

6 Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

²So when you give alms, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Amen I tell you, they have received their reward. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees in the secret, will reward you.

textual variants

6:1 Be careful not to practice your righteousness - Greek manuscripts differ; some say "your charity" and some say "your righteousness", they are two totally different words. The Aramaic uses 'b'Zidqatkhon' בזדקתכון from the root 'zedeq' זדק. Zedqata זדקתא is the equivalent to the Hebrew Tzedakah (צדקה), which appears in the Hebrew manuscripts. This word evolved from specifically meaning 'righteousness' to meaning 'charity' as well, so it means both things. This variation in the Greek manuscripts actually evidences that their original source was a Semitic Language, which even the fathers of the church testify about: "Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect" (*Adversus Heresies 3:1:1*). "Matthew compiled the sayings in the Hebrew language, and everyone translated them as well as he could" (*Irenaeus of Lyon, cited by Eusebius in History of the Church 3:39*).

There are two ways to understand the text: Since this clause is the first verse in a topic that is going to be developed in the following paragraphs – i.e, not doing things in order to be honored by men – The Greek translators may have used "righteousness" as an introductory general statement. However, the immediate following verse talks about giving alms to the poor, and this is why some Greek manuscripts preferred to translate Tzedakah as "charity".

6:4 Your Father... will reward you - some manuscripts say: "Your Father, who sees in the secret, will reward you publicly". One could argue, however, that 'publicly' does not necessarily mean in this world. The word is anyway missing in many manuscripts.

commentary

6:1 to be seen by them - In the next three paragraphs Yeshua talks about charity (6:1), prayer (6:5) and fasting (6:16), which represent three kinds of religious relationship: Towards our neighbor (6:1), towards God (6:5) and towards ourselves (6:16). He insists that neither of them must be done "to be seen by men". He is talking of the intention of the heart – what in Judaism we call Kavanah. Giving charity or praying or fasting without proper Kavanah is not meritorious. The Rif (*on Rosh haShana 28*) quotes the Gemara (114a) to prove that the hallakha goes according to those who ruled that it is required to have a proper intention of the heart when performing commandments (*also Raavad on the Rif and Ramban in Milkhamot HaShem*). God cannot be fooled, he knows your heart motivations, and even though he may use your good deeds for the benefit of someone else, you'll get the reward you wanted and nothing else. This was written in the first century. A couple generations later Judaism developed a whole philosophy on this matter, namely, doing good things for the wrong reason. The sages noticed a seeming contradiction, for it is written: "great until the very heavens is your kindness" (*Psalms 57:11*), and somewhere else "great beyond the very heavens is your kindness" (*Psalms 108:5*). They explained: "One speaks of those who perform a command "Lishma" – lit. 'for its own sake' – and the other speaks of those who perform a command "Lo Lishma" – lit. 'not for its own sake', or 'not for [heaven's] sake' – (kan beosin lishma, ve kan beosin shelo lishma). When one truly desires to increase Hashem's honor, the reward awaiting him is beyond the heavens - the spiritual world. One whose motives are not as sincere will be rewarded but only up to the heavens - in the physical realm" (*Pesakhim 50b*). Let's do good things just because it's the right thing to do; this is basically what this mussar is all about; if you do good things with egoistic reasons, you'll get rewarded anyway because of the good thing you did, but the reward is going to reflect your innermost intention.

6:3 do not let your left hand know what your right is doing - The 12th century Jewish philosopher Maimonides says there are eight levels of charity (*Mishne Torah, Matanot le Aniyim 10:7-12*). The highest form of charity is helping someone up to the point in which he is no longer dependent upon others, but not everyone has the means to perform this kind of tzedakah, that's why according to the Talmud, the highest form of charity is when the giver doesn't know the person receiving, and the beggar doesn't know from whom he receives, this delivers a man from unnatural death (cf. *Bava Bathra 10a-b*).

relevant quotes

"R. Eleazar said: A gift of charity in secret is greater than Moshe Rabbeinu[’s prayer], for of Moshe it is written (*Deut 9:19*), I was afraid because of the anger and the wrath, and about charity it is written (*Prov 21:14*), A gift in secret subdues anger" (*Bava Bathra 9b*).

⁵And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ⁶But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees in the secret, will reward you. ⁷And when you incline to pray, you are not to be babblers like the pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹This, then, is how you should pray:

commentary

6:7 you are not to be babblers like the pagans - This verse has been rendered in many different ways, the most common being "do not use vain repetitions", but this translation can lead to misinterpretation and misconception. Some may infer and conclude from such a translation that "repetitions are vain", but that's not what the text is saying at all. Some may infer and conclude that "fixed prayers and prayer-books are vain" but again that's not so. In fact in the very next paragraph Yeshua teaches a fixed prayer. It's worth noting that Yeshua says "like the pagans"; fixed prayers and prayer-books (siddurim) are not a pagan thing; it's something that has ever existed in Judaism since the day in which the high priest was commanded to learn the priestly blessing (cf. *Num 6:23-27*), and the people of Israel the Shema. The secret here, as intended by both the Greek and the Aramaic manuscripts, is that one must meditate on and give a meaning to each uttered word during the prayer (cf. *Avot 2:18 [13]*). Another translation may be "Do not be garrulous". Yeshua is basically warning against the prayer that becomes too mechanical and meaningless. About the prayers of the pagans it is written that they "called in the name of the Baal from the morning until noon" (*1Kings 18:26*), and they "called with a loud voice" (*ibid. 28*) thinking they would be answered for their many words, but that was not so.

6:7 because of their many words - Rav Yehuda taught that prolonging one's prayer is a good thing because it prolongs a person's days and years. Rabbi Yohanan, on the other hand, said that "Anyone who prolongs his prayer expecting fulfillment, will ultimately receive vexation of heart, as it is stated (*Prov 13:12*): Hope deferred makes the heart sick". There are here two different situations. In the first one there's a correct intention of the heart and the person knows that ultimately it will be God's will, in the second one the person is getting egoistical and frustration arises when things don't come up fast and as expected. In the gemara's words: "Prolonging prayer is undesirable when one expects his prayer to be fulfilled, while this, where Rav Yehuda says that prolonging prayer prolongs one's life, refers to a situation where one does not expect his prayer to be fulfilled. How does he prolong his prayer? By increasing his supplication" (*Berakhot 55a*). While the servants of Baal increased their supplications the entire day expecting to be answered, Eliyahu the prophet only needed a short and concise prayer in faith, and his prayer was answered right away. That's the kind of prayer the people of Israel must aim to.

6:8 your Father knows what you need before you ask him - "God knows our thoughts before they were formed" (*Bereshit Rabbah 9*).

6:9 This, then, is how you should pray - This prayer is called the Avinu (Our Father), also known as "the lord's prayer". It's a totally new prayer, but its content is already present in Jewish sources, such as in the Amidah. The community of disciples established that Yeshua's Avinu should be prayed three times per day (cf. *Didache 8:3*), which implies it goes together with the Amidah, which is also recited three times per day. Yeshua was not the only Rebbe to teach his disciples his own Prayer: Yohanan the Immerser also taught his disciples a personal prayer (*Luke 11:1-2*). There were so many sages who would compose a personalized supplemental prayer for their students, which they would attach at the end of the Amidah (cf. *Berakhot 16b-17a*). This way, each school was distinguished by their master's prayer. For example, "Upon concluding his prayer Rabbi Yohanan would say: May it be your will, Adonai our God, that you look upon our shame and behold our evil. Then dress yourself in mercy, cover yourself with strength, wrap yourself in kindness and gird yourself in grace. May the attribute of goodness and gentleness come before you".

Mar bar Hanina composed the following prayer for the Amidah: "My God, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceit. To those who insult me may my soul be silent. May my soul be like dust to everyone. Open my heart to your Torah so that my soul will look for your commandments. Deliver me from harm, from evil inclination, evil women, and all evil that occurs in this world. As for those who think evil of me, speedily annul their counsel and frustrate their plans. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before you, Adonai, my rock and my redeemer". Other Rebbes such as Shelah haQadosh (Horovitz), Rabbi Isaac Luria or Rebbe Nahman of Breslev also composed Prayers that their followers would include in their list of daily prayers.

⁹Our Father who is in heavens, sanctified be your name.

¹⁰May your kingdom come. May your will be done

—commentary—

6:9 Our Father who is in heavens - The expression "Father who is in heavens" also appears in Jewish literature; Yehudah ben Teimah, for instance, uses it in Pirquei Avot (5:20; cf. *Yonah 1:9; Lam 3:41*). As Yeshua taught us, we are not supposed to recite the prayer mechanically. Each word is an exercise of kavana-meditation and each utterance should be filled with feeling and emotion. As in all the other fixed prayers, the body should be relaxed and the intention to connect with the Creator should be present; this is especially the case with the first utterance, for it sets the spiritual tone for the rest. God is actually everywhere, not only in heaven (*Psalm 139:8*), but there's a need from our part to connect with the invisible spiritual world, with God within and beyond, realizing that God is not something of the creation, but rather the source of our existence, hence the phrase "Our Father who is in heavens", for Heaven represents the spiritual world, as it is written: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth", this is, the spiritual and the material worlds, for this reason it is written: "The heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool; which is the house that you will build for me, and which is the place of my rest? All these my hand made, and all these have become, says HaShem. But to this one will I look, to one poor and of crushed spirit" (*Isaiah 66:1-2*). Obviously this must be understood metaphorically, since God "is not supported by any material object, for God is incorporeal... the throne here denotes his essence and greatness" (*Moreh Nevukhim 1:9*). The Avinu prayer contains seven petitions and is arranged in an order pattern that reflects the traditional position of the ten sefirot in Kabbalah. The **sefirot** are ten attributes through which God manifests his light, either in bigger or smaller scale, as it is shown all throughout the Bible. The sefirot are not God, but they are the medium through which specific qualities and attributes can be ascribed to him, such as kindness or justice; through them we can express what he does, not what he is. The Hebrew for sefirot is related to 'leSaper', meaning to express or communicate. One should not meditate on the sefirah itself, as if they were individual powers, but to the Infinite Being that never changes and is the Essence that permeates the sefirah (cf. *Aryeh Kaplan, Meditation and Kabbalah p.184*). The world and all it would contain was made through the sefirot (see *ten utterances in Genesis 1, the ten fingers of God in Psalm 8:3; cf. Sefer Yetzirah 1:1; Ramban on Gen 1:1*). This is why we can also find the sefirot in our own body and in our own soul, and being aware of this helps us rise spiritual awareness and walk the path towards higher spiritual levels. In our case, "Our Father" represents the highest form in which we can relate to God, through the sefirah of **Wisdom** (Hokhma), which in Kabbalah is called Abba (Father) and represents the potential of everything in its essential abstract form.

6:9 who is in heavens - The word 'heavens' appears coupled with Father, and in kabbalah 'Father' is always coupled with Binah (understanding), which is the mother from where all the other sefirot emerged. Hokhma and Binah are "Two inseparable friends" (*Zohar 1:123a*). Normally 'Heaven' is associated with tiferet, but Binah is called "the end of heaven above" (*Zohar 1:9a*), which is, as explained above, the realm of the Divine "throne", which in Kabbalah represents the world of creation (Beriah), where Binah is the predominant sefirah. It is from this "throne" that Divine goodness is bestowed to the lower realms, for Binah is the fountain of life.

6:9 sanctified be your name - This is the first of the seven petitions that this prayer is made of, and it corresponds to the 3rd intellectual sefirah, thus paralleling the 3rd portion in the Amidah prayer: "Ki atah qadosh, veShimkha qadosh" - For you are sacred, and your name is sacred, or when praying in group: "We sanctify your name" (*Amidah #3*). The Qaddish says: "May his great name be magnified and sanctified". There are 10 sefirot and the first 3 are 'separated / set apart' from the other seven, since there are seven emotive and three intellectual sefirot. According to the kavanot of the Arizal, "ki atah qadosh" corresponds to the energy of Daat (the 3rd sefirah) being projected to tiferet. The words are taken from Isaiah's vision of God enthroned before the angels, where they say constantly: Holy, Holy, Holy. God's honor and fame (i.e, his name) can be sanctified or profaned by our behavior, "when I prove myself holy among you in their sight" (*Ezekiel 36:23*), so in this first petition we are asking for us and for the world to live and behave in purity.

6:10 May your kingdom come - This phrase reflects the Qaddish prayer: "May he cause his kingdom to reign". The Blessed Holy One created the worlds so that he would have upon whom to bestow his kindness, as is written in Etz Khaim, "It is the nature of He who is good to do good." We exist here in the lowest sefirah of the lowest world, where God wants to build his kingdom (that's why our sefirah is called Malkhut; kingdom). Here we are asking God to fulfil the reason of our existence: to bestow his kindness on us and become our king. "The Lord will reign forever" (*Psalm 146:10*) is also a cry of redemption, both physical and spiritual. In Aramaic it can also read: "The kingdom is come".

6:10 May your will be done - In this third petition the prayer takes an aspect of restriction. The coming of the kingdom implies the will of God, even if people don't like it, and that's an aspect of strength (Gevurah) and justice. It is calling for obedience, since God's will is done by the people.

¹⁰ May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.

¹² And forgive our faults, as we also forgive our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'

[For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever, Amen].

commentary

6:10 on earth as it is in heaven - Just like angels obey HaShem, let men obey HaShem. The harmonization of heaven and earth refers to the sefirah of Tiferet, which stands in the middle of them all as their "heart". This refers to the Torah, which is the book by which we learn to obey HaShem on earth.

6:11 give us today our daily bread - Our daily bread refers to a continuous need that doesn't disappear; the need doesn't change. In the Aramaic it reads: "Gives us today the bread of our necessity". At first glance it looks like a petition to satisfy our outward needs, but like the Torah says: "Man does not live by bread alone" (*Deut 8:3*). It is written (*Ex 16:4*): "I will rain down for you bread from heaven; let the people go out and pick each day's portion on its day, so that I can test them, whether they will follow my Torah or not". The Zohar teaches that a person doesn't know anything of this world until he eats bread from the earth, and in the same manner Israel didn't perceive nor understand anything from the realm of heaven until they ate bread from heaven (*Zohar I:157b-158a*). This refers to our daily study of the Torah, the Word of God, which produces a daily internal transformation when assimilating its spiritual nutrients. This represents the energy of Tiferet (the Torah from heaven) descending upon us through Netzakh (endurance, continuity).

6:12 forgive our faults as we also forgive our debtors - The words 'faults' and 'debtors' come from the very same root word which can mean either "faults" or "debts". The soul that God gave us is pure and it's destined to return pure, and if we don't return it in the same state, we are metaphorically in debt with the Creator, and he will "burnt it" until the price is totally paid (cf. *Qohelet Rabbah 12:7*). This phrase has its parallel in ancient Jewish literature: "forgive the hurt done by your neighbor and you'll be forgiven when you pray" (*Sirakh 28:2*; cf. *Yalkut Vayiqra 613*). In Hassidut "sincerity" is connected to the sefirah of Hod (acknowledgment); which is Netzakh's counterpart, they are a more earthly version of Hessed and Gevurah, two parts in a weighing plate. In the case of "forgive our faults" we are asking for a proper retribution, and this is actually what Hod means in essence, for in Hod we will understand that ultimately "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or bad" (*Ecc1 12:14*).

6:13 Lead us not into temptation - Not to be brought into temptation (ניסיון) is a blessing (cf. *Berakhot 56b*). This part is very similar to what the sages prayed before sleep: "bring me not into sin, iniquity, or temptation, or into contempt. And may the good inclination have sway over me and not the evil inclination, and deliver me from evil hap and sore diseases, and let not evil dreams or thoughts disturb me" (*Berakhot 60b*). A faculty of the sefirah of Yesod is purity in the face of temptation. Yosef is called "Tzaddiq" (*Amos 2:6*) for resisting the temptation with Potiphar's wife, and it is written that the Tzaddiq is "Yesod Olam" - the foundation of the world (*Prov 10:25*). How to deliver us from temptation? Either by removing a temptation that is too strong for us to withstand; or by palliating its force, or by increasing our strength to resist it. Being delivered (or rescued) "from evil" (Heb. 'min haRa' מן הרע; Ar. 'min bisha' מן בישא) refers, as explained in the Talmudic source, to all kinds of harming or evil forces, especially to our evil inclination. Yesod is considered the filter through which all the upper energies come into Malkhut (the last sefirah), so a proper purity leads into a proper channeling of the spiritual blessings into our lives. A bad connection, on the other hand, leads to Malkhut being disconnected from the group and therefore, the energies we receive may turn into negative forces, God forbid.

textual variants

6:13 For yours is the kingdom - This doxology doesn't appear at all, neither in the Matthew nor in the Luke best and earliest manuscripts; the earliest manuscripts in which it occurs would be those of the Aramaic Peshitta. It is a clear addition into the text. The benediction, however, appears at the end of the Avinu prayer in a very early (2nd century) book, called the Didache, written by the community of believers (cf. *Didache 8:2-3*). The words are a shortened form of what we read in 1Chronicles 29:11 and are meant to be a liturgical benediction that the masses would pronounce at the end of the Avinu during a communal prayer service. This is not uncommon in Judaism, since the Amidah and many other prayers have two forms, depending on whether one prays alone or in a minyan (a quorum of ten member or more). "For yours is the kingdom" would be an intention to specifically mention the last sefirah, the sefirah of Malkhut (kingdom) in a positive light, as receiving and incorporating into it all the other sefirotic energies. If there's a Khazan (a cantor) in the liturgy who is leading the prayer, the last word "Amen" is to be pronounced by the community and not by the person who is reading the prayer out loud. "Amen" אמן is related to the word אמנה 'amanah', meaning truthfulness or אמונה 'emunah', meaning faith. When we hear another reciting a blessing we respond with 'amen'; thus affirming that we believe that which has just been said (cf. *Shavuot 36a*).

¹⁴For if you forgive people their faults, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

¹⁶Moreover, when you fast, do not make yourselves look sad as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Amen I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees in the secret, will reward you.

commentary

6:14 For if you forgive people their faults - Yeshua is emphasizing a part of the prayer while paraphrasing the book of Shimon Yeshua ben Sirakh: "forgive the hurt done by your neighbor and you'll be forgiven when you pray" (*Sirakh* 28:2). Even though today the book of Ben Sirakh is marginalized (cf. *Yadayim* 2:13), this was not the case in the 1st century Rabbinic Judaism, in which it was commonly quoted, not as a Scriptural book, but as a Rabbinic work (cf. *Sanhedrin* 100b, *Bava Bathra* 98b, *Niddah* 16b). The *Sefer Haggalui* by Saadia Gaon explains that many of these 2nd Temple books were written by Rabbis following the pattern of the prophets, and were scoffed by some Rabbis for their ambition to emulate Scripture, although that wasn't their original intention. Given then, that even the Talmudic masters quote from it, it is of no surprise to find Yeshua, a 1st century Galilean Jew, paraphrasing from it.

6:15 But if you do not forgive others - The sages say: "He who is merciful to others, mercy is shown to him by Heaven, while he who is not merciful to others, mercy is not shown to him by Heaven" (*Shabbat* 151b). Notice here that "Heaven" is an euphemism for God's Sacred Name. This is based on the verse: 'VeNatan lekha rakhamim, verikhamekha vehirbekha' ונתן לך רחמים ורחמך והרבך (*Deut* 13:18 [17]), which they interpret here as: "He will inspire you with compassion [towards others] then he shall have compassion upon you". When you are attuned to healing the hurts of others, you can find healing in your own heart.

6:16 when you fast - This is the third of the religious duties mentioned in this chapter, together with charity and prayer, which Yeshua insists must not be done "to be seen by men". Although nowadays there's a popular perception that Jews rarely fast except for the already established fast days (such as Yom Kippur or Taanit Esther), the teachings of the first tannaim leaned toward asceticism and fasting was actually a common practice in the 2nd Temple era, being considered an act of piety and self nullification. Fasting was the only ascetic practice that the entire people of Israel would engage themselves into. It is called "affliction of the soul" (*Lev* 23:27; *Isa* 58:3), and it is a form of sacrifice, since one is considered to be offering one's blood and fat upon the altar (cf. *Berakhot* 17a). They would fast not only on the appointed feasts, but also in mourning (cf. *1Sam* 31:13), in supplication to avoid evil decrees (cf. *Yoel* 1:14; *Esther* 4:3; *Berakhot* 31b), or to purify oneself, subjugating the evil inclination (cf. *Deut* 9:9).

6:17 anoint your head - In the old times this was a common hygienic and cosmetic practice; they used olive oil to wash their head, in the same manner we use shampoo (cf. *Ruth* 3:3, *Micah* 6:15). The olive oil is still used today to obtain a soft shiny hair in home and natural remedies. According to the ascetics, the affliction of the soul is not complete only by abstaining oneself from food and liquids; you are to refuse carnal needs and material comforts, so you may want to sleep on the floor instead of a comfortable bed, or you may want to avoid shampoo in your hair, or fashion clothes. The Day of Atonement may have a similar level of asceticism, but this is certainly not the norm in Judaism. Yeshua is not necessarily opposing to the ascetic practice per se, since he went to fast 40 days in the desert, but he acknowledges that God cares more what is in the heart, and this behavior may cause an appearance of external piety, and pride and need for recognition may rise from it, so Yeshua is telling us to avoid this hypocritical scenery and keep our fasting private. It is human nature to let people know when you are fasting in order to get some recognition, to let them know how pious you are. This is precisely what Yeshua is opposing to. In no case should one boast of his fasts to others, and even though he is asked he should try to evade the question, except when he has fasted in expiation of his sins; in this case acknowledgment may lead others to expiation likewise (*Orakh Hayim*, 565, 6).

¹⁹Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²²The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. ²³But if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how much more will be your darkness!

²⁴No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon.

commentary

6:19 do not store for yourselves treasures on earth - Righteousness, charity and good deeds are the real treasure you will store for the future world; material things pass away. This same concept is found in Bava Bathra (11a), in a story about king Monobaz – i.e., Adiabene (1st century) – who embraced Judaism (cf. *Josephus, Ant. 20:2-4*). He squandered his and his father's wealth to charity in years of scarcity. "His brothers admonished him: Your father gathered treasure and added to the treasures of his fathers, and you are wasting them! He replied: My fathers store up below and I am storing above, as it says (*Psalms 85:12*): Truth will sprout from the earth and righteousness will look down from heaven... My fathers gathered for this world, but I have gathered for the future world, as it says (*Isa 58:8*), Your righteousness shall go before you, and the glory of HaShem shall be your reward". The same story can be found in the Talmud Yerushalmi, where it says: "My father laid up treasure for this world; I laid up treasure for heaven" (*Yerushalmi Pe'ah 15b*).

6:22 the eye is the lamp of the body - The correlation between the eyes and the light is found in several verses: "The Lord gives light to the eyes" (*Prov 29:13*), "the light of the eyes rejoices the heart" (*Prov 15:30*), "eyes like flaming torches" (*Dan 10:6*)... etc. Zechariah has a vision of seven lamps (cf. *Zech 4:2*) and the angel tells him they represent the eyes of HaShem (*Zech 4:10*). In this ancient figure of speech, the state of an eye signifies the internal character of a being. What you look and how you look at it reflects your inner being, and it also affects potentially that which you are looking at. In fact, our sages say that one has to be cautious not to be led astray by the wandering eye (*Num 15:39*), since visual sensations cause the most sinful temptations (cf. *Sotah 8a*). The eye is therefore defined as a lamp, and its quality of being good or bad is an ethical, rather than physical description.

6:23 if your eye is evil - The 'evil eye', ayin haRa עַיִן הַרַע, is a common Hebrew term, which refers to the effect caused by jealous onlookers, in other words, by envy. There's a Jewish expression that says "bli ayin haRa" - lit. 'without the evil eye', which expresses a desire not to cause someone else's wrath against their fortune. In short, an evil eye is a jealous eye (cf. *Pirkei Avot 2:9, 11 [14]*). A good eye - ayin haTovah - on the other hand, is generous, not poisoned by greed and envy, it is open to the needs of the less fortunate (cf. *Deut 7:16, 15:9*), as it is written: "He who has a good eye shall be blessed; for he gives of his bread to the poor" (*Prov 22:9, cf. Sotah 38b*). We should always be satisfied with our lot and wish the best for our neighbors (*Avot D'Rebbi Nathan, A:16*). This reflects a saying in the book of Tovi: "Give alms from your possessions to all who live uprightly, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it... for charity keeps you from entering darkness" (*Tovi 4:7*).

6:24 mammon - Mammon is a mishnaic word for wealth or profit. The name may be derived from 'matmon' מַטְמוֹן 'treasure'; Ibn Ezra associates it with me'od מְאוֹד (many), as in the Shema prayer: "With all your might", which the Talmud translates "with all your wealth - your mammon" (*Deut 6:5, Berakhot 61b*). 'Mammon' is used in hallakha in reference to monetary compensations (cf. e.g. *Ketuvot 42a*). In our case, Yeshua is talking, not about the fact of having money or wealth, but about the problem of rising your material possessions to the level of a "master"; this is what we call: avarice or greed, and in this sense, the author may derive 'mammon' from the word 'amen' אָמֵן, because material possessions have become the object of someone's confidence and trust, they have become their god. Covetousness and greed lead the persons' life, and not spirituality. This is why, in the context of the evil eye, the sages say: "Let your fellow's mammon be as dear to you as your own and do not anger easily" (*Pirkei Avot 2:17 [12]*). The personification and deification of mammon (i.e. avarice) in this text has led to later theologians to suggest that Mammon may have been a Syrian deity, but this is anachronistic, given that there were certainly idols of money, but one specifically named Mammon is unknown to us. Notice the similarity of Yeshua's words with the verse: "If a man has two wives, one is beloved and the other is despised" (*Deut 21:15*).

²⁵Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Behold, is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷Who among you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his stature? ²⁸And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹So do not worry, saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or What shall we wear? ³²For the people of the world run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

—commentary—

6:25 do not be anxious about your life - In this portion Yeshua is perfectly depicted as belonging to the Hassidic movement. The Talmud speaks of two different world-views among the Pharisaic Jews: the ordinary majority and the Hassidim, or "saints of former times" (Hassidim haRishonim). Although hassid means "pious", another proper translation would be "saint". The main difference between these two groups was that the Hassidim were charismatic; highly regarded as saints. The sages say about them that they were unselfish. It says: "One who wants that he as well as others should give charity, is a Hassid" (*Avot 5:13*). Shimon haHassid used to say: "He who prays should regard himself as if the Shekhina was before him" (*Sanhedrin 22a*). The differences between the Hassidim and the ordinary Rabbis were minimal, but basically, they had to do with their level of faith in HaShem. The ordinary Jews would keep their liquids covered to protect them from snakes (*Mishna Terumah 8:4*), and would teach everyone to do so, for obvious reasons. The outstanding Hassidim, on the other hand, relied highly on God's protection and were not worried about these things (cf. *Pesakhim 64b*). In comparison to the greater Hassidim, ordinary people were seen as people of little faith (*Sotah 48b*).

With these words Yeshua is concluding a thought process that began with the subject of charity, which then flowed naturally into the topic of greed and envy for material things. One should not take the hassidic teaching to an extreme; because, as the sages say: One is not meant to rely on miracles all the time (cf. *Pesakhim 64b*), as Paul would say: He who does not work doesn't eat either, so it is obviously lawful and encouraged to take proper care for food and raiment; but one should have faith enough in HaShem as to know that the future is ultimately in his hands. Don't let worries for the future steal your present. The book of Ben Sirakh says: "Do not give in to sadness or torment yourself deliberately. Gladness of heart is the very life of a person" (*Ben Sirakh 30:21-22*), and the sages quote Ben Sirakh commenting on Solomon's words, "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you don't know what a day may bring forth" (*Prov 27:1*): "For perhaps you will not exist tomorrow, and you have worried for a world which belongs not to you" (*Sanhedrin 100b*).

—relevant quotes—

"Rabbi Eliezer [ben Hyrcanus] the Great said: Whoever has a piece of bread in his basket and says, What shall I eat tomorrow? belongs only to them who are little in faith" (*Sotah 48b*).