יא כ"ז), This is what Scripture says: "He who seeks good seeks favor" (Mishlei 11:27). The midrash opens its commentary on the whole book with a *pesicha*, an opening exposition drawn from another verse. This opening line gave the work its name, *Shocher Tov*, much as other midrashim are named after the verse they begin with.[1] The midrash applies the first half of the verse to the righteous person, who seeks the good of the Jewish people and wins Hashem's favor for it. It applies the second half to the wicked, who seek the people's harm.[2] **מִי הוּא זֶה, זֶה דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל, שׁוֹחֵר בְּטוֹבָתָן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל, לְהַעֲמִיד מֵהֶם עֶשְׂרִים וְאַרְבָּעָה מִשְׁמָרוֹת כְּהוּנָּה, וְעֶשְׂרִים וְאַרְבָּעָה מִשְׁמָרוֹת לְוִיָּה. Who is this? This is Dovid, king of Israel, who sought the welfare of the Jewish people by establishing from among them twenty-four watches of Kohanim and twenty-four watches of Levites.** The Kohanim and Levites served in the Sanctuary in rotating shifts ("watches"). Moshe had set up eight watches of each. Dovid,

[1] R' Shlomo Buber, *Haaros veTikkunim*, who notes the parallel naming of *Midrash Chazis* (on *Shir HaShirim*), *Midrash Tadshe*, and the midrash on Shmuel that Rashi calls "*Midrash Es La'asos*." The passage is cited in *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Mishlei* §947; the continuation "But he who seeks evil" also appears in *Midrash Mishlei* ch. 1.

[2] Mahari Kohen.

together with Shmuel the prophet, expanded them to twenty-four, so that many more of the people could take part in the Divine service.[3] **יְבַקֵּשׁ רָצוֹן. שֶׁהָיָה מְבַקֵּשׁ רַחֲמִים שֶׁתִּשְׁרֶה עָלָיו רוּחַ הַקּוֹדֶשׁ, כְּדֵי לְבָרֵךְ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְהֵיכָן בֵּרְכָן, בְּאַשְׁרֵי הָאִישׁ. "Seeks favor": for he would pray for mercy that the holy spirit rest upon him, so that he could bless the Jewish people. And where did he bless them? With "Praiseworthy is the man."** The favor Dovid sought was Divine inspiration, and he wanted it for the sake of blessing his people. The first word of *Tehillim*, *ashrei*, is therefore itself a blessing. The next paragraph returns to this idea: Moshe ended his blessings with *ashrecha* ("Fortunate are you"), and Dovid began his book with the same blessing, *ashrei*.[4] **וְדוֹרֵשׁ רָעָה תְּבוֹאֶנּוּ (משלי שם), זֶה דוֹאֵג וַאֲחִיתוֹפֶל. "But he who seeks evil, it will come upon him" (ibid.): this refers to Doeg and Achitofel.** These two were Dovid's enemies and sought his harm, and the evil they sought came upon them.[5]

ב "And Dovid sat before Hashem": Dovid as the counterpart of Moshe

דָּבָר אַחֵר אַשְׁרֵי הָאִישׁ. זֶהוּ שֶׁאָמַר הַכָּתוּב וַיָּבֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד וַיֵּשֶׁב לִפְנֵי ה' (ש"ב ז יח), Another interpretation: "Praiseworthy is the man." This is what Scripture says: "Then King Dovid came and sat before Hashem" (II Shmuel 7:18). The link is to the end of our verse, "and did not sit in the seat of scoffers." Dovid did not sit among scoffers. The only place he sat was in the Temple courtyard, before Hashem. This raises the question that follows: was anyone permitted to sit there at all?[6] **וְכֵן תָּנֵי ר' חִיָּיא אֵין יְשִׁיבָה בָּעֲזָרָה, אֶלָּא לְמַלְכֵי בֵּית דָּוִד בִּלְבָד, And so Rabbi Chiya taught: There is no sitting in the Temple courtyard except for the kings of the house of Dovid alone.** The Torah describes the Kohanim as those who "stand to serve" before Hashem. Sitting in the courtyard is therefore forbidden. The kings of Dovid's line are the exception, since our verse says that Dovid "sat."[7] **ר' אַמִּי בְּשֵׁם ר' שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן לָקִישׁ אָמַר אֵין יְשִׁיבָה בָּעֲזָרָה אֶלָּא מְקוֹם מַלְכֵי בֵּית דָּוִד בִּלְבָד, וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר וַיֵּשֶׁב לִפְנֵי ה', Rabbi Ami said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish: There is no sitting in the courtyard except in the place of the kings of the house of Dovid alone. And so it says, "and he sat before Hashem."** This statement narrows Rabbi Chiya's ruling to a specific location. A particular spot in the courtyard was set aside for the Davidic kings, and anyone could sit there.[8] **וְלֹא כֵן אָמַר רַב הוּנָא בְּשֵׁם ר' שְׁמוּאֵל אֵין יְשִׁיבָה לְמַעְלָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר קִרְבַת עַל חַד מִן קָאֲמַיָּא (דניאל ז יו), But did not Rav Huna say in the name of Rabbi Shmuel: There is no sitting on high, as it says, "I came near to one of those who stood by" (Daniel 7:16)?** The midrash now challenges the idea that Dovid sat. The Aramaic *ka'amaya*, "those who stood by," is read as *kaymaya*, "standing ones." The angels are called "those who stand" because they never sit.[9] **שֶׁאֵין לָהֶם קְפִיצַת רֶגֶל, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וְרַגְלֵיהֶם רֶגֶל יְשָׁרָה (יחזקאל א ז), For they have no joints in their legs, as it says, "And their legs were a straight**

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3 *Tosefta Taanis* ch. 4; see *Taanis* 27a and *Yerushalmi*, end of *Sukkah* (cited by R' Buber).

4 R' Buber, referring to the end of paragraph ב below.

5 R' Buber, citing *Sanhedrin* 106b and *Midrash Tehillim* on Psalm 52.

6 R' Buber and Mahari Kohen. Rabbi Yaakov Reifmann (cited by R' Buber) instead holds that the law of sitting in the courtyard has no direct bearing on our psalm. In his view, it appears here only because of the verse "Then King Dovid came and sat," whose continuation does connect to *Tehillim* 1: Dovid could have said "Cursed is the man who walked in the counsel of the wicked," but chose to say "Praiseworthy is the man who did not walk."

7 *Yerushalmi Pesachim* end of ch. 5, *Yoma* ch. 3, *Sotah* 7:7; *Aggadas Shmuel* ch. 27; *Yoma* 25b, *Kiddushin* 78b, and Rashi on *Yoma* there, citing *Devarim* 18:5, 7 (cited by R' Buber). See also *Yoma* 69b and Rashi on *Sanhedrin* 101b and *Sotah* 40b.

8 Mahari Kohen. R' Buber finds this statement hard to follow. It repeats Rabbi Chiya's ruling and contradicts Rabbi Ami's own view below, and the *Yerushalmi* quotes Rabbi Ami in the name of Reish Lakish as saying that *even* the Davidic kings could not sit. R' Buber therefore suggests that the line is a copyist's garbled addition, though he leaves it in his text.

9 Some manuscripts read "in the name of Rabbi Yishmael." The *Yerushalmi* (*Berachos* 1:1) has Rabbi Chanina bar Andrei in the name of Rabbi Shmuel bar Sotar, with the reading *kaymaya*. See also Rashi on *Daniel* 7:16 and on *Sotah* 40b; *Bereishis Rabbah* 65:21; *Chagigah* 15a ("It is a tradition that there is no sitting on high"); *Tanchuma*, *Kedoshim* 6; *Shemos Rabbah* 1; *Rus Rabbah* 1 (all cited by R' Buber). One manuscript reads *ka'amaya kaymaya* explicitly.

leg" (Yechezkel 1:7). *Kefitzah* is the joint of the leg that bends. The angels' legs are "straight," without such joints, so they cannot sit.[10] **וּכְתִיב שְׂרָפִים עוֹמְדִים מִמַּעַל לוֹ (ישעיה ו ב), And it is written, "Serafim stood above Him" (Yeshayahu 6:2). וּכְתִיב וְכָל צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם עוֹמֵד עָלָיו מִימִינוֹ וּמִשְּׂמֹאלוֹ (מ"א כב יט), And it is written, "and all the host of heaven standing by Him, on His right and on His left" (I Melachim 22:19).**[11] **לְמַעְלָה אֵין יְשִׁיבָה, וְדָוִד יוֹשֵׁב, On high there is no sitting, and Dovid sits?!** In the presence of the Holy One, the proper posture is standing. If even the angels in Heaven do not sit, how could Dovid sit before Hashem in the Sanctuary?[12] **אָמַר ר' אַמִּי אַף לְמַלְכוּת בֵּית דָּוִד אֵין לָהֶם יְשִׁיבָה בָּעֲזָרָה, וּמַהוּ וַיֵּשֶׁב לִפְנֵי ה', שֶׁסָּמַךְ עַצְמוֹ, Rabbi Ami said: Even the kings of the house of Dovid may not sit in the courtyard. What, then, is "and he sat before Hashem"? That he leaned.** He stood on his feet while leaning against the wall. This posture is something between sitting and standing, and it was allowed only to the kings of Dovid's line. Other kings had to stand in awe, unsupported.[13] **וּלְמִי הָיְתָה יְשִׁיבָה בָּעֲזָרָה וּבַהֵיכָל, חֲוֵי אוֹמֵר לְכֹהֵן גָּדוֹל שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וְעֵלִי הַכֹּהֵן יוֹשֵׁב עַל הַכִּסֵּא (ש"א א ט), And who did have the right to sit in the courtyard and in the Sanctuary? You must say: the Kohen Gadol (High Priest), as it says, "And Eli the Kohen was sitting on the seat" (I Shmuel 1:9).**[14] **אִם כֵּן וַיֵּשֶׁב לִפְנֵי ה', שֶׁיִּשֵּׁב עַצְמוֹ בִּתְפִלָּה. If so, what is "and he sat before Hashem"? That he settled himself in prayer.** The midrash offers a second answer. The verb *vayeishev*, "he sat," is understood as *yishev*, "he settled." Dovid composed his mind and prepared himself to pray. The verse describes inner composure, not physical sitting.[15] **תַּמָּן תָּנִינַן עַמּוֹנִי וּמוֹאָבִי אֲסוּרִין וְאִיסוּרָן אִיסּוּר עוֹלָם, אֲבָל נְקֵבוֹתֵיהֶן מוּתָּרִין מִיָּד, There, in the Mishnah, we learned: A male Ammonite and a male Moavite are forbidden to marry into the congregation, and their prohibition is permanent; but their women are permitted immediately.**[16] This law prepares for Dovid's words in the next verse. Dovid descended from Rus the Moavite. Had the Torah's prohibition, "An Ammonite or Moavite shall not enter the congregation of Hashem," applied to women as well, Dovid could never have joined the community at all, let alone become king.[17] **וַיֹּאמֶר מִי אָנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹהִים וּמִי בֵיתִי כִּי הֲבִיאֹתַנִי עַד הֵלֹם (ש"ב ז יח), "And he said: Who am I, Hashem God, and what is my house, that You have brought me this far?" (II Shmuel 7:18). מָהוּ הֵלֹם, לֹא דַיִּי שֶׁבָּאתִי, אֶלָּא שֶׁעָשִׂיתַנִי מֶלֶךְ, וְאֵין הֵלֹם אֶלָּא מַלְכוּת, What is "this far" (halom)? It was not enough that I entered the congregation; You also made me king. And halom always denotes kingship, as it says, "Has the man yet come here (halom)?" (I Shmuel 10:22).** That verse comes from the selection of Shaul as king, when the people asked whether the man chosen for the throne had arrived. The midrash therefore hears royalty in the word *halom*. Dovid is saying: You did not merely admit me, a descendant of Moav, into the congregation. You brought me to the throne.[18] **וַתְּקַטֵּן עוֹד זֹאת בְּעֵינֶיךָ (ש"ב ז יט). כְּאֵינַשׁ דְּאָמַר לַחֲבֵרֵיהּ זְעֵירָא הָדָא בְּאַפָּךְ, "And this was yet a small thing in Your eyes" (II Shmuel 7:19). It is like a person who says to his friend, "This is a small thing in your sight."** Dovid speaks the way a person speaks to a friend who has done him a favor and treats it as trivial. In the parallel version, a friend does someone a small favor, and he responds: "You have done a small thing; in the end you will do a great one." Even kingship was small in Hashem's eyes, so He

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10 *Aruch*, s.v. *kafatz* (cited by R' Buber); Mahari Kohen.

11 Some manuscripts and the printed edition cite instead "I will give you places to walk among these who stand" (*Zechariah* 3:7).

12 Mahari Kohen.

13 *Yerushalmi* (cited above): "he leaned against the wall"; Mahari Kohen. On the halachic implications, see *Birkei Yosef*, *Choshen Mishpat* 17:3 (cited by R' Buber). The passage is quoted in *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Shmuel* §78.

14 *Sotah* 40b and *Tosafos* there (cited by R' Buber).

15 *Yerushalmi*, in the name of Rabbi Aibo bar Nagari; *Midrash Shmuel* 26; R' Buber; Mahari Kohen.

16 Mishnah, *Yevamos* 76b.

17 One manuscript makes the connection explicit: "Was I not under 'An Ammonite or Moavite shall not enter,' yet You brought me this far?" Some manuscripts and early printings also add, at "This is the law of man": "What You wrote in Your Torah, 'An Ammonite or Moavite shall not enter' (*Devarim* 23:4), You wrote only of the man (the male); but their women are permitted immediately" (R' Buber).

18 *Zevachim* 112a; *Bereishis Rabbah* 55:7; see *Shabbos* 113b and *Shemos Rabbah*, end of ch. 2 (cited by R' Buber).

went on to promise Dovid's house an enduring future.[19] **וַתְּדַבֵּר גַּם אֶל בֵּית עַבְדְּךָ לְמֵרָחוֹק (שם), שֶׁהָיִיתִי רָחוֹק וְנִתְקָרַבְתִּי, "And You have spoken also of Your servant's house for a long time to come" (ibid.): for I was far away and was brought near.** In the plain sense, *lemerachok* means "for the distant future." The midrash reads it as "from afar." Dovid, descended from Moav, began far from the congregation and was brought close. **וְזֹאת תּוֹרַת הָאָדָם ה' אֱלֹהִים (שם), זֹאת תּוֹרַת אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב, אֵין כָּתִיב כָּאן, אֶלָּא זֹאת תּוֹרַת הָאָדָם, "And this is the law of man, Hashem God" (ibid.). It does not say here "This is the law of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov," but rather "This is the law of man."** The verse speaks of "the man" in general terms rather than naming the Patriarchs. This leads the midrash to ask which single man is most praiseworthy. That question connects back to "Praiseworthy is the man."[20] **וּמִי הוּא הַמְשׁוּבָּח שֶׁבַּנְּבִיאִים, וְהַמְשׁוּבָּח שֶׁבַּמְּלָכִים, הַמְשׁוּבָּח שֶׁבַּנְּבִיאִים, זֶה מֹשֶׁה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וּמֹשֶׁה עָלָה אֶל הָאֱלֹהִים (שמות יט ג), הַמְשׁוּבָּח שֶׁבַּמְּלָכִים, זֶהוּ דָוִד, And who is the most praised of the prophets, and the most praised of the kings? The most praised of the prophets is Moshe, as it says, "And Moshe went up to God" (Shemos 19:3). The most praised of the kings is Dovid.**[21] **מֹשֶׁה הוֹצִיא אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם, וְדָוִד הוֹצִיא אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִשִּׁעְבּוּד גָּלְיוֹת, מֹשֶׁה עָשָׂה מִלְחָמָה בְּסִיחוֹן וְעוֹג, וְדָוִד עָשָׂה מִלְחָמָה כָּל סְבִיבָיו, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר כִּי מִלְחֲמוֹת ה' אלהים (הוא) נִלְחָם (ש"א כה כח), מֹשֶׁה מֶלֶךְ עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל יְהוּדָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וַיְהִי בִישֻׁרוּן מֶלֶךְ (דברים לג ה), וְדָוִד מָלַךְ עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל יְהוּדָה, You find that whatever Moshe did, Dovid did. Moshe brought the Jewish people out of Mitzrayim, and Dovid brought the Jewish people out of servitude in exile. Moshe waged war against Sichon and Og, and Dovid waged war against all those around him, as it says, "for he fights the wars of Hashem God" (I Shmuel 25:28).**[22] **Moshe reigned over Israel and over Yehudah, as it says, "And he was king in Yeshurun" (Devarim 33:5); and Dovid reigned over Israel and over Yehudah.** The midrash reads "king in Yeshurun" as referring to Moshe himself.[23] **מֹשֶׁה קָרַע לְיִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַיָּם, וְדָוִד קָרַע לְיִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַנְּהָרוֹת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בְּהַצּוֹתוֹ אֶת אֲרַם נַהֲרַיִם (תהלים ס ב), Moshe split the sea for the Jewish people, and Dovid split the rivers for the Jewish people, as it says, "When he fought against Aram Naharayim" (Tehillim 60:2).** In the *pshat*, the plain meaning, *behatzoso* means "when he fought against," and Aram Naharayim is simply the name of a land, "Aram of the Two Rivers." The *derash*, the homiletical reading, takes advantage of the interchangeable letters *hei* and *ches*. It reads *bechatzoso*, "when he divided," and so finds in the verse Dovid dividing the "rivers" (*naharayim*).[24] **מֹשֶׁה בָּנָה מִזְבֵּחַ, וְדָוִד בָּנָה מִזְבֵּחַ, זֶה הִקְרִיב וְזֶה הִקְרִיב, מֹשֶׁה נָתַן חֲמִשָּׁה חוּמְשֵׁי תוֹרָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, וְדָוִד נָתַן חֲמִשָּׁה סִפְרֵים שֶׁבַּתְּהִלִּים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, אַשְׁרֵי הָאִישׁ (תהלים א), וְאַשְׁרֵי מַשְׂכִּיל (תהלים מא), מִזְמוֹר לְאָסָף (תהלים עג), תְּפִלָּה לְמֹשֶׁה (תהלים צ), יֹאמְרוּ גְאוּלֵי ה' (תהלים קז). Moshe built an altar, and Dovid built an altar; this one offered sacrifices, and that one offered sacrifices. Moshe gave the five books of the Torah to the Jewish people, and Dovid gave the five books of Tehillim to the Jewish people. "Praiseworthy is the man" (Tehillim 1), "Praiseworthy is he who considers [the poor]" (Tehillim 41), "A song of Asaf" (Tehillim 73), "A prayer of Moshe" (Tehillim 90), "Let those redeemed by Hashem say" (Tehillim 107).** These are the openings the midrash gives for the five books of *Tehillim*. **מֹשֶׁה בֵּירַךְ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאַשְׁרֶיךָ, וְדָוִד בֵּירַךְ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאַשְׁרֵי. Moshe blessed the Jewish people with ashrecha ("Fortunate are you"), and Dovid blessed the Jewish people with ashrei ("Praiseworthy is").** Moshe's final blessing ends with "Fortunate are you, Israel."[25] Dovid opened his book with the very word on which Moshe closed his. This brings the paragraph back to the first words of the psalm: "Praiseworthy is the man" is Dovid's blessing to his people, matching Moshe's.

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[19] *Midrash Shmuel* 26, in the name of Rabbi Simon, quoted in *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Shmuel* §146 (cited by R' Buber); Mahari Kohen refers to this version.

[20] R' Buber.

[21] R' Buber.

[22] Some manuscripts read "and Dovid fought the wars of the Holy One," which matches the proof verse more closely.

[23] Ramban on *Devarim* 33:5 notes that some aggados interpret the verse as referring to Moshe (cited by R' Buber).

[24] R' Buber, and the marginal glosses of Rabbi Avraham Provinciali.

[25] *Devarim* 33:29: "Fortunate are you, Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by Hashem."

ג Scripture avoids an unseemly word

זֶהוּ שֶׁאָמַר הַכָּתוּב בְּצֶדֶק כָּל אַשְׁרֵי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא הָלַךְ. אִמְרֵי פִי אֵין בָּהֶם נִפְתָּל וְעִקֵּשׁ (משלי ח ח), This is what Scripture says, "All the words of my mouth are spoken in righteousness; they contain no twisting or perversion" (Mishlei 8:8). The opening clause of *Tehillim* 1 is introduced by a *pesicha* (an opening exposition drawn from another verse). The words of the Torah, the "mouth" speaking in *Mishlei*, are refined in their phrasing as well as in their content.[26] **אֵין בָּהֶם לֹא קַפְדָּנוּת וְלֹא עִקְמוּמוּת, They contain neither harshness nor crookedness.** The two nouns gloss the verse's two terms. "Crookedness" renders *ikesh*, which the Aramaic translation gives as *ikas*, "twisted." *Kafdanus* belongs to a root meaning "cut short," so it suggests curt, abrupt speech.[27] **מָצִינוּ שֶׁעִיקֵּם הַכָּתוּב שְׁתַּיִם וְשָׁלֹשׁ תֵּיבוֹת, שֶׁלֹּא לְהוֹצִיא דָּבָר מְגוּנֶּה מִפִּיו שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר מִן הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּהוֹרָה וּמִן הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר אֵינֶנָּה טְהוֹרָה (בראשית ז ח), We find that Scripture went the long way around by two or three words so as not to utter an unseemly word, as it says, "Of the pure animals and of the animals that are not pure" (Bereishis 7:8).** The Torah could have said "the impure animals" (*hateme'ah*) in one word. Instead it wrote three words, "that are not pure," so as not to say "impure."[28] **אָמַר ר' יוּדָן בַּר מְנַשֶּׁה אַף כְּשֶׁבָּא לִפְתּוֹחַ בְּסִימָנֵי בְּהֵמָה טְמֵאָה, לֹא פָתַח אֶלָּא בְּסִימָנֵי טְהֵרָה, Rabbi Yudan bar Menasheh said: Even when it came to introduce the signs of the impure animal, it opened only with the signs of purity.** In the very section that lists forbidden animals, the Torah begins each description with the feature that resembles a kosher sign.[29] **אֶת הַגָּמָל כִּי לֹא מַפְרִיס פַּרְסָה אֵין כָּתִיב כָּאן, אֶלָּא כִּי מַעֲלֵה גֵּרָה (ויקרא יא ד), It is not written here, "the camel, because it does not split the hoof," but rather, "because it brings up the cud" (Vayikra 11:4).** The full verse says the camel brings up the cud but does not split the hoof. The Torah mentions the kosher sign it has first, and only afterward the sign it lacks.[30] **וְאֶת הַחֲזִיר כִּי לֹא מַעֲלֵה גֵּרָה, אֵין כָּתִיב כָּאן, אֶלָּא כִּי מַפְרִיס פַּרְסָה (שם שם ז), And it is not written, "the pig, because it does not bring up the cud," but rather, "because it splits the hoof" (Vayikra 11:7).**[31] **אָמַר דָּוִד אַף הקב"ה הֵעִיד עָלַי וְאָמַר בִּקֵּשׁ ה' לוֹ אִישׁ כִּלְבָבוֹ (שמ"א יג יד), וְכִינָּה שְׁמוֹ לְבוֹרְאוֹ, Dovid said: The Holy One Himself testified about me, saying, "Hashem has sought for Himself a man after His own heart" (I Shmuel 13:14), and so He linked his name to his Creator.** By calling Dovid "a man after His heart," Hashem described him as resembling Him. Dovid takes this as a charge to imitate his Creator, here in the refinement of his speech. **מָה בּוֹרְאוֹ לֹא הוֹצִיא דִּיבּוּר מְגוּנֶּה, אַף דָּוִד כֵּן, Just as his Creator did not utter an unseemly word, so too Dovid did not.** **הָיָה לוֹ לוֹמַר אָרוּר הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הָלַךְ בַּעֲצַת רְשָׁעִים, אוֹ אַשְׁרֵי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הָלַךְ בַּעֲצַת צַדִּיקִים, וְלֹא אָמַר אֶלָּא אַשְׁרֵי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא הָלַךְ בַּעֲצַת רְשָׁעִים. He could have said, "Cursed is the man who walked in the counsel of the wicked," or "Praiseworthy is the man who walked in the counsel of the righteous." Yet he said only, "Praiseworthy is the man who did not walk in the counsel of the wicked."** Like the Torah's "that are not pure," Dovid chose a negative phrasing. He opens the book of *Tehillim* with praise rather than a curse, and he attaches the word "praiseworthy" to the man who kept away from the wicked.[32] **[כֵּיוֹצֵא בַּדָּבָר אַתָּה אוֹמֵר אִם יַעֲמוֹד מֹשֶׁה וּשְׁמוּאֵל לְפָנַי (ירמיה טו א), [Similarly, you may**

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[26] Cited in *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Tehillim* §610, and the opening in *Yalkut*, *Mishlei* §940 (R' Buber).

[27] R' Buber, citing the *Aruch* (s.v. *kafad*) and the Aramaic translation of *Yeshayahu* 50:2; and the Aramaic translation of *ikesh* as *ikas*.

[28] The *Pesikta*, *parshas Parah*, adds explicitly: "and it did not say 'of the impure animal.'" See also *Bereishis Rabbah* 32:4 (cited by R' Buber). Some manuscripts read "two or three letters." R' Buber regards this as an error, since the reading "words" appears in *Midrash Tehillim* 12 and in *Yalkut*.

[29] R' Buber restored the wording here from the *Pesikta*, explaining that a copyist skipped from one "signs of" to the next. *Yalkut* reads, "Even when it came to open, it opened with the signs of purity," and Mahari Kohen likewise proposes this reading.

[30] *Pesikta Rabbasi* 14 develops this exposition at length (cited by R' Buber).

[31] R' Buber notes that the parallel cases of the hare and the hyrax (*Vayikra* 11:5–6) are missing here. See the *Pesikta*, *parshas Parah*.

[32] Mahari Kohen, on a fuller wording: "praiseworthy" applies to the one who did not walk in the counsel of the wicked and did not stand in the path of sinners.

say of the verse, "Even if Moshe and Shmuel were to stand before Me" (Yirmeyahu 15:1): The bracketed passage that follows is found only in some manuscripts and printed editions. It seems to have been displaced from the end of the previous paragraph, which showed that everything Moshe did, Dovid did. This passage draws a similar comparison between Moshe and Shmuel, whom the prophet names together.[33] **אַתָּה מוֹצֵא מַה שֶּׁכָּתוּב בָּזֶה כָּתוּב בָּזֶה, זֶה לֵוִי וְזֶה לֵוִי, זֶה בָּנָה מִזְבֵּחַ וְזֶה בָּנָה מִזְבֵּחַ, זֶה הִקְרִיב וְזֶה הִקְרִיב, זֶה מָלַךְ וְזֶה מָלַךְ, זֶה בִּקְרִיאָה וְזֶה בִּקְרִיאָה, You find that what is written about this one is written about that one. This one was a Levi and that one was a Levi; this one built an altar and that one built an altar; this one offered sacrifices and that one offered sacrifices; this one was a king and that one was a king; this one was called and that one was called.** "Called" refers to Hashem's call to each of them: "Moshe, Moshe," and he answered, "Here I am" (*Shemos* 3:4); "Hashem called to Shmuel," and he answered, "Here I am" (*I Shmuel* 3:4).[34] **וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר נָבִיא מִקִּרְבְּךָ מֵאַחֶיךָ כָּמוֹנִי יָקִים (דברים יח טו), And so it says, "A prophet from among you, from your brothers, like me, will [Hashem your God] raise up for you" (Devarim 18:15).** The words "like me" hint at Shmuel, the prophet who was Moshe's equal.[35] **וְכֵן תִּמְצָא בִּירְמְיָה מַה שֶּׁכָּתוּב בָּזֶה כָּתוּב בָּזֶה, And so you find with Yirmeyahu: what is written about this one is written about that one.** The parallels between Moshe and Yirmeyahu are only mentioned here. They are spelled out in full elsewhere.[36] **ר' יוּדָן אוֹמֵר הַמִּזְמוֹר הַזֶּה מְשׁוּבָּח מִכָּל הַמִּזְמוֹרִים. Rabbi Yudan says: This psalm is the most praised of all the psalms.]** This is a separate statement, attached to the word "praiseworthy." The psalm opens with *ashrei*, and Dovid opened with *ashrei* every section that was especially dear to him.[37]

ד "For Hashem God is a sun and a shield"

זֶהוּ שֶׁאָמַר הַכָּתוּב כִּי אַשְׁרֵי הָאִישׁ. דָּבָר אַחֵר Another interpretation of "Praiseworthy is the man." **שֶׁמֶשׁ וּמָגֵן ה' אֱלֹהִים חֵן וְכָבוֹד יִתֵּן ה' לֹא יִמְנַע טוֹב לַהוֹלְכִים בְּתָמִים (תהלים פד יב), This is what Scripture says, "For Hashem God is a sun and a shield; Hashem gives grace and glory; He does not withhold good from those who walk wholeheartedly" (Tehillim 84:12).** The opening verse is followed immediately by "Praiseworthy is the man who trusts in You" (84:13). That is how it leads back to the *ashrei* of our psalm, as the end of the paragraph shows.[38] **חִזְקִיָּה בַּר חִיָּיא אָמַר אַשְׁרֵיהֶם הַנְּבִיאִים שֶׁהֵן מְדַמִּין אֶת הַצּוּרָה לְיוֹצְרָהּ, וְאֶת הַנְּטִיעָה לְנוֹטְעָהּ, Chizkiyah bar Chiya said: Fortunate are the prophets, who liken the form to its Former, and the planting to its Planter.** The meaning is the reverse of the wording. The prophets liken the Creator to things He created, describing Him in images drawn from His own handiwork. The phrasing was inverted out of reverence.[39] **כְּמָה דְאַתְּ אָמַר כִּי שֶׁמֶשׁ וּמָגֵן ה' אֱלֹהִים, as you say, "For Hashem God is a sun and a shield." וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר אַרְיֵה שָׁאָג מִי לֹא יִירָא (עמוס ג ח), And so it says, "A lion has roared; who will not fear?" (Amos 3:8).** Who

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33 R' Buber. The passage is found in two manuscripts and the Venice printing, but is absent from four manuscripts and from the first (Constantinople) edition. It also appears, with variations, in the printed *Midrash Tehillim* 25:6 and in *Aggadas Shmuel* 9, and is cited in *Yalkut*, *Yirmeyahu* §232.

34 R' Buber. The clause "this one was called" is missing in the printed editions but appears in two manuscripts and in *Midrash Shmuel*.

35 R' Buber, citing the *Pesikta*, *Divrei Yirmeyahu* (112a). There Rabbi Yehudah bar Simon expounds "a prophet like you" as "like you in rebuke" and applies the parallels to Yirmeyahu. The person who added this passage applied the same verse to Shmuel.

36 The *Pesikta*, *Divrei Yirmeyahu* (cited by R' Buber). The Venice printing and later editions add, "Similarly Dovid and Shlomo: what is written about this one is written about that one." R' Buber considers this a printer's addition based on *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 1:6.

37 R' Buber. The statement is absent from four manuscripts. Compare *Berachos* 9b: "Every section that was dear to Dovid, he opened with *ashrei*."

38 Cited in *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Tehillim* §833, from *Midrash Shocher Tov* (R' Buber). R' Buber's further remark about the focus of the exposition is garbled in the text available and is not used here.

39 R' Buber, citing *Bereishis Rabbah* 27:1 ("Great is the power of the prophets, who liken the form to its Former"); *Koheles Rabbah*; *Tanchuma*, *Chukas*; *Bamidbar Rabbah* 19:4; and the *Pesikta*, *parshas Parah*. *Pesikta Rabbasi*, *Parah* reads, "They liken the image of the Power above to the image of man."

gave the lion its strength, if not Hashem? Yet the prophet compares Him to a lion.[40] **וּכְתִיב הִנֵּה כְּבוֹד אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּא מִדֶּרֶךְ הַקֶּדִים וְקוֹלוֹ כְּקוֹל מַיִם רַבִּים וְהָאָרֶץ הֵאִירָה מִכְּבוֹדוֹ (יחזקאל מג ב), And it is written, "And there was the glory of the God of Israel, coming from the way of the east, and His voice was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with His glory" (Yechezkel 43:2). אֶלָּא מַשְׁמִיעִין אֶת הָאוֹזֶן מָה שֶׁיְּכוֹלָה לִשְׁמוֹעַ, וּמַרְאִין אֶת הָעַיִן מָה שֶׁיְּכוֹלָה לִרְאוֹת. Rather, they let the ear hear what it is able to hear, and show the eye what it is able to see.** Hashem is of course not a sun, a lion, or rushing water. The prophets use such images because human senses can grasp nothing more. **דָּבָר אַחֵר כִּי שֶׁמֶשׁ וּמָגֵן ה' אֱלֹהִים. Another interpretation of "For Hashem God is a sun and a shield." מָה הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ הַזֶּה קוֹפַחַת, יָכוֹל אַף הקב"ה כֵּן, תַּלְמוּד לוֹמַר מָגֵן, If so, just as this sun beats down on a person's head, might one think the Holy One does so too? Therefore Scripture says, "shield."** The sun strikes the head with its heat. The second image corrects any harshness implied by the first.[41] **מָה הַמָּגֵן הַזֶּה מֵגִין עַל הָאָדָם, אַף הקב"ה מֵגִין עַל הָעוֹלָם כּוּלּוֹ, Just as this shield protects a person, so the Holy One protects the entire world. ר' חִיָּיא בַּר אֲבִין אָמַר מֵאִיר כַּשֶּׁמֶשׁ וּמֵסִיךְ כַּמָּגֵן. Rabbi Chiya bar Avin said: He gives light like a sun and shelters like a shield. דָּבָר אַחֵר מָגֵן זֶה הַתְּרִיס אִיסְקוּטָא פַּרְסָאָה, שֶׁמַּקִּיף אֶת הָאָדָם מִשָּׁלֹשׁ רוּחוֹתָיו, Another interpretation: "Shield" means the tris, the Persian scutum, which surrounds a person on three sides.** *Tris* is the Greek word for a shield. "Persian *scutum*," from the Latin word for shield, seems to be an early gloss explaining the foreign word.[42] **וּמִנַּיִן לְרַבּוֹת הָרוּחַ הָרְבִיעִית, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר ה' כַּצִּנָּה רָצוֹן תַּעֲטְרֶנּוּ (תהלים ה יג). And from where do we include the fourth side? As it says, "Hashem, You will surround him with favor as with a shield" (Tehillim 5:13).** The verb *ta'trenu* comes from *atarah*, a crown, which encircles on every side. Hashem's protection therefore covers even the side no ordinary shield can guard.[43] **[דָּבָר אַחֵר כִּי שֶׁמֶשׁ וּמָגֵן ה' אֱלֹהִים חֵן וְכָבוֹד יִתֵּן ה' לֹא יִמְנַע טוֹב לַהוֹלְכִים בְּתָמִים, מְדַבֵּר בְּאַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ, [Another interpretation: "For Hashem God is a sun and a shield; Hashem gives grace and glory; He does not withhold good from those who walk wholeheartedly" speaks of Avraham our father.** This bracketed exposition is absent from R' Buber's base manuscript but appears in most other manuscripts and early printings. In it, each phrase of the verse is matched to an attribute of Avraham.[44] **כִּי שֶׁמֶשׁ זֶה אַבְרָהָם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר מִי הֵעִיר מִמִּזְרָח צֶדֶק (ישעיה מא ב), "A sun": this is Avraham, as it says, "Who aroused righteousness from the east?" (Yeshayahu 41:2).** The midrash reads *he'ir*, "aroused," as *he'ir*, "illuminated." Avraham, "righteousness from the east," rose like the sun.[45] **וּמָגֵן זֶה אַבְרָהָם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר אָנֹכִי מָגֵן לָךְ (בראשית טו א), "A shield": this is Avraham, as it says, "I am a shield for you" (Bereishis 15:1). אֱלֹהִים זֶה אַבְרָהָם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר נְשִׂיא אֱלֹהִים אַתָּה בְּתוֹכֵנוּ (שם כג ה), "God": this is Avraham, as it says, "You are a prince of God among us" (Bereishis 23:6).** In its plain sense, "of God" in the Bnei Ches' words means "a mighty prince." The midrash takes the divine title as applied to Avraham himself. **חֵן וְכָבוֹד יִתֵּן ה' זֶה אַבְרָהָם, וּכְתִיב וְאַבְרָם כָּבֵד מְאֹד בַּמִּקְנֶה בַּכֶּסֶף וּבַזָּהָב (בראשית יג ב), "Hashem gives grace and glory": this is Avraham, for it is written, "And Avram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold" (Bereishis 13:2).** The link is verbal. The word for "rich" is literally "heavy" (*kaved*), from the same root as *kavod*, "glory." **לֹא יִמְנַע טוֹב לַהוֹלְכִים בְּתָמִים זֶה אַבְרָהָם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר הִתְהַלֵּךְ לְפָנַי וֶהְיֵה תָמִים (שם יג יז), "He does not withhold good from those who walk wholeheartedly": this is Avraham, as**

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40 This verse appears in only one manuscript and in *Yalkut*. Compare the *Mechilta*, *Yisro* 4, cited by R' Buber: "To let the ear hear what it can hear. Similarly, 'A lion has roared; who will not fear?' Who gave strength and might to the lion, if not He? Yet we describe Him so, to let the ear hear what it can hear."

41 R' Buber and Mahari Kohen; the *Aruch*, s.v. *kafach*: "strikes on the head."

42 R' Buber: *tris* is Greek *thureos*, a shield, and *iskuta* is Latin *scutum*. The Venice printing substituted *targa* ("Persian *targa*"), which was repeated in later editions. Mahari Kohen, commenting on that reading, explains that it too is a kind of shield.

43 R' Buber and Mahari Kohen: the root of *ta'trenu* implies surrounding on all sides.

44 R' Buber, who notes that the passage is also missing in one other manuscript. Two manuscripts read instead, "Avraham was worthy of being created before Adam, for 'a sun' is Avraham," and lack the words "speaks of Avraham our father."

45 R' Buber.

it says, "Walk before Me and be wholehearted" (Bereishis 17:1). וְאִם בְּאַבְרָהָם הַכָּתוּב מְדַבֵּר הָיָה לוֹ שֶׁיֹּאמַר אַל יִמְנַע טוֹב לַהוֹלֵךְ בְּתָמִים, וּמַהוּ לַהוֹלְכִים בְּתָמִים, אֶלָּא זֶה אַבְרָהָם שֶׁהָלַךְ לִפְנֵי הקב"ה בְּתַמִּימוּת, נַעֲשָׂה לוֹ מָגֵן, אַף כָּל מִי שֶׁמְּהַלֵּךְ לְפָנָיו בְּתַמִּימוּת נַעֲשָׂה לוֹ מָגֵן, But if the verse speaks of Avraham, it should have said, "He does not withhold good from the one who walks wholeheartedly." Why does it say "from those who walk," in the plural? Rather, the point is this: Avraham walked before the Holy One wholeheartedly, and He became a shield for him. So too, anyone who walks before Him wholeheartedly, He becomes a shield for him. The plural opens Avraham's reward to all who follow his path. **And what is written right after it? "Praiseworthy is the man who trusts in You" (Tehillim 84:13). וְאַחֲרָיו מָה כְּתִיב אַשְׁרֵי אָדָם בּוֹטֵחַ בָּךְ (תהלים שם פד יג), אַבְרָהָם אֵין כָּתִיב כָּאן אֶלָּא אָדָם, כָּל אָמַר דָּוִד אַשְׁרֵי הָאִישׁ, נָתַתָּ שַׁלְוָה לָרְשָׁעִים, אָדָם, וְאֵין נָאִין בְּשַׁלְוָתָן אֶלָּא עוֹמְדִין. It does not say "Avraham" here, but "man": any man. Dovid said, "Praiseworthy is the man": You have given tranquility to the wicked, yet they do not behave becomingly in their tranquility, but stand firm [in their ways].]** The closing words are obscure. The word "stand" seems to echo our psalm's "and did not stand in the path of sinners." On this reading, the wicked misuse the calm Hashem grants them by standing fast in sin, while praiseworthy is the man who did not.[46]

ה Each blesser opens where his predecessor closed

ר' יוּדָא פָּתַח אַל תִּתְהַדַּר לִפְנֵי מֶלֶךְ וּבִמְקוֹם גְּדוֹלִים אַל תַּעֲמוֹד (משלי כה ו), אַשְׁרֵי הָאִישׁ. "Praiseworthy is the man." Rabbi Yuda opened: "Do not glorify yourself before the king, and do not stand in the place of the great" (Mishlei 25:6). The exposition of this opening verse is not given here.[47] **ר' יוּדָן גָּרַס לָהּ, ר' פִּנְחָס עָבִיד לָהּ אֲרִיכָא, Rabbi Yudan recited it briefly; Rabbi Pinchas developed it at length.** Rabbi Yudan gave the teaching as a short formula. Rabbi Pinchas built it into an extended exposition with an opening exposition of its own.[48] **ר' יוּדָן גָּרַס לָהּ, בְּמָקוֹם שֶׁפָּתַח זֶה חָתַם זֶה, וּבְמָקוֹם שֶׁחָתַם זֶה פָּתַח זֶה, Rabbi Yudan recited it: Where the one opened is where the other had closed, and where the one closed, the next one opened.** Each great figure began his blessing with the word his predecessor had ended with. The connection to the *Mishlei* verse is not spelled out. The sense seems to be that none of them set himself up in the place of the great. Each continued from where the one before him had left off.[49] **וְר' פִּנְחָס עָבִיד לָהּ אֲרִיכָא, פָּתַח מִזְקֵנִים אֶתְבּוֹנָן (תהלים קיט ק), And Rabbi Pinchas developed it at length. He opened: "I gain understanding from elders" (Tehillim 119:100).** Each blesser drew his own opening from the elder who preceded him, as the account below shows in detail.[50] **אַתְּ מוֹצֵא שֶׁבַּתְּחִילָּה הָיָה מְבָרֵךְ הקב"ה אֶת עוֹלָמוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וַיְבָרֶךְ אוֹתָם אֱלֹהִים (בראשית א כב), You find that at first the Holy One Himself would bless His world, as it says, "And God blessed them" (Bereishis 1:22). כֵּיוָן שֶׁעָמַד נֹחַ וּבֵירְכוֹ לוֹ וּלְבָנָיו, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת נֹחַ וְאֶת בָּנָיו (שם ט א), When Noach arose, He blessed him and his sons, as it says, "And God blessed Noach and his sons" (Bereishis 9:1). עָמַד בְּאַבְרָהָם וּבֵירְכוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וַה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת אַבְרָהָם בַּכֹּל (שם כד א), He came to Avraham and blessed him, as it says, "And Hashem blessed Avraham with everything" (Bereishis 24:1). מַהוּ וְהְיֵה בְּרָכָה (שם יב ב), What is meant by "And you shall be a**

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46 Mahari Kohen emends "stand" (*omdin*) to "deny [Hashem]" (*kofrin*): "they are not becoming in their tranquility, but deny." R' Buber records the reading "there is no pride in their tranquility, but they stand," which he found in all manuscripts. The printed editions omit this closing sentence.

47 R' Buber refers to *Bereishis Rabbah* 55:6 and *Devarim Rabbah* 2:7 for an exposition of this verse.

48 Mahari Kohen explains *arichta* as "the opening of the exposition." R' Buber records Kohut's suggestions in *Aruch HaShalem*: a Greek word for opening, or a form of *arich*, "arranging." R' Buber notes that this formula is not found in the Yerushalmi or the midrashim and may come from an early copyist.

49 *Yevakesh Ratzon* links the verse to *Kiddushin* 31b. A son may not stand in his father's place or decide in favor of his words, as if he were judging him as an equal. So no son began his blessing where his father had begun. Each took his father's closing words as his own opening. Building on the words of those who came before is itself a way of honoring them.

50 Compare *Bereishis Rabbah* 100:12, which brings "I gain understanding from elders" for those who opened where their predecessor stopped, and *Tanchuma* (R' Buber), *Vayechi* 17 (cited by R' Buber). *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Tehillim* §612 cites the passage from Rabbi Pinchas's opening onward.

blessing" (Bereishis 12:2)? Hashem had just said, "And I will bless you," so the further phrase must add something new.[51] **אָמַר ר' נְחֶמְיָה שֶׁמָּסַר לוֹ אֶת הַבְּרָכָה, Rabbi Nechemyah said: It means that He handed the blessing over to him,**[52] **שֶׁאָמַר לוֹ עַד כָּאן הָיִיתִי זָקוּק לְבָרֵךְ אֶת עוֹלָמִי, מִכָּאן וָאֵילָךְ חֲרֵי הַבְּרָכוֹת מְסוּרוֹת לָךְ, וּלְמַאן דַּאֲהַנֵּי לָךְ לְבָרְכָה בָּרִיךְ, for He said to him: Until now I had to bless My world Myself. From now on, the blessings are entrusted to you; whomever it pleases you to bless, bless.**[53] **כֵּיוָן שֶׁעָמַד יִצְחָק מָה כָּתִיב, וַיִּתֵּן אַבְרָהָם אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ לְיִצְחָק (שם כה ה), When Yitzchak arose, what is written? "And Avraham gave all that he had to Yitzchak" (Bereishis 25:5).** "All that he had" is understood to include something beyond material wealth. The Sages differ as to what it was. **ר' יְהוּדָה וְר' נְחֶמְיָה וְרַבָּנִין, ר' יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר זֶהוּ בְּכוֹרָה, ר' נְחֶמְיָה אָמַר זֶה בְּרָכָה, וְרַבָּנִין אָמְרֵי זֶה קְבוּרָה וְדַיְיתִיקֵי. Rabbi Yehudah, Rabbi Nechemyah, and the Rabbis disagree. Rabbi Yehudah says: This is the birthright. Rabbi Nechemyah says: This is the blessing. And the Rabbis say: This is burial and a written bequest (diyatiki).** According to Rabbi Nechemyah, Avraham passed on to Yitzchak the power he himself had received, to bless whomever he saw fit. "Burial" means that Yitzchak alone, and not Yishmael, would be buried in the Cave of Machpelah. *Diyatiki* is a Greek term for a written legal document.[54] **ר' לֵוִי בְּשֵׁם ר' חָמָא אָמַר לֹא בֵּירְכוֹ אֶלָּא מַתָּנוֹת נָתַן לוֹ, Rabbi Levi said in the name of Rabbi Chama: He did not bless him; he only gave him gifts.** **וְלָמָּה לֹא בֵּירְכוֹ, And why did he not bless him?** **מָשָׁל לְמֶלֶךְ שֶׁהָיָה לוֹ פַּרְדֵּס וּמְסָרוֹ לְאָרִיס, A parable: A king had an orchard, and he handed it over to a tenant farmer.**[55] **וְהָיוּ לוֹ מִינֵי אִילָנוֹת כְּרוּכִין זֶה עַל זֶה, אֶחָד שֶׁל סַם חַיִּים וְאֶחָד שֶׁל סַם הַמָּוֶת, In it were trees intertwined with one another, one bearing an elixir of life and one bearing a deadly poison.** **אָמַר הָאָרִיס אִם אֲנִי מַשְׁקֶה אֶת סַם חַיִּים, יָבֹא סַם הַמָּוֶת יִחְיֶה עִמּוֹ, וְאִם אֵינִי מַשְׁקֵהוּ, הֵיאַךְ זֶה שֶׁל סַם חַיִּים יִחְיֶה, The tenant said: If I water the tree of life, the tree of poison will thrive along with it. And if I do not water it, how will the tree of life survive?** **אָמַר הָאָרִיס לְשָׁנָה אֲנִי מַשְׁלִים אֲרִיסוּתִי וְהוֹלֵךְ לִי, מָה דַּהֲנֵי לֵיהּ לְמָרֵיהּ דְּפַרְדֵּס יַעֲבִיד, The tenant said: Next year I complete my tenancy and go on my way. Let the owner of the orchard do whatever pleases him.** **כָּךְ אָמַר אַבְרָהָם, אִם אֲבָרֵךְ אֶת יִצְחָק, עַכְשָׁיו בְּנֵי יִשְׁמָעֵאל וּבְנֵי קְטוּרָה מִתְבָּרְכִין עִמּוֹ, So too Avraham said: If I bless Yitzchak, the sons of Yishmael and the sons of Keturah will now be blessed along with him.** His sons were "intertwined" like the trees. If they saw Yitzchak blessed, they too would claim a blessing.[56] **וְאִם אֵינִי אֲבָרֵךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׁמָעֵאל וּבְנֵי קְטוּרָה, הֵיאַךְ אֲבָרֵךְ אֶת יִצְחָק, And if I do not bless the sons of Yishmael and the sons of Keturah, how can I bless Yitzchak?** **חָזַר וְאָמַר אֲנִי בָּשָׂר וָדָם, הַיּוֹם כָּאן וּמָחָר בַּקֶּבֶר, וּמַה שֶּׁהקב"ה רוֹצֶה לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּעוֹלָמוֹ יַעֲשֶׂה, He reconsidered and said: I am flesh and blood, here today and in the grave tomorrow. Whatever the Holy One wishes to do in His world, let Him do.** Like the tenant, Avraham returned the decision to the Owner. **כֵּיוָן שֶׁמֵּת אַבְרָהָם עָלָה הקב"ה עַל יִצְחָק וּבֵרְכוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי מוֹת אַבְרָהָם וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ (בראשית כב א), Once Avraham died, the Holy One revealed Himself to Yitzchak and blessed him, as it says, "And it was after Avraham's death that God blessed Yitzchak his son" (Bereishis 25:11).** **וְכֵן יַעֲקֹב, דִּכְתִיב וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶל יַעֲקֹב עוֹד וַיְבָרֶךְ אוֹתוֹ (שם לה ט), And so too Yaakov, as it is written, "And God appeared to Yaakov again... and He blessed him" (Bereishis 35:9).** **עָמַד יִצְחָק וּבֵירֵךְ אֶת יַעֲקֹב בְּנִתְינָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וְיִתֶּן לְךָ הָאֱלֹהִים מִטַּל הַשָּׁמַיִם (בראשית כז כח), Yitzchak arose and blessed Yaakov, opening with "giving," as it says, "May God give**

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51 Mahari Kohen.

52 Parallels: *Bereishis Rabbah* 39:11 (anonymous); *Bamidbar Rabbah* 11:2 (in the name of Rabbi Elazar); *Tanchuma*, *Lech Lecha* 4, *Naso* 9, and the start of *Vezos HaBerachah*. Other manuscripts and the printed edition read "Rabbi Nachman." R' Buber suggests "Rabbi *Tanchuma*."

53 Mahari Kohen, commenting on Rabbi Nechemyah's view below.

54 *Bereishis Rabbah* 61:6 (cited by R' Buber). On "burial" and *diyatiki*: R' Buber. The Constantinople and later printings add the gloss "a deed of inheritance." R' Buber also cites *Yefeh To'ar* and *Maharzu* on *Bereishis Rabbah*, who explain that the document was given before Avraham married Keturah, and Rashi, who says that Eliezer showed Lavan's family a deed of gift.

55 Parallels in *Bereishis Rabbah*, *Shemos Rabbah*, *Tanchuma*, and the *Pesikta*, *Vezos HaBerachah* (139a), cited by R' Buber.

56 Mahari Kohen.

you of the dew of heaven" (Bereishis 27:28),[57] **וְחָתַם בְּקְרִיאָה, וַיִּקְרָא יִצְחָק אֶל יַעֲקֹב וַיְבָרֶךְ אוֹתוֹ (שם כח א), and he closed with "calling": "And Yitzchak called Yaakov and blessed him" (Bereishis 28:1). עָמַד יַעֲקֹב לְבָרֵךְ אֶת הַשְּׁבָטִים, וּפָתַח בְּמַה שֶׁחָתַם יִצְחָק אָבִיו, הָדָא הוּא דִכְתִיב וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל בָּנָיו (שם מט א), Yaakov arose to bless the tribes, and he opened with what Yitzchak his father had closed with. This is what is written: "And Yaakov called to his sons" (Bereishis 49:1).**[58] **וּבְמָה חָתַם בְּזֹאת, וְזֹאת אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר לָהֶם אֲבִיהֶם וַיְבָרֶךְ אוֹתָם (שם מט א), And with what did he close? With "this": "And this is what their father spoke to them, and he blessed them" (Bereishis 49:28). וּבְמָה חָתַם בְּזֹאת, וְזֹאת אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר לָהֶם אֲבִיהֶם וַיְבָרֶךְ אוֹתָם. And with what did he close? With "this": "And this is what their father spoke to them, and he blessed them."** The repetition of the previous sentence appears to be a copyist's duplication. **עָמַד מֹשֶׁה לְבָרֵךְ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַר יַעֲקֹב בְּכוֹרוֹ שֶׁל מָקוֹם פָּתַח בְּקְרִיאָה וְחָתַם בְּזֹאת, הֲרֵינִי פּוֹתֵחַ בְּמַה שֶׁחָתַם יַעֲקֹב, Moshe arose to bless the Jewish people, and he said: Yaakov, the firstborn of the Omnipresent, opened with "calling" and closed with "this." I will open with what Yaakov closed with.**[59] **פָּתַח וְזֹאת הַבְּרָכָה (דברים לג א), וְחָתַם בְּאַשְׁרֶיךָ (שם שם כט), He opened, "And this is the blessing" (Devarim 33:1), and closed with "Fortunate are you" (Devarim 33:29). כֵּיוָן שֶׁעָמַד דָּוִד, פָּתַח בְּמַה שֶׁחָתַם מֹשֶׁה, אָמַר אַף אֲנִי אֲבָרֵךְ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאַשְׁרֵי. When Dovid arose, he opened with what Moshe had closed with. He said: I too will bless the Jewish people with ashrei.** This explains why the book of *Tehillim* begins with *ashrei*, "praiseworthy." Dovid took up the chain of blessing at the word with which Moshe ended.

ו Ten authors, ten kinds of song, and one sweet singer

דָּבָר אַחֵר אַשְׁרֵי הָאִישׁ. ר' נְחֶמְיָה פָּתַח הַחָכְמָה תָּעוֹז לֶחָכָם (קהלת ז יט), זֶה דָּוִד. Another interpretation of "Praiseworthy is the man." R' Nechemiah opened his discourse with the verse: "Wisdom shall fortify the sage" (Koheles 7:19). This refers to Dovid. R' Nechemiah opens with a *pesicha* (an opening exposition: a verse from elsewhere in Tanakh that leads into the psalm). The "sage" whom wisdom strengthens is Dovid, the author of Tehillim.[60] **מֵעֲשָׂרָה שַׁלִּיטִים (שם). "More than ten rulers" (ibid.). אֵלּוּ עֲשָׂרָה בְּנֵי אָדָם שֶׁאָמְרוּ סֵפֶר תְּהִלִּים, וְאֵלּוּ הֵן. אָדָם, וּמַלְכִּי צֶדֶק, וְאַבְרָהָם, וּמֹשֶׁה, וְדָוִד, וּשְׁלֹמֹה, וְאָסָף, וּשְׁלֹשָׁה בְּנֵי קֹרַח, These are the ten people who composed the book of Tehillim. They are: Adam, Malki-Tzedek, Avraham, Moshe, Dovid, Shlomo, Asaf, and the three sons of Korach.** The midrash reads the "ten rulers" as the ten authors whose words are gathered in Tehillim. Dovid's wisdom "fortifies" him more than all of them, because the whole book bears his name, as the midrash explains below. The three sons of Korach complete the count of ten.[61] **עַל אֵילֵּין לָא יִתְפְּלָגוּן, עַל מָאן יִתְפְּלָגוּן, רַב אָמַר לִידוּתוּן, עַל הַהִידוּתִין וְעַל הַדִּינִין שֶׁעָבְרוּ עָלָיו וְעַל יִשְׂרָאֵל, About these there is no disagreement. About whom is there disagreement? Rav said: "Lidusun" refers to the decrees and the judgments that passed over him and over the Jewish people.** The question concerns the name Yedusun, which appears in several psalm headings. One might count Yedusun as an author. Rav says the word is not a person's name. He reads it as related to *das* (decree): such psalms were composed about the harsh decrees that befell Dovid and the Jewish people. R' Buber notes that the fuller parallels also record R' Yochanan's opposing view, which is missing here. He also notes that Rashi, at the start of *Tehillim*, cites both opinions: some say Yedusun is the person

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57 R' Buber restored this sentence from most manuscripts and the printed edition. A parallel at the start of *Vezos HaBerachah*, cited by R' Buber, has smoother wording.

58 Parallel in *Bereishis Rabbah* 100:12 (cited by R' Buber).

59 See *Tanchuma* (R' Buber), *Vayechi* 17 (cited by R' Buber).

60 R' Buber, *Haaros veTikkunim*, notes that the passage also appears in *Koheles Rabbah* 7, where it is not presented as R' Nechemiah's opening exposition.

61 R' Buber cites the parallels: *Koheles Rabbah* ("ten elders who spoke in the book of Tehillim"), *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 4:4, and *Bava Basra* 14b ("Dovid wrote the book of Tehillim through ten elders"). He notes that the Talmud's list has Heiman and Yedusun instead of Dovid and Shlomo, and that Rashi, at the start of *Tehillim*, quotes the list as given here.

named in *Divrei HaYamim*, and others say the name refers to the decrees and judgments.[62] **רַב הוּנָא בְּשֵׁם ר' אֲחָא אָמַר אַע"פ שֶׁנֶּאֶמְרוּ עַל יְדֵי עֲשָׂרָה, לֹא נֶאֱמַר אֶלָּא עַל יְדֵי דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל, Rav Huna said in the name of R' Acha: Although they were composed by ten, the book is attributed only to Dovid, king of Israel.** The book is known by Dovid's name alone, even though others contributed to it.[63] **מָשָׁל לַחֲבוּרָה שֶׁל כּוּוסְקִין, שֶׁהָיְתָה מְבַקֶּשֶׁת לוֹמַר הִימְנוֹן לַמֶּלֶךְ, A parable: a company of musicians wished to sing a hymn to the king.** *Kevaskin* is probably a corruption of *musikin*, from the Greek for "musicians." *Himnon* is the Greek *hymnos*, a song of praise.[64] **אָמַר לָהֶם כּוּלְכֶם נְעִימִים, כּוּלְכֶם זַמָּרִים, כּוּלְכֶם רְאוּיִין לוֹמַר הִימְנוֹן לַמֶּלֶךְ, אֶלָּא אִישׁ פְּלוֹנִי יֹאמַר עַל יְדֵי כּוּלְכֶם, לָמָּה שֶׁקּוֹלוֹ עָרֵב יוֹתֵר מִכּוּלְכֶם, כּוּלְכֶם מְשׁוּבָּחִים, The king said to them: "You are all pleasant, you are all singers, you are all praiseworthy, you are all worthy of singing a hymn to the king. But let so-and-so sing on behalf of all of you." Why? Because his voice is sweeter than all of yours.** In the parallel versions the lesson is stated outright. When the ten righteous men sought to compose Tehillim, the Holy One told them that all of them were worthy, but Dovid should sing on behalf of all of them, because his voice is sweet.[65] **הָדָא הוּא דִכְתִיב וּנְעִים זְמִרוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל (ש"ב כג א), This is what is written: "And the sweet singer of Israel's songs" (II Shmuel 23:1).** **מִי נְעִים זְמִירוֹתֵיהֶן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל, דָּוִד בֶּן יִשַׁי, אַבְגִּינוֹס בֶּן אַבְגִּינוֹס, Who is the sweet one of the songs of Israel? Dovid son of Yishai, a nobleman son of a nobleman.** *Avginos* is the Greek *eugenes*, "well-born." The phrase stresses Dovid's distinguished lineage.[66] **מַהוּ אוֹמֵר בְּסוֹף תְּהִלִּים, כָּלוּ תְּפִלּוֹת דָּוִד בֶּן יִשַׁי (תהלים עב כ), What does it say at the end of Tehillim? "The prayers of Dovid son of Yishai are concluded" (Tehillim 72:20).** This verse closes the second of the five books of Tehillim. There all the preceding prayers are summed up under Dovid's name, which shows that the book as a whole is called his. R' Buber compares the Talmud's report of R' Meir's teaching: every song of praise in Tehillim was said by Dovid. R' Meir reads *kalu* ("are concluded") as *kol eilu*, "all these."[67] **כְּשֵׁם שֶׁאֲמָרוּהוּ עֲשָׂרָה בְּנֵי אָדָם, כָּךְ נֶאֱמַר בַּעֲשָׂרָה מִינֵי זְמָר, בְּנִיצּוּחַ בְּנִיגּוּן בְּמִזְמוֹר בְּשִׁיר בְּהַלֵּל בִּתְפִלָּה בִּבְרָכָה בְּהוֹדָאָה בְּהַלְלוּיָהּ בְּאַשְׁרֵי, Just as ten people composed it, so it was composed with ten kinds of song: with conducting (nitzu'ach), with melody (niggun), with psalm (mizmor), with song (shir), with praise (hallel), with prayer (tefillah), with blessing (berachah), with thanksgiving (hoda'ah), with halleluyah, and with ashrei.** Each term matches a type of expression found in Tehillim, such as *lamenatze'ach* ("to the conductor"), *mizmor*, and *shir*. The list ends with *ashrei*, the word that opens this psalm. The Mahari Kohen suggests that *hallel* may stand for *haskel*, as in the headings *maskil leDovid* and *maskil leAsaf*.[68] **וְגָדוֹל מִכּוּלָּם הַלְלוּיָהּ, שֶׁכּוֹלֵל שֵׁם וְשֶׁבַח כְּתִיבָה אַחַת, The greatest of them all is halleluyah, because it combines the Divine Name and praise in a single word.** *Hallelu* ("praise") and *Yah* (the Divine Name) are joined together. **רַב קָרָא כָּל סִפְרָא הַלְלוּיָהּ. Rav read "halleluyah" in this way throughout the entire book.** R' Buber explains that Rav read it everywhere in Tehillim as *hallelu-Yah*, two words,

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62 R' Buber, citing *Koheles Rabbah* and *Shir HaShirim Rabbah*, where the wording is more orderly, and Rashi to *Tehillim* 1:1. In *Koheles Rabbah* 7:19, five authors are agreed upon (Adam, Avraham, Moshe, Dovid, Shlomo), and Rav and R' Yochanan disagree about the rest. The Mahari Kohen likewise refers to the glosses on the *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* and *Koheles Rabbah* passages.

63 The printed edition reads: "it was arranged (*nitkan*) only by Dovid." The Mahari Kohen explains that the book is called Tehillim only in Dovid's name. *Koheles Rabbah* and *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* read: "it is not said in their names, but through Dovid." (R' Buber.)

64 R' Buber. Other manuscripts and the printed edition read "of singers" (*zamarin*), and the parallels read "of men." He also notes that the printed words "the praise of the king" are a printer's addition found in no manuscript. The Mahari Kohen glosses *zamarin* as "singers" and *himnon* as "a song of praise."

65 R' Buber, citing *Koheles Rabbah* and *Shir HaShirim Rabbah*.

66 R' Buber. He notes that "great son of great," found in the printed editions, is a printer's gloss on this word. The Mahari Kohen, on the reading *Avinoam ben Avinoam*, explains it as "a king son of a king."

67 R' Buber, citing *Pesachim* 117a.

68 The Talmud's version differs: "with ten expressions of praise" (*Pesachim* 117a), or "ten terms of praise" (*Yerushalmi Sukkah* 3:10), with somewhat different lists. Rashi and *Yalkut Shimoni* quote the list as given here (R' Buber).

because *Yah* carries the sanctity of the Divine Name. He compares the Bavli, where Rav testifies that he saw a Tehillim scroll in his uncle's house in which *hallelu* was written on one side and *Yah* on the other.[69]

ז Walking, standing, sitting, scoffing — and choosing Torah

אֲשֶׁר לֹא הָלַךְ בַּעֲצַת רְשָׁעִים וּבְדֶרֶךְ חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמָד וּבְמוֹשַׁב לֵצִים לֹא יָשָׁב. "Who did not walk in the counsel of the wicked, and did not stand in the path of sinners, and did not sit in the seat of scoffers" (Tehillim 1:1). אָמַר ר' שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן פָּזִי וְכִי מֵאַחַר שֶׁלֹּא הָלַךְ הֵיכָן עָמַד, וּמֵאַחַר שֶׁלֹּא עָמַד הֵיכָן יָשַׁב, וּמֵאַחַר שֶׁלֹּא יָשַׁב הֵיכָן לָץ, **R' Shimon ben Pazi said: If he did not walk, how could he have stood? If he did not stand, how could he have sat? And if he did not sit, how could he have scoffed?** Once the verse says he never set out with the wicked, the later clauses seem unnecessary. אֶלָּא לוֹמַר לְךָ שֶׁאִם הָלַךְ סוֹפוֹ לַעֲמוֹד, וְאִם עָמַד סוֹפוֹ לֵישֵׁב, וְאִם יָשַׁב סוֹפוֹ לָלוּץ, וְאִם לָץ עָלָיו הַכָּתוּב אוֹמֵר אִם חָכַמְתָּ חָכַמְתָּ לָךְ וְלַצְתָּ לְבַדְּךָ תִּשָּׂא (משלי ט יב). **Rather, the verse teaches you that if one walks, he will end up standing; if he stands, he will end up sitting; if he sits, he will end up scoffing. And if he scoffs, Scripture says of him: "If you have become wise, you have become wise for your own good, and if you have been a scoffer, you alone will bear it" (Mishlei 9:12).** The three verbs describe stages of a slide. Casual association hardens into lingering, then into settling in, and finally into mockery.[70] וְשָׁנוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ מִצְוָה גּוֹרֶרֶת מִצְוָה עֲבֵירָה גּוֹרֶרֶת עֲבֵירָה, **Our Rabbis taught: One mitzvah draws another mitzvah in its wake, and one sin draws another sin in its wake.** This teaching from *Pirkei Avos* states the same principle as the verse's progression.[71] וְכִי שֶׁלֹּא הָלַךְ וְלֹא עָמַד וְלֹא יָשַׁב וְלֹא לָץ, יָכוֹל לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה לֹא טוֹבָה וְלֹא רָעָה, אֶלָּא יָשִׂים יָד לְפֶה, תַּלְמוּד לוֹמַר כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת ה' חֶפְצוֹ. **Now, as for one who did not walk, did not stand, did not sit, and did not scoff — one might think that he should do neither good nor bad, but simply place his hand over his mouth. Therefore the verse says, "But his desire is in the Torah of Hashem" (Tehillim 1:2).** Avoiding evil is not enough. The next verse requires active devotion to Torah. אָמַר ר' בֶּרֶכְיָה כְּתִיב אַל תִּרְשַׁע הַרְבֵּה (קהלת ז יז), הָא צִיבְחַר שָׁרֵי, אֶלָּא אִם רָשַׁעְתָּ אַל תּוֹסִיף. **R' Berachiah said: It is written, "Do not be overly wicked" (Koheles 7:17). Does this mean a little wickedness is permitted? Rather, it means: if you have been wicked, do not add to it.** This applies the "sin draws sin" principle. One who has stumbled must stop the slide before it continues.[72] ר' שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחַי אָמַר אִם יָשַׁב אָדָם וְלֹא עָבַר עֲבֵירָה, נוֹתְנִין לוֹ שָׂכָר כְּאִילּוּ עוֹשֶׂה מִצְוָה, **R' Shimon ben Yochai said: If a person sat and did not commit a sin, he is rewarded as if he had performed a mitzvah.**[73] ר' זְעִירָא אָמַר וְהוּא שֶׁבָּא דָּבָר עֲבֵירָה לְיָדוֹ וְנִיצּוֹל מִמֶּנָּה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר סוּר מֵרָע וַעֲשֵׂה טוֹב (תהלים לד טו), סוּר מֵרָע עַל מְנָת לַעֲשׂוֹת טוֹב, **R' Zeira said: This applies only when an opportunity to sin came his way and he escaped it, as it says, "Turn away from evil and do good" (Tehillim 34:15). "Turn away from evil" — in order to "do good."** One can only "turn away" from a sin that was within reach. That act of turning away is itself counted as "doing good."[74] וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר אַף לֹא פָעֲלוּ עַוְלָה בִּדְרָכָיו הָלָכוּ (שם קיט ג). **Similarly it says, "They also did no wrong; they walked in His ways" (Tehillim 119:3).** Refraining from wrongdoing is itself considered walking in Hashem's ways. The parallel in the *Yerushalmi* applies this directly to our verse: since he did not walk in the counsel of the wicked, it is as if he walked in the counsel of the righteous.[75]

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69 R' Buber, citing *Yerushalmi Sukkah* 3:10 and *Pesachim* 117a.

70 Also in *Avodah Zarah* 19b (R' Buber).

71 *Avos* 4:2 (R' Buber). Some manuscripts add a series of examples from *Devarim* 21–22. R' Buber regards these as a copyist's addition from *Tanchuma*.

72 Similarly in *Koheles Rabbah* to 7:17; see also *Shabbos* 31b (R' Buber).

73 *Kiddushin* 39b cites this anonymously; see also *Yerushalmi Kiddushin* 1:10 and *Yerushalmi Makkos* 3:17 (R' Buber).

74 In *Yerushalmi Kiddushin*, R' Zeira's statement reads: "One who had a doubtful sin come his way." R' Buber suggests this means a sin he was fully able to commit but refrained from.

75 *Yerushalmi Kiddushin*, cited by R' Buber. He notes that this teaching of R' Yosi berabbi Bun is central to the passage but missing from the midrash here.