

**Methods of Serving Hashem**  
**Based on Teachings of the Vilna Gaon**

## Table of Contents

- Chapter 1:**      **General topics**
- Chapter 2:**      **Source list for *dveikus hamachshava* to Hashem Yisborach based on the Vilna Gaon**
- Chapter 3:**      ***Kedushas Yesod* based on the Vilna Gaon**
- Chapter 4:**      **Prohibition of defiling the *bris* based on the Vilna Gaon**
- Chapter 5:**      **The deep impact of every action; the significance of *Kri'as Shema al Hamitta***
- Chapter 6:**      **Addendum**

## Chapter One: General Topics

- A. *Biur HaGr"a on Zohar, Parshas Pekudei* (Sha'am printing: p. 30 column 4) states: "Pinchas is Eliyahu; and the reason that he was later called Eliyahu and not by his original name is because when a person increases his good deeds, a new soul is renewed for him, and all the previous ones are annulled for him. This is the secret of the righteous men of early generations who each had many names; each time they were called by a different name. For every *neshamah* (soul) has a different name. And Pinchas merited that a new *neshamah*—which was called Eliyahu—should clothe his soul."

This concept is paramount to our faith. Oftentimes, a Jew acknowledges that he harbors the potential to strive and progress in his *avodas Hashem* (service of Hashem), yet he desists since he fears that he will never attain the loftiest levels of spirituality and holiness for which he strives. However, not only is this not an excuse to avoid striving, but indeed, it is also possible that his constant, concerted effort to serve Hashem will result in his acquiring a new *neshamah*. This fresh *neshamah* can then endow him with new, fantastic spiritual strengths that will allow him to attain the greatest heights in Torah study and *avodas Hashem*, spiritual levels of which he never even fathomed.

- B. *Biur HaGr"a on Zohar, Parshas Pekudei* p. 31 column 4 cites a *Heichal* of the *Zohar* and expands: "Any aspiration and desire for *dveikus* that a person acquires is rooted in this *Heichal*. Although the bounty derives from above, the preparation and desire must be founded within the person's soul." It is written that the person's service is parallel to the bounty that he receives, and the same applies to the upper worlds and even the *sefiros* (spiritual spheres), etc."

This statement contains a paramount and relevant message: Even if a person believes that he does not own the spiritual potential to succeed and achieve the *dveikus* or intensity in learning that he craves, he must know that he is sorely mistaken. Moreover, he must recognize that those occasions that allow him to believe that he will succeed and that he does harbor the potential for greatness are not drawn from within his soul, but are a gift from Hashem Yisborach. However, there are times when this awesome gift is an outcome of his devoted service of Hashem, and he is deserving of it. Hence, even at times when he feels remotely distanced from Hashem and spiritual growth, he should continually strive, endeavor and beseech Hashem Yisborach for help, and Hashem will surely have mercy upon him and grant him the courage and power to achieve his goals.

- C. *Biur HaGr"a on the Zohar, in the Lukutim following Parshas Pinchas* p. 31 column 2 states: "And from this you will learn great mystical secrets regarding the spiritual defects of sins [that cause] the spirit to depart from the soul, even when he is living, and this is why 'The wicked are called dead even during their lifetimes,' and one who performs *mitzvos* is called a 'Living man.'"

There are times when a person feels that he lacks spiritual strength in his soul and that he has lost the powers to serve Hashem that he once possessed. Sometimes, these feelings are merely obsessive worrying, and there is nothing to fear. However, there are unfortunately times when

there is truth to the person's fears, and it is possible that his sins caused an aspect of his soul to depart.

In such cases, the ideal recourse is *teshuva* (repentance). A person must regret his evil ways and return wholeheartedly to Hashem Yisborach. Then, he must continually endeavor to enhance his service of Hashem until the heavens restore the missing aspect of his soul. Even if he does not merit regaining his previous spiritual level, he should never desist in his service of Hashem. Rather, he should double his efforts and continue persisting until he perseveres. He must never despair of regaining his goal and previous spiritual strengths, as emphasized in the *Biur HaGr"a* on *Tikkunim* (*Zohar HaChadash*, p. 49 column 2-3), "A Jew can never despair of achieving the lofty spiritual levels that he once possessed. Even if he is presently unable to attain these levels, the heavens safeguard them and allow him to reclaim them whenever he is spiritually equipped."

- D. *Biur HaGr"a*, *Parshas Vayera* p. 27 column 1 writes that the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) will never depart from one who is meritorious, until it leads him to his final resting place, as written, "Righteousness will walk before him, and place its footsteps upon the way;" "How beautiful are your footsteps in shoes, etc."

Every individual merits seeing the *Shechina* before his demise. A wicked person glimpses briefly; but the *Shechina* quickly absconds, and the Angel of Death then inflicts terrible pain upon him and takes his soul with the most painful death possible (see *Brachos* 8a). However, the *Shechina* itself removes the soul of a *tzaddik* (righteous person) with a kiss, as the *tzaddik* said, "Do not pass from upon your servant." (See there.)

- E. *Biur HaGr"a* on *Tikkunei HaZohar*, *Tikkun* 58 p.106 column 4 states: "This is as it is with every one of man's sin, just as Odom [HaRishon] lost his spiritual radiance [as described in *Sefer Shaar HaGilgulim*—see there], which Chanoch inherited, despite the fact that he performed a mighty repentance. The same occurred with *Bnei Yisrael* when they sinned with the Golden Calf. Indeed, a *baal teshuva* (one who repents) is lowered in the bounty of this world that is described above. Only Dovid merited regaining his former spiritual level because of all that he did to achieve it, and this took him several years."

(See source to study the subject on a deeper level.) This is a formidable message, one that underscores how difficult it is for a person to achieve complete spiritual rectification through repentance. (Also see *Biur HaGr"a* on the *Zohar HaChadash*, *Rus* p. 106 to understand the concept of a *gilgul* (reincarnated soul) and how it applies to the above. This will all be understood in the times of *Mashiach* (Messiah) and the Resurrection of the Dead. In the continuation of this section, the Vilna Gaon relates that this concept was revealed to him.)

- F. *Biur HaGr"a* on *Zohar*, *Parshas Shlach* p. 16 column 4 states: "This is the way of nature, but all is governed and watched by Hashem, for "Man does not move a finger below unless the heavens decree it so from above," (*Chulin* 7b) and "A little bird is not trapped." This is referring to *Yerushalmi Shvi'is* Ch. 9:5, p. 25b. cited by *Tosfos Avodah Zara* 16b that if a tiny bird is not

trapped without Hashem's consent, certainly a person will not be trapped without Hashem willing it to be. (See *ibid* for complete discussion.)

"The laws of nature are the messengers that fulfill all that is decreed in the heavens. Hashem commands whether one will be rich or poor; Hashem decrees who will be lost and who will be found. He does not perform a miracle to create money or rule that money will grow from any place. These are the laws of nature.

"This resembles the parable of a king sitting in his magnificent throne in the royal court when he sees a person on the right side and an animal on the left, and he sends the person food—wheat—through a variety of strategies and tactics, with wheels and ropes, until it reaches him; and he sends the animal barley without either one realizing that it came from the king. They both think that the one who provided it was the messenger that stood closest to them. The king then spreads a large net to carry them to their destination, and when the time comes, he pulls the net and the man is trapped by his neck, and his mind allows him to imagine that it happened by chance and that it is all because of the forces of nature. Indeed, it is written, "Everything is a concealed miracle, and only manifest miracles are performed by the Name *Hava-ya*, as is known."

- G. *Biur HaGr"a on Zohar, Parshas Mishpatim* p. 10 column 3 states: "Until he learns *Shas*, and then he will learn the secrets of the Torah, and from there he will achieve inner fear and he will strive to [serve Hashem] not for the sake of reward, and then he will have attained the spiritual level of Atzilus, as written, 'If there is no fear, there is no Torah; if there is no Torah, there is no fear.' The explanation is that the first statement refers to external fear and the simple meaning of Torah, but the second statement refers to Kabbalah and a sincere, inner fear."

[Despite intensive searching, the author has yet to discover the source of the Vilna Gaon's exact text, 'If there is no fear, there is no Torah; if there is no Torah, there is no fear.' *Avos* 3:17 refers to this concept of Torah study and fear of heaven. See also *Avos* 2:5; *Avos* 3:9; *Avos* 3:17; *Shabbos* 31a, b; *Yuma* 2b; *Sefer Nefesh HaChaim Shaar D Ch. 4, 5*; *Biur HaGr"a on Zohar, Parshas Pekudei, Heichalos*, p.291a (in the new printing—p.23 columns 1-2) regarding the concept of *Yichudim*.

- H. *Tikkunei HaZohar, Likutim* p. 100b column 3 places fear before Torah in its order of levels of spiritual greatness, as follows, 'One whose fear of sin precedes Torah, his Torah is realized,' (*Avos* 3:9). Thereafter, he presents love and 'An ignoramus is not one who is pious,' as one who is a total ignoramus of even societal norms cannot fear sin.

The above refers to two levels of spiritual deficiency:

- A. An ignoramus who does not even conform to societal norms.
- B. An ignoramus who conforms to societal norms but does not learn Torah.

These two levels parallel the spiritual levels of fearing sin and piety, which is an even loftier spiritual level of love. One who is an ignoramus can never become pious, although he can achieve the level of *yiras cheit* (fear of sin). Hence, *yiras cheit* leads a Jew to achieve Torah and Torah leads one to achieve love of Hashem.

## Chapter 2: Source list for *dveikus hamachshava* to Hashem Yisborach based on the Vilna Gaon

### Part I

- A. The writings of the Vilna Gaon encompass many key statements regarding the significance of *dveikus hamachshava* to Hashem Yisborach. *Biur HaGr" a* on *Zohar, Parshas Pekudei* p. 16 columns 3-4 discuss this subject at length, but we will not expand upon it in this booklet as it is necessary to be well-versed in Kabbalistic Torah in order to fully grasp the content. However, in a general sense, this section of the Vilna Gaon's commentary states that for every moment that a Jew reflects upon Hashem Yisborach, he is granted additional aspects to his soul, heavenly, lofty aspects that he never had previously. Moreover, the more intensity, fervor and concentration that a Jew imbues into these thoughts, the greater and loftier are these new aspects that his soul acquires.
- B. *Biur HaGr" a* on *Zohar*, at the end of the *Heichalos* in *Parshas Bereishis*, p. 12 column 3, states as following: "The spirits are included one within the other, and they rise higher and higher and unite into one. This is not the case with the *Chayos* and *Ofanim* (two types of ministering angels) which are bodies of spirit and lights which do not harbor the potential for spiritual growth, but only for absolute clairvoyance... And the ascent of the man's soul [occurs] on *Shabbos* and holidays, during hours of prayer. Only the spirit ascends; the body does not ascend, as it was in the case of Moshe on Mount Sinai." [See below Part II for the Vilna Gaon's discussion regarding Moshe Rabbeinu's ascent on Mount Sinai.]
- C. *Biur HaGr" a* on *Zohar, Parshas Pekudei* p.221a, before the *Heichalos* of *Parshas Pekudei* p.16 column 3, states: "And this is the key to all spiritual ascents, as it is an ascent of the soul in thought; and this is the secret of all growth."

Later in his commentary, he adds, "And you shall know of all spiritual ascents, that all occurs in the mind of all the worlds, as the thoughts of man."

- D. *Biur HaGr" a* on *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 1:1 on the words of the Ram" a, "I place Hashem before me always; this is a paramount rule in the spiritual levels of the righteous." [The Ram" a notes that this statement was originally made by the Rambam in *Sefer Moreh Nevuchim* Vol. 3 Ch. 51-52—see there.]

The Vilna Gaon comments that the concept of 'placing Hashem before me always' is the foundation of the lofty spiritual levels achieved by the righteous *tzaddikim*.

This statement is more severe than that of the Ram" a's, who maintains that 'placing Hashem before me always' is a 'paramount rule' in the lofty spiritual levels of the righteous. (See *Gemara Shabbos*, beginning of Ch. 7.) Obviously, the Ram" a did not wish to detract from the significance of *dveikus hamachshava*, yet the Vilna Gaon specifically emphasizes that *dveikus hamachshava* is an essential aspect of spiritual growth, to the extent that a person cannot ascend spiritually without it. (See *Biur HaGr" a* on *Orach Chaim*, which quotes the opening verse in *Parshas Noach*, "And Noach was a righteous man...Noach walked with Hashem." He explains that 'walking with Hashem' refers to 'placing Hashem before me always.') It is no coincidence that the Torah's first mention of the word

'*tzaddik*—righteous' includes a clear, concise explanation of the qualities of a *tzaddik*, as a *tzaddik* must constantly know that Hashem is Present with him always.

- E. See *Biur HaGr"a* on *Sefer Yetzira* Ch.1:6 p. 9 column 4, beginning with the word, "*U'l'maamaro*," to further understand this concept.

## Part II

- A. In reference to the Vilna Gaon's statement as quoted above in Part I Paragraph A, "And so it was with Moshe on Har Sinai," it is obvious that he does not intend that Moshe Rabbeinu did not ascend physically with his corporeal body to the heavens, as the Torah states this explicitly. Indeed, it is known that every verse in the Torah can be understood according to its simple explanation, which means that it is certain that Moshe did ascend physically to the heavens.
- B. Hence, the Vilna Gaon is likely referring to *Gemara Sukkah* 5a, which states: "Rabbi Yosi taught, 'The Divine Presence never descended, and Moshe and Eliyahu never ascended to the heavens, as written, "The heavens are for Hashem, and the land, He gave to man." [The *Gemara* asks:] Did the Divine Presence not descend? Indeed, it is written, 'And Hashem descended on Mount Sinai.' [The answer is] Above ten handbreadths. And it is written, 'And his feet stood on that day on the Mount of Olives.' [This also means] Above ten handbreadths. [A second question is] Did Moshe and Eliyahu not ascend to the heavens? Indeed, it is written, 'And Moshe ascended to Hashem.' [The answer is] below ten. And it is also written, 'And Eliyahu rose in a tempest to the heavens.' [This also means] below ten. And it is written '[Hashem] makes it possible for His Holy Throne to be grasped' [*Iyov* 26:9]. Rabbi Tanchum teaches, 'He separates a portion of His *Shechina* and fashioned it as a cloud above man.' This is still above ten handbreadths. [The next question is] how can it be above handbreadths if people can still grasp the Throne? [The *Gemara* answers], Hashem brings the Throne exactly above ten handbreadths so it can still be grasped."
- C. See the *Ein Yaakov* which elucidates this point regarding Moshe Rabbeinu and Eliyahu who ascended, 'less than ten handbreadths.' Obviously, the number does not refer to a physical height, since this would mean that they hardly ascended at all and remained very close to the earth. Rather, they ascended to a height that was a mere ten handbreadths beneath the heavens. Similarly, when the *Shechina* descended upon Mount Sinai and the Mount of Olives, it descended almost to the earth but remained ten handbreadths above the earth.
- D. The Vilna Gaon adds that when Moshe ascended to the heavens, his body remained beneath the heavens and certainly did not rise above the heavens. However, his soul ascended to a far greater height and actually reached the heavens and perhaps even a higher level than that. Moshe merited this enormously lofty level due to his sincerity in serving Hashem and cleaving to Him constantly with his thoughts. (See *Nefesh HaChaim* regarding Moshe Rabbeinu's spiritual powers.)

### Chapter 3: *Kedushas Yesod* based on the Vilna Gaon.

- A. *Bi'ur HaGr"a* on *Tikkunei HaZohar*, *Tikkun* 21 p. 56 column 2 states: "All strength is dependent upon this, as it says in *Maseches Avos*, 'Who is strong? One who vanquishes his inclination.' This is the *tzaddik*, and any evil inclination in safeguarding the *bris* (covenant of the circumcision); and upon this is says, 'And any inclination of his heart was only evil...'"
- B. 1. See the Vilna Gaon's commentary at the beginning of *Tikkun* 23 p. 76 column 3 which states as following: "A covenant of fire... The mouth of the *ama* (place of the circumcision) contains the quality of Malchus, and this is why it has a foreskin; and the Malchus that is degraded here will be rectified here, for Chessed is revealed through the circumcision. And the purpose of every man is to rectify it in order to achieve this spiritual level."
2. It would seem that the Vilna Gaon is referring here to safeguarding the place of one's circumcision from spiritual flaws. [*Sefer Ana Avda* and the Chazon Ish's *Sefer Maase Ish* both assert that this is the ultimate purpose of man's sojourn in the physical world; and it is possible that these statements were based upon these words of the Vilna Gaon.]
3. It is also possible that the Vilna Gaon's statement in *Tikkun* 23 refers to the *mitzvah* of *pru u'r'vu*—procreation. Indeed, the Vilna Gaon wrote expansively of the significance and greatness of this *mitzvah* in his commentary on *Tikkunei HaZohar*, at the end of *Tikkun* 43, p. 92 column 3.
4. See *ibid* in the Vilna Gaon's commentary on *Tikkun* 23, citing the *Idra Rabba* p. 142 which includes a powerful description of the importance of safeguarding the *bris* from prohibition. This ostensibly proves that the above was the subject of his statement.
5. Also see *Bi'ur HaGr"a* on *Zohar*, *Parshas Pekudei* in the *Heichalos*, p. 253a (p. 24 end of column 4) which cites the *Idra Rabba*.
6. It is also possible that the Vilna Gaon's statement in Paragraph A referred both to safeguarding the *bris* from forbidden acts and to the *mitzvah* of procreation.
7. Another possibility is that this statement refers to the *mitzvah* of circumcision. See *Idra Rabba*.
- C. See the *Bi'ur HaGr"a* on *Zohar*, *Parshas Mishpatim* p. 115a (p. 10 column 1) in the *Likut Nusach Acharina* which explains that the Vilna Gaon was mostly discussing the concept of *teshuva* (repentance) which is an aspect of the quality of Yesod. (See source for complete explanation.) Also see the exact text of the *Zohar* *ibid* p. 114b which discusses the result of one who repents from sins violated by the place of the *bris* (see *ibid*).
- D. Also see *Biur HaGr"a* on *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 70 p. 161 column 1 which states: "Just as Yosef who safeguarded the *bris*; so a Jew merits that he will control the heavenly angels. And so it was with Chanoch who safeguarded his *bris* during the time of the great Flood; his reward is known."

- E. *Biur HaGr"a on Tikkunei Zohar HaChadash* p. 31 column 3 states: "And they said, 'One who transgresses a sin in private'; sins that are called transgressions by the *Gemara* always refer to adultery and thoughts of adultery, and so it is in many places."
- F. *Biur HaGr"a on Tikkunei HaZohar Tikkun 22*, p. 73 column 4 states: "And this is the decree of the grave: One is saved from this through his *bris*."

The above statement means that a Jew is spared the pain of death and burial by safeguarding his *bris*; and any suffering is a result of failing to safeguard it as possible. [See *Tikkunei HaZohar*, and the Vilna Gaon's commentary beside it which discusses that, occasionally, a person will suffer from poverty instead of actual death, as poverty is likened to death.]

- G. *Biur HaGr"a on Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 69* p. 115 column 2 states: "And he wishes to say that Odom and Chava, his wife, were knowledgeable of shame; and thus, when they united, their knowledge were joined, and she conceived and gave birth... If not for the sin, they would have united without this knowledge—the evil inclination. Instead of from the Tree of Knowledge, their union would have been with the Tree of Life, as it will be in the world-to-come when people will pray for an arousal of unity from Hashem; and the children will live forever from the Tree of Life." [See below for lengthy explanation of the *Biur HaGr"a on Tikkun 69* p. 115.]

In this section of his commentary, the Vilna Gaon describes the concept of physical arousal that causes a man and woman to unite as one. Physical desire only became a factor in procreation after Odom HaRishon's sin. Had Odom refrained from sin and abided by Hashem's command, procreation could have occurred through prayer and beseeching for Hashem's mercy, as in the case of *Bris HaLashon*.

Moreover, the physical desire that leads to procreation causes death in this world. However, if it were possible to procreate through prayer, as Hashem had originally intended, then the babies born would live forever—as those babies would be a product of the Tree of Life.

This teaches us a powerful lesson regarding the significance and necessity of sanctifying oneself prior to and during the fulfillment of this *mitzvah*; and *Chazal* have emphasized this in many places. The Vilna Gaon's message highlights that every Jew must strive to fulfill the *mitzvah* to the utmost with the thoughts and reflections that would have accompanied these *mitzvos* before Odom HaRishon's sin. Not only is this the ideal method of fulfilling the *mitzvah*, but it is also most beneficial for the child.

- H. *Biur HaGr"a on Tikkunei Zohar Tikkun 69* p. 126 column 2 states: "And this is why Moshe feared him [Og, King of Bashan—see source], until he was told, 'Do not fear him,' as he had defiled the *bris*, as stated at the end of *Parshas Chukas*, "With this, he will be uprooted." These words are explained by the *Zohar* at the end of *Parshas Chukas* p. 184a-b.
- I. See *Biur HaGr"a on Zohar Parshas Pekudei, Heichalos*, p. 253a (p.24 columns 3-4) for a lengthy explanation regarding safeguarding the *bris*. Also see *ibid* p. 254b (p. 30 column 2).
- J. Also see *Biur HaGr"a on Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 21* p. 60 column 4: "That one must sanctify himself tremendously while uniting, and then the evil inclination will not rule over the children."

- K. See *Biur HaGr"a* on *Zohar Parshas Pekudei* p. 248a (p. 21 column 1, 3) regarding the concept that the wisdom and mystical secrets of the Torah are dependent upon the *sefiros* of Chochmah and Yesod, which is also rooted in Chochmah, and can be regained through the path of Yesod. (See source for complete explanation.)

The same applies to Kedusha, as written, "In Kedusha is all the Chochmah, and it is dependent upon fulfilling the *bris*," as written, "The secret of Hashem is to those who fear Him; and His covenant, to let them know."

- L. *Biur HaGr"a* on *Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 56* p. 105 column 1 states: "As they sinned in the covenant...and this is [what the verse] 'The sin of my heel will surround me' refers to. [Chazal] elucidated, "[These are] the sins that man is *dash b'akeivo*—steps on with his heel," and 'this' alludes to this sin, as written, "Even a faint discussion." The word '*dash*' refers to Er and Onan's sin that they were '*dash*' inside. The word *eikev* refers to the placenta that comes from between her feet, as the heel is the lowest part of the body. [Regarding the statement that "This is the final aspect created in a man," it is necessary to clarify that although the feet are the final aspect in the physical order of a person; in the order of the *sefiros*, the legs precede the *bris*, and it is the *bris* that is the final aspect of a man. Thus, *Chazal* refer to the *bris* as the 'heel,' as it is the conclusion and culmination of a person.]

- M. 1. The Vilna Gaon writes in his explanation to *Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 69* p. 136 column 4: "There are two evil inclinations in each person, which are the two aforementioned 'holes.' And they are as follows: The first is a person's desire; and this is the worst of all, as written, 'As honeycombs, it will drop from your lips, my bride.' The second inclination is for the emptiness of this world, either for a lot of money or for exhilaration, as it says, 'Money will answer everything....' But this one is not as challenging as the first."

2. The inclination to sin in adultery is an exceedingly compelling, powerful craving that surpasses all other desires for physical pleasure in this world. It is unclear whether the Vilna Gaon deliberately quoted the verse, 'As honeycombs, it will drop from your lips,' in order to accent the lips which form speech, which is the toughest inclination to overcome; or if it was randomly selected to describe the sin of adultery. According to the secrets of the Torah that regard speech, it would seem that the former is correct.

- N. See the *Biur HaGr"a* in the *Tikkunim* of the *Zohar HaChadash* (p. 49 column 3) and the *Biur HaGr"a* on *Tikkunim* of the *Zohar HaChadash* p. 27 column 2, beginning with the words '*V'asidim hevu*,' regarding the sixth thousandth year which is the *sefirah*, 'Yesod'.

- O. *Yeshaya* 60:22 states: "I, Hashem, will hasten it in its time." *Gemara Sanhedrin* 88a expounds that this verse refers to the ultimate future Redemption. "Rabbi Alexandri said, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said, 'What is the meaning of the verse, 'I will hasten it in its time?' [How can one hasten something if it occurs in its time? They explained,] 'If they are meritorious, then [Hashem will] hasten it; and if they are not meritorious, [the Redemption will arrive] in its time.'"

See *Biur HaGr"a* on *Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 21* p. 56 column 2 which seems to allude that the merits required for a hastened redemption are largely dependent upon safeguarding the *bris*.

- P.** Also see *Biur HaGr"ra* on *Tikkunei Zohar Tikkun 10* p. 26 column 1 and *Biur HaGr"ra* on *Tikkunei Zohar Tikkun 56* p. 105 column 1.
- Q.** *Biur HaGr"ra* on the *Tikkunim* of the *Zohar HaChadash* p. 52 column 1 beginning with the words 'Zaka'in ekron,' affirm that "A *tzaddik* is one who safeguards his *bris*."
- R.** See *Biur HaGr"ra* on *Zohar Parshas Shlach* p. 160a (p. 18 columns 2-3) which discuss that safeguarding both covenants—speech and circumcision—are the foundations of all spiritual growth.

#### Chapter 4: Prohibition of defiling the *bris* based on the Vilna Gaon.

- A. *Sefer Sha'ar Hakavanos, Drushei HaLaila*, p. 56 column 2 describes the reason and severity of the prohibition of defiling the *bris*, which causes souls to escape the *Otzar HaNeshamos* (Storehouse of Souls) and enter the bodies of *mazikim* (harmful entities) instead of entering the bodies of Jews. (See *ibid* for lengthy description and explanation.)
- B. 1. *Biur HaGr"a* in *Safra D'tzniusa* also expounds upon this concept. (See *Biur HaGr"a* in *Safra D'tzniusa* Ch. 5 p. 36 column 4 beginning with the words, 'Vayehi ki ad b'keren hayovel,': "And it is known that man [was fashioned] in the image of the heavens in miniature. Just as man, heaven forbid, releases in vain in this world, so the 'person' above does in the Upper Worlds to the evil forces, heaven forbid.
2. *Biur HaGr"a* on *Safra D'tzniusa* Ch. 4 p. 29 column 2 explains that when a person defiles his *bris*, he causes the birth of *mazikim*. (See *ibid* for complete explanation; see *ibid* p. 31 column 3 and p. 32 column 2 for brief explanation.)
3. *Sefer Sha'ar Hakavanos* *ibid* explicitly states that defiling the *bris* not only causes souls to exit the *Otzar HaNeshamos* needlessly, but that these souls also transform into *mazikim*.
4. The Vilna Gaon also in Ch. 5 p. 36 column 4 that "Souls exit the *Otzar HaNeshamos*," although he does not add that they transform into harmful entities. In Ch. 4 p. 29 column 2, he discusses that defiling the *bris* causes the birth of *mazikim*, although he does not mention that the *mazikim* are born as a result of souls fleeing the *Otzar HaNeshamos*. (These points are also summarized on p. 31 column 3 and p. 32 column 2.)
5. Although the Vilna Gaon does discuss both points of souls fleeing the *Otzar HaNeshamos* in vain and of the birth of *mazikim*, he does not relate these two issues or state that the same souls that flee the *Otzar HaNeshamos* are those that transform into the souls of *mazikim*. Nonetheless, it is logical to connect both results of defiling the *bris*, especially as Rav Chaim of Volozhin does relate these both points.
- C. *Biur HaGr"a* on *Zohar Parshas Pekudei* p. 266a (p. 16 column 3) states, "And this is the secret of the sin of releasing in vain, as it draws *mazikim* into this world, and this is a terrible destruction."
- D. See *Biur HaGr"a* on the Introduction to the *Zohar*, p. 12a (p. 5 column 1): "And this is the sin of one who releases in vain, as he did not take form inside a woman, and all that remains is the stringent forces; and the two sides do not unite as one. And this is why the generation of the Flood were wiped out with water and judged harshly." (See *Biur HaGr"a* for complete explanation.)
- E. See *Biur HaGr"a* on *Tikkunei Zohar Tikkun 21* p. 48 column 1 regarding the sin of releasing in vain and it is likely that Paragraph C and D relate to this topic.
- F. *Biur HaGr"a* on *Zohar Parshas Pekudei, Heichalos* p. 254b (p. 30 column 2) states: "And this is the great secret of *keri* (releasing in vain). One takes something *yakar* (precious) and transforms it to *keri*. (In Hebrew, the words *keri* and *yakar* are formed of the same letters—*kuf*, *yud* and *reish*.)

See source for complete explanation and *Sha'ar HaPsukkim L'Chavakuk* in order to acquire a clearer understanding of this topic.

**Chapter 5: The deep impact of every action; the significance of *Kri'as Shema al Hamitta*.**

- A. *Biur HaGr"a* on *Zohar Parshas Bereishis, Heichalos* p. 43b (p. 17 column 2) beginning with the words, '*Trein nehorin,*' contains a very powerful message.

The Vilna Gaon writes, "With the seven Eyes of Hashem, all actions committed in this world are written, every action that a person performed, exactly according to its form and specifics, on the exact day and in the exact place. This is what they exhibit to man before his death; and these are the seven layers of the Eyes... And the reason for the Eye is because the whole world is recorded in the Eye, and all that is in it, and everything that he does, the place is listed in that place, with a Good Eye or an Evil Eye; and this *Heichal* is called Hand, as known, as it is written, 'Your hand is Left,' as said, 'Even My Hand...' This is what it means when it says, 'And with the hand of every man, He will seal,' as this is where the hands of every person are found—in the root of his soul."

- B. The above corresponds to Rebbi's teachings in *Avos* Ch. 2:1: "Look at three things, and you will not come to sin. Know what is above you: An Eye that sees; an Ear that hears; and all your actions are written in the Book." See the Vilna Gaon's explanation of this *Mishnah* in his explanation to *Tikkunei Zohar*.
- C. *Biur HaGr"a* on *Zohar Parshas Yisro* p. 74b (p. 6 column 4) beginning with the words, '*B'sha'ata d'na'im.*' He writes, "And this is 'In the hand of every person, He will stamp.' This means, when a person is sleeping is when [Hashem] writes all that happened on that day, and the etchings change according to the person's actions."
- D. According to the Vilna Gaon, a person's actions are written in the Book when he is sleeping. This also clarifies Rav Chaim Vital's instruction in *Sha'ar Hakavanos, Drushei Halaila* that one should recite *Viduy* (Confession) before going to sleep (see source).

The *Ohr HaChaim's* commentary in *Parshas Vayechi* adds an interesting point regarding the sparks of the soul that divide during the day and ascend to the heavens at night when a person sleeps.

## Chapter 6: Addendum

- A. For a deeper understanding of the concepts of *yetzer hatov* (good inclination) and *yetzer hara* (evil inclination), see *Sefer Kabbalas HaGr"a* Vol. 1 in his explanation to the *Likutim* in the beginning of the *Biur HaGr"a* to *Idra Rabba* which is printed as an introduction to the *Tikkunei HaZohar*, column 4. Also see commentaries on *Biur HaGr"a* on *Tikkun 21* p. 70.
- B. See Rav Chaim Volozhin's introduction to *Biur HaGr"a* on *Safra D'tzniusa* which describes the Vilna Gaon's vast spiritual endeavors and lofty levels in *avodas Hashem*.
- C. *Biur HaGr"a* on *Zohar Parshas Bereishis, Heichalos*, p. 42b (p. 14 column 2) beginning with the words, 'Ad d'askililu: "All the above is accomplished through prayer. But the spirit is acquired through desire, as is focusing upon the Oneness of Hashem."

The section beginning with 'V'hahu rucha' describes, "It emerges that everything is dependent upon focusing upon the Oneness of Hashem and the will of people."

Column 2 beginning with the words 'Hacha hachra'a' states: "In all six *Heichalos*, there are actions. In the seventh *Heichal*, there is only will; and that is The Will." (See *ibid.*)

- D. *Biur HaGr"a* on *Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 69* p. 130 column 3 beginning with the words, 'V'ed ya'ale,' describes, "Just as with rain, every action in this world is hanging in a mist that rises from the earth; so it is with every action of the *Shechina*, and its behavior is dependent on man's speech. And this is the way that the lower world operates; thus, everything that is created on this earth, 'It is all nothing.'"
- E. *Biur HaGr"a* on the Introduction to the *Zohar* p. 11b (p. 4 column 3) states: "And the main thing is that a Jew must cleave to these four things, as all follows the action; and for this, the world was created, so that they shall recognize the power of His Kingship."
- F. These 'four things' are a reference to his list in the Introduction to the *Zohar* on p. 11b. "Fear is essentially that people should fear their Creator, as He is Great and Supreme and the Essence and Root of all worlds; and all before Him are as nothing, as it says, 'And all who dwell in the world are considered as nothing.'"

The Vilna Gaon explains that this *Zohar* is divided into four parts. The first point—Hashem is Great—is expressed in *Chessed*. The second point—He is Supreme—is expressed in *Gevurah*. The third point—Hashem is the Essence and Root of all worlds—is expressed in *Tiferes*; and the fourth point—the fact that all inhabitants of the earth are as nothing before Him—is expressed in *Malchus*. See *ibid.*

## Glossary

|                                  |                              |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b><i>Avodas Hashem</i></b>      | Service of Hashem            |
| <b><i>Baal teshuva</i></b>       | Person who repents           |
| <b><i>Bnei Yisrael</i></b>       | Jewish Nation                |
| <b><i>Bris (</i></b>             | [Place of] circumcision      |
| <b><i>Chazal</i></b>             | Sages                        |
| <b><i>Dveikus</i></b>            | Cleaving [to Hashem]         |
| <b><i>Gilgul</i></b>             | Reincarnated souls           |
| <b><i>Mashiach</i></b>           | Messiah                      |
| <b><i>Mazikim</i></b>            | [Spiritual] harmful entities |
| <b><i>Mitzvah/mitzvos</i></b>    | Commandment(s)               |
| <b><i>Neshama</i></b>            | Soul                         |
| <b><i>Otzar HaNeshamos</i></b>   | Storehouse of Souls          |
| <b><i>Sefiros</i></b>            | Spiritual spheres            |
| <b><i>Shabbos</i></b>            | Sabbath                      |
| <b><i>Shas</i></b>               | Talmud [Torah]               |
| <b><i>Shechina</i></b>           | Divine Presence              |
| <b><i>Teshuva-repentance</i></b> | Repentance                   |
| <b><i>Tzaddik(im)</i></b>        | Righteous person(s)          |
| <b><i>Yiras cheit</i></b>        | Fear of sin                  |