

2

See, this day I set before you blessing and curse. (Deuteronomy 11:26): This is what is stated in scripture, "He opens their ear by discipline... If they will listen and serve, they shall spend their days in goodness, their years in delight. But if they will not listen, they shall perish by the sword." (Job 36:10-12) "He opens their ear by discipline" - the Holy Blessed One does not bring distress to a person until Zie opens his ear and warns him, so that he can repent. If he repents, behold, that is good. If not, Zie brings bad things upon him. From who do you learn this? From Pharaoh, king of Egypt. When God wanted to bring a plague upon him, Zie would send and warn him about it through Hir servant Moshe, as it says, "Tomorrow I will bring locusts on your territory." (Exodus 10:4) And so too, "I will plague your whole country with frogs" (Exodus 7:27). Zie warns about it "by discipline," — by the discipline of the Torah. "And He orders them back from wickedness" (Job 36:10) — from the cheating people and from cheating the Holy Blessed One. "They shall spend their days in goodness," (Job 36:11) — they will complete their years in goodness.

4

And you say, "I shall eat meat" (Deuteronomy 12:20): Rabbi Eliezer said in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua, "From here you learn that a man should not acquire a *litra* (i.e. a pound) of meat until he consults with his household." See what is [the difference] between the Israel and the [other] nations of the world. When Israel do not ritually slaughter, they do not eat [meat]. But the nations of the world stab and eat. The Holy Blessed One said to Israel, "By your life, in the world to come, you will eat from those [animals] that are not slaughtered, from the Behemoth and the Leviathan, about which it is written, 'One [scale] touches the other; not even a breath can enter between them.'"

12

It is written, "Honor the Lord with your wealth." (Proverbs 3:9) Thus if you are attractive, do not be dissolute with sexual transgression, lest people say, "So and so is attractive but doesn't restrain himself from sexual transgression." For that reason, "Honor the Lord with your wealth." Another interpretation: Do it with your wealth, before you [must] do it without your wealth (i.e., in poverty). Another interpretation: "If your voice is pleasant, recite the Shema, and cross over before the ark [to lead in the recitation], because of, "Honor the Lord with your wealth (*honcha*)," — with whatever God has granted you (*hanancha*). "Honor the Lord with your wealth." — There is a story about a person who amassed wine and oil but did not take out his tithes properly. What did the Holy Blessed One do to him? Zie put a stormy spirit in him, so that he took a staff and began to smash the barrels. A member of his household rebuked him. What did [the owner] do to him? He took the staff and cracked him on his head. He said to him, "The spirit is helping me, and you are rebuking me?" [The other] said to him, "Give me the staff, and I shall also smash away." He gave him the staff. While the [first] one was smashing one, the other was smashing two. What made this happen to him? Because he had not taken out his tithes properly. As R. Levi said, "There is a story about a person who took out his tithes properly. Now he had a certain field, and the Holy Blessed One gave him a mind to prepare half of it for sowing and half as storage place for water. So when a year of drought came, he sold a *sea'h* of wheat for a *sela* and a *sea'h* of water for three *sela*. He announced and said, 'Come and buy a *sea'h* of water, which makes three *sea'h* of wheat.' What made this happen to him? Because he had taken out his tithes properly." For that reason Moses warned Israel, "You shall surely tithe." ((Deuteronomy 14:22)