

THE TZETIL KATAN
(The Short List)
by R. Elimelech of Lizensk, ztk'l

*These are the things that a man should do,
so that he live in the Afterlife:*

THINK OF FULFILLING THE MITZVAH OF KIDDUSH HASHEM

1. At every moment and instant that he is away from Torah study, and especially when he sits idle alone in his room or lies on his bed and is unable to sleep, let him focus his thought on the positive commandment to act "so that I will be sanctified among the children of Israel" (Leviticus 22:32). Thus he should imagine and conceive in his mind as if a great and awesome fire is blazing before him to the very heart of heaven; and he, for the sake of sanctifying the name of the blessed Lord, breaks his very nature and throws himself into the flames, so that His name will be sanctified. The Almighty always links up a good intention to a good deed. Consequently, he won't be sitting or lying idly, but will be fulfilling a positive commandment of the Torah.

**THE PROPER WAY OF FULFILLING THE MITZVAH OF
KERIAT SHEMA AND SHEMONEH ESSREH**

2. During the first sentence of Shma yisrael and the first benediction of the shmoneh esreh, he should reflect on what we've written above, and should also bring to mind the thought that if all the nations in the world tortured him with every kind of severe torment and skinned him alive to make him deny that G-d is one, he would bear all the afflictions and not yield to them. In his mind and thought he should imagine that this is actually being done to him. In this way he will properly fulfill his obligation to say Shma yisrael and the shmoneh esreh.

IT WOULD BE MORE PLEASURABLE TO DIE FOR KIDDUSH HA SHEM THAN THE PLEASURE FROM EATING AND HAVING SEXUAL RELATIONS

3. During a meal and at the time of conjugal intimacy he should also have in mind what we've written above. When he begins to feel physical pleasure, he should envision in his mind what we've written, and should say at once with both his mouth and his heart that it would be a greater pleasure and joy for him to fulfill the commandment, that I will be sanctified, in the way described above, than to experience this physical pleasure, which is a leprous affliction deriving from the source of evil. He should then say, as proof of this point, that it would be a greater pleasure and joy for him to fulfill the commandment that I will be hallowed in the way described above, so that even if killers were to seize him while he was eating or in conjugal intimacy in order to subject him to severe tortures to make him deny G-d, he would be happier to sanctify the Divine name in that way than to enjoy this physical pleasure. But he should take care to be sure he's speaking the truth in his heart, and at that time it should penetrate the very inner center of his heart as the absolute truth. He shouldn't fool himself in order to fool the Almighty.

ACCUSTOM YOURSELF TO SAY LE SHEM YICHUD KUDSHA BERICH HU USHCHINTE

4. For everything in our religious life, Torah study, prayer, mitzvot to be done-he should accustom himself to say this: "I am hereby doing this for the sake of the unification of the Holy One, blessed is He, and His shechinah, so as to provide spiritual satisfaction to the blessed Creator." He should accustom himself to utter it with the very core of his heart, and in the course of time he will sense a great radiance while saying it.

THE FORMULA AGAINST THE EVIL INCLINATION

5. When an evil way of behavior begins to awaken within him (Heaven forbid), out of the evil Character traits that are usual with him, such as stubbornness, a feeling of shame (to do a mitzvah) because of pride, laziness, idleness that leads to desperate boredom, and so forth-let him say immediately, at once., with all his might, "the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite"-and he will be saved from evil. He should also get into the habit of limiting his vision so as not to look beyond his own four cubits (the space immediately about him) even when he is in his own home, and particularly when he is in the synagogue, in a room of Torah study, or while walking outside. When a woman happens to

come before him, even his own wife, or his small children, whom he loves, and so forth, he should perceive before his eyes the holy name of the Lord, a-do-noy.

AVOIDING BAD THOUGHTS

6. When a bad thought of immorality comes to him, he should say several times, then you shall keep yourself safe from every evil thing (Deuteronomy 23:10), and then he should meditate on the interpretation of it by our Sages of blessed memory: that a man should not indulge in improper fantasy by day and thus come to suffer a pollution at night. He should not let the bad thought linger in his mind, so as not to defile with uncleanness the higher, Divine human intelligence.

WHEN BY CHANCE SOMETHING BAD CROSSED HIS EYESIGHT

7. When (Heaven forbid) chance brings him face to face with something of a bad influence that mustn't be watched, such as animals or birds drawn to the act of mating, or an indecently exposed area of a woman's body, or the form of his wife when the menses have made her unclean and forbidden to him, or anything similar - let him say this verse at once, without delay: and you shall not go straying after your heart (Numbers 15:39); and so he won't defile his mind with uncleanness.

LEARN TO SPEAK VERY BRIEFLY AND LEARN TO SAY I DON'T KNOW

8. He should train himself in the habit of not taking the initiative and beginning to speak to any person, unless it's essential for some great need; and even when it's essential, he should speak very briefly, weighing and sifting his words thirteen times over so that there shouldn't be any falsehood, flattery, evil gossip or tale-bearing, or any insult or scorn in his words; nor should he try or mean to show off what he has done, in talking to others. He should simply train himself to follow the rule that the Sages of blessed memory gave: Teach your tongue to say, "I don't know." When he finds himself talking with people who don't take care to avoid speaking of vain, idle matters, let him slip away from them with every power he has, by any and all kinds of stratagems. When it isn't possible for him to slip away from them by any means, he should in any event be very brief in the replies he must make to them.

GIVE THANKS TO YOUR CREATOR AND BE HAPPY

9. He should train himself in the habit that just as soon as he wakes up from his sleep, he will say Modeh ani lefanecha (I give thanks to You, living and enduring King, that Thou hast mercifully restored my soul within me; great is Thy faithfulness). Then he should say, even in his own usual language if he wishes, with a happy heart, "Blessed be the G-d above who has given me the mitzvah (religious duty) of wearing these tzitzit (tassels at the corners of a four-cornered garment) with which I am surrounded, and the mitzvah of washing the hands in the morning to remove the evil spirit and the hard shell of dark forces from my two hands." He should see to it that his heart is filled with gladness as he says this, and he should take upon himself to maintain the protective restriction of limiting his speech to a minimum, which was noted in paragraph 8.

NOT TO REMOVE THIS TZETIL KATTAN BEFORE YOUR EYES

10. He should take great care to be conscientious and faithful in learning the lessons of Torah in their proper order as soon as he gets up from sleep, and afterward he should say Tikkun Chatzot (the special prayers for the small hours of the night, over the destruction of the Temple, etc.); and this tzetl katan (Short List) should never be removed from the holy volume that he's studying, even for a brief while. Every time he sits down to study Torah, after he has said the Prayer of the Penitent (tfillath ha-shav) which begins ana ha-shem (I pray You, Lord), and the prayer over Torah study given in Shaarey Tzi-yon, which begins hineni rotzeh lilmod (Here am I, desiring to learn), he should see to it with all his power not to make any interruption, even by having any other thought than the content of his study, or the thought of this tzetl katan as it is before his eyes; for the illumination in it will bring him back to goodness.

TO PRAY WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH AND CONCENTRATION

11. He should accustom himself to pray with all his strength, and in a raised voice that will arouse his sincere thought, linking the mind to the spoken words. His face should then be toward the wall, and held fast to the siddur (prayer-book), both in the morning and evening; and he shouldn't look to the sides, from the beginning of the prayer to its end. When the reader of the congregation repeats the shmoneh esreh aloud, he should follow it in the siddur, so as to answer Amen with all his strength to every benediction. At the time the Torah is read aloud he should pay attention to every single phrase from the one who reads the Torah, as though he were reading the Purim megillah. And he should make himself as if mute and dumb in the synagogue (not to do any talking) even before the prayer- service or after it, until he goes home.

YOU SHOULD FEEL AS IF YOU ARE BEING FORCED TO DO WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THIS TZETIL

12. He should constantly imagine, and especially while reading this tzetil katan, that a man is standing near him, arousing and encouraging him in a strong, mighty voice to observe all these ways of behavior, and he shouldn't reject or fad in even the slightest point. When he becomes accustomed to it all, in the course of time he will experience a great awakening in his soul, flashes of fire, aflame of the Lord (Song of Songs 8:6).

TO CONFESS TO YOUR FRIEND YOUR EVIL THOUGHTS AS TO DIMINISH THE STRENGTH OF THE YETZER HA RA

13. To relate every time before the one who is teaching him the way of the Lord, or even before a true and trusted friend, all the thoughts and evil fantasies which oppose or clash with the holy Torah, that the evil impulse throws up into his brain and heart, while he is studying Torah or praying or lying on his bed, or generally in the middle of the day. He shouldn't hide anything out of shame. The result will be that by telling these things, he will gain the ability to actually use his potential strength to break the force of the evil impulse, so that it shouldn't be able to overpower him to such an extent another time. This is apart from the good advice that he can get from his friend. Such is the proper way of the Lord, and it is a wondrously precious, effective method.

TO REVIEW THE TZETIL KATTAN AND RESHIT CHOCHMA AND THE WAY OF CONDUCT OF THE ARI HA KADOSH

14. He should take very great care to review several times each day this Tzetl katan (Short List), explaining every single word in his own language. It should also be an absolute, unbreakable rule for him to study, before conjugal intimacy, chapter 16 of Reshith Hochmah and Hanhagoth haari (the ways of conduct of R. Isaac Luria"). If he has more time, let him learn also chapter 17 of Reishith Hochmah. And let this remain an ironclad rule.

HOLINESS WHEN EATING AND WHEN RELIEVING ONESELF

15. Before washing his hands in preparation for a meal he should say the Prayer of the Penitent (tfillath ha-shav) by Rabbenu Yonah (of blessed memory). After eating the piece of bread at the conclusion of the benediction hamotzi, he should say this: "For the sake of the unification of the Holy One, blessed is He, and His shechinah, I don't eat for my physical

pleasure (Heaven forbid), but only in order that my body should be healthy and strong for the service of the blessed Lord. And let no sin or bad deed, evil fantasy or bodily pleasure prevent the unification of the Holy one, blessed is He, and His she through the holy sparks of this food and drink." Then he should bear in mind, when he is eating or drinking something, that the flavor he senses in his mouth while chewing or sipping is the inner element in the holiness, and the sparks of holiness, that exist in that food or drink; and by eating the food, chewing it with the teeth and digesting it in the stomach, he makes this inner element of the food become selected out, so that it cannot add any influence of strength to the outer forces of evil. Then his spirit will enjoy the benefit of this inner element, while the waste- matter will become superfluous and will be cast to the dark outer forces. He should then resolve in his mind that just as soon as he feels the need to go to the bathroom, he won't retain the waste matter in his body to defile his mind and make his body loathsome. Hence he won't retain any excrement or urine in his body even one extra moment. In addition, while eating, he should conceive before him the letters of the Hebrew word maachal ("food"), in the square script of the Torah scroll, and he should reflect that the letters, taken as numbers, add up to 91 (mem = 40, alef= 1, chaf= 20, lamed= 30), which is the same total that we get from the letters in the Almighty's two most holy names: yod, followed by ke, vav, ke (26), and alef, da-led, nun, yod (65).

MAN WAS CREATED ONLY TO BREAK HIS NATURE THEREFORE HE SHOULD IMPROVE HIS CHARACTER

16. Man was created in the world only to break (overcome) his nature. He should therefore be conscientious to repair and improve his traits of character, specifically in his eighteenth year of life, as I will explain: For ex- ample, if someone was born with a stubborn nature, he should break his nature forty days in a row, to do specifically the opposite of whatever comes into his mind. If someone is lazy by nature, let him train himself for forty days in a row to do everything briskly, with dispatch: whether going to bed at night or getting up in the morning, putting on his clothes, washing his hands, or cleaning his body. So also let him go briskly to the synagogue directly after he gets up from his Torah study; and so forth. If a person is bashful to the extent that it interferes with his religious life, he should ac- custom himself for forty days to pray specifically in a raised voice, with every part of his body moving forcefully, so as to fulfill the words of Scripture, All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like You? (Psalms 35:10). He should say, as well, the benediction over the Torah in a loud voice and he will be helped from heaven to get rid of the detrimental quality of bashfulness. Likewise, if the words don't come out of a person's mouth well, clear and orderly, because of a habit that has become his nature and his

way of talking, let him train himself for forty days to pay attention to the words that come out when he speaks, whether in general or during prayer to Heaven or 'during Torah study. For a habit of any kind becomes a dominant characteristic. If by nature someone isn't a steady, persevering student in his Torah learning, let him form the habit, again for forty days, to study more than he usually does; and every time before he begins his study, let him look through this tzetl katan (Short List) of mine. From then on he will be helped from heaven to succeed ever more in breaking the bad character traits, until they're gone.

LEARN BY HEART PRAYERS OFTEN RECITED

17. Whenever he is not engaged in Torah study or prayer, let him teach himself to know by heart those things that he needs, such as the prayers of tikkun Rachel, tikkun Leah, tefillath ha-shav (the Prayer of the Penitent), kiddush l'vanah (the monthly prayer over the new moon), brich shmey, al hakol, and the prayer of modim (We thank You) which the congregation says during the repetition of the shmoneh esreh. And let him reflect on the Torah's commandment, that I shall be SANCTIFIED, as written above, in the first paragraph.