

#### Introduction

This profound teaching from the Maharal of Prague explores why the Torah was uniquely given to the Jewish people and not to the other nations of the world. Through careful analysis of Chazal, midrashim, and philosophical truths, the Maharal unpacks the essential qualities required to receive and live by the Torah—qualities rooted in soul structure, spiritual readiness, and divine purpose. The discourse culminates in explaining the singular status of Israel as those called "Adam" (man), not merely in form but in essential spiritual character.

#### מַעֲלוֹת הָאָדָם הֵן הַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוֹת בִּלְבַד The virtues of man are only the Torah and the mitzvos.

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The created beings which Hashem, blessed be He, created in His world—all of them act within the world in which they were created, and each one, according to its stature and importance, so is the greatness of its action.	הַנָּבְרָאִים אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא ה' יִתְבָּרְדְ בְּעוֹלָמוֹ, כֵּלָם הֵם פּוֹעֲלִים בָּעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר נִבְרָאוּ בּוֹ, וְכָל אֶחָד – לְפִי מַעֲלָתוֹ וַחֲשִׁיבוּתוֹ גֹדֶל פְּעֲלָתוֹ
Behold, the heavens and all the host of the heavens—all of them act; they move the firmament and act upon the lower realms as Hashem, blessed be He, created them and arranged them.	הָנֵה הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכָל צְּבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם, כַּלָּם פּוֹעֲלִים; מְסַבְּבִים הָרָקִיעַ, -וּפּוֹעֲלִים בַּתַּחְתּוֹנִים כְּמוֹ שֶׁבְּרָאָם הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ וְסִדַּר אוֹתָם.
And so too, all the lower realms act: the earth is that which acts and brings forth its vegetation, and everything that emerges from the earth—it is the earth that acts.	וְכֵן הַתַּחְתּוֹנִים כַּלָּם פּוֹעֲלִים; הָאָרֶץ הִיא שֶׁפּוֹעֶלֶת וּמוֹצִיאָה צִמְחָה, וְכָל אֲשֶׁר הוּא יוֹצֵא מִן הָאָרֶץ הִיא פּוֹעֶלֶת.
And so too the water acts—watering and causing the earth to grow.	רָכֵן הַמַּיִם פּוֹעֲלִיםמַרְוִים וּמַצְמִיחִים -הָאֲדָמָה.
And the wind also causes everything to grow, as is known.	וָהָרוּחַ גַּם־כֵּן מְגַדַּל הַכֹּל, כְּמוֹ שֶׁהוּא יָדוּעַ.
And so too the fire, like the sun—it heats and causes everything to grow.	וְכֵן הָאֵשׁ, כְּמוֹ הַחַמֶּה – מְחַמֵּם וּמְגַדַּל הַכּּל.
And so too all living beings and all the species in the world—"He did not create it for chaos" (Yeshayahu 45:18); rather, it is said of them (Bereishis 1:28): "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."	וְכֵן כָּל בַּעֲלֵי חַיִּים וְכָל הַמִּינִים שֶׁבָּעוֹלָם, "לֹא לְתֹהוּ בְּרָאָם" (וְשַׁעְיָה מה, יח), רַק נֶאֱמֵר עֲלֵיהֶם "(בְּרֵאשִׁית א, כח): "פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמִלְאוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ.
Until there is not one that is idle, and all act in the world in which they were created.	עַד שֶׁאֵין אֶחָד בָּטֵל, וְהַכּּל פּוֹעֲלִים בָּעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר נִבְרָאוּ בּוֹ.

And every action is attributed to the one who acts; for the heat, which is the action of fire—it is attributed to it.	וְכָל פְעַלָה הִיא מִתִּיחֶסֶת אֶל הַפּוֹעֵל; כִּי הַחֲמִימוּת אֲשֶׁר הוּא פְּעֲלַת הָאֵשׁ – מִתְיַחֵם אֵלָיו.
And so too, the coolness is attributed to the water, which produces coolness.	וְכֵן הַקְרִירוּת מִתְיַחֵם אֶל הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר פּוֹעֲלִים הַקְרִירוּת.
And so with all things—the action is attributed to the one who performs it.	וְכֵן בְּכָל הַדְּבָרִים מִתְיַחֶסֶת הַפְעַלָּה אֶל הַפּוֹעֵל.
And now, man—who is distinct from all other living beings due to the soul, for his soul is not an animalistic soul, but rather his soul is an intellectual soul—	וּמֵעַתָּה הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר הוּא נִבְדָּל מִכֶּל שָׁאָר בַּעֲלֵי חַיִּים מִצֵד הַנָּפֶשׁ, שֶׁאֵין נַפְשׁוֹ נֶפֶשׁ בַּהְמִית, רַק נַפְשׁוֹ נֶפֶשׁ ,שִׂכְלִית
unlike other living beings that make sounds, whose soul is only natural—must have actions that are associated with his intellectual divine soul, and he must have intellectual, divine actions.	לֹא כְּמוֹ שְׁאָר בַּעֲלֵי חַיִּים הַמִּרְעֵיִים, שֶׁאֵין נַפְשָׁם רַק טִבְעִית, מְחַיָּב שֶׁיִהְיָה לוֹ פְּעַלּוֹת מִתְיַחֲסוֹת אֶל נַפְשׁוֹ הַשָּׂכְלִית הָאֱלֹקִית, וְיִהְיוּ לוֹ פְּעֲלוֹת שִׂכְלִיּוֹת אֱלֹהִיּוֹת.
For we already said that every action must be attributed to the actor.	שֶׁכְּבָר אָמַרְנוּ כִּי כָּל פְּעֲלָה צָרִיךְ שֶׁתִּהְיֶה מִתְיַחֶּסֶת אֶל הַפּּוֹעֵל.
And since man is found to share with other natural living beings many actions, this is certainly from the life-force soul that is within man, through which he shares with other animals that make sound.	וּמִפְּנֵי שֶׁתִּמְצָא הָאָדָם מִשְׁתַּתֵּף עִם שְׁאָר בַּעֲלֵי חַיִּים הַטְבְעִיִים בְּהַרְבֵּה פְּעֲלוֹת, וְדָבָר זֶה בְּוַדַּאי מְצַד הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַחִיוּנִי אֲשֶׁר בָּאָדָם, אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ מִשְׁתַּתֵּף עִם שְׁאָר בַּעֲלֵי חַיִּים הַמִּבְעִיִּים.
But it is impossible that he should not also have actions that are attributed to his intellectual divine soul, for its power is not diminished.	אֲבָל אִי אֶפְשָׁר שֶׁלֹא יִהְיוּ לוֹ פְּעֲלוֹת גַּם־כֵּן מִתְיַחֲסִים אָל נַפְשׁוֹ הַשִּׂכְלִית הָאֱלֹקִית, כִּי לֹא יִגָּרַע כֹּחוֹ.
For when man is a builder and carpenter, and does the work of baking and cooking, and similarly tailoring garments—certainly, even though these things require the intellectual soul—	כִּי מַה שֶׁהָאָדָם הוּא בַּנַּאי וְנַגָּר, וְעוֹשֶׁה מְלָאכֶת הָאֲפִיָּה וְהַבִּשׁוּל, וְכַיּוֹצֵא בָּזָה מִתִּקוּוְ הַבְּגָדִים, שֶׁוַדַּאי אַף כִּי דְּבָרִים אֵלוּ צְרִיכִים לוֹ נֶפֶשׁ הַשָּׂכְלִית,
who guarantees me that these things are from the perfection within him?	מִי הוּא עָרֵב לִי שֶׁהַדָּבָר הַזָּה הוּא מִעַד שְׁלֵמוּת שֶׁבּוֹ;
For it is fitting and necessary that he have divine actions that he acts in the world which his Creator created, in accordance with the stature of his divine soul.	וַהַרִי רָאוּי וּמְחַיָּב שֶׁיָּהִיוּ לוֹ פְּעַלוֹת אֱלֹהִיּוֹת שֶׁיִפְעַל בָּעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר בְּּרָאוֹ כְּפִי מַעֲלַת נַפְשׁוֹ הָאֱלֹקִית,
And perhaps all these things we mentioned are from a deficiency in man.	ןאוּלַי כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר זָכַרְנוּ הֵם מִצַד חָסָרוֹן שֶׁבָּאָדָם

And at the end of Kiddushin (82b): "It was taught: Rabbi Shimon the son of Rabbi Elazar said: In my days I never saw a deer drying fruit, or a lion carrying loads, or a fox as a shopkeeper—and they sustain themselves without suffering. And they were not created except to serve me, and I was created to serve my Creator.	וּבְסוֹף קִדּוּשִׁין (פּב, ב): תַּנְיָא רַבִּי שָׁמְעוֹן בְּרַבִּי אֶלְעָזֶר אוֹמֵר: מִיָּמֵי לֹא רָאִיתִי צְבִי קַיֶּץ וַאֲרִי סַבָּל, וְשׁוּעַל חֶנְוָנִי; וְהֵם מִתְפַּרְנָסִים שֶׁלֹא בְּצַעַר, וְהֵם לֹא נִבְרָאוּ אֶלָּא לְשַׁמְשַׁנִי, וַאֲנִי נִבְרָאתִי לְשַׁמֵּשׁ אֶת קוֹנִי.
And if those who were not created except to serve me are sustained without suffering, then I, who was created to serve my Creator—how much more so!"	וּמָה אַלוּ שָׁלֹא נִבְרָאוּ אֶלָּא לְשַׁמְשֵׁנִי, מִתְפַּרְנְסִים שָׁלֹא בְּצַעַר, וַאֲנִי שֶׁנִּבְרָאתִי לְשֵׁמֵשׁ אֶת קוֹנִי, עַל אַחַת כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה;
But I have worsened my deeds and forfeited my livelihood, as it is said (Yirmeyahu 5:25): "Your iniquities have turned these away," etc. Until here.	אֶלָּא שֶׁהָרְעוֹתִי אֶת מַצְשֵׂי, וְקִפַּחְתִּי אֶת פַּרְנָסָתִי. שֶׁנָּאֱמֵר (יִרְמְיָה ה, כה): "עֲוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם הִטוּ אֵלֶה" וְגוֹ', עַד כָּאן
Thus, they have explained that the actions and labors that man does for the sake of livelihood are not from the virtue of man, but they are due to his deficiency and lack.	הָרֵי שֶׁבַּאֲרוּ כִּי הַפְּעֲלוֹת וְהַמְּלָאכוֹת שֶׁעוֹשָׁה הָאָדָם לְצֹרֶךְ כַּּרְנָסָה, אֵינָם מִצַד מַעֲלַת הָאָדָם, אֲבָל הֵם לוֹ מִצֵד פְּחִיתוּת וְחָסָרוֹן.
And when man was created, labor and fixing of garments and building of houses were not created with him—he was in Gan Eden without these things.	וּכְשֶׁנִּבְרָא הָאָדָם לֹא נִבְרַאת עִמּוֹ הַמְּלָאכָה וְתִקּוּן בָּגָדִים וּבִנָּיָן הַבָּתִּים, רַק בְּגַן־עֵדֶן הָיָה בְּלֹא דְּכָרִים אֵלוּ
If so, these are not actions of man that stem from perfection.	וְאָם־כֵּן אֵין אֵלוּ פְּעֲלוֹת לָאָדָם מִצֵד הַשְׁלֵמוּת.
And among living beings, these actions are not found, and they are sustained without these things.	ָןלֹא נִמְצָא בְּבַעֲלֵי חַיִּים אֵלוּ הַפְּעַלוֹת, וְהֵם מִתְפַּרְנְסִים בְּלֹא דְּבָרִים אֵלוּ.
If so, these actions are for man due to deficiency—that he sinned and forfeited his livelihood. And were it not for this, he would not need these things.	אָם־כֵּן פְּעֲלוֹת אֵלּוּ הֵם לָאָדָם מִצֵד חָסָרוֹן, שֶׁחָטָא וְקִפַּח פַּרְנָסָתוֹ. וְלוּלֵי זֶה, לֹא הָיָה צָרִיךּ לִדְּבָרִים אַלּוּ.
And this is regarding three things—for in man there are three things: the body, the soul, and the intellect. And with all three, man serves with them for the sake of his vitality.	וְזֶה בְּעַר שָׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים, כִּי בָּאָדָם שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים; הַגּוּף, וְהַנָּפֶשׁ, וְהַשֵּׁכָל. וּבְכָל שְׁלָשְׁתָּן מְשַׁמֵשׁ הָאָדָם בָּהֶם לְצְרֶךְ חַיּוּתוֹ
And he said that man's perfection is not in that he serves for the sake of livelihood—whether with his body, his soul, or his intellect.	וְאָמֵר כִּי אֵין שָׁלֵמוּת הָאָדָם בַּמֶה שֶהוּא מְשַׁמֵשׁ לְצְרֶךְּ בַּרְנָסָתוֹ – הֵן בְּגוּפוֹ, הֵן בְּנַפְשׁוֹ, הֵן בְּשָׂכְלוֹ
For the lion has a strong body, as is known regarding the lion, and yet he does not use the power of his body which he has for the sake of his livelihood.	וְזֶה כִּי הָאָרִי יֵשׁ לוֹ גוּף חָזָק, כַּאֲשֶׁר נוֹדֶע מֵעִנְיֵן הָאָרִי, וַהָרֵי אֵין מְשַׁמֵשׁ בְּכֹחַ גוּפוֹ שֶׁיֵשׁ לוֹ לְצְרָהְ בַּרְנָסָתוֹ

Therefore, one should not consider what man does with his body to be perfection for him, for among living beings such a thing is not found that they should need it.	לְכָדְּ אֵין לַחֲשֹׁב מַה שֶׁעוֹשֶׁה הָאָדָם בְּגוּפוֹ הוּא שְׁלֵמוּת לוֹ, שֶׁהַרֵי בְּבַעֲלֵי חַיִּים לֹא נִמְצָא דָּבָר זָה שָׁיִהְיֶה צָרִיךְ אֵלָיו.
And corresponding to the soul-force, that movement is from the soul—on this he said that the deer, which has very swift movement, certainly has this power in great measure, yet he does not use this power for the sake of his livelihood.	וּכְנֶגֶד הַכּּחַ הַנַּפְשִׁי, שֶׁהַתְּנוּעָה מִן הַנָּפָשׁ, עַל זֶה אָמַר שֶׁהַצְּבִי שֶׁיֵשׁ בּּוֹ מְהִירוּת הַתְּנוּעָה מְאֹד, הֲרֵי יֵשׁ לוֹ כּּחַ זֶה בְּיוֹתֵר, וַהֲרֵי אֵינוֹ מְשַׁמֵּשׁ בְּכֹחַ זֶה לְצֹרֶךְ פַּרְנָסָתוֹ.
Therefore he said: "And I have not seen a deer as a gatherer," meaning one who prepares his provisions in the summer, and this requires the power of motion to bring the summer fruits into the house.	וּלְפִיכָךְ אָמַר: וְלֹא רָאִיתִי צְבִי קַיָּץ', דְּהַיְנוּ שֶׁיִהְיֶה מְתַקֵן מְזוֹנוֹתִיו בַּקִיץ, וְצָרִיךְ לְזֶה כֹּחַ הַתְּנוּעָה לְהַכְנִיס אֶת פַּרוֹת הַקַיִץ לַבַּיִת.
And corresponding to intellect he said: "I have not seen a fox as a shopkeeper," for this fox has more wisdom than all animals of the field, and he does not use this power for his livelihood—to be a shopkeeper engaging in commerce.	וּכְנֶגֶד הַשֵּׂכֶל אָמַר: לֹא רָאִיתִי שׁוּעַל חֶנְוָנִי, כִּי הַשׁוּעָל הַזֶּה יֵשׁ בּוֹ חָכְמָה מִכָּל חַיּוֹת הַשָּׁדָה, וְאֵין מְשַׁמֵּשׁ בְּכֹחַ זָה לְצָרֶךְ פַּרְנָסָתוֹ, לִהְיוֹת חֶנְוָנִי בַּעַל מַשָּׂא וּמַתָּן.
And since we do not find among living beings that they use these powers for their livelihood, then what man performs with the power of his body, with the sweat of his brow, and by bearing heavy loads for the sake of livelihood—this is not from man's perfection.	ְוְכֵיוָן שֶׁלֹא נִמְצָא בְּבַעֲלֵי חַיִּים שֶׁיְשַׁמְשׁוּ בְּכֹחוֹת אֵלוּ לְצְרֶךְ פַּרְנָסָתָן, אָם־כֵּן מַה שֶׁהָאָדָם פּוֹעֵל בְּכֹחַ גּוּפּוֹ וְזֶעַת אַפּוֹ וְנוֹשָׁא מַשָּׂא גָּדוֹל לְצְרֶךְ פַּרְנָסָתוֹ, אֵין זֶה מָצֵד שָׁלֵמוּת הָאָדָם,
For such a thing is not needed by animals who are less than man—and this thing became obligatory upon him because of his sin.	שֶׁהָרֵי אֵין צָרִיךּ דָּבָר זֶה לְבַעֲלֵי חַיִּים, שֶׁהַם יוֹתֵר פָּחוּת מִן הָאָדָם, וְדָבָר זֶה הִתְחַיַּב לוֹ מִצֵד חָטְאוֹ.
And likewise, that man does not have rest by day and by night, running after his livelihood like a deer, and using his soul-force for this—this is not from perfection, for we do not find this among animals that are beneath him.	ְוְכֵן מַה שֶׁאֵין לָאָדָם מָנוֹחַ בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה, רָץ אַחַר פַּרְנָסָתוֹ כִּצְבִי, וּמְשַׁמֵּשׁ לָזָה כֹּחַ נַפְשִׁי שֶׁלוֹ, וְאֵין זָה מִצַד הַשְׁלֵמוּת, שֶׁהָרֵי לֹא נִמְצָא זָה בְּבַעֲלֵי חַיִּים שֶׁהֵם לְמַטָה הֵימֶנּוּ
And likewise, there is no perfection of intellect in man using it for livelihood, since we do not find that the animal, which is lesser than man, needs this.	וְכֵן אֵין שְׁלֵמוּת הַשֵּׁכָל שֶׁל אָדָם לְשַׁמֵשׁ בּוֹ אֶל פַּרְנָסָתוֹ כִּיוָן שֶׁלֹא נִמְצָא שֶׁצָרִיךְ דָּבָר זָה הַבַּעַל חַי שֶׁהוּא פָּחוּת מִן הָאָדָם.

If so, that which makes man more praiseworthy than all other living beings, and it is proper that he should have unique actions—the unique actions are not the labors and constructions, for such things are not for his perfection, but for deficiency and baseness due to his sin and his having become deficient. Therefore, all these things became necessary for him.	ְאָם־כֵּן מַה שֶׁהָאָדָם מְשֻׁבָּח מִכָּל שְׁאָר בַּעֲלֵי חַיִּים, וְרָאוּי שֶׁיִהְיוּ לוֹ פְּעֲלוֹת מְיֻחָדוֹת, אֵין הַפְּעֵלוֹת הַמְיֻחָדוֹת הָהֵם הַפְּעֵלוֹת שֶׁהֵם הַמְּלָאכוֹת וְהַבִּנְיָנִים, כִּי דְּבָר זֶה אֵינוֹ לוֹ לִשְׁלֵמוּת, רַק לְחָסָּרוֹן וּלְכְּחִיתוּת בִּשְׁבִיל שֶׁחָטָא וְנַעֲשֶׂה בַּעַל חָסָרוֹן; וּלְכָךְ צָרִידְּ לְכָל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלּוּ
And we have already explained that it is impossible that a person should not have actions that are associated with his soul—since he possesses a Divine soul.	וּכְבֶר בַּאַרְנוּ כִּי אִי אֶפְשָׁר שֶׁלֹא יִהְיוּ לָאָדָם פְּעֲלוֹת אֲשֶׁר הֵם מִתְיַחֲסִים אֶל נַפְשׁוֹ, אֲשֶׁר יֵשׁ לוֹ נֶפֶשׁ אֱלֹקִית.
If so, the question remains: what are the unique actions that relate to his elevated status by virtue of possessing an intellectual soul?	וְאָם־כֵּן נִשְׁאַרָה הַשְׁאֵלָה, אֵיזֶה הֵם הַפְּצֵלוֹת הַמְיַיִּחָדוֹת לוֹ, הַמִּתְיַחֲסוֹת אֶל מַצְלָתוֹ בַּמָּה שֶׁיֵשׁ לוֹ נָפֶשׁ שִׂכְלִי.
One can only say that the actions which correspond to the elevation of his soul are the divine actions, namely the mitzvos of the Torah.	לֹא יִשָּׁאֵר לוֹמַר רַק כִּי הַפְּעֲלוֹת הַמִּתְיַחֲסוֹת אֶל מַעֲלַת נַפְשׁוֹ הֵם הַפְּעֲלוֹת הָאֱלֹקִיּוֹת, וְהֵם מִצְוֹת הַתּוֹרָה.
And they are uniquely designated for man in accordance with the stature of his Divine soul. This matter is certainly the unique and fitting action for him.	וְהֵם הֵם מְיָחָדִים אֶל הָאָדָם לְפִּי מַצְלַת נַפְּשׁוֹ הָאֱלֹקִית. וְדָבָר זֶה בְּוַדַּאי הֵם פְּצֵלוֹת הַמְיָחָדוֹת לוֹ וּרְאוּיִים לו.
And if you will ask and say: if so, all the unique actions for each and every creature—those actions are necessitated from it naturally, and it does not alter its actions—	ְוְאָם תִּשְׁאֵל וְתֹאמֵר, אָם־כֵּן הָרֵי כָּל הַפְּעֵלוֹת הַמְיִחָדוֹת לְכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד מִן הַנּבְרָאִים, הַפְּעַלּוֹת מִתְחַיָּבוֹת מִמֶּנוּ מֵעַצְמוֹ, וְאֵינוֹ מְשַׁנָּה פְעַלוֹתָיו.
Why then do we not also find divine actions—meaning the mitzvos—coming naturally from man?	וְלָמָה לֹא נִמְצְאוּ גַּם־כֵּן פְּעֲלוֹת הָאֱלֹקִיּוֹת - הֵם הַמִּצְוֹת הַ מָן הָאָדָם מַעַצְמוֹ —.
This is not a question. For even though it would be fitting for these actions to come from man, the evil inclination that was created within man brings him to evil deeds—	דָּבָר זֶה אֵין שְאֵלָה, כִּי אָם רָאוּי שֶׁיִּהְיוּ אֵלוּ הַפְּעַלוֹת בָּאוֹת מִן הָאָדָם, הַלֹּא יֵצֶר הָרַע שֶׁבָּרָא בָּאָדָם הוּא מְבִיאוֹ אֶל הַפְּעַלוֹת הָרָעוֹת,
that arise from him due to the evil inclination within him.	שָׁבָּאוֹת מָמֶנּוּ מִצֵד יַצֶר הָרַע שֶׁבּוֹ.
And regarding this Moshe Rabbeinu, peace be upon him, reproved Israel and said (Devarim 32:1): "Give ear, O heavens," etc., as will be explained in the coming chapters (chapter 4),	ְעַל זֶה הוֹכִיחַ מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּנוּ עָלָיו הַשָּׁלוֹם אֶת יִשְּרָאֵל, וְאָמֵר (דְבָרִים לב, א): "הַאָּזִינוּ הַשָּׁמֵיִם" וְגוֹ', כְּמוֹ (שַׁיִתְבָּאֵר בַּפְּרָקִים הַבָּאִים (פַּרַק ד,
to make known that this is entirely out of order. For according to the rational order, it would be proper that each creature should necessarily bring forth actions appropriate to it.	לְהוֹדִיעַ שֶׁאֵין זֶה לְפִי הַסֵּדֶר כְּלָל. כִּי לְפִי הַסֵּדֶר הַשֶּׂכְלִי, רָאוּי שֶׁיִּתְחַיְבוּ הַפְעַלּוֹת מִן כָּל נִבְרָא וְנִבְרָא כְּפִי מַה שֶׁרָאוּי.

And for man, whose soul is a divine, intellectual soul, it is proper that he should have unique actions—namely, the mitzvah-actions of the Torah.	וְאֶל הָאָדָם שָׁנַפְשׁוֹ אֱלֹקִית שִׂכְלִית, רָאוּי לוֹ פְּעֵלוֹת מְיַחָדוֹת, וְהֵם פְּעֲלוֹת הַמִּצְוֹת שֶׁבַּתוֹרָה,
Only that the evil inclination interferes.	רַק כִּי הַיֵּצֶר הָרַע מְעַכֵּב.
However, all of the human species cannot possibly be equal in the stature of their souls. And even though all mankind is equal in the form of their faces and in their physical features, they are not equal in that some of them possess more of a Divine portion from their very origin, as is known.	אֶמְנָם כָּל הַמִּין מִבְּנֵי אָדָם אִי אֶפְשָׁר שֶׁיִּהִיוּ הֵם שָׁוִים כַּלָּם בְּמַצְלַת נַפְשָׁם. וְעַם שֶׁכָּל מִין בְּנֵי אָדָם שָׁוִים בְּתֹאַר פְּנֵיהֶם וּבְעִנְיָנֵיהֶם, אֵינָם שָׁוִים בַּמָּה שֶׁיֵּשׁ חֵלֶק מֵהֶם יוֹתֵר אֱלֹקִי מִוּוּלָתָם, כְּמוֹ שֶׁיָּדוּעַ.
For prophecy, and Divine inspiration, and the Divine Presence were uniquely found among the people whom Hashem, blessed be He, chose—distinct from the rest of the nations, the gentiles.	פִּי הַנְּבוּאָה וְרוּחַ הַקּדֶשׁ וְהַשְׁכִינָה הָיוּ מְיַחָדִים בּוֹ הָעָם אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בּוֹ ה' יִתְבָּרַךְ, מִוּוּלֵת שְׁאָר הָעַמִּים ,עַכּוּ"ם
And there is no doubt that prophecy is a preparedness of the human soul, and this preparedness was uniquely found in the people whom Hashem, blessed be He, chose.	וְאֵין סָפֵּק כִּי הַנְּבוּאָה - הָכָנָה בְּנֶכֶּשׁ הָאָדָם. וְתִּמְצָא הָכָנָה הַוֹּאת מְיִחָדִים בָּה הָעָם אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר הַשָּׁם .יִתְבָּרַדְּ
And from this you will see that this nation possessed a more Divine soul due to this preparedness.	וּמִזֶּה תִּרְאֶה כִּי הָעָם הַזֶּה הָיָה יוֹתֵר נַפְּשָׁם אֱלֹקִית מִצֵד הַהְּכָנָה הַזֹּאת.
And this too must be said: this world, in which mankind exists, is a world of nature; therefore, that which is natural ought to be found equally in the whole species, because this world is fundamentally natural.	ְוְגַם זֶה מַכְרָח לוֹמַר. וְזֶה כִּי הָעוֹלֶם הַזֶּה, אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ מִין בְּנֵי אָדָם, הוּא עוֹלֵם הַטֶּבַע; וּלְפִיכָךְ הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר הוּא טִבְעִי, רָאוּי שָׁיִּמָּצֵא בְּכָל הַמִּין בְּשֶׁוָה, בַּמָּה שֶׁהָעוֹלְם הַזֶּה הוּא טִבְעִי בִּכְלָלוֹ.
And if differences are found among them due to geographic location, this is not considered a true difference.	וְאָם יִפָּצֵא שָׁנּוּי בָּהֶם מִפְּנֵי שְנּוּי הַמְּקוֹמוֹת, דָּבָר זָה אֵינוֹ נֶחְשָׁב שְׁנּוּי כְּלָל.
But Divinity is not found equally in the whole species. For if Divinity were equally found in the whole species, then this world would be a transcendent world—since Divinity would be present in it entirely.	אֲבָל הָאֱלֹקִיּוּת לֹא יִמְצֵא בְּשָׁוֶה לְכָל הַמִּין. שָׁאִם הָיָה נִמְצָא לְכָל הַמִּין בְּשָׁוָה, הָיָה עוֹלָם הַזָּה עוֹלָם נִבְדָּל, מֵאַחַר כִּי בִּכְלָלוּתוֹ נִמְצָא הָאֱלֹקִיּוּת.
But this world is a world of nature, not a transcendent world, and this necessitates that Divinity is not found equally in the entire species, only in a part of it.	אֲבָל הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה הוּא עוֹלַם הַטֶבַע, וְאֵינוֹ עוֹלָם הַנִּבְדָּל, וְדָבָר זֶה מְחַיַּב שֶׁאֵין נִמְצָא הָאֱלֹקִיוּת לְכָל הַמִּין בְּשָׁוָה, כִּי אִם בְּחֵלֶק מִמֶּנוּ
And because the nations of the world are from the natural world, therefore they are seventy nations—since the natural world was created in the seven days of Creation.	וּמִפְּנֵי כִּי עַכּוּ"ם הֵם מִן הָעוֹלָם הַטְרָעִי, לְכָךְּ הֵם שָׁרָעִים אֶמוֹת, כִּי עוֹלָם הַטֶּבַע נִבְרָא בְּשִׁרְעַת יְמֵי בְּרֵאשִׁית

And corresponding to the seven days of the natural world, they are seventy nations—ten for each day.	וּכְנֶגֶד שָׁבְעָה יְמֵי עוֹלַם הַטֶּבַע – הֵם שָׁבְעִים אַמּוֹת, כְּנֶגֶד כָּל יוֹם – עֲשָׂרָה.
And the one unique nation was above nature, corresponding to the eighth, for the eighth is above nature.	ְוָהָאַמָּה הַיְחִידָה הָיְתָה עַל הַטֶבַע, וְהִיא כְּנָגֶד הַשְּׁמִינִי, כִּי הַשְׁמִינִי הוּא עַל הַטֶבַע.
Therefore, the Torah, which is above the natural world, is fitting for Israel.	וּלְכָּךְ רָאוּיָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁהִיא עַל עוֹלַם הַטֶּבַע.
And the Torah was created before the created physical world, and Israel too was created before the physical world.	ְוָהַתּוֹרָה נִבְרַאת קֹדֶם שֶׁנִּבְרָא הָעוֹלֶם הַמִּבְעִי, וְיִשְׂרָאֵל נִבְרָאוּ גַּם־כֵּן קֹדֶם שֶׁנִּבְרָא הֶעָעוֹלֶם הַמִּבְעִי.
Therefore, the entire concept of Torah is rooted in the number eight, for nature is under the number seven, and whatever is above nature is eight, as will be explained in the next chapter.	לְכָךְ כָּל עִנְיָן הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁהִיא בַּשְׁמִינִי, כִּי הַטֶּבַע הִיא תַּחַת מִסְפַּר שִׁבְעָה, וּמֵמַה שֶׁהוּא עַל הַטֶּבַע הוּא שְׁמִינִי, כְּמוֹ שֶׁיִּתְבָּאֵר בַּפֶּרָק שָׁאַחַר זָה.
Therefore, the Israelite nation, whom Hashem, blessed be He, chose as His portion, they were uniquely designated for Divine actions—that is, the mitzvos of the Torah—according to the level of their Divine soul, by virtue of their readiness for prophecy, Divine inspiration, and for the Shechinah to dwell among them.	וּלְכָךְ הָאֶמָּה הַיִּשְׂרְאֵלִי, אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר ה' יִתְבָּרַךְּ לְחָלְקוֹ, (ו) הֵם הֵם נִתְיַחְדוּ בַּפְעֲלוֹת הָאֱלֹקִיוֹת, שֶׁהֵם מִצְוֹת הַתּוֹרָה, לְפִי מַדְרַגַת נַפְשָׁם הָאֱלֹקִית, בַּמֶּה שֶׁהִיוּ מוּכָנִים לְנְבוּאָה וְרוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְלִהְיוֹת הַשְׁכִינָה בֵּינֵיהֶם.
And the gentiles, according to their level, were given seven mitzvos—which are the Seven Mitzvos of the Children of Noach (Sanhedrin 56b).	וְעַכּוּ"ם לְפִּי מַעֲלָתָם נָתַן לָהֶם שֶׁבַע מִצְוֹת, שֶׁהֵם שֶׁבַע מְצְוֹת בְּנֵי נֹחַ (סַנְהֶדְרִין נו, ב'.
And in the first chapter of Avodah Zarah (2b): "Hashem came from Sinai and shone forth from Se'ir to them, He appeared from Mount Paran' (Devarim 33:2). What was He doing in Se'ir, and what was He doing in Paran?	וּבְפֶּרֶק קַמָּא דַּצְּבוֹדָה זָרָה (ב, ב): "ה' מִפִּינִי בָּא וְזֶרַח מִשֵּׂעִיר לָמוֹ הוֹפִיעַ מַהֵּר פָּארָן" (דְּבָרִים לֹג, ב), מַאי בָּעֵי בְּשֵׁעִיר, וּמַאי בְּעֵי בְּפָארָן.
This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, offered the Torah to the entire world, and they did not want to accept it—until the Jewish people came and accepted it."	מְלַמֵד שֶׁהֶחֶזִיר הַקָּדוֹשׁ־בָּרוּךְ־הוּא הַתּוֹרָה עַל כָּל הָעוֹלָם, וְלֹא רָצוּ לְקַבְּלָה, עַד שֶׁבָּאוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְקִבְּלוּהָ'.
And in the Midrash (Sifri, Devarim 33:2) it says: "This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, offered the Torah to the children of Esav and said to them: Do you want to accept the Torah?	וּבַמִּדְרָשׁ (סַפְּרִי דְּבָרִים לֹג, ב) אָמַר: מְלַמֵד שֶׁהֶחֶזִיר הַקָּדוֹשׁ־בָּרוּדְּ־הוּא אֶת הַתּוֹרָה לִבְנֵי עֵשָׂוֹ, וְאָמַר לָהָם: רוֹצִים אַתֶּם לְקַבֵּל הַתּוֹרָה,

They said to Him: What is written in it? He said to them: 'You shall not murder' (Shemos 20:13). They said to Him: The entire blessing of that man—'By your sword you shall live' (Bereishis 27:40)—we do not wish to accept it.	ְוָאֶמְרוּ לוֹ: מֵה כְּתִיב בָּה. אָמֵר לָהֶם: "לֹא תִּרְצַח" (שְׁמוֹת כ, יג). אָמְרוּ לוֹ: כָּל בְּרָכוֹת שֶׁל אוֹתוֹ אִישׁ – "וְעַל חַרְבָּךְ תִחָיֶה" (בְּרֵאשִׁית כז, מ), אֵין אָנוּ רוֹצִים לְקַבְּלָה
He said to the children of Yishmael: Do you want to accept the Torah? They said to Him: What is written in it? He said to them: 'You shall not steal' (Shemos 20:13).	אָמַר לִבְנֵי יִשְׁמָעֵאל: רוֹצִים אַתֶּם לְקַבֵּל הַתּוֹרָה, אֶמְרוּ לוֹ: מֵה כְּתִיב בָּה. אָמֵר לָהֶם: "לֹא תִגְנֹב" .((שְׁמוֹת כ, יג
They said to Him: The entire blessing of that man—'He shall be a wild man; his hand against all, and everyone's hand against him' (Bereishis 16:12)—we do not wish to accept it. Until here.	אָמְרוּ לוֹ: כָּל בִּרְכוֹתָיו שֶׁל אוֹתוֹ אִישׁ – "וְהוּא יִהְיֶה פָּרָא אָדָם יָדוֹ בַכּלֹ וְיַד כָּל בּוֹ" (בְּרֵאשִׁית מז, יב), אֵין אָנוּ רוֹצִים לְקַבְּלָהּ', עַד כָּאן.
They have explained through this what we said: that the mitzvos of the Torah, which are divine actions, are attributed to Yisrael, for according to the stature of their soul, they are prepared for divine actions, and these are uniquely theirs.	בַּאֲרוּ בָּזֶה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְנוּ, כִּי מִצְוֹת הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁהֵם הַפְּעֵלוֹת הָאֱלֹקִית, מִתְיַחֲסוֹת אֶל יִשְׂרָאֵל, שֶׁלְפִי מַצְלַת נַפְשָׁם הַם מוּכָנִים אֶל הַפְעֵלוֹת הָאֱלֹקִית, וְהֵם בִּיִחוּד לָהֶם
But the gentiles, due to their deficiency and baseness, are not fit for divine actions, which are the mitzvos.	אֲבֶל עַכּוּ"ם, מִצַד חֶסְרוֹנָם וּפְחִיתוּתָם, אֵינָם רָאוּיִים לַפְעַלוֹת הָאֱלֹקִית, שֶׁהֵם הַמִּצְוֹת.
And this is why He offered the Torah to every nation and language, and the very essence of their soul rejected receiving divine actions—only Yisrael were prepared for the Torah due to the elevation of their soul.	וְזֶהוּ שֶׁהָיָה מֵחְזִיר הַתּוֹרָה עַל כָּל אֶמָה וְלָשׁוֹן, וְעֶצֶם נַפְשָׁם מְמָאֵן לְקַבֵּל הַפְעַלּוֹת הָאֱלֹקִיוֹת, כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיוּ מוּכָנִים לַתּוֹרָה מִצֵד מַעֲלַת נַפְשָׁם.
However, as explained in the Midrash, not only were they unprepared for the Torah, which consists of divine actions—but they were prepared for the opposite of that.	אֶמְנָם כַּבַּמִּדְרָשׁ בַּאַר, כִּי לֹא בִּלְבַד שֶׁהֵם אֵינָם מוּכָנִים לַתּוֹרָה, שֶׁהֵם פְּצֵלוֹת אֱלֹקִיוֹת, אֲבָל יֵשׁ בָּהֶם הַכָנָה אֶל הַפֶּך זָה.
Meaning, Esav and Yishmael were prepared for actions that are the opposite of the Torah, and this is because of the inner preparation that was in them.	וְרָצָה לוֹמַר כִּי עֵשָׂו וְיִשְׁמָעֵאל הָיוּ מוּכָנִים אֶל פְּעַלוֹת שֶׁהֵם הַפֶּךְ הַתּוֹרָה, וְזֶהוּ מִצַד הַהָּכָנָה שֶׁבָּהֶם.
For there is no doubt that their blessings corresponded to what they were inherently prepared for.	כִּי אֵין סָפַק שֶׁבִּרְכָתָם לְפִי מַה שֶׁהֵם הָיוּ מוּכָנִים אֵלֶיהָ בְּעַצְמָם
And that Scripture specifically mentioned Esav and Yishmael is to say that those gentiles had souls inclined to the extreme—and when one's soul is inclined to the extreme, it is evil.	וּמֵה שֶׁזְכַר הַכָּתוּב הַנָּה עֵשָּׁו וְיִשְׁמָעֵאל, לוֹמֵר כִּי עַכּוּ"ם הָהֵם נַפְשָׁם נוֹטָה אֶל הַקּצָה, וְכָל שֶׁנּוֹטָה הְּכָנַת נַפְשָׁם אֶל הַקּצֶה הוּא רַע.

And this is the meaning of: "Hashem came from Sinai, and shone from Se'ir unto them; He appeared from Mount Paran." For Hashem, blessed be He, saw that the actions of the Torah—which are the upright paths, the ways of Hashem—are fitting only for those who have an intermediate preparation, namely a balanced character.	ְוֹזֶהוּ "ה' מִסִינֵי בָּא וְזָרַח מִשַׁעִיר לָמוֹ הוֹפִיעַ מֵהַר פָּארָן". כִּי הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַדְּ רָאָה כִּי פְעֲלוֹת הַתּוֹרָה, הֵם הֵם הַדְּרָכִים הַיְשָׁרִים - הֵם דַּרְכֵי ה' – רָאוּיִים לַאֲשֶׁר לָהֶם הָכָנָה מְמַצַעַת, וְהִיא הַתְּכוּנָה הַיְשֶׁרָה.
Not to those whose soul's nature is inclined to extremity, whose actions are not straight.	לא אָל אֲשֶׁר תְּכוּנַת נַפְשָׁם נוֹטָה אֶל הַקֶּצֶה, וּפְעַלוֹת שֶׁלָהֶם אֵינָם יְשָׁרִים.
And for this reason He rejected Esav and Yishmael, for each one contains a certain extreme. Meaning, these two nations of the gentiles have a soul-disposition that deviates from the center, each to an opposite extreme.	וְזָבַר בִּשְׁבִיל כָּךְ עֵשָּׁו וְיִשְׁמָעֵאל. שֶׁיֵשׁ בְּכָל אֶחָד קָצֶה אֶחָד. כְּלוֹמֵר כִּי אֵלוּ שְׁתֵּי אֲמּוֹת עַכּוּ"ם, תְּכוּנַת נַפְּשָׁם גוֹטָה מִן הָאֶמְצַע, כָּל אַחַת לְקָצֶה אֶחָד,
Therefore, they reject accepting the Torah. This is what was meant when it said that one's blessing is "By your sword you shall live"—to murder; and Yishmael, "His hand against all," by strength and force against others.	לְכָךְ הֵם מְמָאֲנִים לְקַבֵּל הַתּוֹרָה. וְזֶהוּ שֶׁאָמֵר כִּי הָאֶחָד בִּרְכָתוֹ "עַל חַרְבָּךְ תִחָיֶה" – לְרְצֹחַ. וְיִשְׁמָעֵאל "יָדוֹ בַכֹּל" בְּכֹחַ וּבְחָזְקָה עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת.
And both of these are evil, divided character traits. Each one leans to an extreme, as is known to the sages of truth.	וְאֵלּוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם הְּכוּנוֹת רָעוֹת מְחָלָקוֹת. כָּל אַחַת וְאַחַת נוֹטָה לְקָצֶה אֶחָד, כַּאֲשֶׁר יָדוּעַ לְחַכְמֵי אֶמֶת.
And because of this, their disposition rejects accepting the Torah. Yet in the Gemara it only says that they did not want to accept it.	וּבִשְׁבִיל כָּךְ הָיוּ תִּכוּנָתָן מְמָאֵן לְקַבֵּל הַתּוֹרָה. אָמְנָם בַּגְמָרָא לֹא אָמָרוּ רַק שָׁהַם לֹא רָצוּ לְקַבְּלָהּ.
The intent is that the Torah and the mitzvos, which are Divine actions, are not fitting for them, because their soul is not prepared for them—only Yisrael, because of their Divine soul.	וְהַכַּוּנָה בָּזָה כִּי אֵין רָאוּי לָהֶם הַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוֹת, שֶׁהֵם הַפְּצְלוֹת וְהַמַּצְשִׂים הָאֱלֹקִיִּים, שֶׁאֵין נַפְשָׁם מוּכָן לָזֶה, כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל מִצֵד נַפְשָׁם הָאֱלֹקִית.
And for this reason, the Divine actions—which are the mitzvos of the Torah—are fitting for them.	וּמְפָנֵי זֶה רָאוּי לָהֶם הַפְּעֲלוֹת הָאֱלֹקִית, וְהֵם מִצְוֹת הַתּוֹרָה.
And this itself is what our Sages said (Yevamos 61a): "You are called 'Adam' (man), and gentiles are not called 'Adam."	ְרָהוּא עַצְמוֹ מַה שֶׁאָמְרוּ זְכְרוֹנָם לְבְרָכָה יְבָמוֹת סא, א): 'אַתֶּם קְרוּיִים אָדָם וְאֵין עַכּוּ"ם קְרוּיִים אָדָם'.
The explanation is: the unique distinction between man and other living beings is that man has a Divine soul.	וּבָאוּר עִנְיָן זֶה, שֶׁהַהֶּבְדַּל הַמְיִחָד אֲשֶׁר בֵּין הָאָדָם וּבֵין שָׁאָר בַּעֲלֵי חַיִּים, מַה שֶׁהָאָדָם יֵשׁ לוֹ נֶפֶשׁ אֱלֹקִית.

And those who have a Divine soul are prepared for Divine matters, such as prophecy and Ruach HaKodesh. And this is only found in the nation that Hashem, blessed be He, chose.	וְהָנֵּה אוֹתָם אֲשֶׁר יֵשׁ לָהֶם נֶפֶשׁ אֱלֹקִית, הֵם מוּכָנִים לִדְבָרִים אֱלֹקִיִּים, כְּמוֹ הַנְּבוּאָה וְרוּחַ הַקְדֶשׁ, וְדָבָר זָה לֹא תִּמְצָא רַק בָּעָם אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בּוֹ הַשֵׁם יִתְבָּרַדְּ
Therefore they are called "Adam," specifically in completeness—since they possess all that is fitting for a human being, who is called "Adam," specifically because he has a Divine aspect and is not merely natural.	לְכָךְ הֵם קְרוּיִין אָדָם בִּפְרָט בַּשְׁלֵמוּת, בַּמָּה שֶׁיֵשׁ בָּהֶם כָּל אֲשֶׁר רָאוּי לִהְיוֹת לְאָדָם, שֶׁנִּקְרָא אֶדָם בִּפְרָט שֶׁיֵשׁ בוֹ מַעֲלָה אֱלֹקִית וְאֵינוֹ טִבְעִי,
Therefore, "You are called Adam."	וּלְפִיכָךְ אַתֶּם קְרוּיִים אָדָם'.
And because of this, the mitzvos—which are Divine actions—are uniquely and completely associated with Yisrael, as will be further explained.	וּמִפְּנֵי זָה, הַמִּצְוֹת - שֶׁהֵם הַפְּצְלוֹת הָאֱלֹקִיּוֹת – מִתְיַחֲסוֹת בִּפְרָט לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בִּשְׁלֵמוּת, כַּאֲשֶׁר יִתְבָּאֵר .עוֹד
And here a question arises: if so, how is it possible for a convert to receive the Torah, when he has a soul-character that is not good?	וְאֵל יִקְשֶׁה, אָם־כֵּן הַנֵּר אֵיךּ אָפְשֶׁר שֶׁיִהְיֶה מְקַבֵּל הַתּוֹרָה, כַּאֲשֶׁר יֵשׁ לוֹ תְּכוּנָה נַפְשִׁית שֶׁאֵינָה טוֹבָה.
This is not difficult at all—for once he comes to convert, he has an Israelite nature.	אֵין זֶה קַשְׁיָא כְּלֶל, כִּי מֵאַחַר שֶׁבָּא לְהִתְגַּיִר, הִנֵּה יֵשׁ לוֹ תְּכוּנָה יִשְׂרְאֵלִית.
And when he converts, he becomes attached to the Israelite nation, and is considered as one of them.	וְכַאֲשֶׁר נִתְגַּוּר נַעֲשֶׂה טָפַל לָאֶמֶה הַיִּשְׂרְאֵלִית, וַהֲרֵי הוּא כָּמוֹהָ.
Yet still they said (Yevamos 47b): "Converts are as difficult for Yisrael as a sapachas (a skin disease)," for their temperament is not naturally good, and it corrupts the flesh that has a good temperament.	וְעָם כָּל זֶה אָמְרוּ (יְבָמוֹת מוּ, ב): קָשִׁים גַּרִים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמוֹ סַפַּחַת'. כִּי הַפַּפַּחַת מִזְגוֹ אֵינוֹ טוֹב, וּמְקַלְקַל הַבָּשָׂר שָׁיֵשׁ לוֹ מֶזֶג טוֹב.
And here arises a further question: how could it be that Yisrael—who were the chosen nation with a good character—were more drawn to idolatry than all other nations? This matter will be further explained at length in the coming chapters.	וְאֵל יִקְשֶׁה, הֲרֵי נִמְצָא כִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיוּ הָעָם הַנְּבְחָר עִם הַתְּכוּנָה הַטּוֹבָה שֶׁהָיְתָה לָהֶם, הָיוּ לְהוּטִין בְּיוֹתֵר אַחַר עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה מִכָּל הָאֵמוֹת. כִּי דָּבָר זָה יִתְבָּאֵר עוֹד בַּאַרִיכוּת בַּפְּרָקִים הַבָּאִים:

#### **[NOTE Summary**

The Maharal begins by clarifying that not all human beings are spiritually equal. Although all people share physical form, only the Jewish people were created with a heightened Divine soul that renders them suitable vessels for Divine actions—namely, the performance of mitzvos.

This uniqueness is revealed in the Midrashic and Talmudic accounts of Hashem offering the Torah to all nations before giving it to Israel. Nations like Esav and Yishmael refused the Torah because their core nature leaned toward extremity—Esav toward murder, and Yishmael toward theft and violence. Such extremes reflect flawed inner structures, making them incompatible with the Torah's paths of uprightness and balance.

The Maharal explains that Hashem's ways—*darkei Hashem*—are only suitable for those whose souls are prepared through balanced and upright middos. Therefore, the Torah was ultimately received only by Israel, who were not only willing but also ontologically fit to embody Divine will. The Torah's essence is tied to the number eight—representing transcendence of nature (which is symbolized by seven). The seventy nations, born from the natural order, were given seven Noahide laws, while Israel—rooted above nature—received the Torah which precedes creation.

Further, Chazal's statement that "You are called 'Adam,' and the nations are not" is explained to mean that only Israel reflects the full definition of *Adam*—one who possesses a Divine soul and is thereby fit for prophecy, ruach hakodesh, and other lofty spiritual states. This explains why mitzvos are specifically and perfectly suited for Israel alone

The Maharal addresses the challenge of the righteous convert: how can someone from another nation receive the Torah if his soul lacks this Divine preparation? His answer is profound—through conversion, the soul itself becomes transformed and attached to the Israelite identity. However, even so, Chazal caution that converts can pose difficulty to Israel, as their original temperament may still influence the collective.

Finally, he raises a difficult question: if Israel was so spiritually prepared, why were they more attracted to idolatry than the nations? He promises that this paradox will be resolved in the following chapters.

#### **Practical Takeaway**

The Maharal teaches us that living a Torah life demands an inner life of balance, refinement, and spiritual alignment. It is not enough to perform mitzvos externally—one must cultivate an inner soul-structure that reflects uprightness and distance from extremes. We must continually refine our middos to become worthy vessels for the Divine.

#### **Chassidic Story**

#### The Maharal's Rescue of the Community Through Inner Refinement

During the Maharal's tenure in Prague, a blood libel once threatened the Jewish community before Pesach. The

community was terrified, and the authorities were preparing arrests. But the Maharal did not rush to political lobbying or public protest. Instead, he called for the entire community to engage in sincere teshuvah, tikkun hamiddos, and learning Torah with deep kavannah. "Our protection comes from our spiritual state," he told them, "not from politics." Miraculously, the evidence vanished, and the case collapsed before anyone was harmed.

The story is often told alongside the legend of the Golem, but what is certain from reliable accounts is that the Maharal always emphasized that the sanctity of the Jewish soul, when aligned with Divine action, is the true source of protection and light.

Source: R. Shlomo Zalman Rappaport, introduction to Be'er HaGolah (Maharal); Otzar HaGedolim vol. 9; reliable oral traditions from Prague community elders.

#### **END NOTE**]