

PART 5-6: SAYINGS OF RABBI ELIEZER

by Rabbi Dr. Azriel Rosenfeld

A person who recites Psalm 145 ("Ashrei") three times a day is certain to be rewarded in the "World to Come" ("Olam Ha-Ba"). This is because it is arranged alphabetically, and it also has the verse "You open Your hand and satisfy every living thing" (145:16). Psalm 119 has an eightfold alphabet, and Psalm 136 (the "Great Hallel") has the verse "He gives bread to all flesh" (136:25), but only "Ashrei" has both. There is no verse for the letter "nun" in "Ashrei" because the verse "The maiden of Israel has fallen and will no longer arise" (Amos 5:2) begins with the letter "nun"; but in the West (Land of Israel) they explain it as "She fell, but will no longer fall; arise, maiden of Israel!" In any case, David was Divinely inspired to provide support in the next verse: "G-d supports all the fallen" (145:14).

The angel Michael is described as "flying" only once; the verse "One of the seraphs flew to me" (Isaiah 6:6) refers to the same angel as the verse "Michael, one of the primary princes, came to help me" (Daniel 10:11). Gabriel is described as flying twice: "Gabriel, whom I saw at first in a vision, was caused to fly in a flight" (Daniel 9:21). Michael reaches his goal in one flight, Gabriel in two, Elijah in four, and the angel of death in eight -- but at a time of plague, in one.

6. The Shema in Bed (4b-5a)

Even though a person has recited the evening Shema in the synagogue, he should recite it on his bed, as it says "Tremble (RIGZU) and do not sin; say it in your hearts on your beds, and be silent" (Psalms 4:5). A scholar need not do it, but he should recite a verse that refers to mercy, such as "I deposit my spirit in Your hand" (Psalms 31:6).

A person should always incite his good nature against his evil nature, as it says "Enrage (RIGZU) and do not sin" (Psalms 4:5). If it wins, good; if not, he should study Torah, as it says "Say it in your hearts" (ibid.). If it wins, good; if not, he should recite the Shema, as it says "On your beds" (ibid.). If it wins, good; if not, he should remind himself of the day of death, as it says "And be silent" (ibid.).

A person who recites the Shema on his bed is as if he holds a two-edged sword in his hand, as it says "The righteous shall sing on their beds... The praise of G-d is in their throat, and a two-edged sword is in their hand" (Psalms 149:5-6).

"I will give you the Stone Tablets and the Torah and the commandment that I wrote to guide them" (Ex.24:12): "The Stone Tablets" refers to the Ten Commandments; "the Torah" refers to the Written Torah; "the commandment" refers to the Mishnah (the Oral Torah); "that I wrote" refers to the

Prophets and the Writings (the other books of the Bible); and "to guide them" refers to the Gemara (the Talmud). This teaches us that they were all given to Moses at Sinai.

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