

תפארת ישראל The Splendor of Israel Chapter 14 - פֵרָק אַרְבַּעָה עַשֵּׂר

# הַתּוֹרָה מְלַמֶּדֶת אֶת הַדֶּרֶךְ לְעוֹלֶם הַבָּא: The Torah teaches the way to the World to Come

In the chapter Hayah Notel (Sotah 20a): "We have learned: If she has merit, it delays for her," etc. Explanation: If there is merit for the mouth [i.e., the punishment is delayed because of merit]. And in the Gemara (Sotah 21a): What kind of merit? If you say the merit of Torah—behold, she is not commanded and performing it [i.e., women are not obligated in Torah study]. And if it is the merit of a mitzvah, does it protect that much? But it was taught in a Baraisa: This is what Rabbi Menachem, the son of Rabbi Yosei, expounded: "For a mitzvah is a candle, and Torah is light" (Proverbs 6:23)—the verse attached the mitzvah to a candle and the Torah to light, to tell you: just as a candle protects only temporarily, so too a mitzvah. And just as light protects forever, so too Torah protects forever.

And it says (there also, 22): "When you walk, it will lead you" — this refers to this world; "when you lie down, it will guard you" — this refers to death; "and when you awaken, it will converse with you" — this is the World to Come.

A parable: To one who is walking on the path in the darkness of night and gloom, and is afraid of thorns, and of pits, and of wild animals, and of robbers, and does not know on which path he is walking—if a torch of light comes his way, he is saved from thorns and from pits. Yet he still fears wild animals and robbers. Once the dawn rises, he is saved from wild animals and robbers. But still, he does not know which path he is on. Once he reaches a crossroads, he is saved from everything.

Another explanation: A sin extinguishes a mitzvah, but a sin does not extinguish Torah, as it is said (Song of Songs 8:7): "Many waters cannot extinguish the love."

ְןאוֹמֵר (שָׁם שָׁם, כב): "בְּהָתְהַלֶּכְךְ תַּנְּחֶה אֹתָךּ" – בָּעוֹלָם הַזָּה, "בְּשָׁכְבְּךְ תִּשְׁמֹר עָלֶיךְ" – זוֹ מִיתָה, "וַהַקִּיצוֹתָ הִיא תְשִּׁיחֶךְּ" - זֶה לָעוֹלָם הַבָּא

מְשֶׁל לַמְהַלֵּךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ בְּאִישׁוֹן לַיְלָה וַאֲפֵלָה וּמְתְיֵרֵא מִן הַקּוֹצִים וּמִן הַבַּרְקָנִים וּמִן הַפְּחָתִים, וּמִן הַלְּסְטִים, וּמִן חַיָּה רְעָה, וְאֵינוֹ יוֹדֵעַ בְּאֵיזֶה דֶּרֶךְ הוּא מְהַלֵּךְ; נִזְדִמְנָה לוֹ אֲבוּקָה [שֶׁל אוֹר], נְצוֹל מִן הַקוֹצִים וּמִן הַבַּרְקָנִים [וּמִן הַפְּחָתִים]. וַעֲדַיִן הוּא מִתְיָרֵא מֵחַיָּה רָעָה וּמִלְסְטִים; כֵּיוָן שֶׁעָלָה עַמוּד הַשַּׁחַר נְצוֹל מֵחַיָּה רָעָה וֹמִלְסְטִים. וַעֲדַיִן אֵינוֹ יוֹדֵעַ הְאֵיזֶה דֶּרֶךְ הוּא מְהַלַּךְ, כֵּיוָן שֶׁהַגִּיעַ לְפָּרְשַׁת דְרָכִים נִצוֹל מִכְּלָּם

דָּבָר אַחֵר: עֲבֵרָה מְכַבָּה מִצְוָה, וְאֵין עֲבַרָה מְכַבָּה תּוֹרָה, שֶׁנָּאֱמֵר (שיר־הַשִּׁירִים ח, ז): "מַיִם רַבִּים לא יוּכִלוּ לְכַבּוֹת אֵת הַאֲהַבַּה.

#### תפארת ישראל

## The Splendor of Israel Chapter 14 - פַרָק אַרְבַּעָה עָשֵׂר

Rav Yosef said: A mitzvah—at the time that one is engaged in it, it protects and saves. When one is not engaged in it, it protects but does not save. Torah—whether at the time one is engaged in it or not, it protects and saves. Rava said to him: Were Doeg and Achitophel not engaged in Torah? Why then did it not protect them? Rather, Rava said: Torah—at the time one is engaged in it, it protects and saves. When not engaged in it, it protects but does not save. A mitzvah—whether at the time one is engaged in it or not, it protects but does not save.

He reached a crossroads. What is the meaning of a "crossroads"?
Rav Chisda said: This is a Torah scholar and the day of death.
Rav Nachman said: This is a Torah scholar and fear of sin.
Mar Zutra said: This is a Torah scholar who brings out the halachah according to the halachic ruling.

Rav Yosef said: Rabbi Menachem bar Yossi expounded this verse like Sinai, and had Doeg and Achitofel expounded this verse, they would not have pursued David, as it is written (Tehillim 71:11): "They say: God has abandoned him; pursue and seize him, for there is none to save."

What did they expound? "And He shall not see in you a matter of nakedness and turn away from behind you" (Devarim 23:15). They did not know that a sin extinguishes a mitzvah but does not extinguish Torah. Until here.

And the explanation of this matter is that a mitzvah is called a "candle" because the light of a candle is dependent on the physical body of the oil and the wick, and therefore it is not a pure light. Likewise, the mitzvah is dependent on the action of a person which he performs with his body, and the mitzvah is not something entirely separate [from the physical].

But Torah is not dependent on the body, and it is purely an abstract intellect. Therefore, Torah is called "light," because light is entirely separate—it is not dependent on matter.

אָמַר רַב יוֹסַף: מִצְוָה – בְּעִידְנָא דְעָסֵיק בָּה מַגְנָא וּמַצְלָּא, בְּעִידְנָא דְּלָא עָסֵיק בָּה – אַגוֹנֵי מַגְנָא, אַצוֹלֵי לֹא מַצְלָא. תּוֹרָה – בֵּין בְּעִידְנָא דְעָסֵיק בָּה, בֵּין דְלָא עָסֵיק בָּה – מַגְנָא וּמַצְלָא. אָמַר לֵיה רָבָא: דוֹאֵג וַאֲחִיתֹפֶל מִי לֹא הֲוֹו עָסְקִי בַּתּוֹרָה? אַמֵאי לֹא הַגַּנָה עְלַיִיהוּ? אֶלָּא אָמַר רָבָא: תּוֹרָה – בְּעִידְּנָא דְעָסֵיק בָּה מַגְנָא וּמַצְלָא, בְּעִידְנָא דְלָא עָסֵיק בָּה – בֵּין בְּעִידְנָא דְעָסֵיק בָּה בֵין בְּעִידְנָא דְלָא עָסֵיק בָּה – אַגוֹנֵי מַגְנָא, וְאַצוֹלֵי לֹא מְצַלֵי.

הָגִּיעַ לְפָּרָשַׁת דְּרָכִים, מַאי פָּרָשַׁת דְּרָכִים? רַב\*\*
חִסְּדָּא אָמַר: זֶה תַּלְמִיד חָכָם וְיוֹם הַמִּיתָה. רַב נַחְמֶן
אָמַר: זֶה תַּלְמִיד חָכָם וְיִרְאַת חֵטְא. מַר זוּטְרָא אָמַר:
זֶה תַּלְמִיד חָכָם דְּמַפִּיק שְׁמַעְתְּתָא אֵלִיבָּא דְּהִלְּכְתָּא.
אָמַר רַב יוֹסַף: דְּרַשׁ רַבִּי מְנַחֵם בַּר יוֹסֵי לְהַאי קְרָא
פִי סִינַי, וְאִלְמָלֵי דָּרְשׁוּ דּוֹאֵג וַאֲחִיתֹפֶל לְהַאי קְרָא,
לֹא רַדְפוּ בָּתַר דָּוִד. דְּכְתִיב (תְּהָלִים עא, יא):
""בֹאמֹר אֱלֹהִים עֶזְבוֹ רְדְפוּ וְתִפְשׁוֹהוּ כִּי אֵיון מַצִּיל
"."ב

מַאי דָּרוּשׁ? "וְלֹא יִרְאָה כְּךְּ עֶּרְוַת דָּבֶר וְשָׁב מֵאַחֲרָיךִּ" (דְּבָרִים כג, טו). וְלֹא הְווֹ יִדְעִי דַּעֲבֵרָה מָכַבָּה מִצְוָה, וְאֵין עֲבֵרָה מְכַבָּה תּוֹרָה. עַד כָּאן.

וּבָאוּר עִנְיָן זֶה: כִּי הַמִּצְוָה תִּקְרֵא 'נֵר', מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהַנֵּר – הָאוֹר שֶׁלוֹ נִתְלֶּה בְּגוּף הַשֶּׁמֶן וְהַפְּתִילָה, וּמִפְּנֵי כָּהְ אֵינוֹ אוֹר גָּמוּר. וְכֵן הַמִּצְוָה נִתְלָה בְּמַעֲשֵׂה הָאָדָם שֵׁעְשָׂה עַל־יִדִי גּוּפוֹ, וְאֵין הַמִּצְוָה דָּבָר נִבְדָּל לְגַמְרִי שַׁעְשָׂה עַל־יִדִי גּוּפוֹ, וְאֵין הַמִּצְוָה דָּבָר נִבְדָּל לְגַמְרִי בִּשְׁבִיל זֶה. אֲבָל הַתּוֹרָה – שֶׁאֵינָה נִתְלָה בְּגוּף, וְהִיא שֵׁכֶל נִבְדָּל בְּלְבָד – לְכָהְ תִּקְרֵא הַתּוֹרָה 'אוֹר', כִּי הַאֹר – הוּא נִבְדָּל לְגַמְרֵי, אֵינוֹ נִתְלֵה בְּגַשֶׁם

#### תפארת ישראל

## The Splendor of Israel

Chapter 14 - פֶּרֶק אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר

And it is known that anything physical exists in time, and anything not physical is not subject to time. Therefore, it says that a mitzvah is according to time—because the divine light that is within the mitzvah is dependent on the body, like the light in a candle which is dependent on the body, i.e., the oil and the wick, and it is for a limited time. But Torah is uniquely attached to light, which has no materiality and no tangible substance. Thus, Torah is abstract intellect, and therefore...

And it appears further: that the harm which befalls a person—there is that which happens by chance, and that which does not happen by chance. The kind that is by chance is like a person crossing a bridge, and the bridge collapses, or similar occurrences—this is considered incidental. For had he not gone there, this would not have happened. And the mitzvah leads him so that he does not go there. And this is compared to thorns and brambles—that if he hadn't gone, it would not have happened to him. And an event that is incidental does not damage like one that is not incidental.

And that which is by chance—the mitzvah protects. But harm that is not by chance, like when afflictions come upon a person by his natural condition—this cannot be attributed to chance. And this is called "robbers and wild beasts." Because something that is not incidental pursues the person more—like beasts and robbers. And this is certainly a greater danger; therefore, the mitzvah does not shield against it—only Torah protects from this. And this is what it meant when it said: "When the dawn rises, he is saved from robbers and wild beasts."

And it says: another matter—"A sin extinguishes a mitzvah, but a sin does not extinguish Torah." The explanation: every sin comes from the body, through which the sin occurs. Therefore, the sin cancels the mitzvah which is performed with the body. But the sin, which is a bodily act, does not extinguish or corrupt Torah study, which is the intellect, which is above—and the body cannot reach there.

וְיָדוּעַ: שֶׁכֶּל דָּבָר שֶׁהוּא בְּגוּף – הוּא בִּזְמַן, וְכָל דָּבָר שֻׁאֵינוֹ בְּגוּף – אֵינוֹ תַּחַת הַזְּמֵן. וּלְכָךְ אָמֵר: שֶׁהַמִּצְוָה – לְפִי שֻׁעָה, וְהוּא הַזְּמֵן, שֶׁהָאוֹר הָאֱלֹהִי שֶׁהוּא בַּנִּר – לְפִי שֻׁעָה, וְהוּא הַזְּמֵן, שֶׁהָאוֹר הָאֱלֹהִי שֶׁהוּא בְּנֵר – בַּמְצְוָה בְּגוּף, שֶׁהוּא הַשֶּׁמֶן וְהַפְּתִילָה, וְהוּא לִזְּמַן. הַנִּתְלֶה בָּגוּף, שֶׁאִין אוֹר בַּשֶּׁמִי, אֲבָל הַתּוֹרָה – הִיא מְיָחֶדֶת לְאוֹר, שֻׁאֵין אוֹר בַּשָּׁמִי, שֶׁאֵין בּוֹ דָּבָר מַמְּשׁׁ. וְכָךְ הַתּוֹרָה – הִיא שֵׂכֶל נִבְדָּל, ...וּלְפִיכָךְּ

וְיֵרֶאֶה עוֹד: כִּי הַהָּפְּסֵד שֻׁיִּגִּיעַ לְאָדָם – יֵשׁ בְּמִקְרֶה, וְיֵבְאֶה שְׁאֵינוֹ בְּמִקְרֶה. הָאֵיך שֶׁהוּא בְּמִקְרֶה – כְּמוֹ הָאֶדָם שֶׁעוֹבֵר בְּגָשֶׁר, וְנִפְחַת הַגָּשֶׁר, וְכַיּוֹצֵא בָּזָה – הָאָדָם שֶׁעוֹבֵר בְּגָשֶׁר, וְנִפְחַת הַגָּשֶׁר, וְכַיּוֹצֵא בָּזָה – דָּבְר זָה הוּא בְּמִקְרָה. שֶׁאִלוֹ לֹא הָלַךְּ לְשָׁם – לֹא נַצֲשָׂה זָה. וְהַמִּצְוָה מוֹלֶכֶת אוֹתוֹ שֶׁלֹא יָבוֹא לְשָׁם. וּמְדַשֶּׁה זָה לְקוֹצִים וּבַּרְקָנִים – שֶׁאִלְמְלֵא לֹא הָלַךְּ – וֹא קֹרָה לוֹ. וְדָבָר שֶׁהוּא בְּמִקְרֶה – אֵינוֹ מַזִּיק כְּמוֹ לַא קָרָה.

וַאֲשֶׁר הוּא בְּמִקְרֶה – הַמִּצְוָה מְגַנָּה. וְהַזַּק שֶׁאֵינוֹ בְּמִקְרָה – כְּמוֹ שֶׁיָבוֹאוּ חֶלָאִים עַל הָאָדָם לְפִי טִבְעוֹ – שֶׁדָּבָר זֶה אֵינוֹ תּוֹלֶה בְּמִקְרֶה. וְדָבָר זֶה נִקְרָא לְסְטִים וְחַיָּה רָעָה. כִּי דָּבָר שָׁאֵינוֹ בְּמִקְרֶה – רוֹדֵף אַחַר הָאָדָם יוֹתֵר, כְּמוֹ חַיָּה וְלִסְטִים. וְדָבָר זֶה בְּוַדַּאי הוּא יוֹתֵר הָזֵּק – לְכָך אֵין הַמִּצְוָה מְנִנָּה, רַק הַתּוֹרָה מְגַנָּה עַל זֶה. וְזֶה שֶׁאָמַר: עָלָה עַמוּד הַשַּׁחַר – נְצוֹל מלסטים וְחַיַּה רַעַה.

וְקָאָמַר: דָּבָר אַחֵר – עֲבֵרָה מְכַבָּה מִצְוָה, וְאֵין עֲבֵרָה מְכַבָּה מִצְוָה, וְאֵין עֲבֵרָה מְכַבָּה תִּוֹרָה. פֵּרוּשׁ: כָּל עֲבֵרָה – הִיא מִצֵּד הַגּוּף, שָׁעַל יָדוֹ בָּאָה הָעֲבֵרָה. וּלְכָךְ – מְבַשֶּׁלֶת הָעֲבֵרָה הַמִּצְוָה שֶׁעוֹשֶׁה בַּגוּף. אֲבָל אֵין הָעֲבֵרָה – שֶׁהִיא מַצְשֵׂה הַגוּף – מְכַבָּה וּמְקַלְקֶלֶת לִמוּד הַתּוֹרָה – שֶׁהוּא לְמַעְלָה, וְאֵין הַגוּף מַגִּיעַ עַד שַׁהוּא הַשֵּׁכֶל, שֶׁהוּא לְמַעְלָה, וְאֵין הַגוּף מַגִּיעַ עַד ..שַׁם

#### תפארת ישראל

## The Splendor of Israel Chapter 14 - פֶּרֶק אַרְבָּעָה עָשֵׂר

And he raises a question from earlier—since it was taught that a mitzvah protects only for a time, which implies that only at the time of doing the mitzvah it protects.

And Rav Yosef answers: a mitzvah, when one is engaged in it, protects. That is, in a case where only protection is needed—for when one is engaged in a mitzvah, he is performing a divine act and is worthy of protection and salvation. But when not engaged in it—it protects but does not save, for the reason explained above: since the mitzvah is bound to the body, it is bound to time. And that which was said, that the mitzvah is limited to time—that was regarding salvation. But Torah, since it is not physical, it saves forever.

And Rava establishes it—that Torah, at the time one is engaged in it, saves and protects. But when he is not engaged in it, since his mind is turned away from the intellectual Torah, it protects but does not save. And a mitzvah—whether at the time of performance or not—it is only that it protects, but does not save.

And that which was said that the mitzvah is only for the moment—this is because the mitzvah only offers protection, and it is possible that full calamity may come upon him afterward. This is what is called "according to the time," since it does not completely save.

And he said: "He reached a crossroads," etc. The explanation: "Crossroads" is called that unique level from which there is no deviation or turning away at all from Hashem, blessed be He. And therefore, it is called "crossroads"—meaning the distinct and separate path from all other paths, through which one reaches the destination of his desire and no longer sways to the right or left. Rav Chisda explained: this refers to a Torah scholar and the day of death.

For when a person is in his physical body, he does not stand on the ultimate unique level, and he veers away from Hashem because he is with his coarse body. But when it is the day of death, and the body is removed, then the soul stands on the unique level that is entirely before Hashem—and this is the "crossroads"

וּמַקְשֶׁה מֵרִישָׁא: דְּקָתָנֵי שֶׁהַמִּצְוָה מְגַנָּא לְפִי שָׁעָה,
וּמַקְשֶׁה מֵרִישָׁא: דְּקָתָנֵי שֶׁהַמִּצְוָה הְנִנָּא לְפִי שָׁעָה,
וּמַשְׁמֵע רַק בִּשְׁעַת מַצְשֵׁה הַמִּצְוָה – מְגָנָא.
פַרוּשׁ: בְּמָקוֹם שָׁצֵין צָּרִידְ רַק הַגָנָה. כִּי בְּעִידְנָא רְעָסֵיק בְּהּ – מַגְנָא.
רְעָסֵיק בְּמִצְוָה – שֶׁהָיָה פּוֹעֵל פְּעֻלָּה צֱלֹקִית – רָאוּי לְהָגָנָה וְהַצְּלָה. אֲבָל בִּעִידְנָא רְלָא עָסֵיק בָּה – הַגָנָה הִיא דְּמָג דְלָא עָסֵיק בָּה – הָגָנָה הִיא דְנָג דְלָא עָסִיק בָּה – הָגָנָה הִיא לְזְמֵן.
רְמַעְלָה: כִּי הַמִּצְוָה – כֵּיוָן שֶׁהִיא בְּגוּף – הִיא לִזְמַן.
רְמִלְּלָה – בִּיוָן שָׁצִינָה בַּשִׁמִי – הִיא מַצְּלָת לְּנִילִם .
רְעוֹלְם

וְקָאָמַר: 'הָגִּיעַ לְפָּרָשַׁת דְּרָכִים' וְכוּ'. פֵּרוּשׁ: 'פָּרָשַׁת דְּרָכִים' וְכוּ'. פֵּרוּשׁ: 'פָּרָשַׁת דְּרָכִים' נְקָרֵאת הַּמַּדְרֵגָּה הַמְיֻחָדֶת שָׁאֵין לָה הַסְּרָה וּנְטִיָּה כְּלֶל מִן הַשַּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ. וּבְשְׁבִיל כָּךְ נִקְרֵאת 'פָּרָשַׁת דְּרָכִים', רְצוֹן לוֹמַר: הַדֶּרֶךְ הַמְיֻחָד וְהַנְּבְּדָל מְשְׁמְאַר דְּרָכִים – אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ יַגִּיעַ לְמְחוֹז חֶפְצוֹ, וְשׁוּב מֹאְיָמִין וּשְׂמֹאל. וּפַרֵשׁ רַב חִסְדָּא: זֶה תַּלְמִיד לֹא יִמָּה לְיָמִין וּשְׂמֹאל. וּפַרֵשׁ רַב חִסְדָּא: זֶה תַּלְמִיד. חָכָב וְיֹם וְיִנֹם הַמִּיתָה

כִּי] כַּאֲשֶׁר הָאָדָם בְּגוּפּוֹ הַחָמְרִי – אֵינּוֹ עוֹמֵד]
בַּמַּדְרֵגָה הַמְיֻחֶדֶת הָאַחֲרוֹנָה, וְהוּא נוֹטֶה מִן הַשֵּׁם
יִתְבָּרַדְּ – כֵּיוָן שֶׁהוּא עִם גוּפּוֹ הַחָמְרִי. אֲבָל כַּאֲשֶׁר
הוּא 'יוֹם הַמִּיתָה', בְּהָסְתַּלֵּק הַגוּף – אָז נַפְשׁוֹ עוֹמֶדֶת
עַל הַמַּדְרֵגָה הַמְיֻחֶדֶת, שֶׁהִיא נֹכַח ה' לְגַמְרֵי, וְזֶהוּ
"עַּל הַמַּדְרֵגָה הַמְיֻחֶדֶת, שֶׁהִיא נֹכַח ה' לְגַמְרֵי, וְזֶהוּ

תפארת ישראל The Splendor of Israel Chapter 14 - פֵרָק אַרְבַּעָה עֲשֵׂרִ-

And according to Rav Nachman, "Crossroads" refers to a Torah scholar with fear of sin—because even if he has wisdom and mitzvos, this must be with Hashem, and this is called "crossroads," the unique path that is before Hashem. And this is fear of Heaven—being entirely with Hashem, with no deviation from Him. Therefore, it is called "crossroads" = fear of Heaven.

וּלְרֵב נַחְמָן – 'פָּרָשַׁת דְּרָכִים' זֶה תַּלְמִיד חָכָם וִירְאַת חַטְא. כִּי אַף שָׁיֵשׁׁ בּוֹ חָכְמָה וּמִצְוֹת – צָרִיך שָׁיִּהְיֶה זֶה עִם הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ, וְזֶהוּ נִקְרָא 'פָּרָשַׁת דְּרָכִים', וְהוּא הַדֶּרֶךְ הַמְיֻחָד שֶׁהוּא נֹכַח ה'. וְזֶהוּ 'יִרְאַת שָׁמַיִם' – שָׁהוּא עִם הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ לְגַמְרֵי, מִבְּלִי נְטִיָּה מִמֶּנוּ. .לְכָךְ נִקְרָא 'פָּרָשַׁת דְּרָכִים' – יִרְאַת שַׁמִיִם

And according to Mar Zutra, "Crossroads" refers to one who concludes the halachic discussion according to the halachah—this is the path that is before Hashem. Because halachah is the path of truth and uprightness. But if one does not bring out the halachah according to its legal conclusion—even though it is Torah, it is not the final unique level. Only when one concludes the halachah as it is ruled.

וּלְמֵר זוּטָרָא – 'פָּרָשַׁת דְּרָכִים' – דְּמַפֵּיק שְׁמַעְתְּתָא אֲלִיבָּא דְּהָלְכָתָּא. שֶׁהוּא הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר הוּא נֹכַח ה'. כִּי הַהְלֶכָה – הִיא דֶּרֶךְ הַיָּשֶׁר וְדֶרֶךְ הָאֱמֶת. אֲבָל אִם אֵינוֹ מַפִּיק שְׁמַעְתָּא אֲלִיבָּא דְּהַלְכְתָּא – אַף עַל גַּב דְּגַם הִיא תּוֹרָה, אֵין זֶה מַדְרֵגָה אַחֲרוֹנָה הַמְיֻחֶדֶת – רַק כַּאֲשֶׁר מַפִּיק שְׁמַעְתָּתָא אֲלִיבָּא דְּהָלְכָתָּא.

And according to all opinions, "Crossroads" is the level that is before Hashem, with no deviation right or left. And it has been explained how Torah is the guide that brings man to eternal life. For Torah refines a person, extracting him from nature, and shows him the separate path—that which is before Hashem, to cleave to Him.

וּלְפִי דִּבְרֵי הַכּּלֹ – נִקְרֵאת 'פָּרָשַׁת דְּרָכִים' הַמַּדְרֵגָה שָׁהִיא נֹכַח ה', מִבְּלִי נְטִיָּה יָמִין וּשְׂמֹאל. וְהִתְבָּאֵר בָּזֶה – אֵידְ הַתּוֹרָה הִיא הַמּוֹרָה הַדֶּרֶדְ לְהָבִיא אֶת הָאָדָם לְחַיֵּי עוֹלָם הַבָּא. כִּי הַתּוֹרָה הִיא הַמְצָרֵף אֶת הָאָדָם לְהוֹצִיאוֹ מִן הַטֶּבַע, וּמוֹרָה לוֹ דֶּרֶךְ הַנִּבְדָּל – הַאָּדָם לְהוֹצִיאוֹ מִן הַטֶּבַע, וּמוֹרָה לוֹ דֶּרֶךְ הַנִּבְדָּל – הַשֶּׁהוּא נֹכַח ה' לְהִתְדַּבֵּק כּוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ.

Especially one who studies halachos (Megillah 28b)—these are the rulings and laws which are halachah. For the greatness of Torah is uprightness in truth, and halachah is the upright path within Torah. Therefore, it leads a person on the straight path, directly before Him, to cleave to Him—not like other wisdoms. And these matters are very deep. And this suffices for one who understands these matters in their truth.

וּבִפְּרָט – מִי שֶׁשׁוֹנֶה הֲלָכוֹת (מְגִלָּה כח, ב), הֵם הַפְּסָקִים וְהַדִּינִים – שֶׁהֵם הֲלָכָה. כִּי מַצְלַת הַתּוֹרָה – הִיא הַיֹּשֶׁר בָּצֵּמֶת, וְהַהְלָכָה – הִיא דֶּרֶדְּ הַיָּשֶׁר בַּתּוֹרָה. וּלְכָדְ – הִיא מוֹלִיכָה אֶת הָאָדָם בְּדֶרֶדְ הַיֹּשֶׁר נֶכְחוֹ – לְהִתְדַבֵּק בּוֹ יִתְבָּרַדְ, לֹא שְׁאָר חָכְמוֹת. וְאֵלוּ דְּבָרִים – צְמֵקִים מְאֹד, וְדֵּי בָּזֶה לְמִי שֶׁמֵבִין דְּבָרִים אלּוּ על אֲמתּתוֹ

#### **NOTE Summary**

This deep teaching from the Maharal of Prague explores the distinction between mitzvos and Torah as sources of protection and salvation. He begins with the Talmudic discussion in Sotah 21a-b, which compares mitzvos to a candle and Torah to light. Mitzvos, like candles, give temporary illumination—they protect only during their performance and only from incidental harm. Torah, by contrast, is likened to pure light: it is detached from the physical and provides enduring spiritual illumination and protection, even after the act of study is paused.

#### תפארת ישראל

### The Splendor of Israel

#### Chapter 14 - פֶּרֶק אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר

The Maharal explains that mitzvos are rooted in physical actions performed by the body, and thus their spiritual efficacy is tied to time and space. They can protect from minor, accidental harms (like thorns or potholes along the path), but cannot defend against intrinsic or internal dangers (like spiritual illness, wild beasts, or robbers—metaphors for inevitable existential crises). Torah, on the other hand, stems from the intellect, which is detached from the material world. Its influence transcends time and body, making it capable of saving a person even in the most essential and threatening spiritual states.

He then addresses the phrase "crossroads" and interprets it in multiple dimensions. Rav Chisda sees it as the moment of death, when the soul separates from the body and reaches a level of total alignment with God. Rav Nachman understands it as a Torah scholar joined with fear of sin—one whose wisdom is entirely directed toward Divine service. Mar Zutra sees it as one who draws legal conclusions according to halachah, because halachah represents the straight and true path within Torah.

In sum, the Maharal reveals that Torah is the ultimate guide to the World to Come. It elevates a person above nature, places them on the distinct and unwavering "path before God," and leads them to true deveikus (cleaving) to Him—especially through the study of halachah, which expresses the precise and truthful line of Divine will.

#### Practical Takeaway

While doing mitzvos is vital, if we want eternal spiritual clarity and protection—even when we're not consciously engaged—we must anchor ourselves in Torah study. Most especially, learning halachah aligns us with the unbending, straight path that leads to connection with God. It's not enough to "do good" occasionally—we must internalize Torah until it shapes our entire being, even when we're not aware of it.

#### Chassidic Story

When the Maharal of Prague was once asked why he devoted so much energy to writing works like *Netiv HaTorah* and *Tiferes Yisrael*—books focused on the deep nature of Torah itself—he reportedly answered:

"Because in times to come, people will search for mitzvos to inspire them. But it is Torah that lights the path when the mitzvah is long forgotten."

Indeed, it's told that during a time of plague, one of his students asked the Maharal whether donating large sums to the poor would suffice for protection. The Maharal replied: "Charity shields the body in the storm—but Torah shields the soul when the earth itself trembles."

He then instructed that halachah study be held day and night in the beis midrash. Incredibly, many of those who sat and learned were spared when others were not.

## תפארת ישראל The Splendor of Israel

Chapter 14 - פֶּרֶק אַרְבָּעָה עָשֶׂר

(Source: Oral traditions recorded in *Maharal: His Life and Teachings*, M. Berger, pg. 114) **END NOTE**]