

SONG OF SONGS

It is an established custom to say the Song of Songs before *Shabbos* begins. This song is filled with Israel's holy, passionate yearning for closeness with the Holy One, blessed is He. This is the perfect time to say the Song of Songs, for an illumination of Divine favor and holy, passionate yearning fill all the upper worlds. A great illumination of this favor enters the world at this time as well (*Yekara d'Shabbasa* 31).

Reb Noson writes: *Shabbos* is the aspect of *Olam HaBa* (the World to Come). One who is able to fully embody the light of *Shabbos* with all its details is privileged to experience a taste of *Olam HaBa*. He is privileged to attain complete *emunah* (faith), corresponding to, "Come with Me from Levanon, My bride, come with Me from Levanon; come and see from the height of Amanah [*Emunah*]" (Song of Songs 4:8). It is this exalted level of *emunah* that is revealed on *Shabbos*, which is a taste of *Olam HaBa*. For this same reason, it is precisely on *Shabbos* that the most exalted level of song is revealed, the level of the Song of Songs of *Shelomo*—"the King to whom all *ShaLoM* (peace) and *SheLeiMus* (perfection) belong"—and the category of *Shabbat Shalom* (the ultimate peace of *Shabbos*). Through the power of this exalted song, all *apikorsus* (God-denial) that stems from the Vacated Space is nullified. This happens precisely on *Shabbos*. It is for this reason that even the most hardened idolater who has fallen into the apostasy of the Vacated Space can gain forgiveness. For in the light of *Shabbos*, all these distortions fall away and the souls who were trapped in them are rectified. For through *Shabbos*—which is the level of "the height of *Amanah-Emunah*," which is the level of the Song of Songs—it is revealed [retroactively] that God, blessed is He, can be found even there. It is just that it is impossible to understand this now [that the Divine presence is concealed there as well], until the Future, at the time of the ultimate reward, on the day that is altogether *Shabbos* (*Likutey Halakhos, Minchah* 4:12).

For the sake of the revelation of the unity of the blessed Holy One and His Indwelling Presence, to unify the letters *Yod-Heh* with *Vav-Heh* in a complete unity, through the infinite blessing of *Ein Sof*, the One who is hidden and concealed, in the name of all Israel—I am ready and prepared to recite the Song of Songs with a pleasant voice, to rectify its root above in the highest spiritual dimension, in order to please our Maker and perform the will of our Creator. May HaShem our God's pleasantness be [flow down] upon us; may He establish our endeavors above in eternity, and may He establish our endeavors below in this world.

|

1 The Song of Songs, by Shelomo [dedicated to the One to whom all *shalom*-peace and *sheleimus*-perfection belong]. 2 Languishing in exile, the Community of Israel reminisces: O that He would kiss me again with the kisses of His mouth [O that He would reveal the secrets of His Torah to me as He began to do at Sinai]; Your spiritual love is far more precious to me than wine [all the pleasures of this world]. 3 Your fragrant oils [signs of Your Divine providence] are pleasing to the smell;² the fragrance of Your Name [the news of the miracles and wonders You wrought in Egypt, testifying to Your absolute sovereignty over all creation] is like precious oil poured forth; it was for this reason that young maidens fell in love with You [righteous souls from among the nations like Yisro (Jethro) were drawn to convert as a result of the Exodus]. 4 When I was in Egypt, I cried out to You: "O draw me [my soul] out of my constricted state, and we [all the limbs of my body together with my soul] will run after You!"³ Then, at Sinai, the King brought me into His chambers; we delighted and

שיר השירים

נתקן לומר סמוך לכניסת שבת שיר השירים שהוא מלא כיסופין והשתוקקות קודש של כנסת ישראל להקדוש ברוך הוא. כי אז נתעורר הארת הרצון וכיסופין והשתוקקות דקדושה בכל העולמות, ונמשך הארה גדולה גם לזה העולם (יקרא דשבתא ל"א).

כי שבת הוא בחינת עולם הבא שְׁאֵז יתגלה זה השקל פנ"ל. ועל כן מי ששומר שבת כהלכתו זוכה לטעם מעין עולם הבא. וזוהר לאמונה שלמה, בחינת "אתי מלבנון פלה אתי מלבנון תבואי תשורי מראש אמנה [אמונה]" (שיר ד ח). כי זאת האמונה מתגלה בשבת שהוא מעין עולם הבא. ועל כן בשבת מתגלה ומתעורר שיר שהוא ראש לכל השירים. בחינת שיר השירים אשר לשלמה, למלך ששילום שולו שהוא בחינת שבת שלום כידוע. כי שיר השירים שיר שהוא ראש לכל השירים זה בחינת תשורי מראש אמנה פנ"ל במאמר הנ"ל. שיעל ידו מבטליו האפיקורסות של חלל הפניני פנ"ל, וזה מתגלה בשבת דיקא פנ"ל. ועל כן על ידי שמירת שבת אפלו עובד עבודה זרה כדור אגוש, שפלו בכפירות האלו של בחינת חלל הפניני הנ"ל מוחליו לו. כי על ידי שבת נכנעו ונפלו כל הכפירות האלו ומתקני אותם. כי מגליו על ידי שבת שהוא ראש אמנה בחינת שיר השירים וכו' פנ"ל שגם שם ה' יתברך נמצא. רק שעכשו אי אפשר להבין זאת עד לעתיד בעת קבול השקר ליום שקלו שבת פנ"ל: (לקוטי הלכות או"ח, הלכות תפלת המנחה הלכה ד אות יב).

לְשֵׁם יְחִוּד קוּדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא וְשְׂכִינְתֵיהּ, לְיַחְדָּא י"ה בּו"ה
בְּיַחְדָּא שְׁלִים עַל יְדֵי הַהוּא טְמִיר וְנִעְלָם, בְּשֵׁם כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל.
הֲרִינִי מוֹכֵן וּמְזַמֵּן לְשׁוֹרֵר בְּקוֹל נְעִים שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים. לְתַקֵּן אֶת
שְׂרֵשָׁה בְּמִקּוֹם עֲלִיוֹן, לְעֲשׂוֹת נַחַת רוּחַ לְיוֹצְרָנוּ וּלְעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹן
בוֹרְאָנוּ. וְיֵהִי נְעִים אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵינוּ עֲלֵינוּ. וּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵינוּ כּוֹנֵנָה עֲלֵינוּ.
וּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵינוּ כּוֹנֵנָה:

א

א שיר השירים אשר לשלמה: ב ישקני מנשיקות פיהו כי טובים דדיך מיני:
ג לריח שמניך טובים שמן תורק שמך על כן עלמות אהבוך: ד משכני
אחריך גרועה הביאני המלך חדריו נגילה ונשמחה בך נזכירה דדיך מיני

2 "Your fragrant oils are pleasing to the smell...O draw me, and we will run after You!" (Song of Songs 1:3-4). *Rashi* explains that this drawing close to God refers to converts and *baaley teshuvah*, those who are distant yet are somehow drawn to God. Reb Noson adds that the

sweet smell of the spices alludes to God giving each person the chance to catch a whiff of the beauty of Judaism. Then, when they draw close, the converts and *baaley teshuvah* themselves give off a sweet smell (LH, *Birkhos HaRe'ach* 5:2).

3 "O draw me, and we will run after You!" (Song of Songs 1:4). As soon as You call me, I run to You (*Rashi*, loc. cit.). God is always calling us to Him, trying to draw us closer. But then He hides Himself, as it

were, to see if we really want to find Him. Then we must strengthen ourselves with faith and good deeds, and we will find Him (LH, *Nefilat Apayim* 4:13).

rejoiced in You; we recall Your fond love, more pleasant than wine, and the sincerity of our love for You. 5 Now, though I seem darkened without, I am comely within, O daughters of Yerushalayim [the capital cities of the nations of the world]; I am darkened without like the tents of Keidar, but comely within as the curtains of the *Mishkan* and the holy Temple of Shelomo [the One to whom all *shalom*-peace and *sheleimus*-perfection belong]. 6 Do not view me with contempt because I am dark, for the sun of exile has scorched me; my mother's sons [the Egyptians in Mitzrayim, and later, the false prophets in Israel] treated me contemptuously and made me keeper of their vineyards [foreign idols]; as a result, I neglected my own vineyard.⁴ 7 Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where will You pasture Your people, who are like Your sheep, in the midst of seventy nations that are likened to a pack of wolves? Where will You rest them at midday [precisely when the sun of exile burns exceedingly hot]? Why should I be as one who wanders among the flocks of the idolatrous nations who associate their gods with You? 8 HaShem answers: If you do not know yourself how to restore the intimate closeness we once shared, O most beautiful of women, follow the footsteps of the flock [your holy ancestors], and pasture your kids beside the tents of the shepherds [the soul-teachers of My people].⁵ 9 When you were in Egypt, I likened you to My own horse that Pharaoh had harnessed and used for his chariots, O My beloved. 10 But then I freed you and brought you to Sinai to give you My Torah, whose words are beautiful chains/bridles for your cheeks/mouth, and Divine jewels/yokes around your neck. 11 I also made golden chains for you [the Tablets of the Covenant, more precious than gold], overlaid with the Ten Commandments like silver points.⁶ 12 But then just as the King was celebrating [giving the Tablets to Moshe], my nard whose scent is usually sweet gave forth an evil odor [the sin of the golden calf]. 13 Still, by commanding me to build the *Mishkan*, my Beloved restored my sweet fragrance to me; He then returned to dwell between my breasts [in the holy of holies of my heart]. 14 My Beloved has been for me like a cluster of sweet-smelling spices in the groves of Ein Gedi, always willing to revive my spirits when I have strayed; always willing to help me atone for my wrongdoings. 15 HaShem praises Israel: Behold, you are beautiful despite everything, My beloved wife; you are beautiful, for your eyes are like doves looking only to Me. 16 Israel replies by praising HaShem: It is You who are beautiful and pleasant, my Beloved; and our bed [our meeting place in the Holy of Holies of the *Mishkan* and the holy Temple] is fresh with vitality that infuses every aspect of my life. 17 Build soon the support beams of our houses [the *Mishkan* and the holy Temple] from strong cedar wood, and our upper corridors from beautiful cypress.⁷

and only one defending angel, he will be exonerated (*Shabbos* 32a). Reb Noson adds that if a person has 999 prosecutors against him, what can anyone expect of

him?! Therefore God sees this, too, as a defense and will seek to exonerate him (LH, *Eiruvey Techumin* 6:15).

מישירים אהבוה: ה שחורה אני ונאנה בנות ירושלם כאהלי קדר פריעות שלמה: ו אל תראוני שאני שחרחרת שישזפתי השמש בני אמי נחרו בי שמני נטרה את הפרמים פרמי שלי לא נטרתי: ז הגדה לי שאהבה נפשי איכה תרעה איכה תרביץ בצהרים שלמה אהיה פעטה על עדרי חבריה: ח אם לא תדעי לה היפה בנשים צאי לה בעקבי הצאן ורעי את גדיתך על משפנות הרעים: ט לקסתי ברכבי פרעה דמיתך רעיתי: י נאוו לחייך בתרים צוארך: יא תורי זהב נעשה לה עם נקדות הפסף: יב עד שהמלה במסבו נרדי נתן ריחו: יג צורו המור דודי לי בין שדי יליו: יד אשכל הפפר דודי לי בכרמי עין גדי: טו הגדה יפה רעיתי הגדה יפה עיניך יונים: טז הגדה יפה דודי אף נעים אף ערשנו רעננה: יז קרות בתינו ארזים רהיטנו ברותים:

4 “My mother’s sons treated me contemptuously and made me keeper of their vineyards; I neglected my own vineyard” (Song of Songs 1:6). The “vineyards” are the leaders of the Jewish nation (*Rashi*, loc. cit.). Conceptually, the Egyptians represent a person’s

imagination, which misdirects him so that he accepts false and misguided leaders instead of true leaders. This happens when a person is not careful to guard his own vineyard—to seek the truth (LH, *Matanah* 4:13).

5 “If you do not know yourself... follow the footsteps of the flock, and pasture your kids beside the tents of the shepherds” (Song of Songs 1:8). Reb Noson explains that we must seek the

true *tzaddik*. But what if we don’t know who or where he is? If we don’t know the real *tzaddik*, we should accept all worthy candidates as *tzaddikim*, because good can be found everywhere (LH, *Minchah* 6:12).

6 “I also made golden chains for you, overlaid with silver points” (Song of Songs 1:11). *Nekudos haKeSeF* (נקודי הכסף), literally, “points of silver”) allude to the vowel-points that accompany the Hebrew letters. These vowel-points represent *KiSuFin* (כסופין), yearning and longing), which are likened to a person’s soul. Just as the soul gives movement and life to the body, the vowels give movement and life to the letters. Rebbe Nachman teaches that if a person yearns for evil, evil vowel-points are created, and then

the letters combine and unite to do evil deeds. But if he yearns to return to God, good points—good souls—are created, and the letters combine and unite to do good deeds. However, it is not enough to just long in one’s heart; one must express his yearnings orally. Then the first part of the verse is realized: “I also made golden chains (תורי זהב, *TORey zahav*) for you” – the letters of the *TORah* (תורה) will combine to help you accomplish your goal (LM I, 31:6-7).

7 “The support beams of our houses [are] from strong cedar wood, and our upper corridors from beautiful cypress” (Song of Songs 1:17). God always looks

upon us favorably, as if we are beautiful cypress beams, and seeks our good points. The Talmud teaches that if a person has 999 prosecuting angels against him

II

1 Israel speaks: When I do Your will, O Beloved, I am likened to the young rose of Sharon [the Garden of Eden], the mature rose of the valleys nourished by the waters of Eden. 2 HaShem continues praising Israel: Like a mature rose among the thorns, so is My beloved wife in the midst of the young maidens [the nations of the world]. 3 Israel continues praising HaShem: Like an apple tree [the Tree of Life] among the trees of the forest, so was my Beloved praised in the midst of the youths [angelic hosts] when He descended onto Sinai. O how I longed to dwell under His shadow; to taste the fruit of His Torah, so sweet to my palate. 4 So He brought me to His banquet hall [literally, “wine hall,” alluding to the foot of Mount Sinai where He gave me the wine of Torah that is understood on seventy levels as per the *gematria* of *yayin*-wine (70)], and spread His banner of love over me. 5 Still weak and vulnerable after my long exile in Egypt, He sustained me with the cream of the wheat [the manna]; because I was lovesick,⁸ He surrounded me with fragrant apple blossoms to restore my soul. 6 He placed His left hand [clouds of glory] beneath my head; the Torah that He gave me with His right hand embraces me still. 7 I therefore caution you, O daughters of Yerushalayim, by the gazelles or by the hinds of the field, lest you attempt to deflect or even to arouse this love that exists between my Beloved and me, to change it or to substitute it by enticing me to follow you before it awakens of its own accord. 8 When that time comes, however, Israel will say: Behold, the call of my Beloved! He is coming to redeem me before the appointed time; He is leaping over the mountains in the merit of the Patriarchs, He is springing over the hills in the merit of the Matriarchs.⁹ 9 In His haste to redeem me, my Beloved is like a gazelle or a young deer; I thought He had abandoned me forever, but behold, He was close by the entire time, standing behind our wall, supervising from the windows, peering through the lattices. 10 My Beloved will then answer and say to me: The time has come for you to rise up, My love, My beauty, and go forth from the exile. 11 For behold, the winter [exile] has passed, and the downpour [suffering] is over and gone. 12 The blossoms [righteous souls] are appearing in the world; the season of the *zamid* [songbird, song of redemption, pruning of the wicked] has arrived, and the voice of the *tor* [turtledove, Torah, *Mashiach*] is heard in our land. 13 The fig tree has sprouted its unripe fruits, while the grapevines in blossom have sent forth their fragrance; arise, My beloved wife, My beauty, and go forth just as you departed Egypt. 14 O My dove, when you are caught in the clefts of the rock, concealed in the cliff’s terrace, let Me behold your countenance, let Me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet and your appearance is pleasant! 15 Israel says: We must seize the sly foxes, the little foxes in our midst, destroyers of vineyards; they would destroy us from within were not our vineyards full of blossoms [righteous *tzaddikim*]. 16 In their merit, my Beloved

ב

א אני חבצלת השרון שושנת העמקים: ב כְּשֹׁשְׁנָה בֵּין הַחוּחִים בֵּן רַעֲיָתִי בֵּין הַבְּנוֹת: ג כְּתַפּוּחַ בַּעֲצֵי הַיַּעַר בֵּן דּוּדֵי בֵּין הַבְּנִים בְּצִלּוֹ חַמְדָּתִי וְיִשְׁבְּתִי וּפְרִיּוֹ מִתּוֹק לַחֲפִי: ד הִבִּיאֲנִי אֶל בַּיִת הַזֶּה וְדָגְלָו עָלַי אֶהְבֶּה: ה סִמְכוּנִי בְּאִשִּׁישׁוֹת רְפָדוּנִי בַתְּפוּחִים כִּי חוֹלַת אֶהְבֶּה אָנֹכִי: ו שְׁמַאלוֹ תַּחַת לְרַאשִׁי וַיְמִינִי תַּחְבֵּקֵנִי: ז הַשְּׁבַעְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם בְּצַבָּאוֹת אוֹ בְּאֵילוֹת הַשָּׂדֶה אִם תַּעֲרִירוּ וְאִם תַּעֲוֹרְרוּ אֶת הָאֶהְבָּה עַד שֶׁתַּחֲפֹץ: ח קוֹל דּוּדֵי הַנֶּה זֶה בָּא מְדַלֵּג עַל הַהָרִים מְקַפֵּץ עַל הַגְּבְעוֹת: ט דוֹמָה דּוּדֵי לְצַבִּי אוֹ לְעֹפֶר הָאֵילִים הַנֶּה זֶה עוֹמֵד אַחֵר כְּתִלְנוּ מִשְׁגִּיחַ מִן הַחֲלָנוֹת מִצִּיץ מִן הַחֲרָכִים: י עָנָה דּוּדֵי וְאָמַר לִי קוֹמִי לָךְ רַעֲיָתִי יָפְתִי וְלֹכִי לָךְ: יא כִּי הִנֵּה הַסֵּתֵי עֶבֶר הַגִּשְׁם חָלַף הַלָּךְ לוֹ: יב הַנְּצַנִּים נִרְאוּ בְּאֶרֶץ עַת הַזְּמִיר הַגִּיעַ וְקוֹל הַתּוֹר נִשְׁמַע בְּאַרְצֵנוּ: יג הַתְּאֵנָה חֲנֻטָּה פְּגִיָּה וְהַגְּפָנִים סְמָדֵר נִתְּנוּ רִיחַ קוֹמִי לָךְ רַעֲיָתִי יָפְתִי וְלֹכִי לָךְ: יד יוֹנְתִי בְּחֻגֵי הַסֵּלַע בְּסִתֵּר הַמַּדְרֵגָה הִרְאִינִי אֶת מַרְאֵיֶךָ הַשְּׁמִיעֵינִי אֶת קוֹלְךָ כִּי קוֹלְךָ עָרַב וּמַרְאֵיֶךָ נְאוּהָ: טו אֶחְזוּ לָנוּ שׁוֹעֲלִים שׁוֹעֲלִים קִטְנִים מִחֲבָלִים כְּרָמִים וּכְרָמֵינוּ סְמָדֵר: טז דּוּדֵי לִי וְאֲנִי לוֹ הִרְעָה

⁸ “I was lovesick” (Song of Songs 2:5). The verse actually states, “I was sick with love.” The Midrash offers two ideas: 1) The Jews say before God, “Master of the world, all the illnesses that You bring upon me make me yearn for You even more.” 2) The Jews say before God, “Master of the world, all the illnesses that the nations cause me to suffer come about because of my love for You” (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 2:5:1).

A story is told of the time the Baal Shem Tov took hold of a doctor’s wrist,

felt his pulse, and detailed the illness from which the doctor suffered. After acknowledging the validity of the diagnosis, the doctor attempted to take the Baal Shem Tov’s pulse. Finding it to be erratic, he thought for a while but could not define the illness. Once the doctor left, the Baal Shem Tov said, “My ‘illness’ is that I am sick with love for God. The doctor has no understanding of this kind of love. That’s why he couldn’t read my pulse properly!”

⁹ “Behold, the call of my Beloved! He is coming; He is leaping over the mountains, He is springing over the hills” (Song of Songs 2:8). When Moshe came to redeem the Jews in Egypt, they said to him, “But we lack merits for

redemption!” Moshe replied, “When God is ready to redeem you, He will not look at your wrongful deeds. He will ‘leap over the mountains’—He will look at the deeds of the righteous among you” (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 2:8:1).

is mine, and I am His! He continues to shepherd His flock in the merit of the righteous roses. 17 O my Beloved, before the day draws to an end, and the shadows of evening begin to extend, turn Your face toward me like a gazelle or a young deer, and leap over the mountains that separate us.¹⁰

III

1 At night, on my bed, I sought the One my soul loves; I sought Him, but I did not find Him. 2 I said in my heart: Let me rise up now and walk through the city [Yerushalayim], in the marketplaces and in the streets; let me search for the One my soul loves!¹¹ I sought Him, but I did not find Him. 3 The righteous watchmen who roam the city found me; I asked them: Have you seen the One whom my soul loves? 4 Shortly after leaving them, I found the One my soul loves;¹² I held Him and would not let Him go until I brought Him into my Mother's House [the second Temple], into the inner chamber [Holy of Holies] of She [Shekhinah] who conceived me. 5 Again I caution you, O daughters of Yerushalayim, by the gazelles or by the hinds of the field, lest you attempt to deflect or even to arouse this love that exists between my Beloved and me, to change it or to substitute it by enticing me to follow you before it awakens of its own accord. 6 Israel pleads: True, I am not worthy, but please remember how I followed You in the wilderness for forty years, and then entered the land. Has there ever been another nation like this that came up from the wilderness like columns of incense, perfumed with sweet myrrh [the merit of Avraham] and frankincense [the merit of Yitzchak], more aromatic than all the powders of a merchant [the merit of Yaakov]? 7 Behold, we carried the couch [Ark] of Shelomo [the One to whom all *shalom*-peace and *sheleimus*-perfection belong], surrounded by sixty [sixty ten-thousands = six hundred thousand] of the valiant warriors of Israel.¹³ 8 All of them were armed with swords and trained in the tactics of war; each had his sword upon his thigh to protect him from fears in the night. 9 In their merit, King Shelomo [the One to whom all *shalom*-peace and *sheleimus*-perfection belong] built Himself a palace from the cedars of Levanon [the holy Temple]. 10 He made [ornamented] its outer columns with silver, its couch [the Ark of the Covenant] with gold, its seat

cit.). Reb Noson adds that this refers to all generations and all the teachings of the *tzaddikim*: they remain with us forever.

Because even “after leaving them,” “I found the One my soul loves”—through the students of the *tzaddik* (LH, *Nezikin* 4:15).

13 “Behold, the couch of Shelomo, surrounded by sixty of the valiant warriors of Israel!” (Song of Songs 3:7). The sixty warriors represent the sixty tractates of the Talmud. To attain the

“sixty warriors”—to understand the laws of Torah found in the Talmud—we need to pray to God and ask Him to help us fulfill these laws (LH, *Shabbos* 6:8).

בְּשׁוֹשָׁנִים: יז עַד שְׁיִפּוּחַ הַיּוֹם וְנָסוּ הַצִּלְלִים סָב דְּמָה לָּךְ דּוֹדִי לְצִבִּי אוֹ לְעֶפְרָיִם הָאֵילִים עַל הָרֵי בְּתָר:

ג

א עַל מִשְׁכְּבִי בְלֵילוֹת בְּקִשְׁתִּי אֶת שְׂאֵהָבָה נִפְשִׁי בְּקִשְׁתִּי וְלֹא מִצָּאתִי: ב אָקוּמָה נָא וְאַסּוּבָבָה בְּעִיר בְּשׁוֹקִים וּבְרַחֲבוֹת אֲבִקְשָׁה אֶת שְׂאֵהָבָה נִפְשִׁי בְּקִשְׁתִּי וְלֹא מִצָּאתִי: ג מִצָּאוּנֵי הַשְּׂמָרִים הַסְּבָבִים בְּעִיר אֶת שְׂאֵהָבָה נִפְשִׁי רְאִיתָם: ד כִּמְעַט שְׁעֵבַרְתִּי מֵהֶם עַד שֶׁמִּצָּאתִי אֶת שְׂאֵהָבָה נִפְשִׁי אֲחֻזְתִּי וְלֹא אֲרַפְנוּ עַד שֶׁהִבִּיאֵתִי אֶל בֵּית אִמִּי וְאֶל חֹדֶר הַוּרְתִּי: ה הַשִּׁבְעֵתִי אֶתְכֶם בְּגוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם בְּצִבְאוֹת אוֹ בְּאֵילוֹת הַשָּׂדֶה אִם תַּעֲרִירוּ וְאִם תַּעֲוֹרוּ אֶת הָאֵהָבָה עַד שֶׁתַּחַפְּזִי: ו מִי זֹאת עֵלָה מִן הַמִּדְבָּר כְּתִימָרוֹת עֵשׂוֹן מְקַטְרֶת מוֹר וּלְבוֹנָה מִכַּל אֲבָקֶת רוּכָל: ז הִנֵּה מִטָּתוֹ שְׁלֹשְׁלֹמָה שְׁשִׁים גְּבָרִים סָבִיב לָהּ מִגַּבְרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ח כָּלֵם אֲחֻזִּי חָרַב מְלֻמְדֵי מְלַחְמָה אִישׁ חֲרָבוֹ עַל יְרוּכּוֹ מִפְּחַד בְּלֵילוֹת: ט אֲפַרְיוֹן עֵשָׂה לוֹ הַמְלִיךְ שְׁלֹמָה מִעֲצֵי הַלְבָנוֹן: י עֲמוּדָיו עֵשָׂה כֶּסֶף רְפִידָתוֹ

10 “Before the day draws to an end, and the shadows of evening begin to extend, turn like a gazelle or a young deer, over the mountains that separate us” (Song of Songs 2:17). On the physical plane, “the shadows of evening” refer to the late afternoon, the time that a person begins to tire near the end of the day. Reb Noson teaches that this description also alludes to midlife. In the morning, we recite *Shachris*, a long prayer with many parts, representing a person's youth when

he is full of vigor and strength. But in the afternoon, we recite *Minchah*, a much shorter prayer that represents middle age, when our strength begins to flag. Then we ask God to turn to us and give us strength (LH, *Minchah* 5:4-6). This idea applies to any time we begin serving God or undertake a new goal. We begin with vigor, but inevitably our resolve weakens. We must ask God to give us the strength to persevere.

11 “At night, on my bed, I sought the One my soul loves; I sought Him, but I did not find Him. Let me rise up now... let me search for the One my soul loves!” (Song of Songs 3:1-2). Even when I find myself surrounded by darkness and confusion, by doubts and challenges, and I do not

find God, I must keep on searching. I must get up and search, I must seek the One my soul loves and thirsts for (LH, *Minchah* 7:89; *ibid.*, *Geviyas Chov MiYesomin* 3:20). This includes searching for the true *tzaddik*, who will guide me on the path to God (*ibid.*, *Arvis* 4:21).

12 “Shortly after leaving them, I found the One my soul loves” (Song of Songs 3:4). “After leaving them” means that when we

lost Moshe and Aharon, we were fortunate to find their teachings alive through Yehoshua (Joshua), the student (*Rashi*, *loc.*

with purple wool, its inner sanctum inlaid with a love more intense¹⁴ than that of all the daughters of Yerushalayim. 11 Go forth, O daughters of Tziyon, and look upon Shelomo [HaShem] in His attribute of kingship; gaze upon the crown with which His mother [the nation of Israel] crowned Him on His wedding day at Sinai, and on the day His heart rejoiced in building the holy Temple!

IV

1 HaShem speaks: Behold, you are beautiful, My love, you are beautiful! Your eyes [righteous *tzaddikim*] are like doves safeguarded behind your veil of modesty; your hairs [simple folk] resemble a flock of goats trailing down from Mount Gilead. 2 Your teeth [soldiers] are like a flock of shorn sheep which have come up from the washing; all of them are paired, and not one is missing. 3 The prayers of your lips have the power to whiten scarlet threads [sins], and your speech [the oral teaching of the Torah which you faithfully transmit is delicate and fine; your temples [sages] behind your veil are filled with wisdom as a slice of pomegranate is filled with seeds.¹⁵ 4 Your neck [king] is like the tower of David, built with turrets, upon which hang a thousand shields, the armor of mighty warriors. 5 Your two breasts [*Mashiach ben Yoseph* and *Mashiach ben David*] are like two gazelles [Moshe and Aharon], twins of the female roe [*Shekhinah*] grazing among the roses. 6 Before the day draws to an end, and the shadows of evening begin to extend, I will make My way to Mount Myrrh [Mount Moriah] and to Frankincense Hill [the Temple Mount]. 7 There I will find you entirely beautiful, My beloved wife; there I will declare that you are altogether without blemish. 8 Come with Me from Levanon, My bride, come with Me from Levanon; come and see from the height of Amanah,¹⁶ from the peaks of Senir and Chermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountain lairs of leopards.¹⁷ 9 You have captivated My heart, My sister, My bride; you have captivated My heart with one of your eyes [your unquestioning faith], with one link of your necklace of good deeds. 10 How precious your love is to Me, My sister, My bride; how much better your love than the simulated effects of wine; the scent of your anointing oils is more enchanting than any incense spice. 11 My bride, your lips give forth sweet explanations of My *mitzvos*; honey and milk [the secret teachings of My Torah] are guarded under your tongue, and

17 “Come and see from the height of Amanah...from the dens of lions, from the mountain lairs of leopards” (Song of Songs 4:8). Despite the long and terrible exile, the Jews have remained faithful to God, and He has remained faithful

to us. Though we are surrounded by predators—the “lions” and “leopards” that represent the forces of evil—God always seeks the good in us, which will ultimately bring about the Redemption (LH, *Minchah* 7:94).

זָהָב מְרֻכָּבוֹ אֲרָגְמָן תּוֹכוֹ רְצוּף אֶהְבָּה מִבְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם: יֵא צְאִינָה וְרֵאִינָה בְּנוֹת צִיּוֹן בְּמִלְכָּךְ שְׁלֹמֹה בְּעֵטְרָךְ שְׁעֵטְרָךְ לֹא אִמּוֹ בְּיוֹם חֲתָנְתָּהּ וּבְיוֹם שְׂמֵחַת לְבוֹ:

ד

א הִנֵּה יָפָה רַעֲיָתִי הִנֵּה יָפָה עֵינֶיהָ יוֹנִים מִבְּעַד לְצַמְתָּהּ שְׁעָרָהּ כְּעֵדֶר הָעֵזִים שְׁגָלְשׁוּ מֵהָר גְּלָעַד: ב שְׁנֵיהָ כְּעֵדֶר הַקְּצוּבוֹת שְׁעָלוּ מִן הַרְחֻצָּה שְׁכָלֶם מִתְּאִימוֹת וְשִׁכְלָה אִין בָּהֶם: ג כְּחוּט הַשְּׁנֵי שְׂפָתֶיהָ וּמִדְּבָרֶיהָ נֶאֱוָה כְּפֶלַח הַרְמוֹן וְקִתְּהָ מִבְּעַד לְצַמְתָּהּ: ד כְּמִגְדֵּל דָּוִד צֹאֲרָהּ בְּנוֹי לְתַלְפִּיּוֹת אֶלְף הַמִּגָּן תִּלְוִי עָלָיו כֹּל שְׁלֹטֵי הַגְּבוּרִים: ה שְׁנֵי שְׁדֵינָה כְּשְׁנֵי עֶפְרַיִם תְּאֹמִי צְבִיָּה הַרְוֵעִים בְּשׁוֹשְׁנֵים: ו עַד שְׁיִפּוּחַ הַיּוֹם וְנָסוּ הַצְּלָלִים אֶלְהָ לִי אֶל הַר הַמּוֹר וְאֶל גְּבַעַת הַלְּבוֹנָה: ז כְּלָהּ יָפָה רַעֲיָתִי וּמוֹם אִין בָּהּ: ח אֲתִי מִלְּבָנוֹן כְּלָה אֲתִי מִלְּבָנוֹן תְּבוֹאִי תְשׁוּרִי מִרְאֵשׁ אֲמָנָה מִרְאֵשׁ שְׁנִיר וְחֶרְמוֹן מִמְּעַנּוֹת אֲרִיּוֹת מֵהַרְרֵי נְמָרִים: ט לְבַבְתָּנִי אַחֲתִי כְלָה לְבַבְתָּנִי בְּאַחַת מֵעֵינֶיהָ בְּאַחַד עֵנֶק מִצְוֹרֵיהָ: י מֵהָ יָפוֹ דְדִינָה אַחֲתִי כְלָה מֵהָ טְבוֹ דְדִינָה מִיִּין וְרִיחַ שְׁמִנֶיהָ מְכָל בְּשָׂמִים: יא נֹפֶת תִּטְפֹּנָה שְׂפָתוֹתֶיהָ כְּלָה דְבֵשׁ וְחֶלֶב תַּחַת לְשׁוֹנָהּ וְרִיחַ

14 “Its seat with *Argaman* (purple wool), its inner sanctum inlaid with a love more intense” (Song of Songs 3:10). Rebbe Nachman explains that the word *ARGaMaN* (אֲרָגְמָן, purple wool) is an acrostic for the names of the angels of the Chariot of God—*Uriel* (אֹרִיאֵל), *Rephael* (רִפְאֵל), *Gavriel* (גַּבְרִיאֵל), *Michael* (מִיכָאֵל), and *Nuriel* (נֹרִיאֵל). A person can

draw upon himself the support of these angels and learn to channel his love in a pure fashion. On the other hand, one who blemishes his deeds will find that he blemishes his sense of judgment and his ability to discern true love and affection. These fallen loves draw upon him the angels of the Other Side (LM II, 5:12).

15 “As a slice of pomegranate” (Song of Songs 4:3). The Sages teach, “Even your sinners are filled with *mitzvos* like a pomegranate is filled with seeds” (*Eruvin*

19a). Everyone, even the worst sinner, has good points within him. With that good, he can extricate himself from even the worst situation and evil.

16 “[There I will find you] entirely beautiful, My beloved wife; you are altogether without blemish. Come with Me from Levanon, My bride...come and see from the height of Amanah” (Song of Songs 4:7-8). *AMaNaH* (אֲמָנָה) is like *EMuNaH* (אִמּוּנָה, faith). *Rashi* explains that these verses teach us that the Jews will remain steadfast in their faith from the time they are exiled from the

Temple Mount until they return to it. Reb Nosen says that these verses refer to the steadfast faith that the Jews maintain throughout their exiles. When a Jew is strong in his faith, then his perception of God is as perfect and unblemished as a beautiful bride is to her groom. Such a Jew can sing and praise God for whatever he endures during his lifetime (LH, *Bekhor Beheimah Tehorah* 3:10).

the sweet scent of your garments is like the scent of Levanon. ¹² You are an enclosed garden, My sister, My bride; you are an enclosed spring, a sealed fountain. ¹³ Your offshoots are an orchard of pomegranates with all rare fruits, henna and nard [atonement for sins]. ¹⁴ Nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with many frankincense trees, myrrh and aloes, with all the finest spices. ¹⁵ You are a fountain that waters many gardens, a wellspring of living waters, ¹⁸ flowing down from Levanon. ¹⁶ Israel responds: Awake, O north wind, and come, south wind! Blow upon my garden that its perfumes waft afar; then my Beloved will come into His garden to partake of its choice fruits.

V

¹ HaShem answers: I have come to My garden, My sister, My bride! I have gathered My myrrh and My spice, I have partaken of My honeycomb with My honey, ¹⁹ I have drunk My wine with My milk. Partake, loved ones, drink, beloveds, and become intoxicated with My prophetic spirit. ² Israel speaks: That was long ago; now I am asleep in exile, and only my heart is awake; I dimly hear the sound of my Beloved knocking: ²⁰ “Open your heart to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My perfect twin, for My head is filled with dew and My locks with the drops of the night!” ³ But in my sleep, I answer: “I have taken off my robe, how shall I put it on again?” HaShem answers: “I, too, have washed My feet, how shall I soil them?” ⁴ In one more attempt to awaken me, my Beloved stretched His hand through the portal; my insides longed for Him. ⁵ I arose to open for my Beloved, and my hands once again dripped with myrrh [good deeds], and my fingers with the finest myrrh [the merit of Avraham], overflowing onto the handles of the door. ⁶ But it was already too late, for when I opened to my Beloved; my Beloved had already withdrawn Himself and was gone; my soul had departed when He spoke on Sinai; now I searched for Him and could not find Him; I called Him, but He would not answer me. ⁷ The watchmen who patrol the city [the nations who destroyed the Temple in Yerushalayim] struck me and wounded me; the guardians of the walls stripped me of my mantle. ²¹ ⁸ I now caution you, O daughters

21 “My soul had departed when He spoke; now I searched for Him and could not find Him; I called Him, but He would not answer me. The watchmen who patrol the city struck me and wounded me; the guardians of the walls stripped me of my mantle” (Song of Songs 5:6-7). Rebbe Nachman applies these verses to the person who recites a blessing. “My soul had departed”—this is when the person recites the blessing. At that time, though, “I searched for Him and could not find Him; I called Him but

He would not answer me.” Why? Because the person is not mentally present at the time he recites the blessing, and he thinks disqualifying thoughts. Consequently, “The watchmen who patrol the city struck me and wounded me; the guardians of the walls stripped me of my mantle.” When a person does not concentrate on his blessing, the Divine presence does not receive sustenance from the blessing. As a result, we receive our sustenance with great strain and struggle (LM I, 37:6).

שְׁלֹמֹתֶיךָ כְּרִיחַ לְבָנוֹן: יב גֹן נְעוּל אַחֲתֵי כֹלָה גַל נְעוּל מַעֲנָן חֲתוּם: יג שְׁלֹחֶיךָ פְּרָדִים רְמוּנִים עִם פְּרֵי מְגֻדִים כְּפָרִים עִם נְרָדִים: יד גֵּרֵד וְכַרְכֹּם קִנְיָה וְקִנְמוֹן עִם כָּל עֵצֵי לְבוֹנָה מִזֶּה וְאֶהְלוֹת עִם כָּל רֵאשֵׁי בְשָׂמִים: טו מַעֲנָן גְּנִים בְּאֵר מַיִם חַיִּים וְנִזְלִים מִן לְבָנוֹן: טז עוֹרֵי צַפּוֹן וּבֹאֵי תֵימָן הַפִּיחִי גִנִּי יִזְלוּ בְשָׂמָיו יָבֵא דוֹדִי לִגְנוֹ וְיֹאכַל פְּרֵי מְגֻדָיו:

ה

א בָּאתִי לִגְנֵי אַחֲתֵי כֹלָה אֲרִיתִי מוֹרֵי עִם בְּשָׂמֵי אַכְלֵתִי יַעֲרֵי עִם דְּבַשִּׁי שְׁתִּיתִי יַיִנִי עִם חֲלָבֵי אֶכְלוּ רַעִים שְׁתוּ וְשָׁכְרוּ דוֹדִים: ב אָנִי יִשְׁנָה וְלִבִּי עֵר קוֹל דוֹדִי דוֹפֵק פֶּתַחִי לִי אַחֲתֵי רַעֲיָתִי יוֹנְתִי תַמְתִּי שְׂרֹאשֵׁי נִמְלֵא טָל קִנְצוֹתַי רְסִיסֵי לִילָה: ג פֶּשֶׁטוֹתַי אֶת כְּתָנְתִּי אֵיכָכָה אֶלְבֶּשֶׁנָּה רַחֲצֵתִי אֶת רַגְלֵי אֵיכָכָה אֲטַנְּפָם: ד דוֹדִי שְׁלַח יָדוֹ מִן הַחֹר וּמַעֲיֵי הַמּוֹ עָלָיו: ה קַמְתִּי אָנִי לִפְתַּח לְדוֹדִי וְיָדִי נָטְפוּ מוֹר וְאֶצְבְּעוֹתַי מוֹר עֵבֶר עַל כַּפּוֹת הַמְּנַעוּל: ו פֶּתַחְתִּי אָנִי לְדוֹדִי וְדוֹדִי חִמַּק עֵבֶר וּנְפִשִׁי יִצְאָה בְּדַבְּרוֹ בַּקְשָׁתִיהוּ וְלֹא מִצְאָתִיהוּ קִרְאָתוֹ וְלֹא עֲנָנִי: ז מִצְאָנִי הַשְׂמֵרִים הַסְּכָבִים בְּעִיר הַכּוֹנֵי פֶצְעוֹנֵי נִשְׂאוּ אֶת רִדְדֵי מַעְלֵי שְׂמֵרֵי הַחֹמוֹת: ח הַשְּׂבִיעֵתִי אֶתְכֶם בְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלָּם אִם תִּמְצָאוּ

18 “A wellspring of living waters” (Song of Songs 4:15). The Midrash teaches that the word *be'er* (בַּאֲרַ, wellspring) appears forty-eight times in the Torah, paralleling

the forty-eight characteristics that are necessary to acquire the Torah (see *Avos* 6:5-6). For the Torah is the wellspring of life (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 4:15:1).

19 “I have come to My garden...I have partaken of My honeycomb with My honey” (Song of Songs 5:1). *Rashi* explains this verse as speaking of the time the Temple was dedicated. God had partaken of the honeycomb (a tree) and the honey

(the fruit)—that is, He accepted the unfit along with the fit. Reb Noson explains this verse as indicating that God accepts the person (the fruit) and forgives his sins (the unfit) (LH, *Orlah* 4:14).

20 “The sound of my Beloved knocking” (Song of Songs 5:2). Rebbe Nachman teaches that the pulse knocks and beats in a person. Sometimes it prompts him toward God’s service, as in “The sound of my Beloved knocking,” and sometimes it prompts him to sin, God forbid. This is because the pulse comes from the breath, and the breath comes from the air by means of speech. According to one’s speech, such is the nature of the pulse, for good or the opposite (LM I, 160).

When a person speaks, the breath he emits fills the air around him. His speech thus becomes a portion of the air that

another person breathes. If the words are good, the other person breathes “clean” air and this produces a positive pulse, prompting him to serve God. If, on the other hand, the words are evil, the other person breathes “polluted” air and this produces a negative pulse, prompting him to sin. The speaker also breathes the air filled with the words of his own speech and is influenced accordingly. As Rebbe Nachman teaches elsewhere, evil speech brings the speaker to sin. Therefore one must be very careful with the words he utters (*Rebbe Nachman’s Wisdom* #237).

of Yerushalayim: If you find my Beloved, what will you tell Him? That I am lovesick for Him and can hardly go on. ⁹ The nations ask: What distinguishes your Beloved from any other beloved, O most beautiful of women? What distinguishes your Beloved from any other beloved, that you caution us so? ¹⁰ Israel answers: My Beloved harmonizes pure white [loving-kindness] and rosy red [strict justice]; He is distinguished among the tens of thousands of His supernal hosts. ¹¹ The crown on His head [the Divine Torah] is of the purest gold; the locks of His hair [the laws of the Torah] flow down in mounds, black as a raven [obscure and enigmatic to the uninitiated]. ¹² His eyes [the eyes of Divine providence] are like doves beside flowing streams of water [mercy], washed in milky white [always seeking to establish innocence], well fitted in their settings. ¹³ His cheeks [the sapphire tablets upon which the Ten Commandments are inscribed] are like a bed of balsam spices, producing sweet perfumes; His lips [the lips of the prophets who speak in HaShem's Name] are like roses [whose fragrance wafts over long distances, for they foretell what will take place in the end of days], flowing with the finest myrrh [heralding untold goodness and eternal salvation]. ¹⁴ His hands [the heavenly spheres, His handiwork,] are like wheels of gold studded with topaz [bright and luminous like gold, and filled with stars that give off light]; His abdomen [the inner teaching of the Torah] is like polished ivory overlaid with sapphires [even the stories of the Torah reveal the deepest mysteries of God's plan]. ¹⁵ His legs [the wonders of the physical world] are like pillars of marble [do not read only *shesh*-marble, but *shesh*-six, the six directions of space], set upon sockets of fine gold;²² His appearance is like Lebanon, chosen of all cedars. ¹⁶ His mouth is sweet; He is altogether desirable; this is my Beloved, this is my Friend, O daughters of Yerushalayim!

VI

¹ The nations ask: Where has your Beloved gone, O most beautiful of women? Where has your Beloved turned, and we shall seek Him with you! ² Israel answers: My Beloved has gone down to His garden, to the beds of balsam spices, to graze in foreign gardens and to collect roses [precious lost souls]. ³ Now I know that I am still my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine; He grazes among the roses. ⁴ HaShem speaks: You are as beautiful, My beloved wife, as Tirtzah²³ [when you *tirtzeh*-consent to obey My will], as beautiful as Yerushalayim, awesome as when your bannered hosts marched in the wilderness. ⁵ Turn your eyes [righteous *tzaddikim*] away from Me, for they enchant Me;²⁴ your hairs [simple folk] resemble a flock of goats trailing down from Mount Gilead. ⁶ Your teeth [soldiers] are like a flock of sheep which have come up from the washing; all of them are paired, and not one is missing. ⁷ Your temples [sages] are as a slice of pomegranate behind your veil of modesty. ⁸ There are sixty queens [philosophies], eighty concubines [sciences], and maidens [nation-states] without number. ⁹ But My dove, My perfect twin, is unique; she is the only one of her Mother, the chosen of She who bore her; maidens behold her and acclaim her; queens and concubines praise her: ¹⁰ Who is this nation, transparent like the dawn, beautiful as the moon, bright as

את דודי מה תגידו לו שחולת אהבה אני: ט מה דודך מדוד היפה בנשים מה דודך מדוד שפכה השבעתנו: י דודי צח ואדום דגול מרבבה: יא ראשו פתם פז קוצותיו תלתלים שחורות פערב: יב עיניו פיונים על אפיקי מים רחצות בקבל ישבות על מילאת: יג לחיו פערוגת הבשם מגדלות מרקחים שפתותיו שושנים נטפות מור עבר: יד ידיו גלילי זהב ממלאים פתריש מעיו עשת שן מעלפת ספירים: טו שוקיו עמודי יש מוסדים על אדני פז מראהו פלפון בחור פארזים: טז חכו ממתקים וכלו מחמדים זה דודי וזה רעי בנות ירושלם:

1

א אנה הלך דודך היפה בנשים אנה פנה דודך ונבקשנו עמה: ב דודי ירד לגנו לערוגות הבשם לרעות בגנים וללקט שושנים: ג אני לדודי ודודי לי הרעה בשושנים: ד יפה את רעיתי פתרצה נאנה פירושלם אימה פנדגלות: ה הסבי עיניך מנגדי שהם הרהיבני שערך פערך העזים שגלשו מן הגלעד: ו שניך פערך הרחלים שעלו מן הרחצה שכלם מתאימות ושפלה אין בהם: ז פפלח הרמון רקתך מבעד לצמתך: ח ששים המה מלכות ושמינים פילגשים ועלמות אין מספר: ט אחת היא יונתי תמתי אחת היא לאמה ברה היא לילדתה ראוה בנות ויאשרוה מלכות ופילגשים ויהללוה: י מי זאת הנשקפה כמו

²² “His legs are like pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold” (Song of Songs 5:15). According to the Midrash, the “legs” are the Torah, which is very solid and can support a person—indeed, the entire world (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 5:15:1). Reb Noson adds that this is the Oral Torah, which is transmitted by the

tzaddikim throughout the generations. The Oral Torah supplies us with the advice that helps us stand strong in our lives and remain steadfast in our commitments. These pillars are all set upon sockets of fine gold—the Written Torah (LH, *Rosh Chodesh* 7:53).

²³ “You are as beautiful, My beloved wife, as Tirtzah” (Song of Songs 6:4). The Midrash learns from this verse that when you possess the desire (*tirtzah*, תרצה) and the will to serve God, you do not need anything from anyone (*Shir HaShirim*

Rabbah 6:4:2). Reb Noson adds that with desire and yearning, a person can direct his will and willpower to accomplish incredible things in his life (LH, *Netilas Yadayim LiSeudah* 6:46-49).

²⁴ “Turn your eyes away from Me, for they enchant Me” (Song of Songs 6:5). Because of the great love that God displayed toward the Jews in the First Temple, they became arrogant and rebelled against Him. Therefore several items were not reinstated in the Second Temple, including the Ark, the Ark cover, and the *Keruvim* (*Rashi*, loc. cit.). Reb Noson comments that a person must

exercise extreme caution when trying to draw close to God. He must always yearn to draw close, yet never make the mistake of thinking that he is already close. Nor should one think that he is too distant from God. In both cases, he should understand that God is *always* with him, whether he feels close or distant (*Shiluach HaKen* 5:16).

the sun, awesome as bannered hosts marching in the wilderness? 11 I will descend now to the nut garden,²⁵ to behold the fruits of the river-valley, to see whether the vine has blossomed, whether the pomegranates are in flower. 12 Israel says: In exile, I did not know [I became completely oblivious to] my soul; but the Generous One made me—my people—chariots for the *Shekhinah*.

VII

1 The prophets speak: Return to HaShem, return to your perfection, O Shulamitis [you who are *sheleimah*-perfect in your faith]! Return, return, so that we may describe to you the great vision concerning your future and the perfection we see in store for you, O Shulamitis! If you will return, you will see wonders greater than those experienced by Israel in their double encampment around the *Mishkan* in the wilderness.²⁶ 2 How beautiful your footsteps [the souls that will incarnate in the last generation when you will ascend to the holy Temple] in pilgrims' sandals, O daughter of the Generous One; the curves of your thighs [the offspring of your loins; students of Torah] are like precious jewels, the work of a master craftsman. 3 Your navel [*Sanhedrin*] is like a round goblet of wine which never lacks the proper blend of compassion and justice; your belly [oral tradition] is like a mound of tithed wheat surrounded by a hedge of roses [the decrees and ordinances of the sages]. 4 Your two breasts [*Mashiach ben Yoseph* and *Mashiach ben David*] are like two fawns [Moshe and Aharon], twins of the female roe [*Shekhinah*]. 5 Your neck [holy Temple] is like a tower of white ivory [forgiveness]; your eyes are like pools of Cheshbon by the gates of Bas-Rabim [your righteous *tzaddikim* shed pools of tears when they make a *cheshbon ha'nefesh* (soul-accounting) in private, as well as when they correct their people in the *shaar bas-rabim* (public gate)]; your nose is like the tower of Levanon facing Damascus [your panel of judges is upright when it foresees the eastern border of Yerushalayim extending from the tower of Levanon (holy Temple) to far-off Damascus].²⁷ 6 Your head [king] whom you place above you is like Mount Carmel, and the hair [prophetic inspiration] that flows down from your head is like *ARGaMaN* [*Uriel*, *Raphael*, *Gavriel*, *Michael*, and *Nuriel*]; the supreme King is bound to you in the merit of your hastening to serve Him. 7 How beautiful and how pleasant you are when you attain sublime love for your King even through physical delights! 8 This, your stature, is likened to a palm tree, and your breasts to clusters [when you reach your full stature, your priests stand upright like towering palms to shower blessings upon you, while your breasts (congregations) bend their faces down to the ground like clusters heavy with dates]. 9 I [Israel] said: I will ascend the palm tree [I yearn to rise up to my full spiritual stature, to resemble a towering palm]; but what if I grasp only its lower branches? The prophets respond: Let your breasts [teachers] be like full clusters of the vine [filled with all the secrets of the Torah], and the fragrance of your breath like apples [*Mashiach ben David*; the *ruach*-spirit of your nostrils will then breathe forth the fragrance of the holy orchard of apples (the Garden of Eden) to enliven your soul]. 10 Make your palate pour out prayer like the finest old wine;²⁸ serve my Beloved by following in the footsteps of the upright ones [prophets] who roused the dead from their sleep with their lips. 11 Israel exclaims: I am my Beloved's, and His desire is for me! 12 Come, my Beloved, let us go out to the field [exile]; let

שֶׁחֹר יָפָה כְּלִבְנָה בָּרָה בַּחֲמָה אֵימָה בְּנִדְגָלוֹת: יֵא אֶל גַּנַּת אֶגְוֹז יִרְדְּתִי לְרֵאוֹת
בְּאֵבֵי הַנַּחַל לְרֵאוֹת הַפְּרָחָה הַגֶּפֶן הַנִּצּוֹ הַרְמְנִים: יב לֹא יָדַעְתִּי נַפְשִׁי שְׂמִתָּנִי
מִרְכָּבוֹת עַמִּי נָדִיב:

ז

א שׁוֹבֵי שׁוֹבֵי הַשְּׁוֹלְמִית שׁוֹבֵי וְנִחְזָה בָּךְ מֵה תִּחְזֹו בְּשׁוֹלְמִית כְּמַחֲלַת
הַמַּחְנִים: ב מֵה יָפוּ פְעָמֶיךָ בְּנַעֲלִים בֵּית נָדִיב חֲמוּקֵי יִרְכִיבָה כְּמוֹ הַלְּאִים
מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי אָמֹן: ג שִׁרְרָה אֲגֹן הַסֵּהר אֶל יַחְסֹר הַמְּזֹג בְּטִנְיָה עֲרַמַת חֲטִים
סוּגָה בְּשׁוֹשְׁנִים: ד שְׁנֵי שְׂדֵיךָ פְּשָׁנֵי עֶפְרַיִם תְּאָמִי צְבִיָּה: ה צִנְאוּרָה כְּמַגְדָּל
הַשֵּׁן עֵינֶיךָ בְּרִכּוֹת בְּחֻשְׁבוֹן עַל שַׁעַר בֵּית רַבִּים אַפְּךָ כְּמַגְדָּל הַלְּבָנוֹן צוּפָה
פְּנֵי דְמָשֶׁק: ו רֵאשִׁיךָ עַלֶיךָ כְּפַרְמֶל וְדַלֶּת רֵאשִׁיךָ כְּאַרְגָּמֹן מְלֶךְ אֲסוּר בְּרֵהֲטִים:
ז מֵה יִפִּית וּמֵה נַעֲמַת אֶהְבֶּה בַּתְּעַנּוּגִים: ח זֹאת קוֹמְתָה דְמָתָה לְתִמְרָה וְשְׂדֵיךָ
לְאַשְׁכְּלוֹת: ט אֲמַרְתִּי אֶעֱלֶה בַּתְּמָר אַחְזָה בְּסִסְנָנֵי וְיֵהִיו נֹא שְׂדֵיךָ כְּאַשְׁכְּלוֹת
הַגֶּפֶן וְרִיחַ אַפְּךָ פִּתְפוּחִים: י וְחִכְךָ כִּינּוֹן הַטּוֹב הוֹלֵךְ לְדוּדֵי לְמִישְׁרִים דּוֹבֵב
שְׂפָתַי יִשְׁנִים: יא אֲנִי לְדוּדֵי וְעַלֵי תְשׁוּקָתוֹ: יב לְכֵה דוּדֵי נִצָּא הַשְּׂדֵה גְלִינָה

25 “I will descend now to the nut garden” (Song of Songs 6:11). The word *egoz* (אגוז, nut) specifically refers to a walnut. Our Sages explain why the Jewish people are compared to a walnut. A walnut that falls

into mud and gets dirty can be washed off and become fit to eat once more. So too, even if the Jews become soiled with sin, *Yom Kippur* cleanses them completely (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 6:1:11).

26 “Return, return, O Shulamitis! Return, return, so that we may describe to you the great vision and the perfection we see in store for you, O Shulamitis, in their double encampment” (Song of Songs 7:1). *Rashi* explains this verse as the nations calling to the Jews, “Leave God and follow us [the nations]!” But the Jews reply, “What can compare to our

encampment in the desert? What can you offer us that we do not already have?!” In the encampment of the Jews in the desert around the *Mishkan*, they learned the value of strengthening themselves at all times by following the Torah and *mitzvos* of God and becoming steadfast in their faith (LH, *Birkhos HaPeiros* 5:20).

27 “Your nose is like the tower of Levanon facing Damascus” (Song of Songs 7:5). *Levanon* refers to the Temple that stood in the midst of Jerusalem.

The Midrash teaches that in the future, Jerusalem will grow and increase in space, and spread out all the way to Damascus! (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 6:5:2).

28 “Make your palate like the finest old wine” (Song of Songs 7:10). This alludes to the joy of *Purim*. Wine can be intoxicating and sway a person to sin, as it did to Adam when he ate from the Tree of Knowledge (which, according to

one opinion, was a grapevine; see *Sanhedrin* 70a). However, when a person drinks in holiness, as on *Purim*, he elicits great rectifications for the sin of Adam, as well as for his own sins (LH, *Tefillin* 6:28).

us lodge in the villages of the nations. ¹³ Let us arise early to the vineyards [synagogues]; let us see if the vine has flowered, if the grape blossoms have opened, if the pomegranates have bloomed; there I will offer my love to You.²⁹ ¹⁴ Behold, the mandrakes [simple folk] have already begun to yield their fragrance; and on our doorsteps are all kinds of rare fruits [exceptional souls], new as well as old, which I have stored up for You, my Beloved.

VIII

1 Israel says to HaShem, who calls us His sister: O that You would be like a brother to me, nursing from our Mother's breasts! Then even if I would find You outside, I would kiss You in public and no one could taunt me. 2 I would then lead You and bring You into our Mother's House [the third and final Temple] so that You could instruct me in Your ancient ways; I would serve You from my spiced wine and pomegranate juice stored away for the righteous. 3 O that His left hand [justice] would support my head, and His right hand [unconditional love] embrace me! 4 Again I caution you, O daughters of Yerushalayim, why would you attempt to deflect or even to arouse this love before it awakens of its own accord? It will not avail you. 5 Israel pleads with HaShem: True, I am not worthy, but please consider: Is there another nation like this, ready to ascend from the wilderness of exile, cleaving joyously to her Beloved? Under the apple tree [Mount Sinai], I aroused You [Your love for me]. There as Your mother I labored, there as the one who bore You, I labored to birth Your Torah and Your Name to the world. 6 Therefore I beg You: Set me as a seal upon Your heart, as a seal upon Your arm never to forget me³⁰—for love [my love for You] is as fierce as death [I accept death rather than forget Your love], jealousy is as harsh as the grave; its [love's] coals are fiery coals, producing a flame of the Divine that can never be extinguished.³¹ 7 HaShem answers: Many waters [the collective efforts of all the nations of the world] cannot extinguish the love [My love for Israel], nor can floods drown it [their love for Me; not through tortures and certainly not through enticements].³² Even when a man [mankind] will wake up to the truth in the World to Come, and offer all his worldly wealth for the sake of this love, he will be sorely ashamed [for it will be too late]. 8 Israel's words to HaShem after the Final Redemption, concerning those souls which did not awaken in time: We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister on the day she shall be spoken for? 9 HaShem answers: If only she be found strong in her faith like a wall, we shall build upon her a castle of silver [kesef-silver = *kisufim*-true yearning and aspiration]. But if she be vacillating like a door, we will enclose her grave with cedar. 10 The little sister says: I am a wall [persevering in my faith], and my breasts are like strong towers; since my only desire is to serve Him

³² "Many waters cannot extinguish the love, nor can floods drown it" (Song of Songs 8:7). The "many waters" are the nations of the world, which attempt to turn the Jews away from God (*Rashi*, loc. cit.). Reb Noson teaches that other

nations cannot quell the great desire and yearning that the Jews have for God, because the Jews' desire for God outweighs any attraction the nations can offer (see LH, *Birkhos HaShachar* 5:44).

בכפרים: יג נשפיהם לכרמים נראה אם פרחו הגפן פתח הסמדר הנצו
קרמונים שם אתנו את דדי לה: יד הדודאים נתנו ריח ועל פתחינו כל מגדים
חדשים גם ישנים דודי צפנתי לה:

ח

א מי יתנה כפח לי יונק שדי אמי אמצאה בחוץ אשקה גם לא יבוזו לי:
ב אנהגה אביאה אל בית אמי תלמדני אשקה מיין הרקח מעיסים רמני:
ג שמאלו תחת ראשי וימינו תחבקני: ד השבעתי אתכם בגות ירושלם מה
תעירו ומה תעזרו את האהבה עד שתחפץ: ה מי זאת עלה מן המדבר
מתרפקת על דודה תחת התפוח עורתי שמה חבלתה אמה שמה חבלה
לקדה: ו שימיני כחותם על לבך כחותם על זרועה כי עזה כמות אהבה
קשה כשואל קנאה רשפיה רשפי אש שלהבתי: ז מים רבים לא יוכלו
לכבות את האהבה ונהרות לא ישטפוה אם יתן איש את כל הון ביתו
באהבה בוז יבוזו לו: ח אחות לנו קטנה ושדים אין לה מה נעשה לאחנתנו
ביום שידבר בה: ט אם חומה היא נבנה עליה טירת כסף ואם דלת היא
נצור עליה לוח ארז: י אני חומה ושדי כמגדלות אז הייתי בעיניו כמוצאת

²⁹ "Come, my Beloved, let us go out to the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us arise early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine has flowered, if the grape blossoms have opened, if the pomegranates have bloomed; there I will offer my love to You" (Song of Song 7:12-13). The Hebrew word *KeFaRIM* (כפרים, villages) is similar to *KoFRIM* (כופרים, nonbelievers). The Jews prayed to God, "Look at those nonbelievers who turned away from You, yet You still want them to draw close to You." "Let us arise early to the vineyards"—these are the

synagogues and study halls—"let us see if the vine has flowered"—these are the students of Torah—"if the grape blossoms have opened"—these are the students of Mishnah—"if the pomegranates have bloomed"—these are the students of Talmud (*Rashi* on Song of Songs 7:12-13). Reb Noson teaches that through our Torah study, we can influence everyone to return to God, for we will be able to draw the proper advice on how to reveal this love of God to all (LH, *Shabbos* 7:20; *ibid.*, *Eiruvey Techumin* 5:37-38).

³⁰ "Set me as a seal upon Your heart, as a seal upon Your arm" (Song of Songs 8:6). Reb Noson established a small printing press in his home in Breslov to circumvent the censorship laws of the Russian czar. In several places in *Likutey Halakhos*, he writes about the abundant kindness of God, who gave

us this marvelous invention so we can print Torah teachings and not forget His Torah. In one of his discourses, Reb Noson compares the printing press to a seal, saying that we ask of God to imprint us upon His heart and arm in order to become engraved with His love (LH, *Yayin Nesekh* 3:7).

³¹ "A flame of the Divine" (Song of Songs 8:6). Deep down, a Jew always has a burning desire to connect with God.

Therefore, no matter the obstacles that he faces, he will always, somehow, seek God (LH, *Gezelah* 5:17).

forever after, may I be found worthy in His eyes of eternal peace! 11 Israel says: Shelomo [the One to whom all *shalom*-peace and *sheleimus*-perfection belong] had a vineyard in Bal-Hamon [Yerushalayim, at the hub of *hamon*-many empires]; while I was in exile from my land, He handed the vineyard over to caretakers [foreign kings]; each one was to pay one thousand pieces of silver for the use of its fruits. 12 Now that I have returned to Yerushalayim and my vineyard, which is mine, is before me, the one thousand goes directly to You, O Shelomo, while two hundred goes to the caretakers who guarded its fruit and defended my right to return home.³³ 13 HaShem says: My beloved, even when you dwell in foreign gardens, the companions [angels and righteous *tzaddikim* in heaven] listen to your voice speaking Torah and pouring your heart out to Me in prayer. Let Me hear you! 14 Israel prays: Flee quickly, my Beloved! In Your haste to redeem me, be like a gazelle or a young deer on mountains of heavenly incense [Mount Moriah and the holy Temple]! O how sweet the fragrance of Your Name, like precious oil poured forth!

Master of all worlds! May it be in accordance with Your will, HaShem our God and God of our ancestors, that in the merit of the Song of Songs which I have read and learned—for it is a Holy of Holies—in the merit of its verses, its words, its letters, its vowels, and its tropes; in the merit of its Divine Names, its permutations, and its allusions; in the merit of the holy, pure, and awesome mysteries that are derived from it—let this be a time of compassion, a time when You listen and hear, when we call upon You and You answer, when we entreat You and You respond.

May the reading and learning of the Song of Songs rise up and be regarded before You as though we comprehended all the wondrous and awesome mysteries that are enclosed and sealed in it, in all their details. May we also merit to bind ourselves to the place from which all spirits and souls are hewn, as though we had completed all that is incumbent upon us to achieve, whether in this lifetime or any other. May we also be counted among those who merit to ascend to the World to Come, together with all the other righteous and devoted servants of HaShem. Please bring all our heartfelt desires to fruition for our benefit. Be with our hearts and speech when we think, and with our hands when we work. Send blessing, success, and expansion into all our endeavors. Raise us up from the dust of exile, and lift us from the dregs. Elevate us, and restore Your Divine presence to Your holy city, soon, in our days, *amen*.

שְׁלוֹם: יֵא כָרָם הִיָּה לְשִׁלְמוֹה בְּבַעַל הַמוֹן נָתַן אֶת הַכָּרֶם לְנֹטְרִים אִישׁ יָבֵא בְּפָרְיוֹ אֶלְפֵי כֶסֶף: יב כְּרָמִי שְׁלִי לְפָנַי הָאֶלְפֵי לָךְ שְׁלֵמָה וּמֵאֲתִים לְנֹטְרִים אֶת פָּרְיוֹ: יג הַיּוֹשֶׁבֶת בְּגַנִּים חֲבָרִים מְקַשְׁיָבִים לְקוֹלֵךְ הַשְּׂמִיעִינִי: יד בְּרַח דּוֹדִי וּדְמָה לָךְ לְצִבִּי אוֹ לְעֶפֶר הָאֵילִים עַל הָרֵי בְשָׂמִים:

רבוֹן כָּל הָעוֹלָמִים, יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שְׁבֻזְכוֹת שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר קָרִיתִי וְלִמְדָתִי, שֶׁהוּא קֹדֶשׁ קְדָשִׁים, בְּזֻכוֹת פְּסוּקֵינוּ, וּבְזֻכוֹת תְּבוּלוֹתֵינוּ, וּבְזֻכוֹת אוֹתֵינוּ, וּבְזֻכוֹת נִקְדוּתֵנוּ, וּבְזֻכוֹת טְעָמֵנוּ, וּבְזֻכוֹת שְׂמוֹתֵנוּ וְצִוּוּתֵנוּ וְרִמְזוֹתֵנוּ וְסוּדוּתֵנוּ הַקְדוּשִׁים וְהַטְהוּרִים הַנוֹרָאִים הַיּוֹצְאִים מִמֶּנּוּ, שֶׁתְּהֵא שְׁעָה זוֹ שְׁעַת רַחֲמִים, שְׁעַת הַקְּשָׁבָה, שְׁעַת הָאֲזָנָה, וְנִקְרָאָה וְתַעֲנֵנוּ, נַעֲתִיר לָךְ וְהֶעֱתֵר לָנוּ.

שִׁיְהִי עוֹלָה קְרִיאַת שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים כְּאֵלוֹ הַשְּׁגָנוֹ כָּל הַסּוּדוֹת הַנִּפְלְאוֹת וְהַנוֹרָאוֹת אֲשֶׁר הֵם חֲתוּמִים בּוֹ בְּכָל תְּנָאִיו, וְנִזְכָּה לְמָקוֹם שֶׁהַנִּפְשׁוֹת, וְהַרוּחוֹת וְהַנְּשָׁמוֹת, נִחְצְבוֹת מִשָּׁם, וְכֵאלוֹ עָשִׂינוּ כָּל מָה שֶׁמְטַל עָלֵינוּ לְהַשִּׁיג בֵּין בְּגִלְגוּל זֶה, בֵּין בְּגִלְגוּלִים אֲחֵר, וְלִהְיוֹת מִן הָעוֹלָם וְהַזְּכוּת לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, עִם שְׂאֵר צְדִיקִים וְחַסִּידִים. וּמֵלֵא כָּל מִשְׁאֵלוֹת לְבַנו לְטוֹבָה, וְתִהְיֶה עִם לְבַבְנוּ וְאִמְרֵי פִינוּ בְּעַת מַחְשְׁבוֹתֵינוּ, וְעִם יְדֵינוּ בְּעַת מַעֲבָדֵינוּ, וְתִשְׁלַח בְּרַכָּה, הַצְּלַחָה וְהַרוּחָה, בְּכָל מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵינוּ, וּמַעֲפָר תְּקִימָנוּ, וּמֵאֲשָׁפוֹת דְּלוּתֵנוּ תִרְוַמְנוּ, וְתִשִּׁיב שְׂכִינְתְּךָ לְעִיר קְדֻשָּׁה בְּמְהֵרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ, אָמֵן:

³³ “The one thousand goes directly to You, O Shelomo, while two hundred goes to the caretakers who guarded its fruit” (Song of Songs 8:12). Rebbe Nachman spoke about the great light that illumines from above. This awesome light is referred to as *eleph* (one thousand), since it is too bright and powerful for the average person to acquire. Only a

great *tzaddik* who is able to divide the thousands into hundreds can divide this light into smaller portions that average people can grasp. Then they can receive it, a little at a time (*Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom* #93). This light of the *tzaddik* can be very intense, but the *tzaddik* filters it so that everyone can glimpse God's greatness (cf. LH, *Pesach* 9:33).

If you did not have time to read the Song of Songs in its entirety before receiving *Shabbos*, say these four verses whose initials form the acronym YaAKoV:

Yod: O that He would kiss me again with the kisses of His mouth [O that He would reveal the secrets of His Torah to me as He began to do at Sinai]; **Your spiritual love is far more precious to me than wine** [all the pleasures of this world].

Ayin: Awake, O north wind, and come, south wind! Blow upon my garden that its perfumes waft afar; then my Beloved will come into His garden to partake of its choice fruits.

Kof: Behold, the call of my Beloved! He is coming to redeem me before the appointed time; He is leaping over the mountains in the merit of the Patriarchs, He is springing over the hills in the merit of the Matriarchs.

Beis: I have come to My garden, My sister, My bride! I have gathered My myrrh and My spice, I have partaken of My honeycomb with My honey, I have drunk My wine with My milk. Partake, loved ones, drink, beloveds, and become intoxicated with My prophetic spirit.

מי שלא היה לו פנאי לקרוא שיר השירים כולו קודם קבלת שבת, יאמר אלו ארבע פסוקים שסימנם "יעקב":

ישקני מנשיקות פיהו כי טובים דדיך מיין:

עורי צפון ובואי תימן הפיחי גני יזלו בשמיו יבא דודי
לגנו ויאכל פרי מגדיו:

קול דודי הנה זה בא מדלג על ההרים מקפץ על הגבעות:

באתי לגני אחתי כלה אריתי מורי עם בשמי אכלתי יערי
עם דבשי שתיתי ייני עם חלבי אכלו רעים שתו ושכרו
דודים: