

*Lessons in Tanya: Likutei Amarim*

## Title Page

The title page written by the Alter Rebbe reads as follows:

ספר

# לקוטי אמרים

חלק ראשון

הנקרא בשם

## ספר של בינונים

מלוקט מפי ספרים ומפי סופרים קדושי עליון נ"ע  
מיוסד על פסוק כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד בפיה ובלבבך לעשותו  
לבאר היטב איך הוא קרוב מאד בדרך ארוכה וקצרה בעזה"י

SEFER

LIKUTEI AMARIM (“A Compilation of Teachings”)

PART ONE

ENTITLED

SEFER SHEL BEINONIM (“The Book of the Intermediates”)

Compiled from sacred books and from teachers of heavenly saintliness, whose souls are in Eden; based upon the verse,<sup>1</sup> “For this thing is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it”; explaining clearly how it is exceedingly near, in both a lengthy and a short way, with the aid of the Holy One, blessed be He.

\* \* \*

This verse on which the *Tanya* is based speaks of the obligation to fulfill G-d’s commandments, saying that it is very “near”, i.e., accessible, to every Jew to do so — through three channels, which are here alluded to by the three phrases, “your heart,” “your mouth,” and “to do it.” These phrases represent, respectively, the three faculties of thought, speech and action. These are, as it were, the functional organs of the soul; the soul vests itself in them in order to implement its wishes.

In a deeper sense, “your heart” refers to the emotions — experienced in the heart — of love of G-d and awe of Him.

When one fulfills a *mitzvah* out of his love of G-d, knowing that the only way to unite with Him is by fulfilling His commands, he will do so with an inner vitality and pleasure, just as one does when he fulfills the wishes of a dear friend. The love of G-d is thus a channel for the performance of the positive *mitzvot*. On the other hand, one’s awe of G-d

will prevent him from acting in violation of His wishes. He who is pervaded by this sense of awe will be most vigilant in avoiding any transgression of the prohibitive *mitzvot*.

The verse thus declares that acquiring these two emotions of love and awe of G-d, so that they motivate one's observance of the *mitzvot*, is likewise "very near to you."

This declaration is the basis of the *Tanya*. The Alter Rebbe now sets out to explain, in both a lengthy and a brief way, *how* it is very near.

By nature, man's heart desires material things. To develop a love and a desire for G-dliness is actually to shift one's natural desire from one extreme — worldliness, to another — G-dliness. Nor is awe of G-d easily attainable. As the *Gemara* attests, "Is awe of G-d such a small matter" How then does the verse state that it is, indeed, "very near to you"

The Alter Rebbe will explain two ways by which the attainment of love and fear is very near: one "lengthy", and the other "brief".

The lengthy route is contemplation; by pondering deeply on the greatness of G-d and His kindness, one will generate within himself a love and awe of Him. The shorter route consists of arousing and bringing to the surface the hidden love and awe of G-d inherent in the soul of every Jew; it is "short" because in this case he does not create these feelings but merely reveals them.

This, then, is the basis of the *Tanya*.

In his modesty, the Alter Rebbe named the book *Likutei Amarim* — "A Compilation of Teachings," claiming that he did no more than collect teachings "from books and teachers." Chassidic tradition understands "books" as a reference to the works of the *Maharal*, and the *Shelah*, and "teachers" as the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezritch.

The book is popularly called *Tanya*, for the word with which it begins.

FOOTNOTES [1](#). *Devarim* 30:14.



## Approbations

Concerning the approbations of the *tzaddikim*, Rabbi Yehudah Leib HaKohen [1](#) and Rabbi Zusya, [2](#) the previous Rebbe [3](#) cites a tradition originating with the Mittlerer Rebbe, the son of the author of the *Tanya*, as follows.

For twenty years the Alter Rebbe wrote the *Tanya*, revising, adding and deleting,<sup>4</sup> critically examining every word and even (literally) every letter, so that in the final manuscript there was neither a missing nor a superfluous letter, not even the seemingly optional letter *vav*. Only then did he permit it to be copied and distributed to the public. As a result of the many copies and copyists, however, a great many errors found their way into the text. (It is recorded elsewhere that there were those who intentionally corrupted the text in order to ascribe to the Alter Rebbe heretical views, so that they could later attack him.)<sup>5</sup> At that point the Alter Rebbe sent messengers<sup>6</sup> to the aforementioned *tzaddikim*, to confer with them on the printing of the *Tanya* and to request their approbations.

Both his colleagues expressed their enthusiasm over the book. R. Yehudah Leib HaKohen said: “The *Tanya* is an incense to counter all the spiritual plagues besetting the generations just before the arrival of *Mashiach*.” R. Zusya predicted: “With the *Tanya* the Jewish people will go out to greet the righteous *Mashiach*.”

Both indicated in their approbations that they were writing in the week of *Parshat Ki Tavo* (“when you enter the Land”). One of the emissaries, R. Moshe Vilenker, gave two reasons for this: Firstly, by studying the *Tanya* thoroughly one “enters the Land” in a spiritual sense, meaning that he makes the essential will of his soul manifest — for the word רצון (“will”) is related to ארץ (“land”).<sup>7</sup> Secondly, the ways of serving G-d taught in the *Tanya* serve to transmute the curses enumerated in *Parshat Ki Tavo* into blessings.

Both *tzaddikim*, R. Moshe Vilenker went on to explain, similarly indicated their esteem for the *Tanya* in the way they dated their approbations. R. Yehudah Leib HaKohen wrote “the year תקנ”ו,”<sup>8</sup> which is an acrostic for ורחה נשמה קטורת תניא — “*Tanya* is the incense for the spirit and soul” — in keeping with his comment quoted above; R. Zusya wrote the date as פדותינו שנת — “the year of our Redemption” — indicating, as above, that the Jewish people will greet *Mashiach* with the *Tanya*.

הסכמת הרב החסיד המפורסם  
איש אלקי, קדוש יאמר לו  
מורנו הרב רבי משולם זוסיל מאניפולי

Approbation by the famous rabbi and chassid A G-dly man of saintly renown Our teacher Rabbi Meshulam Zusil of Anipoli

הנה בראותי את הכתבים של הרב האי גאון איש אלקים קדוש וטהור, אספקלריא המאירה

I have seen the writings of this rabbi<sup>9</sup> and *gaon*; this G-dly man, saintly and pure; this luminous lens<sup>10</sup> who brings every subject into sharp focus.

וטוב אשר עשה, ואשר הפליא ה' חסדו ונתן בלבו הטהור לעשות את כל אלה

He with his own talents has done well, and moreover G-d in his wonderful kindness has placed in his pure heart additional strength to do all this (i.e., to write the *Tanya*),

להראות עם ה' דרכיו הקדושים

in order to show G-d's People His holy ways.

ורצונו היה שלא להעלות את הכתבים ההם לבית הדפוס מחמת שאין דרכו בכך

It was [the Alter Rebbe's] intention not to publish these writings, for it is not his custom.

רק מחמת התפשטות הקונטרסים ההם בקרב כל ישראל בהעתקות רבות מידי סופרים משונים

But because these pamphlets<sup>11</sup> have spread amongst all Israel in numerous copies by sundry copyists,

ומחמת ריבוי העתקות שונות רבו הטעותי סופרים במאד

and, as a result of the many and various transcriptions, the copyists' errors have multiplied exceedingly,

והוכרח להביא הקונטרסים ההם לבית הדפוס

he was compelled to bring these pamphlets to the printing press.

והעיר ה' את רוח השותפים, ה"ה הרבני המופלג הותיק מורנו הרב רבי שלום שכנא בן מורנו הרב רבי נח, וה"ה הרבני המופלג הותיק מורנו הרב רבי מרדכי בן מורנו הרב רבי שמואל הלוי

G-d has aroused the spirit of the [two] partners, the outstanding and distinguished scholar, R. Shalom Shachna, son of R. Noach, and the outstanding and distinguished scholar R. Mordechai, son of R. Shmuel HaLevi,<sup>12</sup>

להביא הקונטרסים ההם לבית הדפוס בסלאוויטא

to bring these pamphlets to the printing house in Slavita.

ולפעלא טבא אמרתי יישר חילא

I congratulate them on this good deed.

אך עלו בלבם מגור מסביב מן הדפוסים אשר רבו, שדרכן להזיק ולקלקל המאושרים

They were, however, apprehensive of the growing number of printing establishments which are wont to cause damage and ruin to the accredited ones.

אי לזאת גמרנו בלבנו ליתן הסכמה לבל ירים איש את ידו ואת רגלו

In view of this we have resolved to give this approbation so that no man shall lift hand or foot<sup>13</sup>

לגרום להמדפיסים הנ"ל שום היזק חס ושלום בהשגת גבול בשום אופן

to cause any damage, G-d forbid, to the aforementioned printers by encroaching upon their exclusive right in any manner.

ואסור לשום אדם לדפוס הספר הנ"ל בלתי ידיעת המדפיסים הנ"ל עד משך חמש שנים רצופים מיום דלמטה

It is forbidden to any person to reprint this book without the knowledge of the said printers for a period of five full years from the date below.

ושומע לדברי אלה יבא עליו ברכת טוב

May he who heeds these words of mine be blessed with good.

הלא כה דברי הדורש זאת לכבוד התורה

These are the words of one who demands this for the glory of the Torah,

היום יום ג' שנכפל בו כי טוב פרשת תבא, שנת פדותינו לפ"ק

this day, Tuesday — the day on which the Creator twice saw that “it is good”<sup>14</sup> — of the weekly portion *Tavo*, in the year פדותינו<sup>15</sup> (556) of the [sixth] millenium.

הקטן משולם זוסיל מאניפאלי

The insignificant Meshulam Zusil of Anipoli



הסכמת הרב החסיד המפורסם  
איש אלקי, קדוש יאמר לו  
מורנו הרב רבי יהודא ליב הכהן

Approbation by the famous rabbi and chassid  
A G-dly man of saintly renown  
Our teacher Rabbi Yehudah Leib HaKohen<sup>16</sup>

חכמת אדם תאיר פני הארץ

The wisdom of the man illumines the face of the earth—

בראותי ידי קדש המחבר הרב הגאון איש אלקים קדוש וטהור חסיד ועניו

when one sees the hand[writing]s<sup>17</sup> of the author, the rabbi and *gaon*, this G-dly man, saintly and pure, pious and humble,

אשר מכבר נגלה מסתריו

whose hidden [powers] have been revealed long ago (i.e., despite his efforts to the contrary),

יושב בשבת תחמוני אצל אדונינו מורינו ורבינו גאון עולם

when he sat at the seat of wisdom<sup>18</sup> with our lord, master and teacher, the world *gaon* (i.e., the Maggid of Mezritch, who was a world authority in the revealed aspects of Torah, as well as the supreme authority in the realm of chassidic thought),

ודלה מים מבאר מים חיים

and he drew water from the well of living waters (— some understand this as an allusion to R. Avraham “the angel,” son of the Maggid, for the letters מבאר, meaning “from the well,” also spell אברם).

וכעת ישמח ישראל בהגלות דברי קדשו

Now Israel (an allusion to the Baal Shem Tov, whose name was Israel) will rejoice in the revelation of his holy words — for in *Tanya*, the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov find lucid intellectual expression,

המחובר להביא לבית הדפוס ללמד לעם ה' דרכי קדש

which have been compiled in preparation for the press, to teach the nation of G-d the ways of holiness,

כאשר כל אחד יחזה בפנימיות דבריו

as anyone can perceive in the inner meaning of [the author's] words.

והמפורסם אין צריך ראיה

That which is common knowledge needs no proof, and thus the *Tanya* would actually need no approbation,

רק מחשש קלקול הדבר, שלא יגרום היזק למדפיסים

but for the fear of damage, so that no harm be caused to the printers,

באתי ליתן תוקף ואזהרה לבל ירים איש את ידו ורגלו לדפוס

I hereby sound a firm warning — that no man raise his hand or foot<sup>19</sup> to print [the *Tanya*]

עד משך חמש שנים מיום דלמטה

for a period of five years from the date below.

ושומע לדברי אלה יבוא עליו ברכת טוב

May he who heeds these words of mine be blessed with good.

הלא כה דברי המדבר זאת לכבוד התורה

These are the words of one who speaks thus for the glory of the Torah,

היום יום ג' פרשה תבא תקנ"ו לפרט קטן

This day, Tuesday, of the weekly portion *Tavo*, in the year 556 of the [sixth] millenium.

יהודא ליב הכהן

Yehudah Leib HaKohen



הסכמת הרבנים שיחיו  
בני הגאון המחבר זכרונו לברכה  
נשמתו עדן

Approbation of the rabbis, long may they live  
Sons of the author of blessed memory  
Whose soul is in Eden

היות שהוסכם אצלינו ליתן רשות והרמנא להעלות על מכבש הדפוס

Whereas it has been agreed by us to grant permission and authorization to bring to the printing press,

לזכרון לבני ישראל

for a remembrance for the Children of Israel

כתוב דברי יושר ואמת, דברי אלקים חיים של אדוננו אבינו מורנו ורבנו, ז"ל

the<sup>20</sup> written works of uprightness and truth,<sup>21</sup> “words of the living G-d” (as chassidic discourses are called) by our lord our father, master and teacher, of blessed memory,

כתובים בכתב ידו הקדושה בעצמו ולשונו הקדוש

recorded personally by his own holy hand in his own saintly expression,



שכל דבריו כגחלי אש בוערות ילהיבו הלבבות לקרבן לאביהן שבשמים

whose words are all like burning fiery coals which ignite people's hearts, to draw them near to our Father in heaven; —

ובשם אגרת הקדש נקראו, שרובם היו אגרת שלוחה מאת כבוד קדושתו להורות לעם ה' הדרך ילכו בה והמעשה אשר יעשו

These discourses are collectively entitled *Iggeret HaKodesh* (“the holy epistle”), being mostly epistles sent by his holy eminence to teach the people of G-d the way by which they should walk and the deed which they should do; —

“The way...” probably refers to the chassidic paths of self-perfection, those letters offering guidance in attaining love and awe of G-d and in the proper service of G-d through prayer and Torah study; while “the deed...” refers to the inspirational letters dealing with charity and the like.

ומחמת שבכמה מקומות הציב לו ציונים בספר לקוטי אמרים שלו, ודברי תורה עניים במקום אחד ועשירים במקום אחר

Inasmuch as [our father] has made reference, in many places,<sup>22</sup> to his *Sefer Likutei Amarim*, and since<sup>23</sup> “the words of Torah are scanty in one place and ample in another,” so that some subjects in *Iggeret HaKodesh* are more fully elucidated in *Likutei Amarim*, and *vice versa*; —

—ומה גם בשביל דבר שנתחדש בו קונטרס אחרון על איזה פרקים אשר כתב בעת חיברו הספר לקוטי אמרים

Especially also since the [*Iggeret HaKodesh*] introduces new material (pertaining to *Likutei Amarim*) in the form of a *Kuntres Acharon* (“Later Pamphlet”) on certain chapters, which he wrote when he composed the *Sefer Likutei Amarim*; —

פלפול ועיון עמוק על מאמרי זהר ועץ חיים ופרי עץ חיים שנראים כסותרים זה את זה

[The *Kuntres Acharon*] consists of profound discussions and insights in passages of the *Zohar* and *Etz Chayim* which appear to contradict one another,

וברוח מבינתו מישבם כל דיבור על אופניו שכתב בלקוטי אמרים

and in his understanding spirit [the author] resolves each passage according to its context as explained in *Likutei Amarim* — and thus this part of *Iggeret HaKodesh* is certainly directly connected to *Likutei Amarim*; <sup>24</sup> —

ראו ראינו שראוי ונכון לחברם עם ספר לקוטי אמרים ואגרת התשובה של כבוד קדושת אדוננו אבינו מורנו ורבנו זכרונו לברכה

Accordingly, we have deemed it proper to join [the discourses in *Iggeret HaKodesh*] to the *Sefer Likutei Amarim* and *Iggeret HaTeshuvah* of his saintly eminence our lord father, master and teacher (i.e., to print them together).

אי לזאת באנו להטיל גודא רבה וגזרת נח"ש דרבנן דלית לה אסותא

Therefore we hereby place a great fence (i.e., prohibition) and the [25](#) (i.e., excommunication) of the Rabbis for which there is no remedy,

שלא ירים איש את ידו להדפיס כתבניתם או זה בלא זה

that no man lift his hand [26](#) to print [these discourses] in their present form together with the *Likutei Amarim*, or one without the other,

משך חמשה שנים מיום דלמטה

for a period of five years from the date below. [27](#)

ברם כגון דא צריך לאודועי

This, however, must be made known:

שבעוונותינו הרבים ספו תמו כתבי ידו הקדושה בעצמו, אשר היו בדקדוק גדול לא חסר ולא יתיר אות אחת

To our misfortune [28](#) the manuscripts written by his personal saintly hand which were composed with great precision without a superfluous or deficient letter, have become extinct.

ולא נשאר כי אם זה המעט מהרבה אשר נלקטו אחד לאחד מהעתקות המפוזרים אצל התלמידים

All that has remained from the abundance of material is this small number of writings, which have been collected one by one from the copies spread amongst the disciples.

ואם המצא תמצא איזה טעות שגיאות מי יבין, ימצא הטעות דמוכה מטעות סופר והכוונה תהיה ברורה

Should, therefore, an error be discovered — for “who can avoid errors” [29](#) — the obvious error will be identified as deriving from a scribal slip, but the meaning will be clear.

נאום **דוב בער** בן אדוני אבי מורי ורבי הגאון החסיד קדוש ישראל, מרנא ורבנא **שניאור זלמן**, זכרונו לברכה, נשמתו בגנזי מרומים

Declared by Dov Ber, the son of my lord father, teacher and master, *gaon* and chassid, saint of Israel, our teacher and master Shneur Zalman, of blessed memory, whose soul rests in the hidden treasurehouses of heaven.

ונאום חיים אברהם בן אדוני אבי מורי ורבי הגאון החסיד מרנא ורבנא שניאור זלמן, זכר צדיק לברכה,  
נשמתו בגנזי מרומים

Declared also by Chayim Avraham, the son of my lord father, teacher and master, *gaon* and chassid, our teacher and master Shneur Zalman; may the memory of the *tzaddik* be blessed, whose soul rests in the hidden treasurehouses of heaven.

ונאום משה בן אדוני אבי מורי ורבי הגאון החסיד שניאור זלמן זכרונו לברכה, נשמתו בגנזי מרומים

Declared also by Moshe, the son of my lord father, teacher and master, *gaon* and chassid, Shneur Zalman, of blessed memory, whose soul rests in the hidden treasurehouses of heaven.<sup>30</sup>

#### FOOTNOTES

- [1.](#) The Alter Rebbe's colleague, and a disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch.
- [2.](#) The Alter Rebbe's colleague, and a disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch.
- [3.](#) Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn of Lubavitch. See *Iggerot Kodesh — Admur HaRayatz* (KPS, Brooklyn, N.Y., 5742/1982), Vol. IV, pp. 264-267.
- [4.](#) Examine well the first redaction of *Likutei Amarim* (reproduced by KPS, Brooklyn, N.Y. 5742/1982), and notes there. It is reasonable to assume that there were also many emendations in the text before the manuscript was released to the public to be copied. (— Comment by the Rebbe)
- [5.](#) This adds insight to the Alter Rebbe's reference — at the end of his Compiler's Foreword — to “sundry and diverse” copyists (who caused errors to creep into the text), and likewise his statement that the printed *Tanya* would be “cleared of dross and errors.” (— Comment by the Rebbe)
- [6.](#) As recorded in *Iggerot Kodesh, loc. cit.*, the messengers were three renowned chassidim — R. Moshe Vilenker, R. Pinchas of Shklov and R. Yitzchak Moshe of Yass (Jassy).
- [7.](#) See *Bereishit Rabbah* 5:7: “Why is it called ארץ (land)? רצתהש — Because it desired to do the Will of its Creator.”
- [8.](#) I.e., the year 556 (corresponding to 1796); if written in full (ה'תקנ"ו) it would appear as 5556.
- [9.](#) Note that the author's name appeared in neither the title page nor the approbations in the first seven editions. Only beginning with the eighth edition (Shklov, 5574/1814) was the author's name included, posthumously, when also the approbation by the Alter Rebbe's sons first appeared.
- [10.](#) See *Yevamot* 49b on the superiority of Moshe Rabbeinu: “All the prophets gazed at Divinity through a non-luminous (or reflective) lens; Moshe Rabbeinu gazed through a luminous (or clear) lens.” *Rambam* defines this superiority in his *Yad, Yesodei HaTorah*, ch. 6; *Moreh Nevuchim* II, ch. 35; and his commentary on the *Mishnah*, introduction to the chapter known as *Chelek*, in Tractate *Sanhedrin*, Principle 7. (— Comment by the Rebbe)
- [11.](#) The *Tanya* was first distributed in the form of *kuntreisim* (“pamphlets”). See *Tanya*,

KPS edition (Brooklyn, N.Y. 1958), p. 407.

- [12.](#) The first is the Alter Rebbe's son-in-law and father of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch, third leader of *Chabad*; the second is R. Mordechai Gorowitz, the printer of Shklov.
- [13.](#) From *Bereishit* 41:44; i.e., "shall take any liberties."
- [14.](#) *Bereishit* 1:10, 12.
- [15.](#) I.e., 1796
- [16.](#) Author of *Or HaGanuz*. Perhaps this approbation explains the most unusual phenomenon of the Tzemach Tzedek's granting an approbation to the above work. (— Comment by the Rebbe)
- [17.](#) The original reads, "the hands of" — perhaps a copyist's error. (— Comment by the Rebbe)
- [18.](#) From II *Shmuel* 23:8.
- [19.](#) From *Bereishit* 41:44; i.e., "shall take any liberties."
- [20.](#) Paraphrase of *Kohelet* 12:10.
- [21.](#) *Siddur*, from the passage preceding *Keriat Shema*.
- [22.](#) In sections 3, 5, 6, 17, 18, 20, (25?), 29, and in" *Kuntres Acharon*, sec. beg. "And charity like a mighty stream..."
- [23.](#) Paraphrase of *Talmud Yerushalmi, Rosh HaShanah* 3:5, which is quoted in *Tosafot* on *Keritot* 14a, s.v. אלא.
- [24.](#) However, see the passage that introduces *Kuntres Acharon*, Essay One, in Vol. V of this series, p. 259.
- [25.](#) נדוי, הרם, שמתא — three forms of excommunication, which also form in acrostic the word נח"ש — "snake", hence the expression "for which (i.e. 'for whose bite') there is no remedy" (cf. Tractate *Shabbat* 110a).
- [26.](#) From *Bereishit* 41:44; i.e., "shall take any liberties."
- [27.](#) The Shklov 5574 edition bears the date "Thursday, the 22nd of Iyar, 5574," subsequently omitted.
- [28.](#) Literally, "on account of our many sins."
- [29.](#) *Tehillim* 19:13.
- [30.](#) "To date, I have found no explanation for the variations in the titles with which each of the Alter Rebbe's sons describes his father in his signature, and why each in succession omits two words from the signature of the one before him (as the text appears in all editions beginning with that of 5660 1900)." (— Comment by the Rebbe)

It has been suggested that at the time of signing the approbation, the first signatory, as the Alter Rebbe's successor, was himself a Rebbe, a "saint in Israel"; he therefore emphasizes the Alter Rebbe's greatness in being a "saint in Israel." The second signatory was at the time a *rav* and a halachic authority, and he therefore places the emphasis on the Alter Rebbe's greatness as "our master and teacher." The third signatory was then a *gaon* and a chassid (as is known from the traditions handed on

by the leaders of *Chabad*), and he therefore emphasizes the Alter Rebbe's greatness as a *gaon* and *chassid*.

In the same vein we could also understand the distinctive phrase, "the memory of the *tzaddik* be blessed," in the second signature — based on the tradition that the second signatory was outstanding in his righteousness and humility.



### Compiler's Foreword

As we have seen from the title page, the Alter Rebbe perceives himself as a mere compiler rather than as an author.

והיא אגרת השלוחה לכללות אנשי שלומינו יצ"ו יברכם צורנו וישמרם

Being a letter sent to all *Anash* — members of our fellowship, i.e., the *chassidim*), may [G-d] our Stronghold bless and guard them.<sup>1</sup>

אליכם אישים אקרא

To you [worthy] men, do I call.

שמעו אלי רודפי צדק מבקשי ה' וישמע אליכם אלקים, למגדול ועד קטן

Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, who seek G-d, and may the Almighty listen to you, both great in spiritual stature and small,

כל אנ"ש דמדינתנו וסמוכות שלה

all *Anash* in our land and in nearby countries:

איש על מקומו יבוא לשלום וחיים עד העולם נצח סלה ועד

may each in his own place achieve peace and eternal life.

אמן, כן יהי רצון

Amen. May this be His Will.

\* \* \*

הנה מודעת זאת כי מרגלא בפומי דאינשי בכל אנ"ש לאמר

It is well known that all *Anash* are wont to say

כי אינה דומה שמיעת דברי מוסר לראייה וקריאה בספרים

that hearing words of moral guidance from a teacher addressing his student individually and directly is not the same as seeing and reading such guidance in books, which are impersonal and addressed to the reading audience at large.

The spoken word will have far greater effect than the written word, for two reasons. The first:

שהקורא קורא לפי דרכו ודעתו

For the reader, who gains such instruction in books, will read it after his own manner and mind,

ולפי השגתו ותפיסת שכלו באשר הוא שם

and will absorb the written message according to his mental grasp and comprehension at that particular time.

ואם שכלו ודעתו מבולבלים, ובחשיכה יתהלכו בעבודת ה'

Hence, if his intellect and mind are confused and wander about in darkness in ideas pertaining to the service of G-d

בקושי יכול לראות את האור כי טוב הגנוז בספרים

he will find it difficult to see the beneficial light hidden in books,

אף כי מתוק האור לעינים ומרפא לנפש

although this light be pleasant to the eyes and therapeutic for the soul.

In the case of personal guidance, on the other hand, the mentor can ensure that his message is understood fully and correctly.

The Alter Rebbe now points out a second disadvantage in written advice. By its very nature its ability to inspire even the understanding reader is restricted to a specific audience. A book does not allow for the subjective differences between one reader's character and another's. It will, of necessity, leave some of its readership untouched.

The Alter Rebbe next distinguishes between two categories of inspirational books. In those books belonging to the first category this problem is more obvious and acute; in those of the second category, less so.

The first category embraces those books that argue for pious conduct on grounds of human intellect. These will surely not affect all readers equally; owing to the diversity of mind and temperament among readers, what profoundly inspires one reader, will leave another indifferent.

The second category comprises those works founded on the teachings of our Sages. It would seem at first glance that in such books the problem of subjective differences between readers would be irrelevant. Since they are based on Torah, which is pertinent to every Jew without exception, surely every Jew could be guided and inspired by them.

The Alter Rebbe points out, however, that not every Jew is privileged to find his place in Torah and to derive the instruction applicable to him as an individual. Thus the problem still obtains, though to a lesser degree.

ובר מן דין

Aside from this aforementioned possibility that the reader's intellectual shortcomings may prevent him from perceiving the light concealed in the holy books, there is yet another difficulty:

הנה ספרי היראה הבנויים על פי שכל אנושי, בודאי אינם שווין לכל נפש

Those books on piety founded on human intelligence surely do not affect all people equally,

כי אין כל השכלים והדעות שוות

for not all intellects and minds are alike,

ואין שכל אדם זה מתפעל ומתעורר ממה שמתפעל ומתעורר שכל חבירו

and the intellect of one man is not affected and aroused by that which affects and arouses the intellect of another.

וכמו שאמרו רז"ל גבי ברכת חכם הרזים על ששים ריבוא מישראל

As our Sages have said, in reference to the blessing of "He who is wise in secrets" ordained by the Sages to be recited on [witnessing a gathering of] 600,000 Jews,<sup>2</sup> whereby we praise G-d's omniscience in knowing the secrets of them all:

שאין דעותיהם דומות זו לזו וכי

"For their minds (i.e., thoughts, opinions and feelings) are all different from one another."<sup>3</sup>

וכמו שכתב הרמב"ן ז"ל במלחמות שם בפירוש הספרי גבי יהושע, שנאמר בו: איש אשר רוח בו

So too does *Ramban* (of blessed memory) [explain the reason for the blessing] in his *Milchamot*,<sup>4</sup> elaborating on the comment of *Sifrei* on the verse<sup>5</sup> describing Joshua as “a man in whom there is spirit”;

שיכול להלוך נגד רוחו של כל אחד ואחד

*Sifrei* explains “that he was able to meet the spirit of every man.”<sup>6</sup>

אלא אפילו בספרי היראה אשר יסודותם בהררי קדש

But even those works of *mussar* whose foundation is in the peaks of holiness, meaning that they are founded

מדרשי חז"ל אשר רוח ה' דבר בם ומלתו על לשונם

on the *Midrashim* of our Sages “in whom the spirit of G-d speaks, and His word is on their tongues,”<sup>7</sup> — even in the case of such works the aforementioned problem obtains.

ואורייתא וקודשא בריך הוא כולא חד

For although “Torah and the Holy One, blessed be He, are one,”<sup>8</sup>

וכל ששים רבוא נשמות כללות ישראל, ופרטיהם ופרטי פרטיהם

and all 600,000 general souls of Israel, and the individual souls that are their offshoots,<sup>9</sup>

עד ניצוץ קל שבקלים ופחותי הערך שבעמינו בני ישראל

down to even the [soul-]spark residing within the most worthless and least estimable members of our people, the Children of Israel,

כולהו מתקשראן באורייתא ואורייתא היא המקשרת אותן להקדוש ברוך הוא

are all bound up with the Torah and the Torah is what binds them to G-d,

כנודע בזהר הקדוש

as is known from the holy *Zohar*,<sup>10</sup> and since the Torah does contain what is pertinent to every Jew, those works founded on the Torah ought to appeal to every Jewish reader, —

הרי זה דרך כללות לכללות ישראל

yet this is [said] in a general way for the Jewish people as a whole.



This statement of the *Zohar* speaks of the bond between Jewry in general with the Torah in its entirety. It does not refer to a particular Jew seeking individual instruction in a specific area in the Torah.

ואף שניתנה התורה לידרש בכלל ופרט ופרטי פרטות

It is true that the Torah lends itself to interpretation by the rule of “general principles and specific applications,” and these applications may be further broken down to even more specific details,

לכל נפש פרטית מישראל המושרשת בה

to apply to each individual soul in Israel rooted in the Torah.

Thus the Torah contains not only general instruction for the nation as a whole, but also specific instruction for each individual. Therefore, despite subjective differences between people, every Jew could theoretically find in such works instruction pertinent to his circumstances.

הרי אין כל אדם זוכה להיות מכיר מקומו הפרטי שבתורה

Yet, not every man is privileged to recognize his specific place in the Torah, so that he may know how to derive specific guidance from it.

והנה אף בהלכות איסור והיתר הנגלות לנו ולבנינו

Even in the [Torah-]laws governing things forbidden and permissible which have been<sup>11</sup> “revealed to us and to our children [equally]“ (for despite the differences between generations, the law applies equally to all, complete objectivity prevailing), —

מצאנו ראינו מחלוקת תנאים ואמוראים מן הקצה אל הקצה ממש

even in these laws we witness arguments from one extreme to the other between *tannaim* and *amoraim*, with one *tanna*, for instance, declaring perfectly permissible that which another *tanna* rules absolutely forbidden.

ואלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים

Yet<sup>12</sup> “these as well as those are the words of the living G-d.“

לשון רבים

In this phrase the words “living G-d” appear in the plural form<sup>13</sup>

על שם מקור החיים לנשמות ישראל

because [the diversity of opinions in the *Halachah* stems from plurality in] the source of life of the souls of Israel — within the “living G-d” (i.e., within G-d as He is the source of life).

הנחלקות דרך כלל לשלשה קוין: ימין, ושמאל, ואמצע, שהם חסד וגבורה וכו'

The souls, and hence also their source, so to speak, are divided into three general categories: right, left and center, representing kindness (*Chesed*), severity (*Gevurah*)... [and beauty (*Tiferet*)].

ונשמות ששרשן ממדת חסד הנהגתן גם כן להטות כלפי חסד להקל כו' כנודע

Those souls which are rooted in the attribute of kindness tend to be lenient in their halachic decisions, being inclined toward kindness, which dictates that the object be declared permissible and thus capable of being sanctified if used for a sacred purpose, and so on, with the attribute of severity dictating stringency in halachic decisions, and the attribute of beauty mediating, as is known.

In his *Iggeret HaKodesh*, the Alter Rebbe applies this principle to the legal arguments between the Schools of Shammai and Hillel. The School of Shammai was usually stringent, because their spiritual source was the attribute of severity; the school of Hillel usually lenient because of their source in the attribute of kindness. In certain decisions, however, their positions were reversed. For the realm of holiness is governed by the principle of mutual incorporation (התכללות), with kindness containing elements of severity and *vice versa*.

Now if one's individual spiritual tendencies affect the way he views the Torah even in the area of the *Halachah*, which is intrinsically objective,

וכל שכן וקל וחומר בהנסתרות לה' אלקינו

surely, how much more so, will subjective differences play a role in “matters hidden to G-d Almighty,”

דאינון דחילו ורחימו

namely, to one's awe and love of G-d, which are subjective by their very nature, for they express themselves

דבמוחא ולבא דכל חד וחד לפום שיעורא דיליה

in the mind and heart of each person according to his own measure (his *ורשע*),

לפום מה דמשער בלביה

according to his heart's estimation (השערה), and according to the "gate" (שער) that he makes in his heart, to permit his intellectual understanding (of G-dliness) to pervade his heart and generate within him a love and awe of G-d,

כמו שכתוב בזהר הקדוש על פסוק: נודע בשערים בעלה וגו'

as the *Zohar*<sup>14</sup> comments on the verse, "Her husband is known by the gates..."<sup>15</sup>

The *Zohar* interprets the "husband" of this verse as a reference to G-d, Who is the "husband" of the community of Israel. We "know" and attach ourselves to Him "by the *she'arim*," which the *Zohar* interprets in the sense of *shaar* ("gate"), *shiur* ("measure"), and *hash'arah* ("estimation"), as explained above. At any rate, we see that being inspired in the love and fear of G-d is intrinsically subjective. To return to the thread of our earlier argument: If even in the objective *halachah* we find differences of opinion arising from the variety in human nature, we will surely find a variety of response to inspirational literature. The chassidic saying quoted above, that "seeing" (in books — even Torah books) "is not the same as hearing" (inspiration from a teacher), seems quite justified. How then could the Alter Rebbe now propose to offer the *Tanya* to his followers as a substitute for the personal guidance that he had been giving them until this time

In answer the Alter Rebbe states that the *Tanya* is addressed to his chassidim, with whom he has a long-standing relationship, and whose specific needs for guidance are known to him from their personal audiences with him. They will therefore find the advice provided in the *Tanya* relevant to their individual needs.

Chassidim would add that this includes all those who study the *Tanya*: the Alter Rebbe knew them all and addressed himself to each one's needs in the service of G-d, as though they had spoken to him in private audience. As the Rebbe Rashab phrased it,<sup>16</sup> "To study the *Tanya* is to converse with the Alter Rebbe."

\* \* \*

אך ביודעיי ומכיריי קאמינא, הם כל אחד ואחד מאנשי שלומנו שבמדינתינו וסמוכות שלה

I speak, however, of those who know me well, each and every one of *Anash* of our country and those countries nearby,

אשר היה הדיבור של חיבה מצוי בינינו

with whom affectionate words were often exchanged in private audience,

וגילו לפני כל תעלומות לבם ומוחם בעבודת ה' התלויה בלב

and who revealed to me all the hidden recesses of their heart and mind in matters related to the service of G-d which is dependent on the heart.

אליהם תטוף מלתי, ולשוני עט סופר, בקונטרסים אלו הנקראים בשם לקוטי אמרים

To them shall my words seep through, and<sup>17</sup> my tongue shall take the form of a scribe's pen, in these pamphlets entitled *Likutei Amarim* ("A Compilation of Teachings"),

מלוקטים מפי ספרים ומפי סופרים קדושי עליון נשמתם עדן, המפורסמים אצלינו

being compiled from books and teachers, heavenly saints, who are well known to us.

The "books and teachers" alluded to have been explained above, in the comments on the title page.

וקצת מהן נרמזין לחכימין באגרות הקדש מרבתינו שבארצנו הקדושה, תובב"א

Some of these teachings, the wise (for whom "a hint is sufficient") will find alluded to in the sacred letters of our teachers in the Holy Land.

As mentioned above, the Alter Rebbe considered certain senior disciples of the Maggid of Mezritch as his mentors, especially Rabbi Mendel of Vitebsk, who then resided in *Eretz Yisrael*.

וקצתם שמעתי מפיהם הקדוש בהיותם פה עמנו

Some of them I heard from their saintly mouth when they were here with us before they moved to *Eretz Yisrael*.

וכולם הן תשובות על שאלות רבות אשר שואלין בעצה כל אנשי שלומינו דמדינתנו תמיד

All of them are answers to many questions posed continually by *Anash* of our country seeking advice,

כל אחד לפי ערכו

each according to his stature in the service of G-d,

לשית עצות בנפשם בעבודת ה'

so as to receive guidance for themselves in the service of G-d,

להיות כי אין הזמן גרמא עוד להשיב לכל אחד ואחד על שאלתו בפרטות

because time no longer permits [me] to reply to everyone individually on his particular query,

וגם השכחה מצויה

and also because forgetfulness is common.

על כן רשמתי כל התשובות על כל השאלות

I have therefore recorded all the replies to all the questions,

למשמרת לאות, להיות לכל אחד ואחד לזכרון בין עיניו

to be preserved as a sign, and to serve as a reminder in everyone's mind.<sup>18</sup>

ולא ידחוק עוד ליכנם לדבר עמי ביחידות

No longer will one need to press for a private audience,

כי בהן ימצא מרגוע לנפשו ועצה נכונה לכל דבר הקשה עליו בעבודת ה',

for in these *Likutei Amarim* one will find tranquility for his soul, and true counsel on everything that he finds difficult in the service of G-d.

ונכון יהיה לבו בטוח בה' גומר בעדינו

Thus his heart will be firmly secure in G-d who completes and perfects everything for us.

ומי שדעתו קצרה להבין דבר עצה מתוך קונטרסים אלו

He whose mind is too limited to understand how to derive advice from these pamphlets,

יפרש שיחתו לפני הגדולים שבעירו, והם יבוננהו

let him discuss his problem with the foremost scholars of his town and they will enlighten him.

ואליהם בקשתי שלא לשום יד לפה

Of [these scholars] I request that they not lay their hand upon their mouth, i.e., not to keep silent when asked for advice, for fear of appearing to be proud in their knowledge,

להתנהג בענוה ושפלות של שקר, חס ושלום

to conduct themselves with false modesty and humility — for misplaced modesty is falsehood.

וכנודע עונש המר על מונע בר

It is well known how bitter is the punishment of him who<sup>19</sup> “withholds food,” i.e., who withholds Torah knowledge from him who seeks it,

וגודל השכר, ממאמר רז"ל על פסוק: מאיר עיני שניהם ה'

and also how great is the reward granted to one who provides such knowledge. This is well known from the comment of our Sages<sup>20</sup> on the verse,<sup>21</sup> “G-d enlightens the eyes of them both.”

The verse reads, “The pauper and the wealthy man meet; G-d enlightens the eyes of them both.” The *Gemara* applies this to a pauper in Torah knowledge and to one who is wealthy in Torah. When they meet, and the wealthy one teaches the pauper, G-d enlightens the eyes of both of them — with a light that transcends them both.

כי יאיר ה' פניו אליהם, אור פני מלך חיים

Thus G-d will cause His face to shine upon them, with the light of the countenance of the King [which provides] life.

ומחיה חיים יזכנו ויחיינו לימים אשר לא ילמדו עוד איש את רעהו וגו' כי כולם ידעו אותי

May He who provides life to the living grant us the privilege of living to see the days when<sup>22</sup> “no longer will one man teach another... [to know Me], for they will all know Me, [... from the smallest to the greatest-,”

כי מלאה האר' דעה את ה' וגו'

<sup>23</sup>“for the knowledge of G-d will fill the earth as the waters fill the sea.”

אמן כן יהי רצון

Amen. May this be His Will.

\* \* \*

והנה אחר שנתפשטו הקונטרסים הנ"ל בקרב כל אנ"ש הנ"ל בהעתקות רבות מידי סופרים שונים ומשונים

As the aforementioned pamphlets have been distributed among all the *Anash* mentioned above, by means of numerous transcriptions at the hands of sundry and diverse copyists,

הנה על ידי ריבוי ההעתקות שונות רבו כמו רבו הטעויות סופרים במאוד מאוד

the multitude of transcriptions has given rise to an exceedingly great number of textual errors.

As mentioned above, the words “sundry and diverse (copyists)” may well allude to two kinds of errors — the intentional as well as the innocent.

ולזאת נדבה רוחם של אנשים אפרתים הנקובים הנ"ל מעבר לדף לטרוח בגופם ומאודם

Therefore the spirit of the noble men mentioned on the previous page<sup>24</sup> has generously moved them to make a personal and financial effort

להביא את קונטרסים הנ"ל לבית הדפוס, מנוקים מכל סיג וטעות סופר ומוגהים היטב

to have these pamphlets published, cleared of all dross and copyists' errors (— another possible allusion to the two types of errors mentioned above, with “dross” representing the forgeries), and thoroughly checked.

ואמינא לפעלא טבא יישר הילא

I congratulate them on this worthy deed.

ול להיות כי מקרא מלא דבר הכתוב: ארור מסיג גבול רעהו

Inasmuch as the verse states explicitly,<sup>25</sup> “Cursed be he who encroaches on his fellow's border,”

וארור בו קללה בו נידוי, חס ושלום וכו'

and where the expression “cursed” is used, it implies both damnation and excommunication,<sup>26</sup> G-d preserve us, it is actually superfluous to add any further prohibition on violating the copyright of the publishers.

על כן כיהודא ועוד לקרא קאתינא

I come therefore only to reinforce the words of Scripture as [the *Talmud* cites] a mere practice in Judah in order to reinforce an explicit Scriptural statement,<sup>27</sup>

למשדי גודא רבא על כל המדפיסים, שלא להדפיס קונטרסים הנ"ל לא על ידי עצמן ולא על ידי גירא דלהון

invoking a strict prohibition on all publishers against printing these pamphlets, either themselves or through their agents,

בלתי רשות הנקובים הנ"ל

without the permission of the above-named,

משך חמש שנים מיום כלות הדפוס

for a period of five years from the day that this printing is completed.<sup>28</sup>

ולשומעים יונעם ותבוא עליהם ברכת טוב

May it be pleasant for those who comply, and may they be blessed with good.

These are the words of the compiler of the aforementioned *Likutei Amarim*.

FOOTNOTES [1](#). The abbreviation may also represent: “May our Stronghold and Redeemer preserve them,” or some similar expression. Compare the phrase (in the morning prayer): “Stronghold of Israel, arise to the aid of Israel...” It is possible that the Alter Rebbe wrote the words in abbreviation to allow for a variety of interpretations of the blessing. (— Comment of the Rebbe) [2](#). The reading in the text is ריבוא ששים — “sixty ten-thousands,” corresponding to the number of adult male Israelites in the Exodus from Egypt (*Shmot* 12:37; *Bamidbar* 11:21). [3](#). *Berachot* 58a. [4](#). Commenting on Alfasi’s omission of this passage in the *Gemara*. [5](#). *Bamidbar* 27:18. [6](#). *Rashi*, too (*ibid.*), cites the interpretation that “he could meet the spirit of every man,” yet the Alter Rebbe quotes it from *Ramban*. This may be because *Ramban* suggests the possibility that a great sage may be the equivalent of, and incorporate within himself, the minds of 600,000. (*Ramban* accordingly explains why, as the *Gemara* relates, Rabbi Chananya the son of Rabbi Icka recited the blessing of “he who is wise in secrets” when he met Rav Papa and Rav Huna the son of Rabbi Yehoshua.) However, recognizing such a sage requires a discerning mind on the part of the observer, and for this reason *Ramban* rules in practice that one should recite the blessing only when he actually sees 600,000 people. We see from *Ramban*, at any rate, that the alternative possibility theoretically exists. The chassidim, who “know” and “recognize” the Alter Rebbe (as he says of them later), know him to be such a sage “who can meet the spirit of every man”; for inasmuch as his was a “comprehensive soul” (כללית נשמה), he contained within himself the spirit of every one of them. [7](#). Paraphrase of II *Shmuel* 23:2. [8](#). Cf. *Zohar* I, 24a; II 60a. [9](#). See *Tanya*, ch. 37. [10](#). III, p. 73b. [11](#). Based on the verse (*Devarim* 29:28): “The hidden things are for G-d Almighty, and the revealed things are for us and our children...” [12](#). *Eruvin* 13b. [13](#). חיים אלקים, rather than חי אלקה. [14](#). P. 103a, b. [15](#). *Mishlei* 31:23. [16](#). *Torat Shalom* p. 56. [17](#). *Tehillim* 45:2. [18](#). As in the expression concerning the *tefillin* (*Shmot* 13:9): “They shall be for you as a reminder between your eyes.” [19](#). See *Sanhedrin* 91b on *Mishlei* 11:26. [20](#). See *Temurah* 16a on *Mishlei* 29:13. [21](#). *Mishlei* 29:13. [22](#). *Yirmeyahu* 31:33. [23](#). *Yeshayahu* 11:9. [24](#). Referring to the partners R. Shalom Shachna and R. Mordechai; see approbation of Rabbi Zusya of Anipoli and footnote 11 there. [25](#). *Devarim* 27:17. [26](#). *Shevuot* 36a (in inverted order); and *Rambam, Yad, Hilchot Sanhedrin* 26:3. [27](#). *Kiddushin* 6a. [28](#). As above, in the approbations: Tuesday, *Parshat Ki Tavo*, 5556.

## Chapter 1

We have learned (*Niddah*, end of ch. 3):[1](#) “An oath is administered to him:

Before a Jew is born an oath is administered to him in heaven, charging him:

תהי צדיק ואל תהי רשע, ואפילו כל העולם כולו אומרים לך צדיק אתה היה בעיניך כרשע



‘Be righteous and be not wicked; and even if the whole world judging you by your actions tells you that you are righteous, regard yourself as wicked.’”

The soul of a Jew descends into a body for a purpose — in order to fulfill a specific spiritual mission in this world. To enable him to fulfill it a heavenly oath is administered to him that he “be righteous and not wicked,” and concurrently, that he regard himself as wicked and not righteous. The root (בעש) of the verb ביעימשם (“an oath is administered”) is virtually identical with the root (בעש) of the verb ביעימשם (“one causes [him] to be sated”). Accordingly, the oath charging him to be righteous may also be understood to mean that the soul is thereby invested (“sated”) with the power that enables it to fulfill its destiny in life on earth.

וצריך להבין, דהא תנן אבות פרק ב' : ואל תהי רשע בפני עצמך

This requires to be understood, for we have learned in the *Mishnah [Avot, ch. 2]*,<sup>2</sup> “Be not wicked in your own estimation.”

How, then, can we say that an oath is administered to the soul that it regard itself as wicked, when this directly contradicts the Mishnaic injunction *not* to regard oneself as wicked?<sup>3</sup>

וגם אם יהיה בעיניו כרשע ירע לבבו ויהיה עצב

Furthermore, if a person considers himself wicked, he will be grieved at heart and depressed,

ולא יוכל לעבוד ה' בשמחה ובטוב לבב

and consequently will not be able to serve G-d joyfully and with a contented heart;

Apart from the previously mentioned contradiction from the *Mishnah*, an additional question is now raised. A cardinal principle in the service of G-d is that it be performed with joy — joy at the privilege of serving Him either through performing a positive command or by refraining from that which is prohibited. How then can one be required to take an oath to consider himself wicked, when this will cause him to be depressed, making it impossible for him to serve G-d with joy?

Furthermore, just as the first part of the oath, “Be righteous and be not wicked,” is vital to his success in realizing his life’s mission, so too the fulfillment of the second part of the oath, that he consider himself wicked, is imperative. How can this possibly be so, when such an attitude hinders his joyful service of G-d?

ואם לא ירע לבבו כלל מזה

while if his heart will not be at all grieved by this self-appraisal,

I.e., if we should propose that in order to fulfill the oath the person will indeed regard himself as wicked, but at the same time will resolve that his wickedness shall not perturb him, so as not to encumber his joyful service of G-d,

יכול לבוא לידי קלות חס ושלום

he may be led to irreverence, G-d forbid, by such an attitude, with sin perturbing him not at all.

For although his original resolve that being wicked will not perturb him stems only from his sincere desire to serve G-d with joy, yet such a resolution may very well lead to a situation where wickedness will truly not disturb him.

אך הענין

However, the [above] matter will be more clearly understood after a preliminary discussion of the true meaning of “righteous” and “wicked”.

כי הנה מצינו בגמרא ה' חלוקות: צדיק וטוב לו, צדיק ורע לו

We find in the *Gemara*<sup>4</sup> five distinct types: a righteous man who prospers, materially as well as spiritually — he knows only good; a righteous man who suffers, in both a material as well as spiritual sense: spiritually, he has not yet vanquished all his evil, and in the material sense too he is wanting;

רשע וטוב לו, רשע ורע לו, ובינוני

a wicked man in whom there is some good and who prospers; a wicked man who suffers spiritually and materially; and an intermediate man — the *Beinoni*.

ופירשו בגמרא: צדיק וטוב לו — צדיק גמור

The *Gemara* explains: “the righteous man who prospers” is the consummate lit., “complete” *tzaddik*;

Once he has achieved this level, physical suffering — to cleanse the soul from the impurities of sin — is unnecessary; he therefore prospers materially as well.

צדיק ורע לו — צדיק שאינו גמור

the “righteous man who suffers” is the imperfect *lit.*, “incomplete” *tzaddik*.

He therefore experiences some measure of material suffering, thereby cleansing the soul while it is yet clothed in the body, so that he will not have to endure any spiritual suffering in the World to Come.

Accordingly, the *Gemara* is not referring to two *tzaddikim* on the same spiritual level, one of whom prospers while the other suffers; rather, it speaks of two distinct levels of *tzaddikim*. The *Gemara* thus cites only two characterizations regarding the *tzaddik* — “consummate” and “imperfect” (lit., “complete” and “incomplete”). The terms “who prospers” or “who suffers” do not indicate his spiritual level: they merely describe his resultant material status.

וברעיא מהימנא פרשת משפטים פירש: צדיק ורע לו — שהרע שבו כפוף לטוב

In *Ra'aya Mehemna (Parshat Mishpatim)*<sup>5</sup> it is explained that “the righteous man who suffers” is one whose evil nature is subservient to his good nature.<sup>6</sup>

He is a *tzaddik* who still retains some vestige of evil, albeit subservient to his good nature. Accordingly, a “righteous man who prospers” is a *tzaddik* in whom there is only good, since he has totally transformed his evil nature.

According to the *Zohar* (of which *Ra'aya Mehemna* is a part), the terms “who prospers” and “who suffers” also indicate and describe the level of the *tzaddik*. The “*tzaddik* who prospers” is a *tzaddik* in whom there is only good — the evil within him having already been transformed to good; the “*tzaddik* who suffers” is a *tzaddik* of lower stature — one who still harbors some evil.

However, we must now understand why redundant titles are given to each level of *tzaddik*: “complete *tzaddik*” and “*tzaddik* who prospers”; “incomplete *tzaddik*” and “*tzaddik* who suffers.” If the “complete *tzaddik*” is the “*tzaddik* who prospers” (i.e., in whom there is only good) and the “incomplete *tzaddik*” is the “*tzaddik* who suffers” (i.e., retains a vestige of evil), why then is it necessary to give each *tzaddik* two appellations?

The explanation provided further (in ch. 10) is that each descriptive term denotes a specific aspect of the divine service of the *tzaddik*. The terms “complete *tzaddik*” and “incomplete *tzaddik*” denote the level of service of the *tzaddik*'s G-dly soul, i.e., the *tzaddik*'s love of G-d, for it is by virtue of this love that he is called “*tzaddik*.” The “complete *tzaddik*” is he who has attained perfection in his love of G-d in a manner of *ahavah betaanugim* (“love of delights”) — the serene love of fulfillment. The *tzaddik* whose *ahavah betaanugim* is as yet imperfect is called the “incomplete (or unperfected) *tzaddik*.”

The terms “*tzaddik* who prospers” and “*tzaddik* who suffers” denote the *tzaddik*'s status *vis-à-vis* his efforts in transforming his animal soul to holiness. For the *tzaddik*, through his lofty service of *ahavah betaanugim*, transforms the evil within him into holiness and good. The designation “*tzaddik* who prospers” indicates that he has already totally transformed the evil within him and now good alone remains, while the “*tzaddik* who suffers” is one who has not yet managed to totally transform the evil within him to good; a vestige of it still remains.

The explanations that follow make it abundantly clear that the evil referred to here is no more than an amorphous evil still harbored in the heart of the “incomplete *tzaddik*.” For the *tzaddik* has no association with actual evil that manifests itself in thought or speech, and most certainly not with the evil that finds expression in actions.

ובגמרא סוף פרק ט' דברכות: צדיקים יצר טוב שופטן כו', רשעים יצר הרע שופטן

In the *Gemara* (end of ch. 9 of *Berachot*<sup>7</sup>) [it is stated] that the righteous are “judged” i.e., motivated and ruled by their good nature, their good nature having the final say; the wicked are judged i.e., motivated and ruled by their evil nature, their evil nature having the final say;

בינונים זה וזה שופטן וכו'

intermediate men are “judged” by both the good and evil nature.<sup>8</sup>

אמר רבה: כגון אנא בינוני. אמר ליה אביי: לא שביק מר חיי לכל בריה וכו'

Rabbah declared: “I, for example, am a *Beinoni*.” Said Abbaye to him, “Master, you make it impossible for any creature to live.”

Abbaye argued thus: “If *you* are a *Beinoni*, then all those on a lower level than you fall into the category of the wicked, concerning whom our Sages say:<sup>9</sup> ‘The wicked, even while alive, are considered dead.’ By calling yourself a *Beinoni* you thus make it impossible for anyone to live.”

ולהבין כל זה באר היטב

To understand all the aforesaid clearly [an explanation is called for].

In addition to the question which will soon follow — that according to the common conception of a *Beinoni* as a person having half *mitzvot* and half transgressions, how could a great sage like Rabbah mistake himself for a *Beinoni* — a further question is implied:

If a *Beinoni* is simply one having half *mitzvot* and half transgressions, then his status is readily identifiable, and there is no possible room for debate.

וגם להבין מה שאמר איוב בבא בתרא פרק א' : רבונו של עולם, בראת צדיקים בראת רשעים כו'

And also to understand the statement of Job [*Bava Batra* ch. 1]<sup>10</sup>: “L-rd of the Universe! You have created righteous men, You have created wicked men,....”

והא צדיק ורשע לא קאמר

for He does not decree [which persons are to be] righteous and wicked.

The *Gemara*<sup>11</sup> relates that G-d decrees that a child about to be born will be wise or foolish, strong or weak, and so on. However, whether the child will be righteous or wicked G-d does not say: this is not predetermined; rather, it is left to the individual's free choice.

How, then, are we to understand Job's plaint, "You have *created* righteous men, You have *created* wicked men"?<sup>12</sup>

וגם להבין מהות מדריגת הבינוני

We must also understand the essential nature (*mahut*) of the rank of the *Beinoni*.

The *mahut* of a *tzaddik* is righteousness; the *mahut* of the wicked man is evil. What is the *mahut* — the essential nature — of the *Beinoni*?

שבדאי אינו מחצה זכויות ומחצה עוונות, שאם כן איך טעה רבה בעצמו לומר שהוא בינוני

He is certainly not one whose deeds are half virtuous and half sinful; for if this were so, how could Rabbah err in [classifying] himself as a *Beinoni*?

ונודע דלא פסיק פומיה מגירסא, עד שאפילו מלאך המות לא היה יכול לשלוט בו

— when it is known that his mouth never ceased studying [the Torah], so much so that even the Angel of Death had no dominion over him.<sup>13</sup>

Such was Rabbah's diligence that he did not neglect his studies for even one moment. Qualitatively too, his learning was on so high a plane that the Angel of Death was unable to overpower him.

ואיך היה יכול לטעות במחצה עוונות, חס ושלום

How, then, could he err in considering that half his deeds were sinful, G-d forbid?

ועוד, שהרי בשעה שעושה עונות נקרא רשע גמור

Furthermore, when can a person be considered a *Beinoni*? For at the time one sins until he repents he is deemed completely wicked,

ואם אחר כך עשה תשובה נקרא צדיק גמור

(and if he was sinful and then repented, thus ceasing to be wicked, he is deemed completely righteous<sup>14</sup>).

ואפילו העובר על איסור קל של דברי סופרים מקרי רשע, כדאיתא בפרק ב' דיבמות ובפרק קמא דנדה

Even he who violates a minor prohibition of the Rabbis is termed wicked, as is stated in *Yevamot*, ch. 2,[15](#) and in *Niddah*, ch. 1.[16](#)

ואפילו מי שיש בידו למחות ולא מיחה נקרא רשע בפרק ו' דשבועות

Moreover, even he who himself does not sin, but has the opportunity to forewarn another against sinning and fails to do so is termed wicked [*Shevuot*, ch. [617](#)].

וכל שכן וקל וחומר במבטל איזו מצות עשה שאפשר לו לקיימה

All the more so he who neglects any positive law which he is able to fulfill,

כמו כל שאפשר לו לעסוק בתורה ואינו עוסק

for instance, whoever is able to study Torah and does not do so,

שעליו דרשו רבותינו ז"ל: כי דבר ה' בזה וגו' הכרת תכרת וגו'

to whom our Sages[18](#) have applied the verse,[19](#) “Because he has despised the word of the L-rd (i.e., the Torah), [that soul] shall be utterly cut off....”

ופשיטא דמקרי רשע טפי מעובר איסור דרבנן

It is thus plain that such a person is called wicked, more so than he who violates a prohibition of the Sages.

ואם כן על כרחך הבינוני אין בו אפילו עון ביטול תורה

This being so, we must conclude that the *Beinoni* is not guilty even of the sin of neglecting to study Torah;

a sin most difficult to avoid, and counted among those sins that people transgress daily.[20](#)

ומשום הכי טעה רבה בעצמו לומר שהוא בינוני

This is why Rabbah mistook himself for a *Beinoni*.

Since a *Beinoni* is innocent even of neglecting Torah study, Rabbah could [mistakenly] consider himself a *Beinoni*, even though he scrupulously observed even the most minor commandments and never ceased from his studies.

הגהה

ומה שכתוב בזהר חלק ג' דף רל"א: כל שממועטין עונותיו וכו' —

NOTE

As for what is written in the *Zohar* III, p. 231: “He whose sins are few [is classed as a ‘righteous man who suffers’],”

implying that even according to the *Zohar* the meaning of a “righteous man who suffers” is one who does have sins, albeit few; and if so, a *Beinoni* must be one who is in part virtuous and in part sinful,

היא שאלת רב המנונא לאליהו

this is the query of Rav Hamnuna to Elijah.

אבל לפי תשובת אליהו שם הפי' צדיק ורע לו הוא כמ"ש בר"מ פרשה משפטים דלעיל

But according to Elijah’s answer [*ibid.*], the meaning of a “righteous man who suffers” is as stated in *Ra’aya Mehemna* on *Parshat Mishpatim*, quoted above,[21](#) i.e., that the “righteous man who suffers” is one whose evil nature is subservient to his good nature.

ושבעים פנים לתורה

And the Torah has seventy facets (modes of interpretation).[22](#)

The Rebbe notes that the words, “And the Torah has seventy facets,” help us understand Rav Hamnuna’s query. It is difficult to understand how Rav Hamnuna would even entertain the notion that a “righteous man who suffers” is one who actually sins, inasmuch as all the abovementioned questions clearly lead us to assume the opposite. Rav Hamnuna’s query, however, was prompted only by the fact that “the Torah has seventy facets,” and he thought that this was possibly one of these facets.

END OF NOTE

והא דאמרין בעלמא דמחצה על מחצה מקרי בינוני ורוב זכויות מקרי צדיק

As for the well-known saying[23](#) that one [whose deeds and misdeeds are] equally balanced is called a *Beinoni*, while [he who has] a majority of virtues outweighing his sins is called a *tzaddik*,

הוא שם המושאל

this is only a borrowed name, i.e., a figurative use of the term borrowed from its true usage in order to emphasize a particular point. Thus the names *Beinoni* and *tzaddik*, denoting a balance between merits and sins, are in fact but borrowed names

לענין שכר ועונש

used in regard to reward and punishment,

לפי שנדון אחר רובו

because one is judged according to the majority [of his deeds],

ומקרי צדיק בדינו מאחר שזוכה בדין

and he is termed “righteous” in reference to his verdict, since he is acquitted at his trial.

It is only in this legal sense that the term *tzaddik* is applied to one who performs more good deeds than evil.

אבל לענין אמיתת שם התואר והמעלה של מעלת ומדריגות חלוקות צדיקים ובינונים

If, however, we seek to truly define the distinct qualities and ranks of *tzaddikim* and *Beinonim*,

אמרו רבותינו ז"ל: צדיקים — יצר טוב שופטן, שנאמר: ולבי חלל בקרבי

our Sages have remarked that the righteous are “judged” i.e., motivated and ruled, solely by their good nature, as it is written,<sup>24</sup> “And my heart is slain within me,”

שאין לו יצר הרע כי הרגו בתענית

meaning that he i.e., David, the author of this verse was devoid of an evil nature, having slain it through fasting.

David extirpated his evil nature through fasting; other ways too are possible.

We thus see from the *Gemara* that the definition of *tzaddik* in its true sense applies to the person who has rid himself of his evil nature.

אבל כל מי שלא הגיע למדרגה זו, אף שזכויותיו מרובים על עונותיו, אינו במעלת ומדריגת צדיק כלל

But whoever has not attained this degree of ridding himself of his evil nature, even though his virtues outnumber his sins, is not at all at the level and rank of *tzaddik*.

In fact, not only has he not reached the rank of *tzaddik*: he has not yet attained even the level of *Beinoni*, as has been demonstrated above.

ולכן אמרו רבותינו ז"ל במדרש: ראה הקדוש ברוך הוא בצדיקים שהם מועטים, עמד ושתלן ככל דור ודור  
וכו'

This is why our Sages have expounded:<sup>25</sup> “The Almighty saw that the righteous were few, so He arose and planted i.e., and spread them in every generation,”

וכמו שכתוב: וצדיק יסוד עולם



[for,] as it is written,<sup>26</sup> “The *tzaddik* is the foundation of the world.”

Thus, in each generation there must be a *tzaddik* who serves as the “foundation of the world.”

This paucity of *tzaddikim* (“The righteous were few”) can be explained only if a *tzaddik* is he who has totally rid himself of his evil nature. Were the term *tzaddik* to mean one whose good deeds outweigh the evil, why then do our Sages say that “the righteous were few,” when the overwhelming majority of Jews have more good deeds than evil!

אך ביאור הענין

However, the explanation of the matter, so that we better understand the levels of *tzaddik* and *Beinoni*, as well as the various gradations within their ranks,

על פי מה שכתב הרב חיים ויטאל ז"ל בשער הקדושה ובע' חיים שער נ' פרק ב'

[is to be found] in light of what Rabbi Chayim Vital wrote in *Shaar HaKedushah* (and in *Etz Chayim*, Portal 5, ch. 2) —

דלכל איש ישראל אחד צדיק ואחד רשע יש שתי נשמות

that every Jew, whether righteous or wicked, possesses two souls,

וכדכתיב: ונשמות אני עשיתי,

as it is written,<sup>27</sup> “And *neshamot* (souls) which I have made.”

Though the verse speaks of an individual Jew (as is indicated by the singular form of the word *ruach* (spirit) in the preceding phrase, “When the spirit of *a man* which emanates from Me will be humbled...”), the plural term souls is nevertheless used, indicating that *every* Jew possesses two souls.

שהן שתי נפשות

These are two *nefashot*<sup>28</sup> — two souls and life-forces.

נפש אחת מצד הקליפה וסטרא אחרא

One soul originates in the *kelipah* and *sitra achra*.

“*Kelipah*” means a shell or peel. G-d created forces which conceal the G-dly life-force found in all creation as a peel covers and conceals a fruit. “*Sitra achra*” means “the other side” — the side of creation that is the antithesis of holiness and purity. (The two terms are generally synonymous.)

והיא המתלבשת בדם האדם להחיות הגוף

It is this *nefesh* (which originates in the *kelipah* and *sitra achra*) that is clothed in the blood of a human being, giving life to the body;

וכדכתיב: כי נפש הבשר בדם היא

as it is written,<sup>29</sup> “For the *nefesh* of the flesh (i.e., the *nefesh* that sustains physical and corporeal life) is in the blood.”

וממנה באות כל המדות רעות מארבעה יסודות רעים שבה

From [this *nefesh*] stem all the evil characteristics, deriving from the four evil elements within it.

Just as the four physical elements of Fire, Air, Water and Earth are the foundation of all physical entities, so too is this *nefesh* comprised of four corresponding *spiritual* elements. Since they derive from *kelipah* and evil, they themselves are evil, and from them in turn one's evil characteristics come into being.

דהיינו: כעס וגאווה מיסוד האש שנגבה למעלה

Namely: anger and pride [emanate] from the element of Fire which rises upwards;

Once ignited by anger and pride, a man (like fire) soars aloft. Pride is the state of considering oneself superior to others. Anger too is an offshoot of pride. Would a person not be proud, he would not be angered when someone defied his will.

ותאות התענוגים מיסוד המים, כי המים מצמיחים כל מיני תענוג

the appetite for pleasures [emanates] from the element of Water, for water promotes the growth of all kinds of pleasure-giving things.

The ability of water to make pleasurable things grow indicates that concealed within it is the element of pleasure. Thus, the appetite for pleasure derives from the element of Water.

והוללות וליצנות והתפארות ודברים בטלים מיסוד הרוח

frivolity and scoffing, boasting and idle talk [emanate] from the element of Air; like air, they lack substance;

ועצלות ועצבות מיסוד העפר

and sloth and melancholy [emanate] from the element of Earth.

Earth is characterized by heaviness. A man encumbered by sloth and melancholy likewise senses a heaviness of the limbs.

וגם מדות טובות שבטבע כל ישראל בתולדותם, כמו רחמנות וגמילות חסדים, באות ממנה

From this soul stem also the good traits inherent in every Jew's character, such as compassion and benevolence.

But since this is a *nefesh* of *kelipah* and evil, how do *good* characteristics come from it? This matter is now addressed.

כי בישראל נפש זו דקליפה היא מקליפת נוגה, שיש בה גם כן טוב

For in the [case of the] Jew, this soul of *kelipah* is derived from the *kelipah* called “*nogah*”, which also contains good; and the good within this *nefesh* gives rise to these positive natural traits.

והיא מסוד ע' הדעת טוב ורע

[This *kelipah*] is from the esoteric “Tree of Knowledge” [which is comprised] of good and evil.[30](#)

מה שאין כן נפשות אומות העולם הן משאר קליפות טמאות שאין בהן טוב כלל

The souls of the nations of the world, however, emanate from the other, unclean *kelipot* which contain no good whatever,

כמו שכתוב בע' חיים שער מ"ט פרק ג': וכל טיבו דעבדין האומות לגרמייהו עבדין

as is written in *Etz Chayim*, Portal 49, ch. 3, that all the good that the nations do, is done out of selfish motives.

Since their *nefesh* emanates from *kelipot* which contain no good, it follows that any good done by them is for selfish motives.

וכדאיתא בגמרא על פסוק: וחסד לאומים חטאת — שכל צדקה וחסד שאומות העולם עושין אינן אלא להתייחר כו'

So the *Gemara*[31](#) comments on the verse,[32](#) “The kindness of the nations is sin” — that all the charity and kindness done by the nations of the world is only for their self-glorification...

When a Jew acts in a benevolent manner he is motivated mainly out of concern for the welfare of his fellow. The proof of this is that were his fellow not to need his help, this would give him greater pleasure than the gratification derived from his act of kindness.

Concerning the nations of the world, however, this is not so. Their motivation is not the welfare of their fellow; rather, it stems from a self-serving motive — the desire for self-glorification, a feeling of gratification, and the like.

It should be noted that among the nations of the world there are also to be found those whose souls are derived from *kelipat nogah*.<sup>33</sup> Called “the pious ones of the nations of the world,” these righteous individuals are benevolent not out of selfish motives but out of a genuine concern for their fellow.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Niddah* 30b. [2.](#) *Avot* 2:13. [3.](#) The apparent contradiction between the two statements is resolved in ch. 13. See also chs. 14, 29 and 34. [4.](#) *Berachot* 7a. [5.](#) *Zohar* II, 117b. [6.](#) This is an alternative interpretation of the words לו ורע which may be rendered literally as “evil [belongs] to him”; i.e, he is master of the evil nature in him. [7.](#) 61b. [8.](#) See beginning of ch. 9, and ch. 13. [9.](#) *Berachot* 18b. [10.](#) *Bava Batra* 16a. [11.](#) *Niddah* 16b. [12.](#) The question is answered in ch. 14 and ch. 27. [13.](#) See *Bava Metzia* 86a. [14.](#) The Rebbe notes that although the *Gemara* in *Kiddushin* 49b indicates only that the penitent sinner is considered a *tzaddik*, it is explicitly stated in *Or Zarua*, sec. 112, that he is considered a *tzaddik gamur*. [15.](#) 20a. [16.](#) 12a. [17.](#) 39b. [18.](#) *Sanhedrin* 99a. [19.](#) *Bamidbar* 15:31. [20.](#) See below, end of ch. 25. [21.](#) *Zohar* II, 117b. [22.](#) *Otiot deRabbi Akiva*; comp. *Bamidbar Rabbah* 14:12. [23.](#) See *Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah* 3:1; *Rashi on Rosh HaShanah* 16b. [24.](#) *Tehillim* 109:22. See ch. 13 for the comment of the Rebbe on the interpretation of this verse. [25.](#) Cf. *Yoma* 38b. [26.](#) *Mishlei* 10:25. [27.](#) *Yeshayahu* 57:16. [28.](#) The Rebbe notes: The addition of the words, “These are two *nefashot*,” makes it clear that the two souls possessed by every Jew are not necessarily of the soul-level of *Neshamah*, the third highest of the five soul-levels (viz., *Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah, Chayah* and *Yechidah*), for this soul-level is not necessarily found in every Jew, and certainly not in his animal soul. Rather, this refers to the essential soul-level of *Nefesh* possessed by every Jew. [29.](#) *Vayikra* 17:11. [30.](#) See *Zohar* I, 12b. [31.](#) *Bava Batra* 10b. [32.](#) *Mishlei* 14:34. [33.](#) See *Siddur Im D’ach, Shaar Chag HaMatzot; Lekutei Biurim* (By Rabbi Hillel Malisov of Paritch), 47b.



## Chapter 2

ונפש השנית בישראל היא חלק אל-ה ממעל ממש

The second, uniquely Jewish, soul is truly “a part of G-d above,”

“A part of G-d above” is a quotation from Scripture (*Iyov* 31:2). The Alter Rebbe adds the word “truly” to stress the literal meaning of these words. For, as is known,<sup>1</sup> some verses employ hyperbolic language. For example, the verse<sup>2</sup> describing “great and fortified cities reaching into the heavens” is clearly meant to be taken figuratively, not

literally. In order that we should not interpret the phrase “a part of G-d above” in a similar manner, the Alter Rebbe adds the word “truly”, thus emphasizing that the Jewish soul is quite literally a part of G-d above.

כמו שכתוב: ויפה באפיו נשמת היים

as it is written<sup>3</sup> concerning Adam (whose soul was a comprehensive one, a *neshamah klalit*, in that it contained all the particular souls of subsequent generations): “And He (G-d) blew into his nostrils a soul of life”;

ואתה נפחת בי

and as we say in prayer concerning the soul of every individual Jew,<sup>4</sup> “You blew it into me.”

The significance of the verb “to blow” as it relates to the infusion of the Jewish soul is now explained.

וכמו שכתוב בזוהר: מאן דנפח מתוכיה נפח, פירוש מתוכיותו ומפנימיותו

It is written in the *Zohar*,<sup>5</sup> “He who blows, blows from within him,” that is to say, from his inwardness and his innermost being.

שתוכיות ופנימיות החיות שבאדם מוציא בנפחתו בכח

For it is of his inward and innermost vitality that a man emits through blowing with force.

Blowing tires a person much more quickly than speaking, as is readily observed, for it requires a greater exertion of effort and vitality. Hence, the fact that the metaphor of blowing is used to describe G-d’s implanting the Jew’s soul in his body signifies that this soul originates in the “innermost” aspect of G-dliness.

That the Jew is rooted in G-d’s innermost and essential being is indicated further by the designation of the Jewish people as G-d’s “children”, whose souls originate in His “thought” just as a child stems from his father’s brain, as the Alter Rebbe explains presently.

כך על דרך משל נשמות ישראל עלו במחשבה

So, too, allegorically speaking, have Jewish souls risen in the [Divine] thought,<sup>6</sup>

The Jew has his source in Divine “thought” — the innermost level of G-dliness. All other created beings, even angels, are rooted in and created by Divine “speech”. Speech is external in comparison with thought.

כדכתיב: בני בכורי ישראל

as it is written<sup>7</sup> regarding the Jewish nation, “Israel is My firstborn son”;

בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם

and concerning Jews as individuals,<sup>8</sup> “You are children unto G-d your L-rd.”

פירוש: כמו שהבן נמשך ממוח האב

That is to say, i.e., the significance of the Jew's being called G-d's child is that just as a child is derived from its father's brain — his inner and essential being,

כך כביכול נשמת כל איש ישראל נמשכה ממחשבתו וחכמתו יתברך

so too (to use an anthropomorphism) is the soul of every Jew derived from G-d's thought and wisdom.

The Alter Rebbe now takes this concept a step further. Deriving from G-d's thought and wisdom actually implies that it derives from G-d Himself, as he goes on to explain.

דאיהו חכים ולא בחכמה ידיעה, אלא הוא וחכמתו אחד

For<sup>9</sup> “He is wise — G-d possesses the quality of wisdom — but not with a wisdom that is known to us created beings,” because He and His wisdom are one,

וכמו שכתב הרמב"ם שהוא המדע והוא היודע כו'

and as Maimonides writes,<sup>10</sup> “He is Knowledge and simultaneously the Knower... Who knows and comprehends — *through* the “Knowledge“...; [and He is that which is Known]” — G-d is also the *subject* of knowledge and comprehension, as Maimonides concludes.

This means that G-d's wisdom and comprehension are totally different from man's. In human comprehension there are three separate and distinct components: (a) the person's soul, the “knower” and possessor of knowledge; (b) the power of intellect and comprehension — the “knowledge” — by which the person knows; (c) the subject of the knowledge — the “known” — such as a law in the *Mishnah* or a discussion in the *Gemara* which is apprehended and known.

Concerning G-d's wisdom, however, Maimonides states: “He is the ‘Knowledge’, the ‘Knower’, and the ‘Known’.” G-d is the means of comprehension — the “Knowledge,” and at the same time is He Who understands — the “Knower”, and is also that which is understood — the “Known”.

ודבר זה אין ביכולת האדם להבינו על בוריו כו'

Maimonides continues: “And this is not within the power of any man to comprehend clearly”;

כדכתיב: החקר אלו-ה תמצא, וכתיב: כי לא מחשבותי מחשבותיכם וגו'

as it is written,<sup>11</sup> “Can you find and understand G-d by searching?” And it is also written,<sup>12</sup> “For My thoughts are not your thoughts,” [says G-d]; and consequently “your” [human] thoughts cannot possibly comprehend “My” thoughts.

Since His wisdom is one with G-d Himself, as has been shown, it follows that the Jewish soul, which stems from Divine wisdom (as stated above), actually derives from G-d Himself.

Many Jewish philosophers<sup>13</sup> rejected Maimonides’ description of G-d as “the Knower, the Knowledge and the Known.” In fact they considered it erroneous to ascribe to G-d a description of any sort — even of the lofty level of intellect of which Maimonides writes — inasmuch as description implies limitation, and G-d is inherently limitless.

The Alter Rebbe therefore points out in this note that the Kabbalists agreed with Maimonides, with the qualification that his concept does not apply to G-d’s essence. For His essence is truly infinite — even higher than the inscrutable level of “Knowledge” that Maimonides refers to. Regarding His essence, those who disagree with Maimonides are correct in maintaining that G-d cannot be defined in terms of “knowledge”, since He transcends it infinitely. Only after G-d limits the infinite light of His essence through the process of *tzimtzum* (progressive contractions), and thereby assumes the attribute of *Chochmah* (“Wisdom”), — only then can it be said of G-d that He is the “Knower, Knowledge and Known.”

הגהה

והודו לו חכמי הקבלה כמ"ש בפרדס מהרמ"ק וגם לפי קבלת האר"י ז"ל

**Note:**

The Kabbalists have agreed with him (*that G-d can be described as “Knower, Knowledge and Known”*), as stated in *Pardes* of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero.<sup>14</sup>

Even according to the Kabbalah of the *AriZal* (Rabbi Isaac Luria, of blessed memory), Maimonides’ statement stands.

The Kabbalah of the *AriZal* provides an even deeper insight into the limitlessness of G-d’s essence, higher than even that level of “knowledge” to which Maimonides refers. Still, even according to the teachings of the *AriZal*, Maimonides’ statement is acceptable — with one proviso, however.

בסוד התלבשות אור אין סוף ברוך הוא, על ידי צמצומים רבים, בכלים דחב"ד דאצילות

This is so only when applied to the mystic principle of the clothing of the *Ein Sof*-light — by means of numerous “contractions” (*tzimtzumim*) — in the vessels of the *Sefirot* of *CHaBaD* (חב"ד — an acronym of *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat* — “wisdom”, “understanding”, and “knowledge”, respectively; the triad of *Sefirot* which represent Divine “intellect”) of the world of *Atzilut* (“Emanation”).

Through a process of self-limitation called *tzimtzum* (“contraction”), G-d manifests (or, in kabbalistic terminology, “clothes”) His infinite essence (referred to by the Kabbalists as *Ein Sof* — “the endless, infinite One”) in the *Sefirot*, which are His attributes. This manifestation occurs first in *Atzilut*; specifically, in *CHaBaD* of *Atzilut* — Divine Intellect. Thus, at the level of *Atzilut*, G-d can indeed be defined in Maimonides’ terms of “Knower, Knowledge and Known,” i.e., intellect,

אך לא למעלה מהאצילות

but not higher than *Atzilut*.

Above the World of *Atzilut* the Unknowable G-d cannot be defined. Accordingly, in terms of the kabbalistic scale, Maimonides had nothing to say about G-d except from the World of *Atzilut* and “down”.

וכמו שכתוב במקום אחר, שאין סוף ברוך הוא מרומם ומתנשא רוממות אין ק' למעלה מעלה ממהות ובחינת חב"ד עד שמהות ובחי' חב"ד נחשבת כעשייה גופניית אצלו ית' כמ"ש כולם בחכמה עשית

As explained elsewhere,<sup>15</sup> the *Ein Sof*, blessed be He, is infinitely exalted over, and transcends, the essence and level of *ChaBad*.

In fact, the level of *ChaBad* is regarded as *being equally inferior as* material action in relation to Him.

Thus it is written,<sup>16</sup> “You have *made* them all with wisdom.”

“You *have conceived* them all with wisdom” would seem more appropriate: conceiving, not “making”, is surely the proper function of G-d’s wisdom. “You have *made* them all with *wisdom*” indicates however that to G-d, “wisdom” — the highest level within the Worlds — is as lowly as *Asiyah*, the lowest level.

END OF NOTE

The Alter Rebbe now addresses a difficulty arising from his previous statement that every soul emanates from Divine wisdom. Since all souls emanate from one source — Supernal Wisdom — it should follow that all souls are of the same level and rank. How then do the various levels and ranks found in Jewish souls come about?

ואף שיש רבבות מיני חלוקי מדרגות בנשמות, גבוה מעל גבוה לאין ק'



True, there are myriads of different gradations of souls (*Neshamot*), rank upon rank, *ad infinitum*.

כמו גודל מעלת נשמות האבות ומשה רבינו, עליו השלום, על נשמות דורותינו אלה דעקבי משיחא

For example, the souls of the Patriarchs and of Moses our Teacher are by far superior to the souls of our own generations, [which belong to] the period preceding the coming (lit., the “heels”, i.e., the footsteps) of the Messiah;

שהם בחינת עקביים ממש לגבי המוח והראש

for [the latter souls] are like the very soles of the feet in comparison with the brain and the head.

Just as the life-force found in the soles of the feet cannot possibly be compared to that found in the head and brain, so too can there be no comparison between the souls of these present generations and those souls (here called the “head” and “brain”) of earlier generations.

וכן בכל דור ודור יש ראשי אלפי ישראל, שנשמותיהם הם בחינת ראש ומוח לגבי נשמות ההמון ועמי הארץ

Similarly, within each generation we find the same disparity among *Neshamot*: there are those who are the “heads (the leaders) of the multitude of Israel,” so designated because their souls are in the category of “head” and “brain” in comparison with those of the masses and the ignorant.

וכן נפשות לגבי נפשות כי כל נפש כלולה מגנפש רוח ונשמה

Likewise there are similar distinctions between *Nefashot* and *Nefashot* (the soul-levels of *Nefesh*), for every soul consists of *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah*.<sup>17</sup>

Just as the soul-level of *Neshamah* varies from one Jew to another, so too do the levels of *Ruach* and *Nefesh*.

Thus we see how manifold are the differences in the ranks of souls. Accordingly, we would expect similar variations in their divine sources — the greater the soul, the higher its source.

מכל מקום שורש כל הנפש רוח ונשמה כולם, מראש כל המדרגות עד סוף כל דרגין, המלוכבש בגוף עמי הארץ וקל שבקלים

Nevertheless, the root of every *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah*, from the highest of all ranks to the lowest — the “lowest” being those souls embodied within the illiterate and the most light-minded of light-minded Jews, —

נמשך ממוח העליון שהיא חכמה עילאה כביכול

all are derived, as it were, from the Supreme Mind which is *Chochmah Ila'ah* (Supernal Wisdom).

In order to help us better understand why the levels of individual souls vary so widely despite their common source, the Alter Rebbe now returns to the analogy of a father and son (used earlier to illustrate the description of Jews as G-d's "children" who are derived from *Chochmah Ila'ah* — G-d's "brain", as it were).

An explanation in brief: In the analogy we observe that the child's entire body is derived from a drop of semen originating in its father's brain. Yet the many physical components which constitute the child's body are by no means uniform. They vary greatly, from the brain — the highest component— to the nails of the feet, the lowest.

These radical differences come about through the presence of the drop of semen in the mother's womb during the nine months of gestation. It is this period of physical development that produces the differences between one organ and another: the more materialized a particular component of the drop becomes, the more it diverges from its original state and becomes an entity with its own unique physical characteristics. We thus observe that though all the organs share a common source, nevertheless in the process of development there arise differences as radical as that between brain and nails.

Another matter evident from the analogy: Though the nails are the most insignificant part of the child's body, they are still bound and united with their first source — the father's brain. For, like the other parts of the child's body, the nails too receive their nourishment and life from its brain. Since the child's brain retains the essence of its source (the father's brain) and is thus constantly bound to its source, even the nails are therefore bound up with their original source.

The same is true regarding souls. All souls are derived from the same source and root, from *Chochmah Ila'ah*. But the soul must descend therefrom through a multitude of Worlds and levels, before clothing itself in a physical body. It is this descent that creates changes in the soul's level and differences between one soul and another, for one soul is affected by this descent to a greater degree than another.

The second aspect of the analogy too applies here. Although a soul may descend to the very lowest of levels, it is still bound up and unified with its original source in *Chochmah Ila'ah*. In the analogy, the nails remain bound to the father's brain through their unity with the son's brain. Similarly, these souls of the lowest level remain bound to their source in *Chochmah Ila'ah* through their attachment to the souls of the righteous and the sages of their generation, from whom they receive their spiritual nourishment. Even when in this physical world, souls of a higher level (analogous to the child's brain) retain the spiritual level of their source — the level of "head" and "brain"; and through these souls even the souls of lower levels remain bound and unified with their source within G-d. This, briefly, is what the Alter Rebbe goes on to explain.

כמשל הבן הנמשך ממוח האב, שאפילו צפרני רגליו נתהוו מטפה זו ממש

[The manner of the soul's descent] is analogous to a child who is derived from his father's brain: even the nails of his feet come into existence from the very same drop of semen which comes from the father's brain. How then were nails created from it?

על ידי שהייתה תשעה חדשים בבטן האם, וירדה ממדריגה למדריגה, להשתנות ולהתהוות ממנה צפרנים

— by being in the mother's womb for nine months, descending degree by degree, changing continually, until [even] the nails are formed from it.

Though the child's organs all derive from the same source — the drop of semen which comes from the father's brain — yet they develop into entities as radically diverse as the brain and the nails.

ועם כל זה עודנה קשורה ומיוחדת ביחוד נפלא ועצום במהותה ועצמותה הראשון, שהיתה טפת מוח האב

Furthermore: Although the drop has been so altered as to become the substance of the child's nails, yet it is still bound to and united in a wondrous and mighty unity with its original essence and being, namely, the drop of semen as it came from the father's brain.

וגם עכשיו בבן, יניקת הצפרנים וחיותם נמשכת מהמוח שבראש

Even now, in the son, the nails receive their nourishment and life from the brain that is in his head.

The nails derive their life from the child's brain, which in turn retains the substance of its source, the brain of the father. Thus the nails too are bound up — through the brain of the son — with the father's brain.

Evidence is now brought that the nails remain bound to the father's brain:

כדאיתא בגמרא נדה שם : לובן שממנו גידים ועצמות וצפרנים

As is written in the *Gemara (Niddah, ibid. 18)*, “From the white of the father's drop of semen are formed the veins, the bones and the nails of the child.”

According to the Kabbalah too, there is a connection between the nails and the brain, as shall be presently stated.

וכמו שכתוב בע' חיים, שער החשמל, בסוד לבושים של אדם הראשון בגן עדן

(In *Etz Chayim, Shaar HaChashmal*, it is likewise stated in connection with the esoteric principle of Adam's garments in the Garden of Eden,

שהיו צפרנים מבחינת מוח תבונה

that they (the garments) were of “nails” [derived] from the cognitive faculty of the brain.)

וככה ממש כביכול בשורש כל הנפש רוח ונשמה של כללות ישראל למעלה

Exactly so, as it were, is the case with regard to every *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, and *Neshamah* in the community of Israel on high.

The soul, too, is changed from its original state by a process of “development” similar to the gestation which transforms the drop of semen; in the case of the soul, however, this process consists of a descent from World to World, and from level to level within each World, as mentioned briefly above.

The Alter Rebbe will now go on to state the details of this descent.

Specifically, the soul passes through four spiritual Worlds, in its descent from Supernal Wisdom to the human body. These “Worlds”, or stages in the creative process, are (in descending order): *Atzilut* (the World of Emanation), *Beriah* (the World of Creation), *Yetzirah* (the World of Formation) and *Asiyah* (the World of Action). (They are written acrostically as ע"אב"י, pronounced *ABiYA*.)

The function and significance of these “Worlds” will be clarified further in the *Tanya*; for the moment a brief explanation will suffice.

*Atzilut* (Emanation) is a World where the *Ein Sof*-light radiates, so that *Atzilut* is, in effect, G-dliness Itself “transplanted” (so to speak) to a lower level. (This takes place by means of *tzimtzum*.) For this reason, *Atzilut* is still united with its source — *Ein Sof*.

These two characteristics of *Atzilut* are indicated in its very name. The word *Atzilut* is etymologically related to two roots: (a) The verb לִצַּא, meaning “to delegate”, as in the verse, [19](#) “I (G-d) shall delegate something of your (Moses’) spirit and place it upon them (the seventy Elders).” The verse is saying, then, that the spirit of prophecy possessed by the seventy Elders was merely an extension of Moses’ spirit, not something new, and separate from him. Similarly, the properties of *Atzilut* are extensions, on a lower level, of the *Ein Sof*. (b) *Atzilut* is also related to the word “*etzel*”, meaning “near” — thus indicating the unity of *Atzilut* with its source.

The World of *Beriah* (Creation), as its name implies, is a creation, not Divinity itself. It is the first creation to come about in a manner of *Yesh Me’Ayin* — *creatio ex nihilo*; from *Ayin* (“nothingness”) there comes about a *Yesh*, a definite state of existence. *Beriah*, however, represents merely the passage out of non-existence; it is a state in creation which cannot yet be spoken of as giving rise to proper “existence”, definable in terms of form and structure.

*Yetzirah* (Formation) is the World where that which was created from *Ayin* assumes shape and form.

The World of *Asiyah* refers to the completed creation. Understandably, this completed creation is still spiritual. The *final* world of creation (“physical *Asiyah*”), comprising our physical world with all its creatures, comes into being only at a later stage.

Together, these worlds form the *Seder Hishtalshelut*, “the chain-like order of descent,” so designated because just as the lowest link in a chain is connected to the highest by means of all the interlocking links, similarly, in the *Seder Hishtalshelut*, the lowest level in *Asiyah* is connected to the highest level in *Atzilut*; all the levels interlock and flow from each other.

In the course of its descent from *Chochmah Ila'ah* (Supernal Wisdom — the highest level in *Atzilut*) to the physical body, the soul passes through the entire *Seder Hishtalshelut*; and, as stated earlier, this descent produces the various levels of souls, just as gestation causes the drop of semen to be transformed into the child’s bodily organs, even to the point where it is formed into nails.

After this introduction, we return to the Alter Rebbe’s words:

בירידתו ממדריגה למדריגה על ידי השתלשלות העולמות, אצילות בריאה יצירה עשיה מחכמתו יתברך

By [the soul’s] descending degree by degree through the *Hishtalshelut* of the Worlds of *Atzilut*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, from G-d’s wisdom,

כדכתיב: כולם בחכמה עשית

as it is written: “You have made them all with wisdom (*Chochmah*)” (i.e., everything emanates from *Chochmah*, which is the source of all *Hishtalshelut*),

נתהוו ממנו נפש רוח ונשמה של עמי הארץ ופחותי הערך

[through this descent] the *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah* of the ignorant and least worthy come into being.

Their souls were most strongly affected by this descent, and therefore they are on the lowest level. Similarly, all the various levels of “higher” and “lower” souls are determined by the soul’s descent through *Hishtalshelut*; some souls are affected to a greater degree, others less.

The Alter Rebbe now relates the second point in the analogy to our case. Just as in the analogy, the nails of the child are still bound up with their first source through their being constantly nurtured by the child’s brain, so too, in the case of the soul:

ועם כל זה עודינה קשורות ומיוחדות ביחוד נפלא ועצום במהותן ועצמותן הראשון, שהיא המשכת חכמה עילאה

Nevertheless (notwithstanding the fact that they have already become souls of the lower levels — the souls of the ignorant and the least worthy), they (these lesser souls) remain bound and united with a wonderful and mighty unity with their original essence, namely, an extension of *Chochmah Ila'ah* (Supernal Wisdom),

כי יניקת וחיות נפש רוח ונשמה של עמי הארץ הוא מנפש רוח ונשמה של הצדיקים והחכמים ראשי בני ישראל שבדורם

for the nurture and life of the *Nefesh, Ruach* and *Neshamah* of the ignorant are drawn from the *Nefesh, Ruach*, and *Neshamah* of the righteous and the sages, the “heads” of Israel in their generation.

By drawing their nurture and life from those who represent the levels of “head” and “brain”, all Jews are bound up with their source in *Chochmah Ila'ah* — Supernal Wisdom.

ובזה יובן מאמר רבותינו ז"ל על פסוק: ולדבקה בו — שכל הדבק בתלמיד חכם מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו נדבק בשכינה ממש

This explains the comment of our Sages<sup>20</sup> on the verse,<sup>21</sup> “And cleave unto Him” (concerning which the question arises: How can mortal man cleave to G-d? In answer, our Sages comment): “He who cleaves unto a [Torah] scholar is deemed by the Torah as if he had actually become attached to the *Shechinah* (the Divine Presence).”

This seems difficult to comprehend: How can one equate cleaving to a Torah scholar with cleaving to the *Shechinah*? However, in light of the above, this is readily understood.

כי על ידי דביקה בתלמידי חכמים, קשורות נפש רוח ונשמה של עמי הארץ ומיוחדות במהותן הראשון ושרשם שבחכמה עילאה

For, through attachment to the scholars, the *Nefesh, Ruach* and *Neshamah* of the ignorant are bound up and united with their original essence and their root in Supernal Wisdom,

שהוא יתברך וחכמתו אחד, והוא המדע כו'

(and thereby with G-d Himself, since) He and His wisdom are one, and “He is the Knowledge...”

והפושעים ומורדים בתלמידי חכמים

(<sup>22</sup>As for those who willfully sin and rebel against the Torah sages: How do they receive their spiritual nurture and life? Spiritual life and nurture flow only where there is a desire to nurture and give life. In answer to this, the text continues:

יניקת נפש רוח ונשמה שלהם מבחינת אחוריים של נפש רוח ונשמת תלמידי חכמים

the nurture of their *Nefesh, Ruach* and *Neshamah* comes from the hind-part, as it were, of the *Nefesh, Ruach* and *Neshamah* of the scholars.)

Nurture from “the hind-part” can be understood by way of comparison to one who gives an object to his enemy — obviously, not out of a true desire to give, but rather due to some external factor. The grudging reluctance with which he gives will be reflected in his manner; he will turn away from him, tossing the object to his enemy over his shoulder. The same is true in the spiritual sphere. When spiritual nurture is given unwillingly, it is described as coming from “the hind-part” of the giver — an external level of nurture.

Nevertheless, even those who rebel against the sages receive some measure of spiritual nourishment from them. For every soul, without exception, must be bound up with its root and source, as explained earlier. The level of nurture they receive, is however from the “hind-part” of the souls of the sages.

Having<sup>23</sup> concluded that every Jew has a holy soul which emanates “from above” (from Supernal Wisdom), the Alter Rebbe now states that even the quality (the “rank” or “level”) of each individual soul is determined only by factors “from above” — spiritual factors, such as the soul’s above-mentioned descent through *Hishtalshelut*. No actions of this physical world can determine its quality and rank. The Alter Rebbe makes this statement indirectly by clarifying a quotation from the *Zohar* which seems to indicate the contrary.

ומה שכתוב בזהר ובזהר חדש שהעיקר תלוי שיקדש עצמו בשעת תשמיש דוקא

As for what is written in the *Zohar*<sup>24</sup> and in *Zohar Chadash*<sup>25</sup> that the essential factor is to conduct oneself in a holy manner during sexual union,

מה שאין כן בני עמי הארץ כו'

which is not the case with the children of the ignorant and their ilk who do not conduct themselves thus,

The ignorant — as the *Zohar* goes on to imply — draw down for their child a soul of a lower level, which seems to indicate that an action occurring in this physical world can, in fact, affect the soul’s level. Not so, declares the Alter Rebbe. The *Zohar* is not referring to the soul at all, but to the soul’s spiritual “garment” — as follows:

היינו משום שאין לך נפש רוח ונשמה שאין לה לבוש מנפש דעצמות אביו ואמו

this is because no *Nefesh, Ruach* and *Neshamah* is without a garment which stems from the *Nefesh* of its father’s and mother’s essence.

וכל המצות שעושה, הכל על ידי אותו הלבוש כו', ואפילו השפע שנותנים לו מן השמים, הכל הוא על ידי לבוש זה

All the commandments that it fulfills are influenced by that garment — it is through this garment that the soul achieves its ability to affect the body and to perform the commandments involving physical matters; even the benevolence that flows to one from heaven is all given through that garment. Because the soul is so strongly bound up with this garment, the *Zohar* refers to the garment, in this context, as the person's "soul".

ואם יקדש את עצמו, ימשיך לבוש קדוש לנשמת בנו

Now, if the person sanctifies himself, he will bring forth a holy garment for the *neshamah* of his child, thereby enabling the child to serve G-d more readily.

ואפילו היא נשמה גדולה, צריכה לקידוש אביו כו'

However great a soul it may be, it still needs the father's sanctification at the time of intercourse.

אבל הנשמה עצמה, הנה לפעמים נשמת אדם גבוה לאין ק' בא להיות בנו של אדם נבזה ושפל כו'

But the soul itself as distinct from its "garment" is not affected by the parents' sanctification; in fact it sometimes happens that the soul of an infinitely lofty person comes to be the son of an ignoble and lowly person.

כמו שכתב האר"י ז"ל כל זה בליקוטי תורה פרשת וירא, ובטעמי מצות פרשת בראשית

All this has been explained by Rabbi Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, in *Likutei Torah* on *Parshat Vayera*, and in *Taamei HaMitzvot* on *Parshat Bereishit*.

Thus the physical world — of which the parents are a part — can in no way affect the soul's spiritual rank. Even the statement of the *Zohar* that the essential factor regarding the state of the soul is the holy manner of conduct during sexual union, pertains only to the soul's "garment". The soul itself, with all its various levels, emanates "from above."

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) See *Tamid* 29a. [2.](#) *Devarim* 1:28. [3.](#) *Bereishit* 2:7. [4.](#) *Siddur*, Morning Prayer; cf. *Berachot* 60b. [5.](#) Not found in our editions of the *Zohar*. [6.](#) See *Bereishit Rabbah* 1:4. [7.](#) *Shmot* 4:22. [8.](#) *Devarim* 14:1. [9.](#) Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar*. [10.](#) *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 2:10. [11.](#) *Iyov* 11:7. [12.](#) *Yeshayahu* 55:8. [13.](#) Including Rabbi Yehudah Loewe (*Maharal*) of Prague in his *Gevurot HaShem*. [14.](#) *Shaar Mahut VeHanhagah*, ch. 13. [15.](#) See, e.g., *Shaar HaYichud VahaEmunah* (*Tanya*, Part II), ch. 9. [16.](#) *Tehillim* 104:24. [17.](#) See *Zohar* I, 206a; also Rabbi Yeshayahu Hurwitz, *Shnei Luchot HaBrit* I, 9b. [18.](#) 31a. [19.](#) *Bamidbar* 11:17. [20.](#) *Ketubbot* 111b. [21.](#) *Devarim* 30:20. [22.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [23.](#) This interpretation of the following passage of *Tanya* follows a comment of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of righteous memory. This paragraph forms (for the most part) a translation of this comment. [24.](#) See *Zohar* II, 204b; III, 80-82. [25.](#) *Bereishit*, p. 11.



# Chapter 3

והנה כל בחינה ומדריגה משלש אלו, נפש רוח ונשמה, כלולה מעשר בחינות

Now, each of these three distinctions and grades — *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah* — consists of ten faculties<sup>1</sup>

כנגד עשר ספירות עליונות שנשתלשלו מהן

corresponding to the Ten Supernal *Sefirot* (divine manifestations,<sup>2</sup> in which they originate and whence they descend.

הנחלקות לשתיים

The Ten *Sefirot* are subdivided into two general categories.

שהן שלש אמות ושבע כפולות

These two categories are: three “mothers”, i.e., three of these *Sefirot* are termed “mothers” for they are the source and root of the other seven *Sefirot*, as a mother is the source of her offspring, and seven “doubles” — the seven divine attributes, called “doubles” inasmuch as each of the emotional attributes manifests itself in a twofold manner, as shall presently be explained.

פירוש: חכמה בינה ודעת, ושבעת ימי הבנין: חסד גבורה תפארת כו'

Namely: *Chochmah* (“wisdom”), *Binah* (“understanding”) and *Daat* (“knowledge”) are called “mothers”; and the seven “doubles” are [the emotional attributes known as] the “seven days of Creation”: *Chesed* (“kindness”), *Gevurah* (“severity”), *Tiferet* (“beauty”), and so on, the other four being: *Netzach* (“endurance”), *Hod* (“splendor”), *Yesod* (“foundation”), and *Malchut* (“royalty”).

These seven attributes are known as the “seven days of Creation,” for it was through these seven attributes that G-d created the world. Each day’s creation came about through a particular attribute: during the first day *Chesed* was dominant, the second day *Gevurah*, and so on.

וכך בנפש האדם שנחלקת לשתיים — שכל ומדות

Just as the Ten Supernal *Sefirot* are divided into two general categories, so, too, with the human soul [and its ten faculties]; they are divided into two general categories: *seichel* (“intellect”) and *middot* (“emotional attributes”).

השכל כולל חכמה בינה ודעת, והמדות הן אהבת ה' ופחדו ויראתו ולפארו כו'

The [category of] intellect includes the three all-inclusive intellectual powers *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat* (*ChaBaD*), whilst the *middot*, which bear the same names as their corresponding seven *Sefirot*: *Chesed*, *Gevurah*, etc., represent the following emotions: love of G-d, dread and awe of Him, glorification of Him, and so forth.

Love corresponds to *Chesed* (“kindness”), as they are, respectively, the internal (i.e., emotional) and external (i.e., practical) aspects of the same trait; the dread and awe of G-d correspond to *Gevurah*, as they are its inner aspect; so too the glorification of Him corresponds to *Tiferet*.

והב"ד נקראו אמות ומקור למדות כי המדות הן תולדות הב"ד

*ChaBaD* (the intellectual faculties) are called the “mothers” and source of the *middot*, for the *middot* are “offspring” of (i.e., derive from) *ChaBaD*.

At this point it would be worthwhile to explain briefly the function of the faculties *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat* (abbreviated as *ChaBaD*), mentioned frequently in the coming chapters.

*Chochmah* is the first flash of intellect. It is the seminal and inner point of an idea. This seminal point of intellect already includes within it all the details and ramifications of the idea, but as yet they are concentrated and obscured. (This is analogous to a dot, in which the dimensions of length and breadth are not evident — all that is seen is the dot — although for the dot to exist it must certainly contain length and breadth.)

*Chochmah* is also called *barak hamavrik* — the intuitive flash of illumination which is the beginning of intellectual revelation. For instance, we may observe how a person striving to answer an intellectual question suddenly realizes in a flash of intuition that the question can be answered along a particular line of reasoning. At the moment of illumination he is as yet unaware exactly how the particular question is answered: he knows only that he has found an adequate solution to the problem.

Thereafter the faculty of *Binah* (“understanding”) comes into play. Through cogitation, *Binah* apprehends, crystallizes and clarifies the details of the idea which were obscured in *Chochmah*, until the whole edifice of the idea, in all its length and breadth, becomes manifest. For this reason the function of *Binah* is described as *meivin davar mitoch davar* — “to understand (or deduce) one matter out of another” — i.e., that which was previously concentrated in the obscure intuitive flash of *Chochmah* is now revealed and understood.

After the person fully understands the idea with all its details and ramifications, he must then immerse himself in it, binding and unifying himself with it to the extent that he not only understands it but also feels it. Only in this way can he be affected by the idea; if his understanding points to the desirability of a particular thing, it will give birth to a love for

it; if his understanding indicates instead the harmfulness of a particular thing, he will react with a feeling of fear and flee from it; and similarly with other emotions. The faculty with which one thus immerses himself in an idea is called *Daat* (“knowledge”), which is etymologically related to the expression,<sup>3</sup> “and Adam knew (ידע) Eve,” a verb which denotes attachment and union. We now return to the text:

וביאור הענין: כי הנה השכל שבנפש המשכלת, שהוא המשכיל כל דבר

The explanation of the matter (i.e., of the three intellectual processes described above — inspiration, cogitation, and contemplation) is as follows: that intellectual faculty of the rational soul that first conceives any matter (i.e., the faculty which produces the seminal point of an idea and the first flash of illumination, as explained above)

נקרא בשם חכמה — כ"ח מ"ה

is given the appellation of *Chochmah* [which is composed of the two words] מה כח — the potential of “what is.”<sup>4</sup>

It is a faculty concerning which one can only pose the question “*Mah?*” (“What is it?”) — for at this stage the idea in question is not yet clear or comprehensible logically, since its details are still *in potentia*, emerging only at a later stage.

וכשמוציא כחו אל הפועל, שמתבונן בשכלו להבין דבר לאשורו

When one brings forth this concentrated idea from the potential into the actual, that is, when one cogitates with his intellect on the seminal point in order to understand a matter full well —

That is: when he ponders all the details which make up the totality of the particular idea in its length and breadth. “Length” involves the range of an idea; when one draws down a concept from a lofty level to a lower one (by way of a parable, for example) in order to make it more readily understood, he is “lengthening” it, giving it a greater range of accessibility, so that it will be more readily intelligible to a student. For a student whose capacity is more limited, one parable may not suffice; it may be necessary to provide a second parable to explain the first, thereby “lengthening” the concept still further downward. (As Scripture writes concerning King Solomon:<sup>5</sup> “He spoke three thousand parables.” So great was Solomon’s wisdom that to explain one of his thoughts he had to give three thousand parables; one parable to explain the basic concept, a second parable to explain the first parable, and so forth, until ultimately giving three thousand parables — an extreme example of the “length” of an idea.)

The “breadth” of an idea means the multitude of details which the concept comprises, as well as all its ramifications. For example, the logic behind a halachic ruling in the laws of *kashrut* may also apply to laws governing financial disputes.

This is the meaning of the word לאשורו (“full well”) — understanding the intellectual concept completely, in both its length and breadth.

ולעמקו

[Thus, when one cogitates on a concept in its length and breadth] and delves to its very depths

מתוך איזה דבר חכמה המושכל בשכלו

as it evolves from the concept which he had conceived in his intellect (i.e., when he apprehends in a detailed manner the seminal point of intellect, which prior to his cogitation was but a nebulous point of *Chochmah*),

נקרא בינה

this is called *Binah*. (*Binah* is that faculty which elucidates the details of any concept and apprehends it “full well” and “in depth.”)

והן הם אב ואם המולידות אהבת ה' ויראתו ופחדו

They (*Chochmah* and *Binah*) are the very “father” and “mother” which give birth to love of G-d, and awe (*yirah*) and dread (*pachad*) of Him.<sup>6</sup>

כי השכל שבנפש המשכלת כשמתבונן ומעמיק מאד בגדולת ה'

For when the intellect in the rational soul deeply contemplates and immerses itself exceedingly in the greatness of G-d,

איך הוא ממלא כל עלמין

how He fills all worlds,

i.e., how G-d animates all of creation with an immanent divine light and life-force (just as the soul fills and gives life to every part of the body) — a life-force which clothes itself in and unifies itself with each creature, and which adapts itself to the individual needs of that creature,

וסובב כל עלמין

and when one further contemplates how He encompasses all worlds,<sup>7</sup>

He illuminates the worlds with a G-dly light and life-force that is far beyond the capacity of the worlds to receive internally; rather, it affects them in an encompassing manner.

וכולא קמיה כלא השיב

Or, when one contemplates another aspect of G-d's greatness, namely, how in His presence all creation is considered as naught, —[8](#)

נולדה ונתעוררה מדת יראת הרוממות במוחו ומחשבתו

Upon contemplating and immersing oneself in any of the above-mentioned aspects of G-d's greatness the *middah* of awe for the Divine Majesty will be born and aroused in one's mind and thought,

לירא ולהתבושש מגדולתו יתברך, שאין לה סוף ותכלית

to fear and be humble before His blessed greatness, which is without end or limit,

i.e., the fear will be coupled and permeated with humility, as in the awe one feels in the presence of a very wise or righteous person, which expresses one's bashfulness and humility before him,

ופחד ה' בלבו

and there will also be born a dread of G-d in his heart.

This explains how contemplating G-d's greatness arouses a fear and dread of Him — an expression of the attribute of *Gevurah*.

ושוב יתלהב לבו באהבה עזה כרשפי אש, בחשיקה וחפיצה ותשוקה ונפש שוקקה

Next his contemplation will give birth to the attribute of *Chesed*, expressed as a love of G-d, so that his heart will glow with an intense love of G-d like fiery flames, with a passion, desire and longing, and a yearning soul

לגדולת אין סוף ברוך הוא

(each of these expressions — “fiery flames,” “passion”, and so on, denoting a different grade of love) toward the greatness of the blessed *Ein Sof*.

והיא כלות הנפש, כדכתיב: נכספה וגם כלתה נפשי וגו', וכתיב: צמאה נפשי לאלקים וגו', וכתיב צמאה לך נפשי וגו'

This is what is meant by the term *kalot hanefesh* (“a consuming passion of the soul”), as it is written:[9](#) “My soul longs [for You]; indeed, it faints...,” and [10](#) “My soul thirsts for G-d ...,” and again, [11](#) “My soul thirsts for You.”

So intense can one's love become that the soul risks being consumed in the fiery flames of its love of G-d, and totally leaving the body. In fact, were one not to forestall this danger, and contain this great love, he would indeed expire. But he restrains himself so

that his soul will remain *clothed in his body* — the only condition in which it is possible for him to fulfill his G-d-given mission.

והצמאון הוא מיסוד האש שבנפש האלקית

This loving thirst is derived from the element of Fire in the divine soul.

וכמו שכתבו הטבעיים, וכן הוא בע' חיים, שיסוד האש הוא בלב

As students of natural science affirm, and so it is in *Etz Chayim*, the element of Fire is in the heart,

ומקור המים והליחות מהמוח

while the source of [the element of] Water and moisture is in the brain,

וכמו שכתוב בע' חיים שער נ', שהיא בחינת חכמה שנקרא מים שבנפש האלקית

As explained in *Etz Chayim*, Portal 50, [the source of the element of Water] is the level of *Chochmah* which is called “the water of the divine soul.”

Inasmuch as the heart is the seat of the emotions — of warmth — we say that it is the abode of the element of Fire. In contrast, the brain — being the seat of “cold” intellect, calm and measured intelligence — is the source of the element of Water. One can readily observe this by comparing the demeanor of an emotional person to that of an intellectual.

So, too, with the intellect and emotions of the divine soul: the heat and passion of one’s love of G-d is expressed in the heart, ultimately leading him to expire in *kalot hanefesh*. The mind, however, remains cool. This capacity of the intellect for calm appraisal of a situation leads it to comprehend that G-d’s intent is that the soul remain clothed in the body so that it will be able to fulfill the Torah and its commandments. This realization cools the fiery ardor of the heart and thus prevents the soul from actually expiring in *kalot hanefesh*.

The Alter Rebbe’s discussion of the birth of *middot* from the intellect has thus far been centered on two emotions: love and fear of G-d. What of the others?

ושאר המדות כולן הן ענפי היראה והאהבה ותולדותיהן, כמו שכתוב במקום אחר

The rest of the remaining five *middot* are all offshoots and derivatives of fear and love (and obviously they, too, are born of *Chochmah* and *Binah*), as is explained elsewhere.

All the above explains why *Chochmah* and *Binah* are called the “father” and “mother” of the *middot*, for it is through the contemplation exercised by *Chochmah* and *Binah* that the *middot* are born. *Chochmah* is called the “father”. Just as the drop of semen which derives from the father’s brain comprises, in concentrated and concealed form, all the

organs of the child's body, similarly the seminal point of *Chochmah* contains, in a concealed manner, all the details of an idea, as explained above. And just as it is the mother who reveals the child's organs from their concealed state, and brings them to a state of completion, similarly, *Binah* reveals, expands and elucidates the concept in all its details.

But what of *Daat*, the third of the intellectual faculties? *Daat* too, as explained earlier, is a "mother" and source of *middot*. What does it contribute to their birth? This issue is now addressed.

והדעת הוא מלשון: והאדם ידע את חוה, והוא לשון התקשרות והתחברות

*Daat*, whose etymology may be found in the verse,<sup>12</sup> "And Adam knew (ידע) Eve," implies attachment and union.

שמקשר דעתו בקשר אמ"י וחזק מאד, ויתקע מחשבתו בחוזק, בגדולת אין סוף ברוך הוא, ואינו מסיח דעתו

(As applied to *Daat* of the divine soul, this means) binding one's mind with a very firm, strong bond and firmly fixing one's thought on the greatness of the blessed *Ein Sof*, without diverting his mind from it (i.e., the subject matter conceived in *Chochmah* and developed in *Binah* is absorbed in the mind by concentration, *Daat*.)

כי אף מי שהוא חכם ונבון בגדולת אין סוף ברוך הוא, הנה אם לא יקשר דעתו ויתקע מחשבתו בחוזק ובהתמדה

For even one who is wise (by utilizing his faculty of *Chochmah*) and understanding (by exercising his faculty of *Binah*) in the greatness of the blessed *Ein Sof*, yet, unless he applies his *Daat* and fixes his thought firmly and diligently on his understanding of G-d's greatness,

לא יוליד בנפשו יראה ואהבה אמיתית, כי אם דמיונות שוא

he will not produce in his soul true fear and love, but only vain fancies.

He will only imagine that he fears G-d and loves Him. True fear and love are attained only by way of *Daat*.

ועל כן הדעת הוא קיום המדות וחיותן

Thus, *Daat* provides the substance and vitality of the *middot* (and is therefore termed a "mother" of the *middot*, another parent side by side with *Chochmah* and *Binah*).

והוא כולל חסד וגבורה, פירוש: אהבה וענפיה ויראה וענפיה

It comprises *Chesed* and *Gevurah*; that is to say, love with those other *middot* that are its offshoots, and fear with its offshoots.

## FOOTNOTES

- [1.](#) Elsewhere (e.g., *Likutei Torah, Bamidbar* 1a, 51b; *Shir HaShirim* 16d) the Alter Rebbe makes it clear that the soul does not “consist” of the ten faculties, but rather manifests itself through them, since the soul itself is essentially indefinable and indivisible.
- [2.](#) The Ten *Sefirot* are more fully discussed in *Iggeret HaKodesh (Tanya, Part IV)*, ch. 15 and elsewhere.
- [3.](#) *Bereishit* 4:1.
- [4.](#) *Zohar* III, 28a; 34a.
- [5.](#) I *Melachim* 5:12.
- [6.](#) *Yirah* means an awe which is felt for the most part intellectually. *Pachad* denotes a dread which is felt emotionally, in one’s heart. This is why at the beginning of the chapter, where the emotions are enumerated and explained in a general way, *pachad* precedes *yirah*, for *pachad* — the feeling of dread in one’s heart — is a truer emotion than the intellectual *yirah*. Here, however, when dealing with the emotions as they are born from the intellect, *yirah* precedes *pachad*, for only after the emotion is first formed in the mind, at which stage it is *yirah*, does it then descend to the heart, as *pachad*.
- [7.](#) *Zohar* III, 225a.
- [8.](#) *Zohar* I, 11b.
- [9.](#) *Tehillim* 84:3.
- [10.](#) *Ibid.* 42:3.
- [11.](#) *Ibid.* 63:2.
- [12.](#) *Bereishit* 4:1.



## Chapter 4

ועוד יש לכל נפש אלקית שלשה לבושים

In addition [to its ten faculties — discussed in ch. 3], every divine soul (*nefesh elokit*) possesses three garments.

The soul possesses three auxiliary powers, which are its instruments of expression. Like garments, they can be donned or shed at will. When the soul utilizes any of these three powers it is “clothed” in them; when it does not use them, it is “divested” of them. Also,



just as garments give expression to their wearer's beauty and importance, so, too, when the soul dons and utilizes these "garments", its intellect and emotion find expression.

שהם מחשבה דבור ומעשה של תרי"ג מצות התורה

They (the garments) are: thought, speech and action as they find expression in the 613 commandments of the Torah.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain how the divine soul expresses itself through these three garments.

שכשהאדם מקיים במעשה כל מצות מעשיות

For, when a person actively fulfills all the precepts which require physical action (e.g., when he dons the *tefillin* or fulfills the commandment of *tzitzit*, etc.),

ובדיבור הוא עוסק בפירוש כל תרי"ג מצות והלכותיהן

and with his power of speech he occupies himself in expounding all the 613 commandments and the laws governing their fulfillments,

i.e., the person's speech is immersed in the study of Torah which includes the exposition of the commandments. For example, Tractate *Berachot* deals with the commandments and the laws of blessings; Tractate *Shabbat* deals with the commandments and laws of *Shabbat* observance, etc.,

ובמחשבה הוא משיג כל מה שאפשר לו להשיג בפרד"ס התורה

and with his power of thought he comprehends all that he is capable of understanding in the *Pardes* (i.e., the four levels) of Torah,

The word *Pardes* (פרדס), whose literal meaning is "orchard", is here used as an acronym of the four Hebrew words, *Pshat*, *Remez*, *Derush* and *Sod*, meaning, respectively: plain sense, intimation, homiletical exposition and esoteric meaning — the four levels of Scriptural interpretation.

הרי כללות תרי"ג אברי נפשו מלובשים בתרי"ג מצות התורה

then all of his soul's 613 "organs" are clothed in the 613 commandments of the Torah.

Just as the human body consists of 248 organs and 365 blood vessels, corresponding to the Torah's 248 positive commandments and 365 prohibitive commandments (613 in all), the soul similarly comprises 613 "organs" — the spiritual counterpart of the 613 bodily organs — each "organ" corresponding to a specific commandment. When, through its three "garments" (thought, speech and action), the soul embraces all 613 commandments,

then all 613 “organs” of the soul are en clothed in all 613 commandments — each “organ” of the soul in its related commandment.

(Note the Alter Rebbe’s emphasis of the word “all” (“*all* the precepts which require physical action,” “in expounding *all* the 613 commandments,” “*all* that he is capable of understanding”). Should his “garments” fail to include *all* 613 commandments — were he to omit one specific commandment — then the corresponding “organ” of the soul will remain bereft of its *mitzvah*-“garment”).

Thus we see, in a general sense, how fulfillment of all the commandments with one’s thought, speech and action, “clothes” the entire soul in all 613 commandments of the Torah. The Alter Rebbe now goes on to specify which components of the soul are “clothed” by which particular garment.

ובפרטות: בחינות חב"ד שבנפשו מלובשות בהשגת התורה שהוא משיג בפרד"ס, כפי יכולת השגתו ושרש נפשו למעלה

Specifically: the *CHaBaD* of his soul (i.e., his intellectual faculties) are clothed in the comprehension of the Torah, which he comprehends in [the four levels of] *Pardes* of the Torah, to the extent of his mental capacity and according to the supernal root of his soul.

One’s mental capacity determines how much he may understand; the root of his soul determines the area in Torah for which he will have the greatest aptitude. For example, one whose soul is related to the level of *Pshat* is more likely to comprehend the straightforward meaning of the words of Torah; a soul related to *Remez* will delve to the stratum of implied meaning underlying the words; and so on. When the person comprehends Torah to the extent of his mental capacity then the *CHaBaD* components of his soul are clothed in the garment of *thought* of Torah, i.e., thought as it is related to Torah.

והמדות, שהן יראה ואהבה וענפיהן ותולדותיהן, מלובשות בקיום המצות במעשה ובדיבור שהוא תלמוד תורה שכנגד כולן

And the *middot*, namely the emotions of fear and love (of the Almighty) together with their offshoots and ramifications, are clothed in the fulfillment of the commandments in deed and in word, (“in word”) meaning in the study of Torah, which is 1 “the equivalent of all the commandments.”

The Alter Rebbe’s previous statement, that in comprehending Torah the soul’s faculty of intellect clothes itself in thought, requires no further elaboration; it goes without saying that the intellect can comprehend Torah only through the vehicle of thought.

His latter statement, however (that the *middot* are clothed in the fulfillment of the commandments in deed or in word), requires further amplification. What connection do the *middot* of fear and love have with action and speech? The seat of the emotions is in the heart; how do they come to clothe themselves in actions which are done with one’s

hand (in donning *tefillin*, for example), or in speech where one uses his mouth (such as in oral Torah study)?

In answer to this question, the Alter Rebbe explains that completeness in the performance of the commandments demands love and fear of G-d; one can bring to his fulfillment of the commandments the fullness generated by vitality and depth of feeling only when he is imbued with fear and love of the Almighty.

In the Alter Rebbe's words:

כי האהבה היא שרש כל רמ"ח מצות עשה וממנה הן נמשכות, ובלעדה אין להם קיום אמיתי

For love is the root of a Jew's observance of all the 248 positive commands; from it they issue forth, and without it they have no true substance.

כי המקיימן באמת הוא האוהב את שם ה' וחפ' לדבקה בו באמת

For he who fulfills them in truth, is he who loves G-d's Name and who truly desires to cleave to Him.

ואי אפשר לדבקה בו באמת כי אם בקיום רמ"ח פקודין

Now, one cannot truly cleave to Him except through the fulfillment of the 248 positive commandments,

Thus, one's love of G-d and desire to cleave to Him dictate that he observe the commandments. Why is it possible to cleave to G-d only by fulfilling the commandments?

שהן רמ"ח אברין דמלכא כביכול, כמו שכתוב במקום אחר

for they are the 248<sup>2</sup> “organs of the King” (of G-d, King of the universe), as it were, as is explained elsewhere.<sup>3</sup>

Just as each of the organs of a human being is a vessel for the particular soul power that clothes itself in it (e.g., the eye is a vessel for the power of sight, the ear for hearing, and so on), so is each commandment a vessel for the specific aspect of G-d's Will (the “Supernal Will”) which clothes itself in that particular commandment. Each commandment expresses not only the Supernal Will that a specific act be carried out, but also the particulars of its observance. Thus it is understood that by performing the commandments one achieves unity with G-d, Whose Will they express.

It follows, then, that love of G-d clothes (or expresses) itself in one's performance of the 248 positive commandments; it is their root and life-force, which leads one to observe them with the totality of one's being. For when one loves G-d and desires to cleave to Him, he will perform His commandments as he would perform a task for a dear friend — with delight and zest, and with all of his being.

והיראה היא שרש לשם"ה לא תעשה, כי ירא למרוד במלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא

Fear is the root of one's observance of the 365 prohibitive commands, for he (the G-d-fearing person) will fear to rebel against the Supreme King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He (by acting in defiance of His Will; he will therefore refrain from anything that G-d forbade).

At this level, the word "fear" is taken in its simple sense — trepidation before the severity of G-d's command.

או יראה פנימית מזו, שמתבושש מגדולתו, למרות עיני כבודו ולעשות הרע בעיניו

Or a deeper level of fear — that he feels *ashamed* before G-d's greatness, so that he will not rebel against the all-seeing eyes of His glory by doing what is evil in His eyes,

כל תועבת ה' אשר שנא, הם הקליפות וסטרא אחרא

namely, any of the abominable things hated by G-d, which are the *kelipot* and *sitra achra* (the "other side" — that which is the opposite of holiness),

אשר יניקתם מהאדם התחתון, ואחיזתם בו הוא בשם"ה מצות לא תעשה

which draw their nurture from man below (in this world) and have their hold in him so that they be able to derive their nurture and life through him through his violation of the 365 prohibitive commandments.

When a person transgresses a prohibitive commandment, G-d forbid, he provides the *kelipot* with additional strength and vitality. Since *kelipot* and the *sitra achra* are entities which conceal G-dliness and holiness and are as such despised by G-d, the Jew therefore guards himself against transgressing. He is "ashamed" to transgress and give the *kelipot* strength and life. Thus, fear of G-d clothes itself in the observance of prohibitive commandments; for one's fear of G-d enables him to withstand temptation and refrain from transgression.

We now understand clearly how fear and love of G-d are related to the fulfillment of the commandments, and how the *middot* are the root and life-force in the performance of commandments in both action and speech.

\* \* \*

Until now it has been explained that the divine soul has three garments in which it clothes itself: the thought, speech and action of Torah and the commandments. The Alter Rebbe now goes on to state that, unlike physical garments, which are less important than their wearer, the garments of the divine soul are even loftier than the soul which "wears" them. Thus, "wearing" its garments — i.e., thinking and speaking words of Torah, and acting in performance of the commandments — elevates the soul to a higher level. For, since

Torah and the commandments are one with G-d, the Jew, by donning the garments of Torah and the commandments, also becomes united with him. In the Alter Rebbe's words:

והנה שלשה לבושים אלו מהתורה ומצותיה, אף שנקראים לבושים לנפש רוח ונשמה

Now these three “garments” deriving from the Torah and its commandments, though they are called [merely] “garments” of the *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah*,

עם כל זה גבהה וגדלה מעלתם לאין ק' וסוף על מעלת נפש רוח ונשמה עצמן

nevertheless, their quality (the quality of the garments of the Torah and its commandments) is infinitely higher and greater than that of the *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah* themselves,

כמו שכתוב בזהר, דאורייתא וקודשא בריך הוא כולא חד

[for] as explained in the *Zohar*,<sup>4</sup> Torah and the Holy One, blessed be He, are truly one.

פירוש: דאורייתא, היא חכמתו ורצונו של הקדוש ברוך הוא, והקדוש ברוך הוא בכבודו ובעצמו, כולא חד

This means: Since Torah is the wisdom and Will of the Holy One, blessed be He (i.e., the wisdom of Torah expresses G-d's wisdom; its practical application and laws — e.g., whether or not a particular object is kosher — expresses His Will), it is one with His glory and essence,

כי הוא היודע והוא המדע וכו' כמו שכתוב לעיל בשם הרמב"ם

since He is the Knower, the Knowledge... and the Known, as explained above in ch. 2 in the name of Maimonides (— *that these three aspects, separate and distinct in terms of human intellect, are, as they relate to G-d, one and the same entity: they are all G-dliness*).

The Torah, being G-d's intellect, is thus one with G-d Himself, and when a Jew understands and unites himself with it, he is united with G-d Himself.

From the above we understand that since the garments of thought and speech of Torah study and the active performance of the commandments are united with G-d, they are even higher than the soul itself.

However, a question presents itself: How can it be said that in understanding Torah one comprehends G-d's wisdom and Will, when G-d's wisdom — like G-d Himself — is infinitely beyond man's limited comprehension? This will now be explained:

ואף דהקדוש ברוך הוא נקרא אין סוף, ולגדולתו אין חקר, ולית מחשבה תפיסא ביה כלל

Although the Holy One, blessed be He, is called *Ein Sof* (“Infinite”), and<sup>5</sup> “His greatness can never be fathomed,” and<sup>6</sup> “No thought can apprehend him at all,”

וכן ברצונו וחכמתו

and so are also His Will and His wisdom (infinite and unfathomable),

כדכתיב: אין חקר לתבונתו, וכתיב: החקר אלוקה תמצא, וכתיב: כי לא מחשבותי מחשבותיכם

as it is written,<sup>7</sup> “There is no searching of His understanding”; and it is also written,<sup>8</sup> “When you will search (to understand) G-d, will you find?”; and it is further written,<sup>9</sup> “For My thoughts are not like your thoughts,” says G-d to man;

Thus human thought is incapable of grasping Divine “thought”. How, then, can it be said that in understanding Torah man grasps G-d’s wisdom?

To this the Alter Rebbe answers that G-d “compressed” and “lowered” His wisdom, clothing it in the physical terms and objects of Torah and its commandments, so that it might be accessible to human intelligence, in order that man may thereby be united with G-d.

הנה על זה אמרו: במקום שאתה מוצא גדולתו של הקדוש ברוך הוא, שם אתה מוצא ענותותו

concerning this disparity between human intelligence and Divine wisdom, our Sages have said,<sup>10</sup> “Where you find the greatness of the Holy One, blessed be He, there you find His humility.”

I.e., how can we approach G-d’s greatness, to “find” it and be united with it? — Through His “humility”, by His lowering Himself to our level.

וצמצם הקדוש ברוך הוא רצונו וחכמתו בתרי”ג מצות התורה ובהלכותיהן

G-d compressed His Will and wisdom in the 613 commandments of the Torah and in their laws,

As mentioned above, the logic of the law represents Divine wisdom, and the ruling, Divine Will —

ובצרופי אותיות תורה נביאים וכתובים

and in the letter-combinations of Scripture (*Torah, Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim*),

The very letters and words of Scripture contain G-d’s Will and wisdom; wherefore even one who is ignorant of their meaning fulfills the precept of Torah study by merely reciting them —

ודרשותיהן שבאגדות ומדרשי חכמינו ז"ל

and G-d's Will and wisdom are also contained in the exposition of these verses found in the *Aggadot* and *Midrashim* of our Sages, of blessed memory.

בכדי שכל הנשמה או רוח ונפש שבגוף האדם תוכל להשיג בדעתה

In all of these did G-d “compress” His Will and wisdom in order that every *Neshamah* or even the lower soul-levels of *Ruach* and *Nefesh*, situated as they are in the human body, will be able to grasp them with its intellect,

ולקיימן כל מה שאפשר לקיים מהן במעשה דבור ומחשבה

and [in order] that it (the *Nefesh* or *Ruach* or *Neshamah*) fulfill them, as far as they can be fulfilled, in action, speech and thought;

ועל ידי זה תתלבש בכל עשר בחינותיה בשלשה לבושים אלו

thereby clothing itself with all its ten faculties in these three garments (of the thought, speech and action of Torah and *mitzvot*).

ולכן נמשלה התורה למים: מה מים יורדים ממקום גבוה למקום נמוך

Therefore has the Torah been compared to water,<sup>11</sup> for just as water descends from a higher level to a lower level,

The water which reaches the lower level is the same water that left its source within the higher level; unlike light, for example, which also travels from its source, but in whose case it is not the source (the luminous body) itself that is transmitted, but only a ray of it; and unlike intellect which can also be communicated from one person to another, but in whose case, too, it is not the source (the teacher's mind) itself that transmits itself to the lower level (the student's mind), but only the idea, a product of the source.

כך התורה ירדה ממקום כבודה

Just as we find in the analogy of water, so has Torah descended from its place of glory, i.e., the lofty spiritual plane which is its source.

שהיא רצונו וחכמתו יתברך, ואורייתא וקודשא בריך הוא כולא חד, ולית מחשבה תפיסא ביה כלל

In its original state it is G-d's Will and wisdom, and “Torah is one and the same with G-d,” Whom no thought can apprehend at all — on that plane, Torah is incomprehensible to man, as is G-d Himself.

ומשם נסעה וירדה בסתר המדרגות ממדרגה למדרגה בהשתלשלות העולמות

From there the Torah has journeyed in a descent through hidden stages, stage after stage, in the *Hishtalshelut* of the Worlds (i.e., the chain-like order of interconnected spiritual “Worlds”, explained more fully in ch. 2; Torah descended through all these levels —)

עד שנתלבשה בדברים גשמיים ועניני עולם הזה, שהן רוב מצות התורה ככולן והלכותיהן

until it clothed itself in material matters and things of this corporeal world, which comprise nearly all the Torah’s commandments and their laws.

Nearly all the *mitzvot* involve material objects: *tzitzit* are made of wool, *tefillin* of leather, and so on. Even the “spiritual” *mitzvot* involve material objects in their *halachot* — the laws governing their practical application. For example, the *mitzvah* of loving one’s fellow, although essentially a “spiritual” *mitzvah*, as it consists of an emotion — love, demands that one aid his fellow-Jew materially, financially, etc.; these being concrete, material expressions of a “spiritual” *mitzvah*.

ובצרופי אותיות גשמיות בדיו על הספר, עשרים וארבעה ספרים שבתורה נביאים וכתובים

Thus, the Torah clothed itself in the material objects with which the *mitzvot* are performed and also in the physical letter combinations written with ink in a book, namely the twenty-four books of *Torah*, *Nevi'im*, and *Ketuvim*.

(As mentioned above, the letters and words contain the holiness of G-d’s Will and wisdom.)

כדי שתהא כל מחשבה תפיסא בהן, ואפילו בחינת דבור ומעשה שלמטה ממדרגת מחשבה תפיסא בהן ומתלבשת בהן

Torah underwent this great descent so that every human thought be able to grasp them, and so that even speech and action, which are on a level lower than thought, be able to grasp them (— G-d’s Will and wisdom) and clothe themselves in them — by performing the commandments in speech and action.

ומאחר שהתורה ומצותיה מלבישים כל עשר בחינות הנפש וכל תרי"ג אבריה מראשה ועד רגלה

Now, since Torah and its commandments clothe all ten faculties of the soul, and all of the soul’s 613 “organs”, from head to foot, i.e., from its highest level — its “head” — to its lowest level,

הרי כולה צרורה בצרור החיים את הוי' ממש, ואור הוי' ממש מקיפה ומלבישה מראשה ועד רגלה

it the soul is truly completely bound up with G-d in the [12](#) “bond of life,” and the very light of G-d envelops and clothes it from head to foot.

כמו שכתוב: צורי אחסה בו, וכתוב: כצנה רצון תעטרנו



So it is written:<sup>13</sup> “G-d is my Rock, in whom I take refuge” (and naturally, only that which surrounds a person can protect him); and it is further written,<sup>14</sup> “As with a shield G-d’s Will surrounds him,”

שהוא רצונו וחכמתו יתברך, המלוכשים בתורתו ומצותיה

meaning His Will and wisdom that are clothed in Torah and its commandments.

We see, at any rate, that although G-d’s wisdom and Will are beyond man’s reach, they are made accessible to him because the Torah is clothed in physical terms, and its commandments are vested in physical objects.

ולכן אמרו: יפה שעה אחת בתשובה ומעשים טובים בעולם הזה מכל חיי עולם הבא

For this reason, it has been said:<sup>15</sup> “One hour of repentance and good deeds in this world is better than the whole life of the World to Come.”

כי עולם הבא הוא שנהגין מזיו השכינה, שהוא תענוג ההשגה

For the reward in the World to Come consists of enjoying the radiance of the Divine Presence;<sup>16</sup> it is the pleasure derived from comprehension of G-dliness.

ואי אפשר לשום נברא, אפילו מהעליונים, להשיג כי אם איזו הארה מאור הוי'

Now no created being, even a spiritual being of the higher realms such as angels or souls, can comprehend any more than a glimmer of the Divine light,

ולכן נקרא בשם זיו השכינה

for which reason the reward of the souls in the World to Come is referred to as “the radiance of the Divine Presence,” since it is no more than a remote gleam of the Divine light.

אבל הקדוש ברוך הוא בכבודו ובעצמו לית מחשבה תפיסא ביה כלל

But as for the essence and glory of the Holy One, blessed be He, no thought can apprehend Him at all.

כי אם כאשר תפיסא ומתלבשת בתורה ומצותיה, אזי היא תפיסא ומתלבשת בהקדוש ברוך הוא ממש

Only when it apprehends and clothes itself in Torah and its *mitzvot* does it grasp and clothe itself in G-d Himself,

דאורייתא וקודשא בריך הוא כולא חד

for “Torah and the Holy One, blessed be He, are one and the same.”

Hence the superiority of Torah and *mitzvot* in this world over the life of the World to Come. In the World to Come the soul grasps only a glimmer of G-dliness; in this world, through Torah and *mitzvot*, it is united with G-d Himself.

ואף שהתורה נתלבשה בדברים תחתונים גשמיים

For, although the Torah has been clothed in lowly material things, and it is only these material things that man's intellect grasps when studying Torah, not the essence of G-d's Will and wisdom, yet —

הרי זה כמחבק את המלך, דרך משל

it is, by way of illustration, like one who embraces a king.

שאינן הפרש במעלת התקרבותו ודביקותו במלך, בין מחבקו כשהוא לבוש לבוש אחד, בין שהוא לבוש כמה לבושים

There is no difference in the degree of his closeness and attachment to the king whether he embraces him when the king is wearing one robe or many robes,

מאחר שגוף המלך בתוכם

since the king's body is in them.

Similarly, when a Jew “embraces” G-d's wisdom in Torah study, the fact that His wisdom is clothed in material “robes” is irrelevant.

Another point understood from this analogy: in the study of Torah, man is also “embraced”, enveloped and encompassed by, G-d's wisdom that the Torah contains (as will be explained further in ch. 5) — as the Alter Rebbe continues:

וכן אם המלך מחבקו בזרועו גם שהיא מלובשת תוך מלבושיו

Similarly, when the king embraces one with his arm, though it be dressed in his robes.

To illustrate that Torah is analogous to a royal embrace, the Alter Rebbe quotes:

כמו שכתוב: וימינו תחבקני

As it is written,<sup>17</sup> “His (G-d's) right hand embraces me,”

שהיא התורה, שנתנה מימין

which refers to Torah, called “the right hand” because Torah was given by G-d's<sup>18</sup> “right hand,”

for [Torah] is related to the attribute of *Chesed* (“kindness”), and “water”.

As explained in the Kabbalah, the right hand represents both *Chesed* and water (and, as said earlier, Torah is compared to water), and the left hand represents *Gevurah* (“severity”) and fire. When the verse states that G-d’s right hand “embraces me,” the intention is that G-d “embraces” and envelops the soul through Torah — G-d’s “right hand.”

Thus, the bond that Torah study creates between the soul and G-d is two-fold: The soul “embraces” G-d and is “embraced” by G-d. In this, Torah study is superior to other *mitzvot*, as discussed in the following chapter.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Mishnah, Peah* 1:1. [2.](#) *Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun* 30. [3.](#) See further, ch. 23. [4.](#) Part I, 24a; II, 60a. [5.](#) *Tehillim* 145:3. [6.](#) Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar*. [7.](#) *Yeshayahu* 40:28. [8.](#) *Iyov* 11:7. [9.](#) *Yeshayahu* 55:8. [10.](#) *Megillah* 31a. [11.](#) *Bava Kama* 17a. [12.](#) *I Shmuel* 25:29. [13.](#) *Tehillim* 18:3. [14.](#) *Ibid.* 5:13. [15.](#) *Avot* 4:17. [16.](#) *Berachot* 17a. [17.](#) *Shir HaShirim* 8:3. [18.](#) *Devarim* 33:2.

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## Chapter 5

At the conclusion of the previous chapter, the Alter Rebbe depicted the study of Torah as a royal embrace: When one studies Torah, his intellect “embraces” and encompasses the Divine Will and wisdom — and thus he “embraces” the King of kings Himself, since “He and His wisdom are one.” In turn, the “King” (i.e., G-d’s Will and wisdom) “embraces” the mind of the Torah student.

But while it is readily understood that the mind can be described as “embracing” the Torah knowledge that it absorbs, the meaning of Torah’s “embracing” one’s intellect is unclear. In ch. 5 the Alter Rebbe clarifies this point. He does so by elucidating the term “grasp” used in the statement by Elijah (quoted in the previous chapter) that no thought can “grasp” G-d except by way of “grasping” the Torah.

Primarily, however, this chapter aims to show how Torah study is superior to all other *mitzvot*; not only is one encompassed by G-d’s Will when he studies the Torah, as when he performs any *mitzvah*, but furthermore, he “embraces” G-d by understanding His wisdom as set forth in Torah.

ולתוספת ביאור באר היטב לשון תפיסא שאמר אליהו: לית מחשבה תפיסא בך כו'

A further explanation, to more fully elucidate the expression “*tefissa*” (“grasp”), in the words of Elijah, “No thought can grasp You”:

As explained in ch. 4, we cannot ordinarily “grasp” G-d with our intellect, but only through Torah study. Realizing our inability to comprehend G-dliness will thus explain how we do grasp Him through Torah.

הנה כל שכל כשמשכיל ומשיג בשכלו איזה מושג, הרי השכל תופס את המושכל ומקיפו בשכלו

When any intellect perceives and understands some intellectual subject, the mind grasps that subject and encompasses it,

והמושכל נתפס ומוקף ומלוּבש בתוך השכל שהשיגו והשכילו

and the subject is grasped and encompassed by, and is clothed within, the intellect that understood and perceived it.

The subject, which is now within the human intellect, is surrounded and encompassed by that intellect, much as a material object is surrounded by the hand that grasps it.

But the subject can be said to be within the mind only once the mind has fully understood it (as indicated also by the Alter Rebbe’s use of the past tense — “...*the intellect that understood and perceived it*”). *Before mastering the subject, however, while the mind is engaged in analyzing its details, the subject is still “above” the mind, and the relationship between them is the reverse: the mind is “within” the subject and is encompassed by it.*

In the Alter Rebbe’s words:

וגם השכל מלוּבש במושכל בשעה שמשגיגו ותופסו בשכלו

Also, the intellect is clothed within the subject at the time of intellectual comprehension and grasping.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, in the act of understanding an idea the mind both encompasses the concept and is encompassed by it, and this is the significance of the term “grasping” used above.

דרך משל: כשאדם מבין ומשיג איזו הלכה במשנה או בגמרא לאשורה על בוריה

When, for example, one understands and comprehends a particular *halachah* in the *Mishnah* or *Gemara*, clearly and thoroughly, through strenuous application of his mind,

הרי שכלו תופס ומקיף אותה, וגם שכלו מלוּבש בה באותה שעה

his intellect grasps and encompasses that *halachah*, and his intellect is also clothed in it at that time when he strives to understand it.

והנה הלכה זו היא חכמתו ורצונו של הקדוש ברוך הוא

Now, this *halachah* is the wisdom and Will of G-d — the rationale underlying the *halachah* is G-d's wisdom, and the ruling itself is G-d's Will, as mentioned in ch. 4.

שעלה ברצונו שכשיטעון ראובן כך וכך, דרך משל, ושמעון כך וכך, יהיה הפסק ביניהם כך וכך

It so arose in His Will that if, for example, Reuven would claim thus and Shimon thus, such and such should be the verdict between them.

ואף אם לא היה ולא יהיה הדבר הזה לעולם, לבא למשפט על טענות ותביעות אלו

Even if it never did nor ever will come to pass that litigation occur over these arguments and claims,

Thus, were the purpose of Torah study only to learn how to practice its laws — in this case: how to resolve this dispute — then the study of such a law would indeed serve no purpose. In fact, however, there is great value in studying even such a *halachah*, for thereby one knows G-d's Will and wisdom, and attaches himself to it, as the Alter Rebbe continues:

מכל מקום, מאחר שכך עלה ברצונו וחכמתו של הקדוש ברוך הוא, שאם יטעון זה כך וזה כך יהיה הפסק כך

yet, since it arose thus in G-d's Will and wisdom that if one person would claim this way and the other that way, the verdict be such and such,

הרי כשאדם יודע ומשיג בשכלו פסק זה, כהלכה הערוכה במשנה או גמרא או פוסקים

therefore when one knows and comprehends this verdict as a *halachah* set forth in the *Mishnah* or *Gemara* or *Poskim* (the halachic codifiers),

If one arrives at the identical verdict on the basis of any other legal system, this verdict represents human knowledge, not Divine wisdom. If, however, he derives the ruling from Torah,

הרי זה משיג ותופס ומקיף בשכלו רצונו וחכמתו של הקדוש ברוך הוא, דלית מחשבה תפיסא ביה ולא ברצונו וחכמתו

he then actually comprehends and grasps the Will and wisdom of G-d, Whom no thought can grasp, nor [can any thought grasp] His Will and wisdom,

כי אם בהתלבשותם בהלכות הערוכות לפנינו

except when they — G-d's Will and wisdom — clothe themselves in the *halachot* set before us.

This is one facet of understanding Torah, namely, that thereby one's intellect encompasses the Divine Will and wisdom. Furthermore:

וגם שכלו מלובש בהם

His intellect is also clothed within them — within the Divine Will and wisdom contained in Torah; his mind is encompassed by them.

והוא יחוד נפלא, שאין יחוד כמוהו ולא כערכו נמצא כלל בגשמיות

Now this is a most wonderful unity; in the physical realm there is no unity similar or parallel to it, i.e., of two things as disproportionate as human intellect and Torah, G-d's intellect —

להיות לאחדים ומיוחדים ממש מכל צד ופנה

that they should actually become one and united from every side and angle.

וזאת מעלה יתירה גדולה ונפלאה לאין קץ, אשר במצות ידיעת התורה והשגתה

This is the distinctive, infinitely great and wonderful superiority of the *mitzvah* of knowing and comprehending Torah

על כל המצות מעשיות, ואפילו על מצות התלויות בדבור, ואפילו על מצות תלמוד תורה שבדיבור

over all the *mitzvot* involving action, and even over those performed through speech; indeed, even over the *mitzvah* of oral Torah study.

The precept of Torah study may be performed by reciting passages of Scripture, even if one is ignorant of their meaning. Such study, however, lacks the infinitely superior quality of *comprehending* Torah, namely:

כי על ידי כל המצות שבדבור ומעשה הקדוש ברוך הוא מלביש את הנפש, ומקיפה אור ה' מראשה ועד רגלה

For through all the *mitzvot* performed in action and speech G-d clothes the soul, and envelops it with His light from “head” to “foot”, i.e., from its highest level to its lowest;

ובידיעת התורה, מלבד שהשכל מלובש בחכמת ה', הנה גם חכמת ה' בקרבו

while in the case of the knowledge of Torah, apart from the intellect's being clothed in (i.e., enveloped by) Divine wisdom, the Divine wisdom is also within him, so that he envelops it,

מה שהשכל משיג ותופס ומקיף בשכלו מה שאפשר לו לתפוס ולהשיג מידיעת התורה

through his intellect's comprehending, grasping and encompassing whatever Torah knowledge it is capable of grasping and comprehending,

איש כפי שכלו וכה ידיעתו והשגתו בפרד"ס

each man according to his intellect and his capacity for knowledge and understanding in *Pardes*<sup>2</sup> — the four modes of Torah interpretation: *Pshat*, *Remez*, *Derush* and *Sod*.

Thus, apart from the effect that Torah shares with other *mitzvot*, namely, that a *mitzvah* when performed *envelops* the soul in Divine light, Torah study has the additional effect of *filling* the soul (internally) with the light of Divine wisdom contained in the Torah that the soul grasps and encompasses.

ולפי שבידיעת התורה, התורה מלובשת בנפש האדם ושכלו ומוקפת בתוכם

Since through the knowledge of Torah the Torah is absorbed in the soul and intellect of the person and is encompassed within them,

לכן נקראת בשם לחם ומזון הנפש

it is therefore called the “bread” and “food” of the soul.

כי כמו שהלחם הגשמי זן את הגוף כשמכניסו בתוכו וקרבו ממש, ונהפך שם להיות דם ובשר כבשרו

Just as physical bread nourishes the body when it is ingested and absorbed within it, and [when] it is transformed there into blood and flesh of one's own flesh,

ואזי יחיה ויתקיים

and only then will the body live and be sustained;

כך בידיעת התורה והשגתה בנפש האדם שלומדה היטב בעיון שכלו

similarly, through the knowledge and comprehension of Torah by the soul of a person who studies it well, with the concentration of his intellect,

עד שנתפסת בשכלו ומתאחדת עמו והיו לאחדים

to the point where the Torah is grasped by his mind and is joined with him so that they become one,

נעשה מזון לנפש

[the Torah thereby] becomes food for the soul.

וחיים בקרבה מחיי החיים, אין סוף ברוך הוא, המלובש בחכמתו ותורתו שבקרבה

It becomes inner life for it, from the Fountainhead of life, the blessed *Ein Sof*, Who is clothed in His wisdom and Torah that are in [the soul] of the Torah student.

וזהו שכתוב: ותורתך בתוך מעי

This is the meaning of the verse,<sup>3</sup> “Your Torah is in my inner parts,” meaning that Torah is food for the soul.

וכמו שכתוב בע' חיים, שער מ"ד פרק ג', שלבושי הנשמות בגן עדן הן המצות

It is similarly written in *Etz Chayim* (Portal 44, ch. 3) that *mitzvot* are the “garments” of the souls in Paradise.

In Paradise, souls enjoy the radiance of the Divine Presence. In order that the soul, a finite being, be capable of bearing the infinite radiance, it must be shielded by spiritual “garments”. The *mitzvot* it performed during its life on earth provide the soul with these garments; for, as explained above, performing *mitzvot* envelops the soul in Divine light, as a garment envelops the body.

והתורה היא המזון לנשמות שעסקו בעולם הזה בתורה לשמה, וכמו שכתוב בזהר, ויקהל דף ר"י

Torah on the other hand is the *food* of the souls in Paradise which had engaged in Torah study for its own sake during their life on this earth. It is similarly written in the *Zohar* (*Vayakhel*, p. 210).

ולשמה היינו כדי לקשר נפשו לה' על ידי השגת התורה

The meaning of [Torah study] “for its own sake” is [study] with the intent of binding one’s soul to G-d by comprehending the Torah,<sup>4</sup>

איש כפי שכלו, כמו שכתוב בפרי ע' חיים

each man according to the capacity of his intellect, as explained in *Pri Etz Chayim*.

We thus see from the above statement in *Etz Chayim* that Torah is the food of the soul and *mitzvot* are its garments.

But the question now arises: If Torah and *mitzvot* each have their own unique quality, why the superiority of Torah study over *mitzvot*?

The Alter Rebbe answers this by defining the terms “food” and “garments” in their spiritual context. From this explanation it will become clear that Torah has the qualities of both “food” and “garment” — hence its superiority.

והמזון היא בחינת אור פנימי, והלבושים בחינת מקיפים



(5)The “food” of the soul refers to the level of “indwelling light”; the “garments” refer to the level of “encompassing light.”

ולכן אמרו רבותינו ז"ל שתלמוד תורה שקול כנגד כל המצות

For this reason, our Sages have said<sup>6</sup> that Torah study is equal to all the other *mitzvot* combined;

לפי שהמצות הן לבושים לבד, והתורה היא מזון וגם לבוש לנפש המשכלת

for *mitzvot* are “garments” alone, while Torah is “food” and also a “garment” for the intellectual soul.

שמתלבש בה בעיונה ולימודה

Torah serves as a “garment” because one clothes himself within it, by his soul’s concentration on it and study of it.

וכל שכן כשמוציא בפיו בדבור

How much more so, if one expresses the words of Torah orally,

שהבל הדיבור נעשה בחינת אור מקיף, כמו שכתוב בפרי ע' חיים

for the breath of speech becomes a kind of “encompassing light,” as written in *Pri Etz Chayim*.)

We thus see that Torah study possesses the qualities of both “food” and “garment”. It is thus superior to other *mitzvot*, which are “garments” alone.

## FOOTNOTES

1. The Rebbe notes:

The process of understanding an idea is as follows: At first one grasps the idea or concept in a general way, and at that time his intellect encompasses the subject. Afterwards, one begins to dissect the general idea through analysis and argument, at which time the subject encompasses his intellect. When he finishes dissecting and analyzing (i.e., once he has mastered the concept thoroughly, in the Alter Rebbe’s words: “The intellect...understood and perceived it...”), his intellect once again encompasses the subject.

2. See beginning of ch. 4 for the meaning of the term *Pardes*.

3. *Tehillim* 40:9.

4. The Rebbe observes that the Alter Rebbe finds it necessary to define the term לשמה (“for its own sake”), lest we misinterpret the *Zohar* to mean that the factor that causes the Torah to become “food” for the soul is some other, incidental meaning of לשמה; rather, “The meaning...is [study] with the intent of binding one’s soul to G-d by

comprehending the Torah.”

5. Parentheses are in the original text.

6. *Mishnah, Peah* 1:1.

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## Chapter 6

In the previous chapters the Alter Rebbe discussed the divine soul; its ten faculties — three intellectual and seven emotional — and its three garments by which it expresses itself, namely, the thought, speech and action of Torah and the *mitzvot*.

He explained that the garments of the divine soul are actually on a higher level than the soul itself, inasmuch as Torah and G-d are one, and that by “clothing” itself in these garments, i.e., by studying the Torah and by performing the *mitzvot*, the soul is united with G-d. This is particularly true of Torah study, in which the soul both embraces and is embraced by the G-dliness contained in Torah.

In ch. 6 the Alter Rebbe begins to discuss the animal soul. He explains that its structure exactly parallels that of the divine soul; it too has ten faculties and three garments; only, unlike the divine soul, the substance of the animal soul is *kelipah*, and its faculties and garments are impurity. By clothing itself in these garments the animal soul descends to an even lower state of impurity.

Concerning the concept of *kelipah*, we have noted in ch. 1 that although all existence was created by and receives its life from G-dliness, yet, in order that man be able to choose between good and evil, and that he earn his reward by serving his Creator by his own effort, G-d created forces of impurity which conceal the G-dliness in all of creation. These forces are called *kelipah* (plural: *kelipot*), literally meaning “shells” or “peels”: Just as the shell conceals the fruit, so do the forces of *kelipah* conceal the G-dliness in every created being.

There are two categories in *kelipot*: *kelipat nogah* (lit. “a *kelipah* [inclusive] of light”), and “the three unclean *kelipot*.”

The first category, *kelipat nogah*, contains some measure of good. It is thus an intermediary level between the realms of good and evil, and whatever receives its vitality via the concealing screen of this *kelipah* may be utilized for either good or evil. To this category belong all permitted physical objects; they may be used for a *mitzvah* and ascend thereby to the realm of holiness, or they may be used sinfully, G-d forbid, and thereby be further degraded.

The second category — consisting of the “three impure *kelipot*” — is wholly evil. Whatever receives its vitality via the concealment of this type of *kelipah* cannot be transformed into holiness, nor, in some cases, may it even be used in the service of holiness. To this category belong all forbidden physical objects; whether forbidden only for consumption, in which case they cannot be transformed into holiness but they may serve it, or whether forbidden for any form of benefit, in which case they cannot even serve any holy purpose.

והנה זה לעומת זה עשה אלקים

1“The Almighty has created one thing opposite the other.”

Everything in the realm of holiness has its counterpart in *kelipah*. In our context, the animal soul, with its faculties and garments, is the counterpart (in *kelipah*) of the divine soul, with its faculties and garments.

כי, כמו שנפש האלקית כלולה מעשר ספירות קדושות ומתלבשת בשלשה לבושים קדושים

Just as the divine soul consists of ten holy [faculties, which correspond to the Ten Supernal] *Sefirot*, and is clothed in three holy garments, i.e., the thought, speech and action of Torah and the *mitzvot*,

כך הנפש דסטרא אחרא מקליפות נוגה המלובשת בדם האדם

so, too, the soul of *sitra achra* (defined further in this chapter) derived from *kelipat nogah*, which is clothed in man’s blood — as explained in ch. 1, the animal soul is clothed in the blood, and thereby animates the body — this soul too

כלולה מעשר כתרין דמסאבותא

consists of ten<sup>2</sup> “crowns of impurity,” i.e., the faculties of *kelipah*, called “crowns” in kabbalistic terminology.

שהן שבע מדות רעות

These ten faculties are: seven evil *middot* (seven emotional traits),

e.g., lust, the equivalent in *kelipah* of the *middah* of *Chesed* (“kindness”); anger, which expresses the *middah* of *Gevurah* (“severity”); boastfulness, the equivalent of *Tiferet* (“beauty”); and so forth,

הבאות מארבעה יסודות רעים הנזכרים לעיל

which stem from the four evil elements mentioned above (in ch. 1),

Spiritual entities have their “elements” as physical objects do; in this case evil elements, since this is a soul of *kelipah*.

ושכל המולידן הנחלק לשלש, שהן חכמה בינה ודעת, מקור המדות

and the intellect (*seichel*) which gives birth to these [seven evil *middot*], which is subdivided into three, viz., *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat*, the source of the *middot*.

כי המדות הן לפי ערך השכל

The intellectual faculties are described as the source of the evil *middot* for the *middot* are commensurate with the quality of one’s intellect.

כי הקטן חושק ואוהב דברים קטנים פחותי הערך, לפי ששכלו קטן וקצר להשיג דברים יקרים יותר מהם

A child desires and loves (i.e., he expresses his *middah* of *Chesed* towards) petty things of little value, for his intellect is too immature and deficient to appreciate more valuable things.

וכן מתכעס ומתקצף מדברים קטנים, וכן בהתפארות ושאר מדות

Similarly with regard to the *middah* of *Gevurah*: he is angered and vexed by trivial things, and likewise with regard to boastfulness (which expresses the *middah* of *Tiferet*), and other *middot*.

This correlation between *middot* and intellect indicates that the intellect affects the nature and expression of *middot*, and for this reason, the three intellectual faculties are said to be the source of the seven *middot*.<sup>3</sup>

ועשר בחינות אלו הטמאות, כשאדם מחשב בהן או מדבר או עושה

Now these ten unclean categories, when a person thinks [thoughts originating from] them (e.g., when he thinks of ways of obtaining something he desires), or speaks words originating from them or does an act which serves or expresses them,

הרי מחשבתו שבמוחו ודבורו שבפיו וכח המעשה שבידיו ושאר איבריו, נקראים לבושי מסאבו לעשר בחינות אלו הטמאות

then the thought in his brain, the words in his mouth and the power of action in his hands and other organs, are called “impure garments” for these ten unclean categories,

שמתלבשות בהן בשעת מעשה או דבור או מחשבה

which clothe themselves in these garments, during the act, speech or thought.

But what sort of thoughts, words and action are the “garments” of the animal soul? Earlier, in ch. 4, we learned that the divine soul has specific thoughts, etc., in which it clothes itself, namely, thought, speech and action in matters of Torah and the *mitzvot*. Are we then to understand that the animal soul, too, has specific garments — sinful thoughts, words or actions, perhaps?

Not so, states the Alter Rebbe presently. *All* thoughts, words and acts that are not directed toward G-d and the service of G-d, even though they are not actually sinful, are garments of the *kelipah*, and hence, of the animal soul.

In his words:

והן הם כל המעשים אשר נעשים תחת השמש

These garments of the animal soul comprise all the deeds that are done under the sun (i.e., all mundane actions),

אשר הכל הבל ורעות רוח, וכמו שכתוב בזהר בשלה, שהן תבירו דרוחא כו'

which are all<sup>4</sup> “vanity and an affliction of the spirit,” as the *Zohar*<sup>5</sup> (*Parshat Beshallah*) interprets this: “a ruination of the spirit [of holiness].”

וכן כל הדבורים וכל המחשבות אשר לא לה' המה ולרצונו ולעבודתו

Similarly, all words and all thoughts that are not directed to G-d and to His Will and His service are all garments for the animal soul.

שזהו פירוש לשון סיטרא אחרא פירוש: צד אחר, שאינו צד הקדושה

For this is the meaning of the term *sitra achra* — literally “the other side,” i.e., not the side of holiness.

Thus, whatever does not belong to the realm of holiness is *sitra achra*. But what, in fact, does the realm of holiness encompass?

וצד הקדושה אינו אלא השראה והמשכה מקדושתו של הקדוש ברוך הוא

The side of holiness is nothing but the indwelling and extension of G-d’s holiness.

ואין הקדוש ברוך הוא שורה אלא על דבר שבטל אצלו יתברך, בין בפועל ממש, כמלאכים עליונים

Now, G-d dwells only on that which is surrendered to Him, whether [the surrender is an] actual [one] (and visible even in that surrendered being’s external aspects) as is the case with the supernal angels whose entire being is constantly and openly surrendered to G-d

ובין בכה, ככל איש ישראל למטה, שבכחו להיות בטל ממש לגבי הקדוש ברוך הוא במסירת נפשו על קדושת  
ה'

or whether [it is a] potential [surrender], as in the case of every Jew here below in this physical world, who has the capacity for surrendering himself completely before G-d, through martyrdom for the sanctification of G-d's Name.

As explained further in the *Tanya*, every Jew has the capacity for such self-sacrifice; in the face of an attempt to coerce him to forsake Judaism he will willingly suffer martyrdom. Thus, every Jew possesses internally within his soul the potential for surrender to G-d, whatever his external state; this potential, however, may reveal itself only in the act of martyrdom. Because he is surrendered to G-d, G-d's holiness rests upon him.

ולכן אמרו רבותינו ז"ל שאפילו אחד שיושב ועוסק בתורה שכינה שרויה בו

That is why our Sages<sup>6</sup> have said that “if even one individual sits and engages in Torah study, the Divine Presence rests upon him.”

For when one engages in Torah study his surrender to G-dliness emerges, to affect him on a revealed, external level, since such study entails setting aside one's own notions and presumptions in order to understand and accept G-d's wisdom and Will as expressed in Torah. It is this surrender to G-dliness that causes the Divine Presence to rest upon the Torah student.

וכל בי עשרה שכינתא שריא לעולם

Also,<sup>7</sup> “On each gathering of ten Jews the Divine Presence rests” always; together, ten Jews form a “congregation of Israel,” which is a fit abode for the Divine Presence.

אבל כל מה שאינו בטל אצלו יתברך, אלא הוא דבר נפרד בפני עצמו, אינו מקבל חיות מקדושתו של הקדוש  
ברוך הוא

Anything, however, that does not surrender itself to G-d, but [considers itself as if it] is a thing separate unto itself, does not receive its life from the holiness of G-d —

But where else would it receive its vitality? G-dliness and holiness is the source of vitality for every existing being, as it is written, “You give life to them all” (*Nechemiah* 9:6). The Alter Rebbe goes on to qualify his previous remark, stating that those beings who do not surrender themselves to G-d receive their vitality only from a superficial, external level of G-dliness; and from this level, too, only when it descends degree by degree through numerous “contractions” of the life-force.

מבחינת פנימית הקדושה ומהותה ועצמותה בכבודה ובעצמה, אלא מבחינת אחריים

To return to the Alter Rebbe's words: The self-styled separate being does not receive its vitality from the *pnimiyut*, the inner aspect of holiness, from its every essence and core, but from its *achorayim*, its "hind-part", so to speak.

To bestow from one's "*pnimiyut*" (literally, one's "face") means, as explained in ch. 22, to give with a pleasurable will and desire; "*achorayim*" (literally, "behind one's back") means to bestow without desire or pleasure, out of some extenuating factor. The giver's attitude will be apparent, in either case, in his manner of giving. If one gives something to his enemy, for example, he will avert his face from him, for one's face represents his inner feelings; since the giver's heart is not in his gift, he turns his face away, presenting his enemy with his rear. Thus, *pnimiyut* and *achorayim* in the sense of internal and external aspects (of one's will) are related to their literal meanings of "face" and "rear".

In our context, everything in the realm of holiness, whose existence and life G-d desires, receives its life from the *pnimiyut* of G-dliness; while the *kelipot*, in which G-d has no desire (since He created them only for the reasons given in the paragraphs introducing this chapter), receive their life from the *achorayim* of G-dliness.

שיורדים ממדרגה למדרגה רבבות מדרגות בהשתלשלות העולמות, דרך עלה ועלול

This limited form of life-force reaches the *kelipot* by descending degree by degree through myriads of levels, in the chain-like descent of the worlds, in the manner of cause and effect.

The higher level is the "cause" for the lower level which emerges from it. However, in a descent which is a sequence of cause and effect, the effect, although lower, is always comparable to the cause. Such descents, no matter how numerous, would be insufficient to produce the low level of vitality bestowed upon *kelipot*. This can be produced only by the descent of the vitality through *tzimtzum*, as the Alter Rebbe now continues:

וצמצומים רבים

The vitality descends also through many *tzimtzumim*, or contractions — and this process diminishes the vitality to the point where it is incomparably lower than in its original state.

עד שנתמעט כל כך האור והחיות, מיעוט אחר מיעוט, עד שיכול להתצמצם ולהתלבש בבחינת גלות

So greatly diminished does the light and life-force become, diminution after diminution, until it is able to become contracted and clothed in a manner of exile, meaning that instead of being surrendered to the Divine life-force, the object in which the vitality is clothed masters it; as, for example, a captive in exile is mastered by his captors.

תוך אותו דבר הנפרד, להחיותו ולקיימו מאין ליש

The vitality is thus in a state of exile within that object which is (i.e., which considers itself) separate from holiness, giving it vitality and existence, causing that object to pass from non-existence to existence,

שלא יחזור להיות אין ואפס כבתחלה מקודם שנברא

so that it does not return to its original state of non-existence, as it was before it was created by the vitality clothed in it.

In brief: All that is not surrendered to G-d, but considers itself separate from Him, receives its vitality from the *achorayim* of G-dliness by way of numerous descents and various contraction. The Divine life-force is concealed within it in a state of exile; thus it belongs to the realm of *kelipah*. It is now clear why any thought, word or action not directed toward [serving] G-d — hence, not surrendered to G-dliness — is a garment of the animal soul that derives from *kelipah*, even if that thought, word or deed is not actually evil.

ולכן נקרא עולם הזה ומלואו עולם הקליפות וסטרא אחרא

That is why this world with all it contains is called the world of *kelipot* and *sitra achra* — despite the fact that this world, too, receives its vitality from G-d's holiness.

Since the creatures of this physical world feel themselves to be independent, separate beings, and their surrender to G-dliness is not apparent, they automatically belong to the realm of *kelipah*.

ולכן כל מעשה עולם הזה קשים ורעים והרשעים גוברים בו, כמו שכתוב בע' חיים, שער מ"ב סוף פרק ד'

This is also why all affairs of this world are severe and evil, and the wicked prevail in it (as is written in *Etz Chayim*, Portal 42, end of ch. 4).

In the following note, referring to his previous statement that this is a world of *kelipot*, the Alter Rebbe writes that this is so notwithstanding the fact that G-dliness pervades *all* existence; or, stated in the terminology of the Kabbalah, that G-d's infinite light (*Or Ein Sof*) clothes itself in the *Sefirot* of the four Worlds — *Atzilut*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, and thereby even this physical world is filled with the *Or Ein Sof*; yet, despite all this, it is still a world of *kelipot*.

הגהה

עם היות בתוכו עשר ספירות דעשיה דקדושה, וכמו שכתוב בע' חיים, שער מ"ג

NOTE

To be sure, this world contains the Ten *Sefirot* of [the World of] *Asiyah*, as is written in *Etz Chayim*, Portal 43.



(The World of *Asiyah* comprises both our physical world, and the spiritual World of *Asiyah*. The *Sefirot* of the spiritual *Asiyah* are, however, contained in the physical *Asiyah* as well.)

ובתוך עשר ספירות דעשיה אלו הן עשר ספירות דיצירה, ובתוכן עשר ספירות דבריה, ובתוכן עשר ספירות דאצילות, שבתוכן אור אין סוף ברוך הוא

Now, within these Ten *Sefirot* of *Asiyah* are [contained] the Ten *Sefirot* of the World of *Yetzirah*, and within them the Ten *Sefirot* of the World of *Beriah*, and in them the Ten *Sefirot* of the World of *Atzilut*, in which abides the *Or Ein Sof*.

ונמצא אור אין סוף ברוך הוא מלא כל הארץ הלזו התחתונה, על ידי התלבשותו בעשר ספירות דארבע עולמות, אצילות בריה יצירה עשיה

Thus, the *Or Ein Sof* pervades this entire lowest world by being clothed in the Ten *Sefirot* of the four Worlds — *Atzilut*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*,

כמו שכתוב בע' חיים, שער מ"ז פרק ב', ובספר גלגולים פרק כ'

as is written in *Etz Chayim*, Portal 47, ch. 2, and in *Sefer Gilgulim*, ch. 20.

#### END OF NOTE

Yet, because the creatures of this world are not openly surrendered to G-d, this is a world of *kelipot* and *sitra achra*.

Until here it has been explained that all thoughts, utterances and actions that are not directed towards holiness are *sitra achra*, and that these are the garments by which the animal soul expresses itself.

But this merely places the garments on a par with the animal soul itself, which like them stems from the *sitra achra*. It was explained earlier, however, that the garments of the divine soul are of a higher spiritual level than the soul itself, and elevate it, and that the animal soul is structured as a mirror-image of the divine soul. It follows, then, that the animal soul's garments are on an even lower level than the animal soul itself and that they degrade it.

The Alter Rebbe goes on to explain that this is indeed the case. After a discussion of the two categories of *kelipah* (mentioned in the introduction to this chapter), he concludes that there are those garments of the animal soul that drag down the soul from the level of *kelipat nogah* — the soul's natural state — to the level of the three completely impure *kelipot*. These are: sinful thoughts, and forbidden words and actions.<sup>8</sup>

אלא שהקליפות הן נחלקות לשתי מדרגות, זו למטה מזו

However, the *kelipot* are divided into two categories, one lower than the other.

המדרגה התחתונה היא של קליפות הטמאות ורעות לגמרי, ואין בהם טוב כלל

The lower category consists of three completely unclean and evil *kelipot*, containing no good whatever.

ונקראו במרכבת יחזקאל: רוח סערה וענן גדול וגו'

In the prophet Yechezkel's vision of the Divine chariot in which he saw and described the forces that conceal G-dliness they are described<sup>9</sup> as "a stormwind," "a great cloud" and "a flaring fire," representing these three wholly unclean *kelipot*.

ומהן נשפעות ונמשכות נפשות כל אומות העולם וקיום גופם

From them flow and are derived the souls of all the nations of the world, and the sustaining force of their bodies which sustains their existence; apart from the soul, which animates them.

ונפשות כל בעלי חיים הטמאים ואסורים באכילה, וקיום גופם

Also derived from these *kelipot* are the souls of all living creatures that are unclean and forbidden to be eaten, and the sustaining force of their bodies.

וקיום וחיות כל מאכלות אסורות מהצומח, כמו ערלה וכלאי הכרם כו', וכמו שכתוב בע' חיים, שער מ"ט פרק ו'

The existence and life of all forbidden vegetation, too, such as *orlah* (the first three years' fruit of a tree), and a mixture of grain seeds in a vineyard, and so forth, are derived from these *kelipot*, as is written in *Etz Chayim*, Portal 49, ch. 6.

וכן, קיום וחיות כל המעשה דבור ומחשבה של כל שס"ה לא תעשה וענפיהן, כמו שכתוב שם סוף פרק ה'

Similarly, the existence and life of any act, utterance or thought in violation of any one of the 365 [Biblical] prohibitions, as well as their [Rabbinic] offshoots are all derived from these three impure *kelipot*, as is written there, end of ch. 5.

The animal soul, on the other hand, is of *kelipat nogah*, which contains an element of good (as mentioned in ch. 1). These sinful garments, belonging to the realm of wholly impure *kelipot*, are thus lower than the animal soul itself, and drag it down to their level; in exact opposition to the divine soul's garments of the thought, speech and action of Torah and the *mitzvot* which are higher than the soul and elevate it.

#### FOOTNOTES

[1.](#) *Kohelet* 7:14. See *Zohar* III, 47b.

[2.](#) *Ibid.* 41a; 70a.

[3.](#) Comparison of the Alter Rebbe's description here of the faculties of the animal soul,

with his description — in ch. 3 — of the divine soul, yields several significant differences. In ch. 3 the *seichel* faculties are given first; here *middot* precede *seichel*. In both cases the *seichel* is said to be the source of *middot*; yet, whereas in ch. 3 this is explained to mean that *seichel* “gives birth” to *middot*, here it is stated only that *middot* are “commensurate” with the quality of *seichel*.

These variations arise from the fundamental difference between the nature of the divine soul and of the animal soul. The divine soul is essentially intellectual (wherefore it is called *Adam*, which, of the various Hebrew words for “man”, means “man, the intelligent being”). Its *middot* actually arise out of the *seichel*; i.e., its emotions of love and fear of G-d stem from the *seichel*'s contemplation of His greatness. The animal soul, on the other hand, is essentially and instinctively passionate. It inclines naturally towards physical pleasures, and need not ponder their desirability in order to desire them. Here, the *seichel* serves merely to steer and channel the development of *middot*. Therefore the general quality of its *middot* reflects, and is commensurate with, the general state of its *seichel*.

[4.](#) *Kohelet* 1:14.

[5.](#) II, 59a.

[6.](#) *Avot* 3:6.

[7.](#) *Sanhedrin* 39a.

[8.](#) The Rebbe notes: In the case of one who ate “neutrally” (neither “for the sake of heaven” nor to indulge his animal soul’s desire, but merely to sate his hunger), it is questionable whether this applies (i.e., whether this too degrades the animal soul). It would appear so from *Kuntres Etz HaChayim*, ch. 3 (where it is written that eating “neutrally” coarsens one at least to the point of leading him to self-indulgence). It is similarly written further in ch. 13 of *Tanya* that one’s animal soul *gains strength* by being exercised through eating and drinking. No proof to the contrary can be adduced from the expression in ch. 7 that such (“neutral”) actions are “no better” than the animal soul itself (and hence, they are apparently also no worse), for it is quite possible that the words “no better” indicate merely that they all belong to the *same category*: like the animal soul itself, such actions are of the realm of *kelipat nogah*, not of holiness. In his *Kitzarei Tanya*, the Tzemach Tzedek apparently takes these words in the same vein.

[9.](#) *Yechezkel* 1:4.



## Chapter 7

However, unlike the life-forms mentioned at the conclusion of ch. 6, which are derived from the three wholly unclean *kelipot*, the following life-forms are derived from *kelipat nogah*: the vitalizing animal soul in the Jew, which is derived from the side of *kelipah* and which clothes itself in the human being's blood (providing him with physical life), as stated above,<sup>1</sup>

ונפשות בהמות וחיות ועופות ודגים טהורים ומותרים לאכילה, וקיום וחיות כל הדומם וכל הצומח המותר באכילה

and the souls<sup>2</sup> of the animals, beasts, birds and fish which are pure according to the laws of the Torah and are thus permitted for Jewish consumption, as also the existence and vitality of everything in the inanimate and the vegetable world that is permissible for consumption.

וכן קיום וחיות כל המעשה דבור ומחשבה בעניני עולם הזה שאין בהם צד איסור

So, too, the existence and vitality of every act, utterance and thought in mundane matters that contain no forbidden aspect

לא שורש ולא ענף משס"ה מצות לא תעשה וענפיהן דאורייתא ודרבנן

— being neither root nor branch of the 365 prohibitive precepts and their offshoots, prohibited either on the explicit authority of the Torah, or by Rabbinic enactment —

רק שאינן לשם שמים

yet (when these permitted thoughts, utterances, or acts) are not performed for the sake of heaven (as they ought to be);

A Jew's actions, words and thoughts should be directed toward the service of G-d. For example: in eating, one's intention should be that the food supply strength for study, prayer, or performing other commandments; he should conduct his business with the intention of providing for his family, educating his children in the path of Torah and *mitzvot*, and giving charity, etc. But when his deeds, words and thoughts do not serve this purpose —

אלא רצון הגוף וחפצו ותאוותו

instead they serve only the will, desire and lust of the body;

ואפילו הוא צורך הגוף וקיומו וחיותו ממש, אלא שכוונתו אינה לשם שמים כדי לעבוד את ה' בגופו

and even where it is a need of the body and necessary for its very preservation and life (such as eating, which the body requires for its very existence and without which it cannot possibly live. Thus, the act itself cannot be faulted), but the fault lies in that his

intention is not for the sake of heaven, i.e., to utilize his body as an instrument in the service of G-d.

לא עדיפי מעשה דבור ומחשבות אלו מנפש החיונית הבהמית בעצמה

If this spiritual intent is absent, then: All these acts, utterances and thoughts are no better than the vitalizing animal soul itself;

והכל כאשר לכל נשפע ונמשך ממדרגה השנית שבקליפות וסטרא אחרא, שהיא קליפה רביעית הנקראת קליפת נוגה

and everything in this totality of things (i.e., the soul with its actions, utterances and thoughts) flows and is drawn from the second gradation of *kelipot* and *sitra achra*, which is (in the progressively ascending order of *kelipot*) the fourth *kelipah*, called *kelipat nogah* (“*kelipah* that shines”; for within this *kelipah* there is yet found a ray of holiness).

שבעולם הזה הנקרא עולם העשייה רובו ככולו רע, רק מעט טוב מעורב בתוכה

For in this world, called the “World of *Asiyah* (‘Action’),” most, indeed almost all, of [the *kelipat nogah*] is evil, with only a little good intermingled within it.

*Kelipat nogah* is found in the higher Worlds as well. However, the proportions of good and evil which comprise it vary from one World to the next. In *Beriah*, *kelipat nogah* is mostly good, possessing only a small measure of evil which is separate from the good. In *Yetzirah* it is composed equally of good and evil, while in the spiritual *Asiyah* evil predominates. In our physical world, *kelipat nogah* is almost totally evil, with only a minute representation of good and light.

שממנה באות מדות טובות שבנפש הבהמית שבישראל, כמו שכתוב לעיל

(From this [minute amount of good within *kelipat nogah*] come the good qualities which are found in the animal soul of the Jew, as is explained above.

As explained in the first chapter, the Jew’s inherent qualities of compassion and benevolence stem from his animal soul. This is a soul of *kelipah*, yet, because its origins are in *kelipat nogah* which incorporates good as well, it gives rise to the good traits of compassion and benevolence.)

Since *kelipat nogah* is a mixture of good and evil, any action, utterance and thought emanating from this *kelipah* can be utilized for good or evil. Indeed, as the Alter Rebbe will explain presently, the very same action, utterance or thought may be holy, if done for the sake of heaven, or evil, if otherwise intended.

והיא בחינה ממוצעת בין שלש קליפות הטמאות לגמרי ובין בחינת ומדרגת הקדושה

Now, *kelipat nogah* is an intermediate category between the three completely unclean *kelipot* and the category and order of Sanctity.

ולכן, פעמים שהיא נכללת בשלש קליפות הטמאות כמו שכתוב בע' חיים, שער מ"ט ריש פרק ד', בשם הזהר, ופעמים שהיא נכללת ועולה בבחינת ומדרגת הקדושה

Hence it is sometimes absorbed within the three unclean *kelipot* (as is explained in *Etz Chayim*, Portal 49, beginning of ch. 4, citing the *Zohar*), and at other times it is absorbed in and elevated to the category and level of Sanctity.

דהיינו כשהטוב המעורב בה נתברר מהרע, וגובר ועולה ונכלל בקדושה

That is, it is absorbed within Sanctity when the good that is intermingled in it is extracted and separated from the evil, prevails [over it], and ascends to be absorbed in Sanctity.

The Alter Rebbe now provides an example of a “neutral” action or utterance that is derived from *kelipat nogah* and can thus be utilized for either good or evil, demonstrating how the action or word itself becomes holy when its motivation is for the sake of heaven, and how it is degraded to the level of the “three completely unclean *kelipot*” if prompted purely by physical desire.

כגון, דרך משל: האוכל בשרא שמינא דתורא ושותה יין מבושם, להרחיב דעתו לה' ולתורתו

For instance, if one eats fat beef and drinks spiced wine not out of physical desire, but in order to broaden his mind for the service of G-d and for His Torah,

כדאמר רבא: חמרא וריחא כו'

as Rava said,<sup>3</sup> “Wine and fragrance [make my mind more receptive],”

או בשביל כדי לקיים מצות עונג שבת ויום טוב

or in order to fulfill the commandment to enjoy the Sabbath and the festivals.<sup>4</sup>

In the latter case his eating and drinking are not merely the means to a spiritual end, as in the previous example, but are a *mitzvah* in themselves, for we are enjoined to enjoy the Sabbath and festivals through eating meat and drinking wine.

אזי נתברר חיות הבשר והיין שהיה נשפע מקליפת נוגה, ועולה לה' כעולה וכקרבתו

When one eats and drinks in the above-mentioned manner then the vitality of the meat and the wine which originated in *kelipat nogah* is then extracted from the evil and ascends to G-d like a burnt offering and sacrifice (i.e., the life-force of *kelipat nogah* that the food and drink contain is absorbed in Sanctity).

וכן האומר מילתא דבדיחותא לפקח דעתו ולשמח לבו לה' ולתורתו ולעבודתו, שצריכים להיות בשמחה

So, too, concerning speech: The vitality of words spoken for a sacred purpose ascends and is absorbed in Sanctity. For example: he who makes a humorous remark to sharpen his mind and make his heart rejoice in G-d and His Torah and service, which should be practiced joyfully,

וכמו שעשה רבא לתלמידיו, שאמר לפניהם מילתא דבדיחותא תחלה, ובדחי רבנן

as Rava was wont to do with his pupils, prefacing his discourse with a humorous remark, whereupon the students became cheerful<sup>5</sup> and thereby more receptive and better able to understand the discourse.

When a humorous remark is made with this intent, the vitality of the words, which originates in *kelipat nogah*, is extracted from the evil of *kelipat nogah* and is absorbed in Sanctity.

אך מי שהוא בזוללי בשר וסובאי יין למלאות תאות גופו ונפשו הבהמית, שהוא בחינת יסוד המים מארבע יסודות הרעים שבה שממנו מדת התאוה

On the other hand, if a person is one of those who gluttonously eat meat and quaff wine in order to satisfy their bodily appetites and animal soul, then since, of the animal soul's four evil elements, this desire belongs to the element of Water, from which comes the appetite for pleasures,

As explained in the first chapter, all evil characteristics come from the four evil elements of the animal soul, with the appetite for pleasures emanating from the element of Water,

הנה על ידי זה יורד חיות הבשר והיין שבקרבו, ונכלל לפי שעה ברע גמור שבשלש קליפות הטמאות

in such case the vitality of the meat and wine that he ingested is thereby degraded, and absorbed temporarily in the utter evil of the three unclean *kelipot*.

וגופו נעשה להן לבוש ומרכבה

His (the glutton's) body becomes a garment and a "vehicle" for these *kelipot*.

The term "vehicle" is an analogy for total subservience; just as a vehicle is completely subservient to the will of its driver, having no will of its own, so (in this case) is this person totally subservient to the three unclean *kelipot*.

לפי שעה, עד אשר ישוב האדם ויחזור לעבודת ה' ולתורתו

But his body remains so [only] temporarily, until the person repents and returns to the service of G-d and His Torah — whereupon he ceases to be a vehicle for the *kelipot*; the energy of the food and drink is then released from the *kelipot* and returns to Sanctity.

כי לפי שהיה בשר היתר ויין כשר, לכך יכולים לחזור ולעלות עמו בשבו לעבודת ה'

For, inasmuch as the meat and wine were kosher and permissible and it was only the person's desire for pleasure that degraded them, they have the power to revert and ascend with him when he returns to the service of G-d — at which time the strength gained from the food and drink are utilized in serving G-d.

שזהו לשון היתר ומותר, כלומר: שאינו קשור ואסור בידי החיצונים

This is implied in the terms *hetter* (“permissibility”) and *mutar* (“permissible”). That which *may* be done or eaten is called “*mutar*”, literally meaning “released” or “unbound”. In our context the term means that the permissible object is not “chained” to the *kelipot*. That is to say, it is not tied and bound by the power of the “extraneous forces,” i.e., the *kelipot* and *sitra achra* which are extraneous to the realm of Sanctity,

שלא יוכל לחזור ולעלות לה'

preventing it from returning and ascending to G-d.

Rather, it *can* return and ascend to G-d when the person involved returns to the service of G-d, as explained above.

רק שהרשימו ממנו נשאר בגוף

Nevertheless, even when this energy reverts to Sanctity through the person's returns to the service of G-d, a trace [of the evil] remains in the body.

Eating permissible food for bodily pleasure causes the food to descend into total evil. Subsequently, the food becomes part of the body. Though repentance elevates not only the person but also the energy of the food and drink as well, still, having become a part of the body, a vestige of evil remains.

ועל כן צריך הגוף לחיבוט הקבר, כמו שיתבאר לקמן

For this reason the body must undergo the “Purgatory of the Grave,” as will be explained later.<sup>6</sup>

Like all heavenly punishments, “Purgatory of the Grave” too is a means of spiritual purification. All remaining traces of evil energy created by eating and drinking for bodily pleasure are removed through this punishment.

וכן החיות שבטפות זרע שיצאו ממנו בתאוה בהמית, שלא קידש עצמו בשעת תשמיש עם אשתו טהורה

So, too, with regard to the vitality of the drops of semen emitted from the body with animal lust, by him who has not conducted himself in a holy manner during intimacy with his wife during her state of purity. Here, too, the vitality is temporarily absorbed in the total evil of the three unclean *kelipot* until the person repents.



In the above instances, the fault lies not in the acts, which in themselves are permissible, but rather in the person's intention in doing them — acting out of regard for bodily pleasure, not for the sake of heaven.

מה שאין כן במאכלות אסורות וביאות אסורות, שהן משלש קליפות הטמאות לגמרי

Such is not the case, however, with forbidden foods and illicit coition, which inasmuch as they are prohibited acts derive their vitality from the three entirely unclean *kelipot*.

הם אסורים וקשורים בידי החיצונים לעולם

These are tied and bound by the “extraneous forces” (the *kelipot*) forever.

ואין עולים משם עד כי יבוא יומם ויבולע המות לנצח, כמו שכתוב: ואת רוח הטמאה אעביר מן הארץ

They (the vitality of these prohibited acts) are not elevated from [the *kelipot*] until “their day comes” (the time when evil will totally disappear from the world), when “death (i.e., the *kelipot*, called “death” because they oppose G-dliness, which is life) will be swallowed up i.e., eradicated forever,” as it is written:<sup>7</sup> “And I (G-d) will remove the spirit of impurity from the earth.” Then, when the *kelipot* cease to exist, the sparks of holiness will of themselves be freed from them.

או עד שיעשה תשובה גדולה כל כך שזדונות נעשו לו כזכיות ממש

Or, until the sinner repents in the manner presently described, in which case the sparks of holiness need not remain in the clutches of the *kelipot* until the End of Days; they may even be freed, and restored to holiness, when he (the sinner) repents so earnestly that his premeditated sins become transmuted into veritable merits.

שהיא תשובה מאהבה מעומקא דלבא, באהבה וחשיקה ונפש שוקקה לדבקה בו יתברך

This is achieved through “repentance out of love (of G-d),” coming from the depths of the heart, with great love and fervor, and from a soul passionately desiring to cleave to the blessed G-d,

וצמאה נפשו לה' כארץ עיפה וציה

and thirsting for G-d like a parched and barren soil thirsts desperately for water.

להיות כי עד הנה היתה נפשו בארץ ציה וצלמות, היא הסטרא אחרא, ורחוקה מאור פני ה' בתכלית

For inasmuch as till now until he repented his soul had been in a barren wilderness and in the shadow of death, which is the *sitra achra*, and had been far removed from the light of the Divine Countenance, in the greatest possible measure,

ולזאת צמאה נפשו ביתר עז מצמאון נפשות הצדיקים

therefore, now that he “repents out of love” his soul thirsts for G-d even more intensely than the souls of the righteous who have never sinned.

The righteous *tzaddik*, ever close to G-d, is like one who always has water near at hand — his thirst is never so intense. The penitent, however, finds himself as if in a desert, where the very absence of water causes his thirst to burn with greater intensity.

כמאמרם ז"ל: במקום שבעלי תשובה עומדים כו'

As our Sages say:<sup>8</sup> “Where penitents stand...[not even the perfectly righteous can stand]. For, as explained earlier, the *tzaddik* lacks the penitent’s intense yearning for G-d.

ועל תשובה מאהבה רבה זו אמרו שזדונות נעשו לו כזכיות, הואיל ועל ידי זה בא לאהבה רבה זו

[Only] concerning repentance out of such great love has it been said<sup>9</sup> that [the penitent’s] premeditated sins become, for him, like virtues, since through them (through the sins which previously had distanced him from G-d) he attained when he repented to this great love. Thus, his sins affected him in the same way as *mitzvot*: they brought about within him a greater love of G-d.

In summary: It is possible even now, before evil completely disappears from the earth, to extricate the vitality of forbidden acts from the *kelipot*, through “repentance out of love of G-d.”

אבל תשובה שלא מאהבה זו, אף שהיא תשובה נכונה, וה' יסלה לו, מכל מקום לא נעשו לו כזכיות

But in the case of repentance that does not come from such love, though it be proper repentance, and G-d will surely pardon him, nevertheless [his sins] are not transformed for him into the equivalent of virtues.

ואין עולים מהקליפה לגמרי עד עת ק', שיבולע המות לנצה

They are not released and hence do not completely ascend from the *kelipah* so that no trace of the sin remains<sup>10</sup> “until the end of time,” when<sup>11</sup> “death will be swallowed up forever.”

Thus we have learned that the energy of forbidden foods and illicit coition is released from the *kelipot* only when one repents out of love or when evil ceases. Now we shall learn that in the case of one specific prohibition, ordinary repentance can accomplish what normally requires “repentance out of love.”

אך החיות שבטפות זרע שיצאו ממנו לבטלה, אף שירדה ונכללה בשלש קליפות הטמאות, הרי זו עולה משם בתשובה נכונה ובכוונה עצומה בקריאת שמע שעל המטה, כנודע מהאריז"ל

However, the vitality in the drops of semen that one issued wastefully, even though it has been degraded and incorporated in the three unclean *kelipot*, can nevertheless ascend

from there by means of true repentance and intense concentration and devotion (*kavanah*) during the recital of the *Shema* at bedtime, as is known from the teachings of our master, Rabbi Isaac Luria, of blessed memory.

ומרומז בגמרא: כל הקורא קריאת שמע על מטתו כאילו אוהז חרב של שתי פיות כו'

This is implied in the Talmudic saying:<sup>12</sup> “He who recites the *Shema* at bedtime is as if he held a double-edged sword...,”

כדי להרוג גופות החיצונים שנעשו לבוש לחיות שבטפות, ועולה החיות מהם, כידוע ליודעי ח"ן

meaning, one edge wherewith to slay the bodies of the “extraneous forces” (the *kelipot*) that have become garments for the vitality in the drops of semen, and another edge by which the vitality ascends from them (from the *kelipot*), as is known to those familiar with the Esoteric Wisdom (the Kabbalah).

ולכן לא הוזכר עון זרע לבטלה בתורה בכלל ביאות אסורות

Therefore the sin of wasteful emission of semen is not mentioned in the Torah among the list of forbidden coitions,

אף שחמור מהן וגדול עונו בבחינת הגדלות וריבוי הטומאה והקליפות שמוליד ומרבה במאד מאד בהוצאת זרע לבטלה יותר מביאות אסורות

even though in one respect it is more heinous than they, and [the individual's] sin is greater with regard to the enormity and abundance of the impurity and of the *kelipot*; he begets and multiplies them to an exceedingly great extent through wasteful emission of semen, even more so than through forbidden coitions. I.e., when measured by the “quantity” of *kelipot* that sin creates, this sin is graver than the forbidden coitions.

רק, שבביאות אסורות מוסיף כח וחיות בקליפה טמאה ביותר, עד שאינו יכול להעלות משם החיות בתשובה

It is only that when measured qualitatively this sin is different. For in the case of forbidden coitions one contributes additional strength and vitality to a most unclean *kelipah*, from which he is powerless to raise up the vitality by means of ordinary repentance,

אלא אם כן יעשה תשובה מאהבה רבה כל כך, עד שזדונות נעשו לו כזכויות

unless he repents with such great love that his willful wrongs are transformed into merits.

Since the sin of wasteful emission of semen can be rectified even without “repentance out of love,” the Torah does not include this sin with the related sins of forbidden coition. Concerning this sin, all that is necessary to elevate the degraded vitality to holiness is proper repentance with true intent and devotion, during the recitation of the bedtime *Shema*.

In the note which follows the Alter Rebbe explains why forbidden coition requires greater repentance than wasteful emission.

הגהה

מפני שנקלטה ביסוד דנוקבא דקליפה, המקבלת וקולטת החיות מהקדושה

NOTE

The reason is that *through forbidden coitions* this vitality has been absorbed by the level of *Yesod* in the “female” element of *kelipah*, which receives and absorbs the vitality from holiness — *just as the physical semen is absorbed within the female, in the case of these sins.*

מה שאין כן בזרע לבטלה שאין שם בחינת נוקבא דקליפא

Not so with wasteful emission of semen, where there is no “female” element of *kelipah*;

רק שכחותיה וחיילותיה מלבישים לחיות שבטפות, כידוע ליודעי ה"ן

Only its (*the kelipah's*) power and forces garb (*i.e., encompass*) the vitality of the semen, as is known to those familiar with the Esoteric Wisdom.

END OF NOTE

ובזה יובן מאמר רבותינו ז"ל: איזהו מעוות שלא יוכל לתקון, זה שבא על הערוה והוליד ממזר

From the above explanation, that the vitality of the forbidden coitions can be released through “repentance out of love,” we will understand that which our Sages say: [13](#) “Which is [14](#) ‘a fault that cannot be rectified’? — Having incestuous intercourse and giving birth to a bastard.”

שאז גם אם יעשה תשובה גדולה כל כך, אי אפשר לו להעלות החיות לקדושה

For then, once the bastard is born, though the sinner undertakes such great repentance as “repentance of great love,” he cannot cause the vitality to ascend to Sanctity,

מאחר שכבר ירדה לעולם הזה ונתלבשה בגוף בשר ודם

since it has already descended into this world and has been clothed in a body of flesh and blood.

Even “repentance of great love” cannot rectify this. Still, it is explained elsewhere that if the repentance is powerful enough it can actually effect the death of the bastard; and once it ceases to be a body of flesh and blood its vitality can ascend to holiness.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) In ch. 1. [2.](#) According to the *AriZal*, all things, including inanimate objects, possess a soul, which is the creative and preserving force of the Creator, the thing's reality. This doctrine was adopted and expounded by the Baal Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe. See *Shaar HaYichud VahaEmunah* ch. 1. [3.](#) *Yoma* 76b. [4.](#) Maimonides, *Code, Hilchot Shabbat* 30:7, *Hilchot Yom-Tov* 6:16; *Shulchan Aruch* by the Alter Rebbe 242:1; 529:1,3. [5.](#) *Pesachim* 117a (*Rabbeinu Channanel's* reading). [6.](#) Ch. 8. [7.](#) *Zechariah* 13:2. [8.](#) *Berachot* 34b. [9.](#) *Yoma* 86b. [10.](#) *Daniel* 11:35. [11.](#) Cf. *Yeshayahu* 25:8. [12.](#) *Berachot* 5a. [13.](#) *Chagigah* 9a. [14.](#) *Kohelet* 1:15.

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## Chapter 8

ועוד זאת במאכלות אסורות, שלכך נקראים בשם איסור

There is an additional aspect in the matter of forbidden foods, for which reason they are called *issur* ("bound" and attached):

מפני שאף מי שאכל מאכל איסור בלא הודע, לשם שמים, לעבוד ה' בכח אכילה ההיא

Even if one ate a forbidden food unwittingly and his intention in eating was for the sake of heaven, i.e., in order to serve G-d with the energy derived from it;

(Had the food been permitted, the very act of eating for the sake of heaven would suffice to extract the good from the evil of the food's vitality, as explained above. In this instance, however, *forbidden* food was eaten for the sake of heaven.)

וגם פעל ועשה כן, וקרא והתפלל בכח אכילה ההיא

moreover, even if he actually carried out his intention, having studied and prayed with the energy derived from that food;

(Again, had the food been permitted and the person studied and prayed with the energy provided by the food, the energy would be elevated to Sanctity. But because the food was forbidden —)

אין החיות שבה עולה ומתלבשת בתיבות התורה והתפלה כמו ההיתר

the vitality contained in it does not ascend or become clothed in the words of Torah and prayer that he studies and prays with the energy of that food as is the case with permitted foods,

מפני איסורה בידי הסטרא אחרא משלש קליפות הטמאות

because it is held captive in the power of the *sitra achra* of the three unclean *kelipot* which do not permit the energy of the food to be elevated to Sanctity.

ואפילו הוא איסור דרבנן, שהמורים דברי סופרים יותר מדברי תורה כו'

This is so even if it is forbidden by reason of a Rabbinic prohibition, for<sup>1</sup> “the words i.e., the prohibitions of the Scribes are even more stringent than the words of the Torah.”

ולכן, גם היצר הרע וכח המתאוה לדברים האסורים הוא שד משדין נוכראין, שהוא יצר הרע של אומות העולם, שנפשותיהם משלש קליפות הטמאות

Therefore, the *yetzer hara* (evil impulse) and the force that lusts after forbidden things is also<sup>2</sup> “one of the non-Jewish demons,” which is the *yetzer hara* of the nations, whose souls are derived from the three unclean *kelipot*.

They therefore lust after forbidden matters, since the forbidden matters, too, derive their energy from the three unclean *kelipot*.

מה שאין כן היצר הרע וכח המתאוה לדברים המותרים, למלאות תאוותו, הוא שד משדין יהודאין, לפי שיכול לחזור לקדושה כדלעיל

On the other hand, the evil impulse and the craving force after permissible things even when done solely to satisfy one's craving in which case, as mentioned earlier, even the permissible matter descends into the utter evil of the three unclean *kelipot*; still it is<sup>3</sup> “one of the Jewish demons”; it is, as it were, a Jewish evil impulse, for it (the vitality of a permitted thing) can be reverted to holiness, as was explained above.<sup>4</sup>

Since the food itself is permissible, therefore, though it was eaten to satisfy bodily desire, it can still be elevated to holiness (when the person returns to the study of Torah and the service of G-d). The *yetzer hara* for forbidden matters, however, is intrinsically un-Jewish, i.e., essentially foreign to the Jew's character. As explained elsewhere, one acquires this “foreign” *yetzer hara* by immersing himself in “permitted” pleasures. These so coarsen him that he begins to lust after prohibited matters as well — a desire totally unnatural for the Jew.

אך מכל מקום קודם שחזר לקדושה הוא סטרא אחרא וקליפה

Although the vitality of permitted foods eaten out of bodily desire can revert to holiness through the person's repentance, nevertheless, before it has reverted to holiness it is *sitra achra* and *kelipah*,

וגם אחר כך הרשימו ממנו נשאר דבוק בגוף

and even afterwards (after the person repented and elevated the energy of the food to holiness) a trace of it remains attached to the person's body,

להיות כי מכל מאכל ומשקה נעשה תיכף דם ובשר מבשרו

since each item of food and drink that one ingests immediately becomes blood and flesh of his flesh.

Since the food which became his flesh and blood was evil at the time of consumption — having been eaten for the sake of bodily pleasure — a trace of the *kelipah* remains in the body even after the person has repented and elevated the vitality of the food to holiness.

ולכן צריך הגוף לחיבוט הקבר, לנקותו ולטהרו מטומאתו שקיבל בהנאת עולם הזה ותענוגיו, מטומאת קליפת נוגה ושדין יהודאין

That is why the body must undergo the “Purgatory of the Grave” (a specific punishment for the body<sup>5</sup>) in order to cleanse it and purify it of the uncleanness which it had received from the enjoyment of mundane things and pleasures, which are from the impurity of the *kelipat nogah* and of the “Jewish demons” (i.e., the “Jewish *yetzer hara*” which desires permitted matters);

אלא אם כן מי שלא נהנה מעולם הזה כל ימיו

unless one had never derived enjoyment from this world all his life (i.e., either he actually derived no enjoyment, or his enjoyment was not *of this world*, since all his actions were completely for the sake of *mitzvot* and holiness),

כרבינו הקדוש

as was the case with *Rabbeinu HaKadosh* (Rabbi Judah the Prince, who said at the time of his demise that he had had no enjoyment of this world even to the extent of his “small finger”).

He who never derived pleasure from this world all his life need not undergo the “Purgatory of the Grave.” However, anyone who has not attained this level must undergo this punishment to purify his body of the uncleanness received from the enjoyment of mundane pleasures.

\* \* \*

We shall now learn what is necessary for the rectification of permitted words not spoken for the sake of heaven.

ועל דברים בטלים בהיתר, כגון עם הארץ שאינו יכול ללמוד

As for innocent idle chatter, such as in the case of an ignoramus who cannot study,

He who is able to study is constantly obligated to fulfill the commandment of studying Torah; for him idle chatter is prohibited. For the ignoramus, however, idle chatter may be permissible. But —

צריך לטהר נפשו מטומאה זו דקליפה זו על ידי גלגולה בכף הקלע, כמו שכתוב בזהר, פרשת בשלח דף נ"ט

he must have his soul cleansed from the impurity of this *kelipah*, through its being rolled in the “Hollow of a Sling,”<sup>6</sup> as is stated in the *Zohar, Parshat Beshallah*, p. 59.

This punishment is described<sup>7</sup> as “being slung from one end of the world to the other,” or “from Israel to other lands.” The meaning of this is that the soul is flung from one extreme to the other: First it is shown the truth and preciousness of holiness, and then it is “slung” into and reminded of the thoughts and words it experienced while in the physical world — a most painful experience for the soul.<sup>8</sup>

אבל לדיבורים אסורים, כמו ליצנות ולשון הרע וכיוצא בהם, שהן משלש קליפות הטמאות לגמרי

But with regard to forbidden speech, such as scoffing and slander and the like, which being prohibited stem from the three completely unclean *kelipot*,

אין כף הקלע לבדו מועיל לטהר ולהעביר טומאתו מהנפש

the “Hollow of a Sling” (alone) does not suffice to cleanse and remove the impurity of the soul,

רק צריכה לירד לגיהנם

but it (the soul) must descend into *Gehinnom* (Purgatory — which is a greater punishment and thus more effective in cleansing the soul).

וכן מי שאפשר לו לעסוק בתורה ועוסק בדברים בטלים

So, too, with one who is able to engage in the study of Torah, but occupies himself instead with idle chatter —

אין כף הקלע לבדו מועיל לנפשו למרקה ולזככה

the “Hollow of the Sling” alone cannot effectively scour and cleanse his soul,

רק עונשים חמורים שמענישים על ביטול תורה בפרטות

but it must receive the severe penalties which are meted out for neglect of the Torah in particular,

מלבד עונש הכללי לכל ביטול מצוות עשה מחמת עצלות, בגיהנם של שלג, כמבואר במקום אחר



apart from the general retribution for the neglect of positive commandments through indolence, namely the “Purgatory of Snow,” as is explained elsewhere.<sup>9</sup>

The purgatory (*Gehinnom*), where the soul is cleansed of the “stains” of sin so that it may enter Paradise to enjoy the radiance of G-d’s glory, operates on the principle of “measure for measure,” i.e., punishment in kind. Thus sins of commission caused by the heat of passion and lust are cleansed in a “*Gehinnom (nehar, lit., “stream“)* of Fire,” while sins of omission, due to indolence and coolness (i.e., lack of fervor), are cleansed in a “*Gehinnom of Snow.*”<sup>10</sup>

וכן העוסק בחכמות אומות העולם בכלל דברים בטלים יחשב לענין עון ביטול תורה, כמו שכתוב בהלכות תלמוד תורה

Occupying oneself with the sciences of the nations of the world is likewise included in the category of engaging in inconsequential matters insofar as the sin of neglecting the Torah is concerned, for in studying the sciences of the nations, too, one is guilty of neglecting Torah study, as is explained in the Laws of Torah Study.<sup>11</sup>

ועוד זאת, יתירה טומאתה של חכמת האומות על טומאת דברים בטלים

Moreover, the impurity of the science of the nations is greater than the impurity of idle speech;

שאינו מלביש ומטמא רק המדות מיסוד הרוח הקדוש שבנפשו האלקית

for the latter clothe and defile only the emotions [which emanate] from the holy element of *ruach* (Air) within his divine soul,

בטומאת קליפת נוגה שבדברים בטלים הבאים מיסוד הרוח הרע שבקליפה זו בנפשו הבהמית, כדלעיל

[by tainting them] with the impurity of *kelipat nogah* contained in idle speech (which is derived from the evil element of *ruach* (Air, which is one of the components) of this *kelipah* in his animal soul), as mentioned above.

The G-dly soul and the animal soul are both composed of four spiritual “elements”: Fire, Air, Water and Earth. The emotions, such as love and fear, which one expresses in idle talk, emanate from the element of Air. Thus, idle speech defiles the emotional attributes of the divine soul, which emanate from the holy element of Air, by using them in the service of the animal soul’s element of Air, i.e., its emotional attributes — which are “impure”, since they derive from *kelipat nogah*.

ולא בחינות חב"ד שבנפשו, מאחר שהם דברי שטות ובורות

[Idle speech does] not, however, [defile] the levels of *ChaBaD* (the intellectual faculties) in his soul, for it is but words of foolishness and ignorance,

שגם השוטים ועמי הארץ יכולים לדבר כן

since even fools and ignoramuses can speak that way.

Since these are not intellectual matters, the intellect remains uninvolved and untainted.

מה שאין כן בחכמת האומות הוא מלביש ומטמא בחינות חב"ד שבנפשו האלקית, בטומאת קליפת נוגה  
שבחכמות אלו

Not so in the case of the science of the nations; thereby one clothes and defiles his divine soul's faculties of *ChaBaD* (intellect) with the impurity of the *kelipat nogah* contained in those sciences,

שנפלו שמה בשבירת הכלים מבחינת אחריים של חכמה דקדושה, כידוע ליודעי ח"ן

whither they (the sciences) have fallen, through the "shattering of the vessels," out of the "hinder-part" of *Chochmah* of holiness, as is known to those familiar with the Esoteric Wisdom.

Thus the study of these sciences contaminates the intellectual faculties of the G-dly soul, and it is therefore much worse than idle speech, which contaminates only the emotional faculties,

אלא אם כן עושה אותן קרדום לחתוך בה, דהיינו כדי להתפרנס מהן בריוח לעבוד ה'

unless one employs them (these sciences) as a useful instrument, viz., as a means of earning a more affluent livelihood with which to be able to serve G-d,

או שיודע להשתמש בהן לעבודת ה' או לתורתו

or unless he knows how to apply them (the sciences) in the service of G-d or to his better understanding of His Torah; e.g., he utilizes mathematics to better understand the laws of the Sanctification of the New Moon.

וזהו טעמו של הרמב"ם ורמב"ן ז"ל וסיעתן שעסקו בהן

This is the reason why Maimonides and Nachmanides, of blessed memory, and their peers, engaged in them (in the sciences — since they were able to utilize this knowledge in the service of G-d and Torah).

Regarding that which was stated at the beginning of this chapter that a thing prohibited even by Rabbinic enactment remains attached to the three unclean *kelipot* and cannot be elevated to holiness, even when it is used unwittingly and for the sake of heaven (i.e., in order to have strength to study and pray), — the following story is worth relating:

A chassid once came to the Alter Rebbe lamenting the fact that his son-in-law was subject to periods when he would doubt his faith. The Alter Rebbe responded that the son-in-law had unwittingly consumed milk which was milked by a non-Jew, with no Jew in attendance. Though he was unaware of this fact, and though the prohibition against such milk is only of Rabbinic origin, this had so strong an effect upon him that it caused him to doubt his faith. The Alter Rebbe then proceeded to tell the chassid how the matter could be rectified, thereby healing the son-in-law of his spiritual malady.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Mishnah, Sanhedrin* 88b; *Bamidbar Rabbah* 14:12. [2.](#) *Zohar* III, 253a; 277a. [3.](#) *Zohar* III, 253a; 277a. [4.](#) Ch. 7. [5.](#) See *Zohar* II, 151a, and especially Rabbi Chayim Vital, end of *Sefer HaGilgulim*, and *Sefer HaKavanot*, p. 55b. [6.](#) See *I Shmuel* 25:29: “He shall sling out the souls of your enemies, as out of the hollow of a sling.” [7.](#) *Shabbat* 152b. [8.](#) Rabbi Joseph I. Schneersohn (sixth *CHaBaD* Rebbe) once stated that reciting from memory words of Torah — such as *Chumash, Mishnah, Tehillim* or *Tanya* — whenever one goes about his affairs, protects one from this punishment (in addition to its intrinsic value as Torah study, and its efficacy in “purifying the atmosphere”). [9.](#) Rabbi Isaac Luria, *Likutei Torah, Shmot*. See also *Zohar* I, 62b; 237b; II, 150a-b. [10.](#) Another interpretation is that the “*Gehinnom of Snow*” cures the soul of the spiritual “frostbite” which caused it to sin out of indolence. The Rebbe rejects this interpretation on the basis of the passage in *Likutei Torah* cited in note 8. [11.](#) 3:7. The Alter Rebbe’s first printed work was a treatise on the Laws of Torah Study (*Hilchot Talmud Torah*), first published in Shklov, 1794 (5554), and subsequently incorporated in his *Shulchan Aruch*.



## Chapter 9

In the previous chapters the Alter Rebbe elaborated on the composition of the Jew’s divine soul with its ten holy soul-powers and three soul-garments, and his animal soul, with its corresponding ten powers and three garments originating in *kelipah*. In the present chapter the Alter Rebbe will discuss the battle fought within the Jew between these two souls.

והנה מקום משכן נפש הבהמית שמקליפת נוגה בכל איש ישראל הוא בלב

The abode of the animal soul derived from *kelipat nogah* in every Jew, i.e., the place where the animal soul (*nefesh habahamit*) resides and is most manifest, is in the heart; for, as mentioned in previous chapters, the animal soul is predominantly emotional, and the heart is the seat of emotion.

בחלל השמאלי, שהוא מלא דם — וכתיב: כי הדם הוא הנפש

More specifically, the abode of the animal soul is in the left ventricle, as it is filled with blood, and it is written,<sup>1</sup> “For the blood is the soul” (*nefesh*) — indicating that the soul resides in that ventricle filled with blood, the left ventricle.

ולכן כל התאות והתפארות וכעס ודומיהן הן בלב

Because the animal soul resides in the heart, therefore all lusts and boasting and anger and similar passions are in the heart,

ומהלב הן מתפשטות בכל הגוף

and from the heart they spread throughout the entire body,

וגם עולה למוח שבראש, לחשב ולהרהר בהן ולהתחכם בהן

rising also to the brain in the head,<sup>2</sup> to think and meditate about them and to become cunning in them —

כמו שהדם מקורו בלב, ומהלב מתפשט לכל האברים, וגם עולה להמוח שבראש

just as the blood has its source in the heart, and from the heart it circulates into every organ, rising also to the brain in the head.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly the soul (*nefesh*) clothed in the blood abides in the heart and spreads out from there to pervade one’s entire body. Thus, in the case of the animal soul, the “brain” (the intellectual faculties) too, instead of motivating the heart and guiding it, merely reacts to it, and serves only as a clever tool for realizing the passions of the heart.

אך מקום משכן נפש האלקית הוא במוחין שבראש, ומשם מתפשטת לכל האברים

But the abode of the divine soul is in the brains that are in the head, and from there it extends to all the limbs.

The divine soul is essentially intellectual, and the brain is the seat of intellect.

וגם בלב, בחלל הימני שאין בו דם

[The divine soul resides] also in the heart, in the right ventricle where there is no blood,

וכמו שכתוב: לב חכם לימינו

As it is written,<sup>4</sup> “The heart of the wise man — i.e., the divine soul (in contrast with the animal soul; specifically: the evil inclination, the *yetzer hara*, which is described<sup>5</sup> as “an old fool”) — is on his right.”

We thus see that the divine soul resides not only in the brain but in the right ventricle of the heart as well.

As he did when speaking of the animal soul, the Alter Rebbe again singles out the heart from among all the other organs; having said that the divine soul extends to *all* the organs, he mentions the heart specifically: “and also in the heart.” For unlike the other organs in which merely the extension of the divine soul is manifest, in the heart the divine soul itself (i.e., its emotional faculties) is revealed. The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain this point.

והיא אהבת ה' כרשפי שלהבת

This revelation in the heart of the divine soul residing in the brain is man's fiery love towards G-d,

מתלהבת בלב משכילים

which flares up in the heart of discerning men who utilize their power of *Chochmah*,

המבינים ומתבוננים

who understand and reflect with their faculty of *Binah* (“understanding”), by which they understand the matter in all its details and ramifications,

בדעתם אשר במוחם

with the knowledge of their brain, i.e., with their faculty of *Daat* (“knowledge”), by which they immerse themselves and sensitize themselves in that which they understand; thus, the love flares up in the hearts of those who utilize all three faculties of *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat* —

בדברים המעוררים את האהבה

on matters that arouse this love, i.e., in contemplation of G-d's greatness (as the Alter Rebbe will soon conclude).

For, as explained in the third chapter, understanding the greatness of G-d leads one to love Him. This love, then, is one example of the divine soul's reaching from the brain into the heart.

וכן שמחת לבב בתפארת ה' והדר גאונו

Similarly: Another, deeper way in which the heart's emotion gives expression to the presence of the divine soul in the brain: the gladness of the heart at [apprehending] the beauty of G-d and the majesty of His glory;

כאשר עיני החכם אשר בראשו, במוח חכמתו ובינתו

the gladness that is aroused when [the divine soul's intellect, which the Alter Rebbe, borrowing a phrase from *Kohelet*,<sup>6</sup> describes as] the wise man's eyes, which are "in his head," meaning in the brain harboring his wisdom and understanding —

מסתכלים ביקרא דמלכא ותפארת גדולתו עד אין חקר ואין סוף ותכלית, כמבואר במקום אחר

when these "eyes" i.e., intellectual faculties gaze intently at the glory of the King and the beauty of His unfathomable, infinite and boundless greatness, then the heart rejoices and is glad, as is explained elsewhere.

Gazing with the mind's "eye" means that one not only understands the greatness of G-d, but also perceives it — as though seeing it with his very eyes. Such perception arouses great joy in one's heart, and this joy, like the love spoken of earlier, is a direct result and a manifestation of the intellect of the divine soul residing in the brain.

וכן שאר מדות קדושות שבלב הן מחב"ד שבמוחין

Similarly the other holy emotions in the heart too, such as fear of G-d, and the like, originate from the ChaBaD (wisdom, understanding, knowledge) in the brains.

The Alter Rebbe has thus established<sup>7</sup> that each of these two souls has its own, separate abode and way of functioning. Lest we erroneously conclude that each soul goes about its own affairs, not interfering or concerning itself with those of the other, the Alter Rebbe continues:

אך הנה כתיב: ולאום מלאום יאמין

It is written,<sup>8</sup> however, "One nation shall prevail over the other nation."

The verse refers to Jacob and Esau. In terms of a Jew's spiritual life it is understood as an allusion to the divine soul and the animal soul respectively, who are constantly warring with each other.

כי הגוף נקרא עיר קטנה, וכמו ששני מלכים נלחמים על עיר אחת, שכל אחד רוצה לכבשה ולמלוך עליה

For the body is called<sup>9</sup> a "small city." The two souls, in relation to one's body, are just as two kings who wage war over a city, which each wishes to capture and dominate even against its will and to rule with the consent of the populace;

דהיינו להנהיג יושביה כרצונו, ושיהיו סרים למשמעתו בכל אשר יגזור עליהם

that is to say, each king wishes to direct its inhabitants according to his will, so that they obey him in all that he decrees upon them.

כך שתי הנפשות — האלקית, והחיונית הבהמית שמהקליפה — נלחמות זו עם זו על הגוף וכל אבריו

So, too, do the two souls — the divine soul and the vitalizing animal soul, which originates from *kelipah* and is therefore the very antithesis of the divine soul — wage war against each other over the body and all its organs, the body being analogous to the city and the organs to its inhabitants.

Here, too, each soul wishes to direct the city's inhabitants according to its will, as follows:

שהאלקית חפצה ורצונה שתהא היא לבדה המושלת עליו ומנהיגתו

The divine soul's will and desire is that she alone rule over the person and direct him,

וכל האברים יהיו סרים למשמעתה ובטלים אליה לגמרי

so that all the organs be subject to her discipline, following and obeying her dictates, and furthermore that they surrender themselves completely to her, i.e., that they not only obey her, but also surrender their will to her,

ומרכבה אליה

and she desires further still that all the organs become a “chariot” for her.

The divine soul desires that the organs not only surrender their will to it, implying that they do indeed have a will of their own, though it is surrendered to the soul, but rather it desires also that they have no will other than its own — similar to a chariot, which has no independent will, but is merely an instrument of its driver.

ויהיו לבוש לעשר בחינותיה וגי לבושיה הנזכרים לעיל, שיתלבשו כולם באברי הגוף

Moreover, the divine soul desires that [the organs] be also a garment, an instrument of expression, for her ten faculties and three garments of thought, speech and action mentioned above,<sup>10</sup> all of which should clothe the limbs of the body,

ויהיה הגוף כולו מלא מהם לבדם

and the entire body should be permeated with them alone.

The body's being harnessed in service of the divine soul might not preclude its serving the animal soul, too, on occasion. The Alter Rebbe therefore adds the phrase: “the entire body should be permeated [by the divine soul] *alone*,” emphasizing the divine soul's desire to have exclusive use of the body as an instrument of expression, leaving no place for the faculties and garments of the animal soul.

ולא יעבור זר בתוכם ח"ו

No alien would then [so much as] pass through the organs, G-d forbid, i.e., the animal soul would exert no influence whatever on the body.

The above forms a general description of the divine soul's desire to pervade the whole body. The Alter Rebbe now turns to specifics: which organs would give expression to each particular faculty or garment of the divine soul.

דהיינו: תלת מוחין שבראש יהיו ממולאים מחב"ד שבנפש האלקית

That is to say, [specifically:] the three brains — the three sections of the brain, which correspond to the three intellectual faculties: *Chochmah, Binah, Daat* — would be permeated with the *ChaBaD* of the divine soul,

שהיא חכמת ה' ובינתו

namely, [in] discerning G-d and understanding Him, i.e., applying the faculties of *Chochmah* and *Binah* to the understanding of G-dliness,

להתבונן בגדולתו אשר עד אין חקר ואין סוף

by pondering His unfathomable and infinite greatness with these two faculties;

ולהוליד מהן, על ידי הדעת, היראה במוחו ופחד ה' בלבו

through applying to this meditation the faculty of *Daat* (knowledge) [as well], i.e., through immersing oneself in the subject of G-d's greatness with the depth typical of *Daat*, so that one not only understands this greatness, but actually feels it, they i.e., his aforementioned faculties of *Chochmah* and *Binah* engaged in pondering G-d's greatness will give birth to an awe [of G-d] in his mind, and dread of G-d in his heart.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, not only his mind but also his heart will be permeated with the faculties of the divine soul: the mind — with the divine soul's *CHaBaD* faculties pondering G-d's greatness, and the heart — with the divine soul's emotions (the fear just mentioned and the love soon to be discussed) arising from this contemplation.

ואהבת ה' כאש בוערה בלבו כרשפי שלהבת

There will also be born of this contemplation a love of G-d, burning in his heart like a flame, like fiery flashes.

להיות נכספה וגם כלתה נפשו בחשיקה וחפיצה, לדבקה בו באין סוף ברוך הוא בכל לב ונפש ומאד

His soul will thirst and pine with desire and longing to cleave to the blessed *Ein Sof* with all his heart, soul, and might — as it is written,<sup>12</sup> “And you shall love G-d, your L-rd, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.”



“With all your heart” means that the heart is filled with the love of G-d; “with all your soul” implies that the love spills over beyond the heart, to affect all the organs of the body — the feet, for example, will move with alacrity to do a *mitzvah*; “with all your might” means loving G-d to the point where one will sacrifice his life for Him.

מעומקא דלבא שבחלל הימני

This love will rise from the depths of the heart, that is, from the right ventricle — the seat of the divine soul’s emotional faculties, as mentioned above.

שיהיה תוכו רצוף אהבה, מלא וגדוש

The kind of love that the divine soul desires entails that [the heart] be inlaid with love from within,<sup>13</sup> and furthermore, not only would the love be (as it were) on the “surface” of the heart, but the heart would also be full, with the love occupying its entire space, as it were; and furthermore, it would be, indeed, filled to overflowing — i.e., the love would overflow into the left part of the heart, to affect the emotional faculties of the animal soul which reside there, as the Alter Rebbe continues:

עד שתתפשט גם לחלל השמאלי, לאכפיא לסטרא אחרא, יסוד המים הרעים שבה

[The love] would thus inundate the left part [of the heart] as well, to crush the *sitra achra*; specifically, the element of Water in it — in the animal soul,

שהיא התאוה שמקליפת נוגה

meaning the lust emanating from *kelipat nogah*.

As mentioned in ch. 1, the animal soul’s element of Water gives rise to lust for physical pleasures derived from *kelipat nogah*. Now, the animal soul’s spirit of lust is the *kelipah* counterpart of the divine soul’s spirit of love (for G-d). Thus, the divine soul’s intense love of G-d has the power to crush the animal soul’s lust for physical pleasures.

לשנותה ולהפכה מתענוגי עולם הזה לאהבת ה'

The effect of the divine soul on the animal soul’s element of Water would be to change and transform it from [a lust for] mundane pleasures to a love of G-d,

כמו שכתוב: בכל לבבך, בשני יצריך

as it is written,<sup>14</sup> [“You shall love G-d]... with all your heart” — which our Sages interpret<sup>15</sup> (basing themselves on the use of the dual form of the word — לבבך instead of לבך, which allows the verse to imply “with all your hearts”): “With both your natures, with your good inclination and also with your evil inclination.”

Accordingly, the evil inclination (i.e., the lust of the animal soul) must also come to love G-d, and this too is part of the divine soul's battle-plan.

The Alter Rebbe now describes the specific level of love of G-d that accomplishes this:

והיינו, שיעלה ויבא ויגיע למדרגת אהבה רבה וחיבה יתירה ממדרגת אהבה עזה כרשפי אש

This transformation of the animal soul's lust to a love of G-d entails rising to attain to the level of *ahavah rabbah* ("abundant love"), a love surpassing even the level of the "powerful love, like fiery flashes" that was mentioned earlier.

והיא הנקראת בכתוב אהבה בתענוגים, להתענג על ה' מעין עולם הבא

This [level of love] is what Scripture describes<sup>16</sup> as *ahavah betaanugim* ("a love of delights"); it is the experience of delight in G-dliness that is a foretaste of the World to Come, since man's reward in the World to Come consists of delighting in G-dliness.<sup>17</sup>

והענג הוא במוח חכמה ושכל המתענג בהשכלת ה' וידיעתו, כפי השגת שכלו וחכמתו

This delight is [felt] in the brain containing *Chochmah* (wisdom) and intelligence, which delights in perceiving and knowing G-d, commensurate with the capacity of one's intelligence and wisdom — the greater one's grasp of G-dliness, the greater his delight.

והוא בחינת המים וזרע, אור זרוע שבקדושת נפש האלקית

[This delight] is the level of Water and "seed", i.e., light that is sown in the holiness of the divine soul,

המהפכת לטוב את בחינת המים שבנפש הבהמית, שמהם באו תאות תענוגי עולם הזה מתחלה

which transforms to good the element of Water in the animal soul from which the lust for physical pleasure had previously arisen.

This means that the element of Water in the animal soul, which had previously expressed itself as a desire for physical pleasures, now expresses itself as a love of G-d, having been transformed by the divine soul's love of G-d.

וכמו שכתוב בע' חיים, שער נ' פרק ג', בשם הזהר, שהרע נהפך להיות טוב גמור, כמו יצר טוב ממש, בהסיר הבגדים הצואים ממנו, שהם תענוגי עולם הזה שהוא מלוכש בהם

It is similarly written in *Etz Chayim*, Portal 50, ch. 3, on the authority of the *Zohar*, that the evil of the animal soul is transformed and becomes perfect good like the good inclination itself, when it is stripped of its "unclean garments," meaning the mundane pleasures in which it had been clothed.

The *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) consists of a powerful drive, an appetite for whatever it perceives as good and desirable. This drive is neutral, and may be steered in any direction; however, being clothed in a corporeal body it inclines toward physical pleasures. These lusts become “unclean garments” for the animal soul’s drive.

By steering it away from physical pleasures toward an appreciation of spiritual pleasures, the divine soul strips the *yetzer hara* of its “unclean garments” and clothes it in “pure garments,” so that it may apply its powerful appetite for pleasures to G-dly, holy matters.

This, then, is the divine soul’s desire: that it create, by means of its intellectual faculties, a fear and love of G-d so powerful as to transform the animal soul to good.

וכן שאר כל המדות שבלב, שהן ענפי היראה והאהבה, יהיו לה' לבדו

The divine soul further desires that similarly, all other emotions of the heart, which are offshoots of fear and love, be dedicated solely to G-d.

Thus far, the Alter Rebbe has discussed the divine soul’s desire for dominion over the mind and heart. He now goes on to speak of the other organs of the body.

וכל כח הדבור שבפה והמחשבה שבמוח, יהיו ממולאים מן לבושי המחשבה והדבור של נפש האלקית לבדה

Also, the entire faculty of speech that is in the mouth, and the thought that is in the mind, be filled exclusively with the divine soul’s garments of thought and speech;

שהן מחשבת ה' ותורתו, להיות שיחתו כל היום, לא פסיק פומיה מגירסא

namely, thoughts of G-d and His Torah, in which he would speak all day, “his mouth never ceasing from study.”<sup>18</sup>

וכח המעשה שבידיו ושאר רמ"ח אבריו יהיה במעשה המצות לבד, שהוא לבוש השלישי של נפש האלקית

And the faculty of action vested in his hands and the rest of his 248 organs — this faculty being the third of the garments of the divine soul — be engaged in the fulfillment of the *mitzvot*, i.e., that he utilize his ability to act solely in the observance of *mitzvot*.

In summary: The divine soul desires that its faculties and garments pervade the body, entirely and exclusively.

אך נפש הבהמית שמהקליפה, רצונה להפך ממש

But the animal soul derived from *kelipah* desires the very opposite; it desires that the body be pervaded with *its* faculties and *its* thought, speech and action.

לטובת האדם, שיתגבר עליה וינצחנה, כמשל הזונה שבזהר הקדוש

But the animal soul desires this for man's benefit, in order that he prevail over her and vanquish her, as in the parable of the harlot [related] in the holy *Zohar*.[19](#)

The parable: A king desired to test the moral strength of his only son. He had a most charming and clever woman brought before him. Explaining to her the purpose of the test, he ordered her to exert every effort to seduce the crown prince. For the test to be valid, the supposed harlot had to use all her charms and guile, without betraying her mission in the slightest way. Any imperfection on her part would mean disobedience, and the failure of her mission. However, while she uses all her seductive powers, she inwardly desires that the prince should not succumb to them.

So too in our case: The *kelipah* itself desires that man overcome it and not permit himself to be led astray. The entire stratagem is solely for man's benefit.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Devarim* 12:23. [2.](#) Note the difference in expression: The emotions merely "spread" to all the other organs, but "rise" to the brain. When emotion is assimilated into the intellect it indeed "rises", and is elevated (— even in the case of the animal soul, where the intellect is merely the tool of emotion), for the essential nature of intellect is more refined than that of emotion. With regard to the blood (mentioned presently), the expression "rises" is again used specifically in connection with the brain: the blood, too, is elevated and refined upon ascending to the brain. [3.](#) The Rebbe explains that the specific mention of the brain (aside from its inclusion with the other organs) parallels the statement further that the divine soul's abode is in the *brain* and the *heart*. [4.](#) *Kohelet* 10:2. [5.](#) *Ibid.* 4:13. [6.](#) *Ibid.* 2:14. [7.](#) This paragraph is based on a comment of the Rebbe. [8.](#) *Bereishit* 25:23. [9.](#) *Kohelet* 9:14; *Nedarim* 32b.10. Chs. 3 and 4. [10.](#) Chs. 3 and 4. [11.](#) For the difference between "awe" and "dread", and their relationship to the mind and heart, respectively, see ch. 3, note 6. [12.](#) *Devarim* 6:5. [13.](#) *Shir HaShirim* 3:10. [14.](#) *Devarim* 6:5. [15.](#) *Berachot* 54a. [16.](#) *Shir HaShirim* 7:7. [17.](#) The Alter Rebbe here distinguishes various degrees of love: *ahavah azah* ("ardent love"), and *ahavah rabbah* ("great love"), also called *ahavah betaanugim* ("delightful love") - a serene love of fulfillment. The first is likened to a burning flame; the second - to calm waters. These and other levels of love are later discussed at length. See chapters 15, 16, 18, 40, 41, 46, 49. [18.](#) *Bava Batra* 86a. [19.](#) *Zohar* II, 163a.



## Chapter 10

After elaborating in the previous chapter on the ongoing battle between the divine and animal soul over mastery of a Jew's body, the Alter Rebbe now proceeds to explain that one who vanquishes his animal soul and transforms its evil into good — is a *tzaddik*.

This level of *tzaddik* comprises two general categories. The “perfect *tzaddik*,” also called the “*tzaddik* who knows only good,” is he who has transformed all the evil of his animal soul to good; while he who has not completely eradicated and converted the evil within him is termed “an imperfect *tzaddik*” and “a *tzaddik* who knows (i.e., possesses some vestige of) evil.”

The difference between the two sets of descriptive terms — “complete” and “incomplete” *tzaddik*, and the *tzaddik* “who knows only good” or “who knows evil” — is as follows. The former set describes the degree of the *tzaddik*’s love of G-d, for it is this love that earns for him the title “*tzaddik*”. In the case of the “complete *tzaddik*” it is a complete and perfect love; while the love of the “incomplete *tzaddik*” is imperfect. The latter set of terms refers to the conversion of the animal soul’s evil to good; an individual in whom it has been entirely transformed is termed “a *tzaddik* who knows only good,” whereas one in whom a vestige of evil remains is termed “a *tzaddik* who knows evil.”

It goes without saying that “evil” in this context refers only to the promptings of evil that may be harbored in the heart; not, of course, to actual evil expressed in thought, speech, or action.

והנה כשהאדם מגביר נפשו האלקית

When a person causes his divine soul to prevail over the animal soul,

ונלחם כל כך עם הבהמית עד שמגרש ומבער הרע שבה מחלל השמאלי

and when he wages war against the animal soul to the extent that he banishes and eradicates its evil from its abode within him, namely, the left part [of the heart],

כמו שכתוב: ובערת הרע מקרבך

as is written:<sup>1</sup> “And you shall eradicate the evil from your midst,” which implies that one ought to eradicate the evil within *himself*;

(The person who has in fact eradicated evil from his heart has not only banished the external, practical *expression* of evil — evil thoughts, words or actions — but has eradicated the evil itself: it has no place in his heart; he no longer desires evil.)

ואין הרע נהפך לטוב ממש

as to one who achieves this goal, but finds that the evil has nevertheless not actually been converted into good, in which case his entire capacity for desire would now be directed only toward good and holiness; since with him this is not the case,

נקרא צדיק שאינו גמור

he is called “an incomplete *tzaddik*.”

וצדיק ורע לו, דהיינו שיש בו עדיין מעט מזער רע בחלל השמאלי

[He is also called] “a *tzaddik* who knows evil,” meaning that some vestige of evil still lingers within him, in the left part [of his heart],

אלא שכפוף ובטל לטוב מחמת מיעוטו

except that it finds no expression at all, not even in evil desires, because [the evil,] by reason of its minuteness, is subjugated and nullified by the good, and cannot therefore be sensed.<sup>2</sup>

ולכן נדמה לו כי ויגרשהו וילך לו כולו לגמרי

Hence, he (the *tzaddik*) may imagine that he has driven it out and it has quite disappeared.

אבל באמת אלו חלף והלך לו לגמרי כל הרע שבו, היה נהפך לטוב ממש

In truth, however, had all the evil in him departed and disappeared, it would have been converted into actual good.<sup>3</sup>

This requires explanation: Perhaps the incomplete *tzaddik* feels no desire for evil because he indeed no longer has any evil, having converted it to good; why must we say that he only *imagines* himself to be altogether free of evil?

To explain this, the Alter Rebbe continues with a clarification of the term “complete *tzaddik*.” The explanation in brief:

As stated in the previous chapter, the complete *tzaddik* is able to convert his evil to good only by dint of his great love of G-d, a love known as “love of delights.” Accordingly, the “incomplete *tzaddik*,” who has yet to attain to this lofty level of love, has obviously not yet accomplished this conversion.

“Love of delights,” then, is the ultimate criterion of where the *tzaddik* stands *vis-a-vis* the eradication of his evil.

In the Alter Rebbe’s words:

וביאור הענין

The explanation of the matter is as follows:

כי הנה צדיק גמור שנהפך הרע שלו לטוב, ולכן נקרא צדיק וטוב לו

A “complete *tzaddik*,” in whom the evil has been converted into good, and who is consequently called “a *tzaddik* who knows [only] good,”

הוא על ידי הסרת הבגדים הצואים לגמרי מהרע

has attained this level by completely removing [his] filthy garments from evil.

דהיינו למאוס מאד בתענוגי עולם הזה, להתענג במ בתענוגות בני אדם

This means: he despises utterly the pleasures of this world, finding it repugnant to derive from them that pleasure which other people derive,

למלאות תאות הגוף בלבד, ולא לעבודת ה'

namely, the pleasure of merely gratifying the physical appetite, instead of using this pleasure toward the service of G-d.

For physical pleasures dedicated to serving G-d are in fact holy; e.g., the pleasure of “enjoying the *Shabbat*” with food and drink. It is not such pleasure that is repugnant to the *tzaddik*, but pleasure for the sake of self-indulgence.

מפני היותם נמשכים ונשפעים מהקליפה וסטרא אחרא

He despises such pleasures for they are derived from and receive their spiritual sustenance from the *kelipah* and *sitra achra*, the very antithesis of holiness.

וכל מה שהוא מהסטרא אחרא, הצדיק גמור הוא שונאו בתכלית השנאה

For the “complete *tzaddik*” utterly hates whatever is of the *sitra achra*,

מחמת גודל אהבתו לה' וקדושתו, באהבה רבה בתענוגים וחיבה יתרה הנזכרים לעיל

because of his great love, a “profuse love of delights,” and his superior degree of affection for G-d and His holiness, as mentioned above (in ch. 9, where the Alter Rebbe explained that “love of delights” is the ultimate level in the love of G-d). To resume: Because of the *tzaddik's* great love for G-d and holiness he utterly hates the *kelipah* and *sitra achra* —

כי הם זה לעומת זה

since they, i.e., holiness and *kelipah*, are antithetical; his love of G-d therefore evokes a commensurate degree of hatred for *sitra achra*.

כדכתיב: תכלית שנאה שנאתים, לאויבים היו לי, חקרני ודע לבבי וגו'

So it is written:<sup>4</sup> “I hate them with a consuming hatred, says King David of those who oppose G-d, they have become enemies to me; search me, he says to G-d, and know my heart.”

This means: “By searching me and knowing how great is the love of You borne in my heart, You will know how great is my hatred toward Your enemies”; for, as stated, love is the measure of hate.

וכפי ערך גודל האהבה לה', כך ערך גודל השנאה לסטרא אחרא והמיאוס ברע בתכלית

Hence, according to the abundance of love towards G-d, so is the extent of hatred toward the spiritual *sitra achra* which nurtures the physical pleasures, and the utter repugnance of the evil of physical pleasures;

Since the *sitra achra* is spiritual, and hence distant from physical man, the term “hatred” is appropriate to it; with regard to the evil of physical pleasures, which are closer to man, the term “repugnant” is applicable: the repugnance of having something odious placed before one’s very eyes.

כי המיאוס הוא הפך האהבה ממש כמו השנאה

for repugnance is as much the exact opposite of love as is hatred.

In any event, we have established that this *tzaddik*’s utter despisal of evil is predicated on his loving G-d to the greatest degree. He is therefore called a “complete *tzaddik*,” since the quality by virtue of which he is termed a *tzaddik*, i.e., his love of G-d, is on the highest and most complete level. He is also called a “*tzaddik* who knows only good” — he possesses only good, having transformed all the evil within him to good.

Hence the “incomplete *tzaddik*,” whose “love of delights” is imperfect, must also be lacking in his hatred of evil. This, in turn, indicates that he retains some vestige of evil, albeit unfelt. He is therefore called “a *tzaddik* who knows evil.”

וצדיק שאינו גמור הוא שאינו שונא הסטרא אחרא בתכלית השנאה

The “incomplete *tzaddik*” is he who does not hate the *sitra achra* — the spiritual *kelipot* — with an absolute hatred;

ולכן אינו מואס גם כן ברע בתכלית

therefore he also does not find evil — physical desires and pleasures — absolutely repugnant.

וכל שאין השנאה והמיאוס בתכלית, על כרחך נשאר איזה שמי אהבה ותענוג לשם

As long as his hatred and abhorrence of evil are not absolute, perforce he must have retained some vestige of love and pleasure towards it.

ולא הוסרו הבגדים הצואים לגמרי מכל וכל



The “filthy garments” in which the animal soul had been clothed, meaning (as explained above) the evil inclination and the lusting after worldly pleasures, have [obviously] not been completely shed from it.

ולכן לא נהפך לטוב ממש, מאחר שיש לו איזה אחיזה עדיין בבגדים הצואים

Therefore, too,[ the evil] of the animal soul has not actually been converted to good, since it still has some hold on the “filthy garments,” i.e., the desires for pleasure in which the animal soul had previously “clothed” and expressed itself,

אלא שהוא בטל במיעוטו וכלא השיב

except that this vestige of evil is imperceptible and cannot express itself in evil desires, etc., because [the evil] is nullified [in the good] by reason of its minuteness, and is accounted as nothing, i.e., the overwhelming preponderance of good prevents the evil from being sensed and from finding expression.

ולכן נקרא צדיק, ורע כפוף ובטל לו

Indeed, he is therefore called לו ורע צדיק, which means (not only “*tzaddik* who knows (retains) evil,” but also) “a *tzaddik* whose evil is [his]; i.e.,] subjugated and surrendered to him,” to the good within him. Such a *tzaddik* is identified with the good, since he is overwhelmingly good.

ועל כן גם אהבתו לה' אינה בתכלית

Perforce, then, the fact that he retains some evil indicates that his love of G-d is also not complete, for a complete love of G-d would have converted all the evil within him to good.

ולכן נקרא צדיק שאינו גמור

He is therefore called an “incomplete *tzaddik*.”

For, as explained above, the terms “complete” and “incomplete” denote the *tzaddik*'s level of love for G-d, and the terms “who knows only good” and “who knows evil” denote the degree of his eradication and transformation of evil.

והנה מדרגה זו מתחלקת לרבבות מדרגות, בענין בחינת מיעוט הרע הנשאר מאחד מארבעה יסודות רעים

Now, this level — that of the “incomplete *tzaddik*” who “knows evil” — is subdivided into myriads of levels, consisting of [varying degrees in] the quality of the minute remaining evil [deriving] from [any] one of the four “evil elements” of which the animal soul is composed (see ch. 1).

In one *tzaddik* the remaining evil may consist of the element of Water, in another the evil may consist of a spark of the element of Fire, and so on. This subdivision of levels is qualitative, based on the *type* of remaining evil.

The Alter Rebbe will now describe (as it were) a quantitative subdivision, depending on the degree to which the evil loses its identity within the good. In one *tzaddik* the vestigial evil may be such that the proportion of good to evil could be described as 60:1; the evil in another *tzaddik* may be more minute, so that it is overwhelmed by a proportion of good that is 1000:1; and so on.

Yet, to borrow a term from the law concerning non-kosher foodstuffs, where in certain cases of error the rule is that even a preponderance of 60 parts (kosher) to 1 (non-kosher) is sufficient to render the entire mixture kosher (since the non-kosher food is no longer capable of tainting the mixture with its flavor), we may likewise say in our case that a preponderance of good over evil to the degree of 60:1 is also capable of preventing the expression and perception of the remaining evil.

In the Alter Rebbe's words:

ובענין ביטולו במיעוטו

[The subdivision] also takes into account the degree to which [the remaining evil] is nullified [in the good] because of its minuteness,

בששים על דרך משל, או באלף ורבבה וכיוצא, על דרך משל

whether in sixty [times as much good], for example, or in a thousand, or ten thousand, and so on.

והן הם בחינת צדיקים הרבים שבכל הדורות

These various sublevels in the ranks of “incomplete *tzaddikim*” are the levels of the numerous *tzaddikim* found in all generations, all of whom belong to the category of the “incomplete *tzaddik*,”

כדאיתא בגמרא, דתמניסר אלפי צדיקיא קיימי קמיה הקדוש ברוך הוא

as we find in the *Gemara*,<sup>5</sup> “Eighteen thousand *tzaddikim* stand before the Holy One, blessed be He.”

Thus, though many attain the level of *tzaddik*, they are in fact “incomplete *tzaddikim*.”

אך על מעלת צדיק גמור, הוא שאמר רבי שמעון בר יוחאי: ראיתי בני עליה והם מועטים כו'

But concerning the rank of the “complete *tzaddik*,” Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's statement<sup>6</sup> applies: “I have seen 'superior men' (*bnei aliyah*) and they are but few.”

שלכן נקראים בני עליה, שמהפכין הרע ומעלים אותו לקדושה

The reason that [the complete *tzaddikim*] are called *bnei aliyah* (literally: “men of ascent”) is that they convert evil and make it ascend to holiness.

כדאיתא בזהר בהקדמה, שכשרצה רבי חייא לעלות להיכל רבי שמעון בן יוחאי שמע קלא נפיק ואמר

It is similarly written in the introduction to the *Zohar*,<sup>7</sup> that when Rabbi Chiyya wished to ascend to the *heichal* (heavenly shrine) of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, he heard a voice come out and say:

מאן מנכון די חשוכא מהפכן לנהורא, וטעמין מרירו למיתקא עד לא ייתון הכא וכו'

“Whichever of you, before coming here, have converted the darkness of the world to light (holiness), and [have transformed] the bitter taste of their animal soul and evil inclination to sweetness (holiness)...[only these may enter].”

ועוד נקראים בני עליה

Another reason for their designation of *bnei aliyah*:<sup>8</sup>

מפני שגם עבודתם בבחינת ועשה טוב, בקיום התורה ומצותיה, הוא לצורך גבוה ומעלה מעלה עד רום כל המעלות

Even their divine service in the area of “doing good,” in their fulfillment of Torah and its *mitzvot*, is for the sake of the Above, and their service is directed toward a most high level, toward the loftiest heights.

ולא כדי לדבקה בו יתברך בלבד, לרוות צמאון נפשם הצמאה לה'

[Their divine service] is not [intended] merely to attach themselves to G-d by serving Him through Torah and *mitzvot*, so as to quench the thirst of their soul which thirsts for G-d,

The divine service of *tzaddikim* of lower levels may indeed be for the purpose of stilling their thirst for G-d and their desire to cleave to Him; for indeed, the fulfillment of Torah and *mitzvot* satisfies these needs —

כמו שכתוב: הוי כל צמא לכו למים

as it is written:<sup>9</sup> “Ho, exclaims the prophet, all who are thirsty for G-dliness, should go to the waters of Torah,” i.e., let them engage in Torah, which is likened to water,

וכמו שכתוב במקום אחר

as is explained elsewhere, that the “thirsty ones” of this verse refer to those who thirst for G-dliness.

The prophet’s words prove this point. Were he addressing those who thirst for Torah, he need not exclaim “Ho,” nor direct them to its “waters”. Whoever thirsts for Torah will find it readily available for study. Rather, the prophet is addressing those who thirst for G-d, advising them to slake their thirst for Him through Torah, which binds one to G-d.

The “men of ascent,” however, whom we have been discussing, are beyond this level of divine service. They do not study Torah or perform *mitzvot* with the intention of quenching their own thirst for G-dliness, for such service is — in a subtle sense — self-serving, as it is motivated by one’s desire for a certain spiritual profit, namely, the bliss of closeness to G-d.

אלא כדפירשו בתיקונים: איזהו חסיד, המתחסד עם קונו, עם קן דיליה

Rather their service of G-d is as the *Tikkunei Zohar*<sup>10</sup> explains that which our Sages have said: “Who is a pious one (*chassid*)? He who is benevolent (*mischassed*) with his Creator (*kono*).” The *Tikkunei Zohar* comments, that *kono* (usually translated “his Creator”) is here to be interpreted as “his nest” (derived from the root *ken* — “nest”), and thus, the *chassid* is he who is benevolent “with his nest” — i.e., his Source, G-d. This “benevolence” towards G-d consists of —

לייחדא קודשא בריך הוא ושכינתיה בתחתונים

“uniting the Holy One, blessed be He, with His *Shechinah* (the Divine Presence), so that the light of this union reach and be felt even in the lowest worlds.”

וכמו שכתוב ברעיא מהימנא, פרשת תצא: כברא דאשתדל בתר אבוי ואימיה, דרחים לון יתיר מגרמיה ונפשיה ורוחיה ונשמתייה כו'

As is also explained in *Ra'aya Mehemna* on *Parshat Tetzeh*: “In the manner of a son who exerts himself for his father and mother, whom he loves more than himself, [more than] his own *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah*,

ומסר גרמיה למיתה עלייהו למיפרק לון כו', וכמו שכתוב במקום אחר

and who sacrifices his life for their sake to redeem them, should they be held in captivity,” and as is also explained elsewhere.

Such is the divine service of “men of ascent”: it is wholly altruistic, motivated only by a desire to please G-d and make His presence felt everywhere.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain that the two aforementioned interpretations of the term “men of ascent” accord with each other and are in fact complementary.

It is a kabbalistic axiom that the “elevation of *mahn*” (מ"ן — initials of *mayin nukvin*, lit., “feminine waters”) effects a corresponding “descent of *mahd*” (מ"ד — initials of *mayin dechurin*, lit., “masculine waters”). This means that the arousal of the “feminine” level, i.e., the recipient (which in our case means the efforts of man below, in actions directed “upward” toward G-d), causes a reciprocal arousal of the “masculine” level, i.e., the giver (meaning, in our case, G-d’s benevolence as it “flows downward” and is bestowed upon man).

Applying this to the service of “men of ascent” we find the following. That aspect of their service mentioned in the first interpretation — that they *elevate* evil and convert it to good — constitutes an “ascent of *mahn*.” The aspect mentioned in the second interpretation — that by their service of love they draw down G-d’s Presence upon earth — constitutes a “descent of *mahd*,” for every *mitzvah* that they perform (as a channel for the descent of G-d’s Presence) is an expression of G-d’s benevolence. Thus, the two interpretations are complementary, since the “ascent of *mahn*” is what causes the “descent of *mahd*” as stated above.

(The Alter Rebbe employs kabbalistic terms in his explanation, which are explained in *Chassidut* at length; they will become clearer in the course of further study.)

In the Alter Rebbe’s words:

ושניהם עולים בקנה אחד. כי על ידי הבירורים שמבררים מנוגה מעלים מיין נוקבין

(11) Both interpretations are complementary. For by refining [the good found in] *kelipat nogah*, as the “men of ascent” do by converting their animal soul (which is derived from *kelipat nogah*) to good, one elevates “feminine waters” (*mahn*),

ונעשים יחודים עליונים להוריד מיין דכורין

effecting unions in the higher realms, so as to cause “masculine waters” (*mahd*) to descend to this world.

שהם הם מימי החסדים שבכל מצוה ומצוה מרמ"ח מצות עשה, שכולן הן בחינת חסדים ומיין דכורין

These [“masculine waters”] are the “waters” of kindness that flow into and are contained in each of the 248 positive *mitzvot*, which are all in the nature of “kindness”, or benevolence, and “masculine waters.”

דהיינו המשכת קדושת אלקותו יתברך מלמעלה למטה להתלבש בתחתונים, כמו שכתוב במקום אחר

This term “masculine waters” as applied to *mitzvot* means that the *mitzvot* draw G-d’s holiness from above, i.e., from the higher realms, downward, so that [G-d’s holiness] be clothed in and revealed within the lowest realms, i.e., our physical world, as explained elsewhere.) Thus the two interpretations of the term “men of ascent” are complementary.

## FOOTNOTES

- [1.](#) *Devarim* 21:21.
- [2.](#) See ch. 1, note 6.
- [3.](#) The Rebbe notes the apparent contradiction between the two statements made here concerning the *tzaddik's* evil nature: on the one hand we are told that the evil is completely driven out and eradicated, and on the other hand it is stated that it is converted to good. The Rebbe remarks:  
  
There are actually two aspects to the “evil nature”: the power of the animal soul, and its “filthy garments,” the evil desires into which the animal soul’s energy has been channeled. These “garments” cannot be elevated or converted; they must be removed and eradicated. The energy of the animal soul and its tendency to find evil outlets for its energy can then be converted to good by “clothing it in clean garments,” i.e., channeling this energy into holy outlets. If the energy has not yet been transformed into good, clearly some of the “filthy garments” must have remained.
- [4.](#) Paraphrase of *Tehillim* 139:22-23.
- [5.](#) Paraphrase of *Sukkah* 45b and *Sanhedrin* 97b.
- [6.](#) *Ibid.*
- [7.](#) *Zohar* I, 4a.
- [8.](#) The Rebbe notes that two reasons are given for the use of the name *bnei aliyah* for the same level of *tzaddikim*, viz., the higher level. One reason corresponds to the appellation “complete *tzaddik*,” while the other corresponds to the term “*tzaddik* who knows only good.” (As we have seen, the “complete *tzaddik*” is so called because of the degree of his love of G-d; the explanation appropriate here is the latter — that his love is utterly selfless. The “*tzaddik* who knows only good” is so called because of his eradication and conversion of evil; the explanation appropriate to him is the former — that he elevates evil to holiness.)
- [9.](#) *Yeshayahu* 55:1.
- [10.](#) Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar* 1b. See *Zohar* II, 114b; III, 222b; 288a.
- [11.](#) Parentheses are in the original text.



## Chapter 11

Having described in ch. 9 the ongoing battle between the divine and animal souls to capture and dominate the body, the Alter Rebbe proceeds, in ch. 10, to define the term *tzaddik* within the context of this struggle.

He explains there that *tzaddikim* are classified in two general categories. The first is that of the “complete *tzaddik*,” also known as the “*tzaddik* who possesses (only) good.” Such a *tzaddik* has succeeded in completely transforming the evil of his animal soul to good and holiness. A *tzaddik* of the second category, that of the “incomplete *tzaddik*,” or the “*tzaddik* who possesses evil,” is one who has not yet completely converted his animal soul to good; he still retains a vestige of its native evil. This remaining fragment of evil, however, is completely nullified within the far greater proportion of good.

In ch. 11, the Alter Rebbe now addresses himself to the definition of the rank that is the antithesis of the *tzaddik* — that of the wicked person, the *rasha*. In direct contrast to the *tzaddik*, whose divine soul overpowers his animal soul, the *rasha* is one whose animal soul overwhelms his divine soul.

The rank of *rasha*, too, is divided into two general categories: the “complete *rasha*,” or the “*rasha* who possesses only evil,” and the “incomplete *rasha*,” or the “*rasha* who possesses some good.” These categories will be defined in this chapter.

(Note: Following the Talmudic expressions which the Alter Rebbe employs, these terms are henceforth translated as the “*rasha* who knows (only) evil,” and the “*rasha* who knows good,” respectively.)

וזה לעומת זה, רשע וטוב לו לעומת צדיק ורע לו

1“One is the opposite of the other”: the “*rasha* who knows good” is the antithesis of the “*tzaddik* who knows evil.”

דהיינו שהטוב שבנפשו האלקית שבמוחו ובחלל הימני שבלבו

This means, that the good that is in [this *rasha*'s] divine soul, which is in his brain and in the right part of his heart (these being the chief dwelling places of the divine soul, as explained in ch. 9),

כפוף ובטל לגבי הרע מהקליפה שבחלל השמאלי

is subservient to, and nullified within, the evil of the animal soul which stems from the *kelipah*, which is in the left part [of the heart], as explained in ch. 9.

Thus, in the “*rasha* who knows good” the evil of the animal soul overpowers the good of the divine soul, to the extent that the good is subservient to the evil and is nullified within it.

וזה מתחלק גם כן לרבבות מדרגות

This rank, too, is subdivided into myriads of degrees.

Just as the rank of the “*tzaddik* who knows evil” is subdivided into myriads of degrees with respect to the nullification within him of the *evil* to *good*, so too are there numerous subdivisions within the rank of the “*rasha* who knows good” with respect to the nullification of *good* to *evil*, as the Alter Rebbe continues:

חלוקות בענין כמות ואיכות הביטול וכפיפת הטוב לרע חס ושלום

[The difference between these myriad sublevels lies] in the quantity i.e., the extent and the quality of the nullification and subservience of the good to the evil, G-d forbid.

The “quantitative” difference between one “*rasha* who knows good” and another is indicated by whether the good is merely outweighed by a majority of evil, or whether the evil is (say) sixty times more prevalent than the good, and so on. The “qualitative” classification hinges on what *aspect* of the divine soul is subservient to its evil counterpart: in one *rasha* the divine soul’s holy capacity for affection may be subservient to the animal soul’s affection for forbidden matters, while in another *rasha* the subservience may lie in another area. The Alter Rebbe now provides practical illustrations of different levels within the ranks of the “*rasha* who knows good.”

יש מי שהכפיפה והביטול אצלו מעט מזער

There is one in whom the subservience and nullification of good to evil are exceedingly minor,

ואף גם זאת אינו בתמידות, ולא תדיר לפרקים קרובים

and even these minor degrees are not permanent, nor recurrent at frequent intervals.

אלא לעתים רחוקים מתגבר הרע על הטוב, וכובש את העיר קטנה הוא הגוף

Rather, only on infrequent occasions does the evil prevail over the good, conquering the “small city,” i.e., the body which, as mentioned in ch. 9, is likened to a small city, whose conquest is the objective of both the divine and animal souls.

אך לא כולו אלא מקצתו לבד

Furthermore, even when the evil does conquer the body, yet not all of the body falls under its dominion, but only part of it,

שיהיה סר למשמעתו ונעשה לו מרכבה

subjecting it — that part of the body — to its discipline, and causing it to be a “chariot” to the evil, i.e., as subservient to the evil as is a chariot to its driver,

ולבוש להתלבש בו אחד משלשה לבושיה הנ"ל



and further causing that part of the body to serve as a “garment” wherein one of the animal soul’s aforementioned three garments will be clothed.

As mentioned in ch. 6, the garments of the animal soul are sinful thought, speech and action. In the case of the *rasha* now described the evil of the animal soul, even on those rare occasions when it does prevail over the good, can do no more than express itself in *one* of these areas or “garments”.

Furthermore, even in this restricted field of expression, the evil is further limited in that it can motivate this *rasha* to commit only minor transgressions, as the Alter Rebbe now continues:

דהיינו או במעשה לבד, לעשות עבירות קלות, ולא חמורות חס ושלום

Namely, the animal soul prevails either in deed alone, in the commission of minor transgressions [only], not major ones, G-d forbid — for his animal soul has not the power to prevail to such an extent;

או בדיבור לבד, לדבר אבק לשון הרע וליצנות וכהאי גוונא

or it may prevail in speech alone, [but merely] in the utterance of that which borders on slander or scoffing, the evil being too weak to cause him to engage in actual slander or scoffing and the like;

או במחשבה לבד, הרהורי עבירה הקשים מעבירה

or the evil may prevail in thought alone, in contemplations of sin which are in certain respects worse than actual sin.<sup>2</sup>

Thought is more refined than speech and action, and of the soul’s three garments, it is the one most intimately connected with the soul itself. Therefore, contemplations of sin can befoul the the soul even more than the sinful deed itself.

וגם אם אינו מהרהר בעבירה לעשותה, אלא בענין זיווג זכר ונקיבה בעולם

[This is the case] even where one does not actually contemplate committing a sin, but merely indulges in contemplation on the carnal union of male and female in general,

שעובר על אזהרת התורה: ונשמרת מכל דבר רע, שלא ירהר ביום כו'

whereby he violates the admonition of the Torah,<sup>3</sup> “You shall guard yourself from every wicked thing,” which our Sages interpret as an injunction that<sup>4</sup> “one must not harbor impure fancies by day so that he will not become polluted at night”; thus, contemplation on such matters violates a command of the Torah.

או שהיא שעת הכושר לעסוק בתורה, והוא מפנה לבו לבטלה

or another area in which the evil may prevail in the case of such a partial *rasha*: when, at a time fitting for Torah study, he turns his heart to inane matters,

כדתנן באבות: הניעור בלילה כו' ומפנה לבו כו'

as stated in the *Mishnah*, Tractate *Avot*:[5](#) “He who awakens at night when he has time to study Torah. and turns his heart to vanity, is guilty against his own soul.”

In the latter two instances, then, the animal soul’s garment of thought has prevailed and manifested itself in his body.

שבאחת מכל אלה וכיוצא בהן נקרא רשע בעת ההיא

In any one of all these instances, or their like, i.e., whenever one commits even a minor transgression in thought, speech or action, he is called *rasha*, wicked, at that time;

שהרע שבנפשו גובר בו ומתלבש בגופו, ומחטיאו ומטמאו

the term *rasha* meaning that the evil of his animal soul prevails within him, clothing itself in his body, inducing it to sin and defiling it.

ואחר כך גובר בו הטוב שבנפשו האלקית, ומתחרט

Afterwards, after this person has transgressed in any of the above-mentioned matters, the good that is in his divine soul asserts itself, and he is filled with remorse over his transgression in thought, word or action;

ומבקש מחילה וסליחה מה', וה' יסלח לו, אם שב בתשובה הראויה על פי עצת חכמינו זכרונם לברכה בשלשה חלוקי כפרה שהיה רבי ישמעאל דורש כו', כמו שכתוב במקום אחר

he will seek pardon and forgiveness of G-d for his transgression, and if he repents with the appropriate penitence, in accordance with the counsel of our Sages of blessed memory, G-d will indeed forgive him, with [one of] the three forms of pardon expounded by Rabbi Yishmael,[6](#) as explained elsewhere.[7](#)

The three forms of pardon: (a) If one transgresses a positive precept and repents, he is pardoned at once; (b) if he transgresses a prohibitive commandment and repents, the Day of Atonement together with his repentance atones; (c) if his transgression carries the penalty of *karet* (spiritual excision) or execution at the hands of the court, then after having repented and undergone the spiritual cleansing of Yom Kippur, suffering brings about full atonement.

However, as the Rebbe notes, the divine pardon elicited by this person’s repentance does not change his status of *rasha* in the true sense of the term, but only in the borrowed sense of the terms *rasha* and *tzaddik* as applied to reward and punishment. Indeed, when weighed on the scales of merits and sins, such a person — who sins rarely, only in minor

matters, and then repents immediately — is deemed a *tzaddik* and deserves reward, since the overwhelming majority of his deeds are good.

But this usage of *tzaddik* is merely a borrowed term, as explained in ch. 1. As true definitive terms, *tzaddik* and *rasha* describe the quality of the good or evil in one's *soul*. Viewed in this perspective the person described above is classified as a *rasha* even after he repents and is pardoned, for he still retains his predisposition toward sin, and his animal soul still tends to dominate him.

Thus far the Alter Rebbe has discussed a higher-level *rasha* — the “*rasha* who knows good” — one in whom the animal soul rarely prevails, and then only in one of the three soul-garments of thought, speech and action.

ויש מי שהרע גובר בו יותר

There is, however, another [type of “*rasha* who knows good”], in whom the evil prevails more strongly.

ומתלבשים בו כל שלשה לבושים של הרע, ומחטיאו בעבירות חמורות יותר, ובעתים קרובים יותר

All three garments of evil clothe themselves in him — he transgresses in thought, in speech, as well as in action; also, the evil causes him to commit more heinous sins, and [to sin] more frequently.

אך בינתיים מתחרט, ובאים לו הרהורי תשובה מבחינת הטוב שבנפשו, שמתגבר קצת בינתיים

Yet he, too, is nevertheless described as a “*rasha* who knows good,” for intermittently between one sin and the next he experiences remorse, and thoughts of repentance enter his mind, arising from the aspect of good that is still in his soul, that gathers a degree of strength in the interim.

אלא שאין לו התגברות כל כך לנצח את הרע

However, the good within him does not strengthen itself sufficiently to vanquish the evil

לפרוש מחטאיו לגמרי, להיות מודה ועוזב

so that he can rid himself entirely of his sins, and be as one who confesses his sins and abandons them once and for all.

ועל זה אמרו רז"ל: רשעים מלאים חרטות

Concerning such a person, the Rabbis of blessed memory have said,<sup>8</sup> “The wicked are full of remorse,” i.e., between sins. It is also possible that even while sinning they regret their actions, but feel themselves unable to master their desires.

שהם רוב הרשעים, שיש בחינת טוב בנפשם עדיין

These represent the majority of the wicked, in whose soul there still lingers some good — and it is this good which causes these feelings of vexation and remorse in their mind and heart.

We thus see that there are many levels within the rank of the “*rasha* who knows good,” ranging from one who sins only rarely, only in minor matters, and with the involvement of only one soul-garment, to him who sins often, grievously, and with all three soul-garments. Yet they all come under the same heading of the “*rasha* who knows good,” the difference between them being to what degree the good within them is dominated by the evil — in direct contrast to the rank of the “*tzaddik* who knows evil,” where there are various degrees of dominance of the evil by the good.

Having defined the “*rasha* who knows good,” the Alter Rebbe now turns to consider the “*rasha* who knows (only) evil”:

אבל מי שאינו מתחרט לעולם, ואין באים לו הרהורי תשובה כלל, נקרא רשע ורע לו

But he who never feels contrition, and in whose mind no thoughts of repentance at all ever enter, is called a “*rasha* who knows (only) evil.”

שהרע שבנפשו הוא לבדו נשאר בקרבו, כי גבר כל כך על הטוב עד שנסתלק מקרבו

For only the evil in his soul has remained in him, having so prevailed over the good that the latter has departed from within him,

ועומד בבחינת מקיף עליו מלמעלה

and the good now stands in a manner of *makkif* over him, i.e., the good hovers over him, so to speak, in an aloof and external manner, so that he has no conscious awareness of it.

Yet, since he still possesses good, albeit as a *makkif*, for after all, he possesses a divine soul —

ולכן אמרו רז"ל: אכל בי עשרה שכינתא שריא

Therefore have the Sages said,<sup>9</sup> “Over every gathering of *any* ten Jews rests the *Shechinah* (the Divine Presence).”

That is to say, even if they are all in the category of the “*rasha* who knows (only) evil,” the *Shechinah* still hovers over them; for they too possess good in a manner of *makkif*. Since at such a gathering the *Shechinah* is present only in the externally encompassing way of *makkif*, not entering the consciousness of those assembled, therefore their correspondingly *makkif* level of good is sufficient to enable them to receive this revelation.

With regard to the subject of the Jew whose animal soul prevails over his divine soul, the following story bears mention.

A certain freethinker once asked of the Tzemach Tzedek: The word *Yehudim* (“Jews”) is normally spelled in the Book of *Esther* with one letter *yud* before the final letter. Why is it that when the word is used there in connection with the harsh decree against the Jews, it is spelled with two letters *yuds*?

The Tzemach Tzedek answered: *Yud* is numerically equivalent to ten; it represents the ten soul-powers possessed by both the divine and animal souls. There are Jews who conduct their lives solely according to the dictates of the divine soul’s ten powers, while in other Jews the animal soul prevails, and their conduct is dictated also by the animal soul’s ten powers. Haman planned to exterminate *all* the Jews, even those who were of two *yuds*, i.e., those ruled by the ten evil soul-powers as well.

But the man persisted: Why then is the word spelled several times with two *yuds* even after the decree was repealed? To which the Tzemach Tzedek responded: After suffering under Haman’s evil decree and ultimately witnessing G-d’s salvation, even those Jews repented and became equals of their brethren whose lives were led by the dictates of the divine soul and good inclination. Thus, concluded the Tzemach Tzedek, the two *yuds* (*yud*, or *yid*, is also Yiddish for “Jew”) became equal.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Kohelet* 7:14. [2.](#) *Yoma* 29a. Cf. *Chiddushei Aggadot* of Maharsha, *ad. loc.*; *Netivot Olam* of Maharal, *Netiv HaPerishut*. [3.](#) *Devarim* 23:10. [4.](#) *Ketubbot* 46a. [5.](#) 3:4. [6.](#) *Yoma* 86a. [7.](#) *Tanya*, *Iggeret HaTeshuvah*, ch. 1. [8.](#) *Nedarim* 9b. (So cited in early sources, though not to be found in current editions of the *Talmud*). [9.](#) *Sanhedrin* 39a.



## Chapter 12

In the previous chapters, the Alter Rebbe defined the terms *tzaddik* and *rasha*. The *tzaddik*, he explained, is one in whom the good qualities of his divine soul vanquish the evil qualities of his animal soul, to the extent of completely eradicating them. A *rasha*, conversely, is one in whom the evil qualities of his animal soul overcome the good of his divine soul, causing him to sin in thought, speech or action.

In this, the twelfth chapter, the term *Beinoni* — the “intermediate man” who is neither *tzaddik* nor *rasha* — will be defined. The *Beinoni*, the Alter Rebbe explains, is one whose practical conduct in thought, speech and action is dictated solely by the divine soul; it has the upper hand over the animal soul. The *Beinoni* accomplishes this by not allowing himself to be dominated in any way by the animal soul, even for the shortest duration, never thinking, speaking and surely not acting in a sinful manner. The garments of the

divine soul alone — namely thought, speech and action in Torah and *mitzvot* — are those used by the *Beinoni*.

Nevertheless, with respect to the *essence* of the divine and animal souls, i.e., their respective faculties of intellect and emotion, the divine soul does not dominate the animal soul, and the latter remains powerful enough to arouse desires for physical matters. However, through constant vigilance the *Beinoni* keeps these desires in check, never permitting them any practical manifestation.

והבינוני הוא שלעולם אין הרע גובר כל כך לכבוש את העיר קטנה

The *Beinoni* (“intermediate man”) is he in whom the evil of the animal soul never attains enough power to conquer the “small city” (i.e., the body, which is likened to a small city which the divine and animal soul both wish to dominate),

להתלבש בגוף להחטיאו

so as to clothe itself in the body and make it sin.

דהיינו ששלשת לבושי נפש הבהמית, שהם מחשבה דבור ומעשה שמצד הקליפה

That is to say, the three “garments” of the animal soul — namely thought, speech and action originating in the *kelipah* — (i.e., forbidden thought, speech and action, which derive their vitality from *kelipah*, as explained in previous chapters) are, in the *Beinoni*, so subdued that they

אין גוברים בו על נפש האלקית להתלבש בגוף

do not prevail within him over the divine soul to the extent of clothing themselves in the body

במוח ובפה ובשאר רמ"ח אברים, להחטיאם ולטמאם חס ושלום

— (neither) in the brain (so that the brain think forbidden thoughts with the animal soul’s garment of thought) nor in the mouth (to speak forbidden words — the garment of speech) nor in any of the other 248 organs (to *act* in a forbidden manner — the garment of action) — in none of these do the garments of the animal soul clothe themselves to cause them to sin and to defile them, G-d forbid, (in which case he would be a *rasha*, not a *Beinoni*).

רק שלשה לבושי נפש האלקית הם לבדם מתלבשים בגוף, שהם מחשבה דבור ומעשה של תרי"ג מצות התורה

Only the three garments of the divine soul, they alone manifest themselves in the body, these being the thought, speech and action related to the 613 commandments of the Torah.

ולא עבר עבירה מימיו ולא יעבור לעולם

The *Beinoni* has never committed any transgression, nor will he ever transgress;

ולא נקרא עליו שם רשע אפילו שעה אחת ורגע אחד כל ימיו

the name “*rasha*” has never been applied to him, however temporarily, not even for a moment, throughout his life.

The Rebbe notes: “The question is well known.”; i.e., with regard to the statement that the *Beinoni* is one who has never transgressed, the following question is commonly raised:

Is it not possible, through repentance and subsequent divine service, that one attain the rank of *Beinoni* despite his previous sins? After repenting one can rise even to the level of *tzaddik*; surely, then, the rank of *Beinoni* is not beyond his reach!

The Rebbe answers this question in the following manner:

When the Alter Rebbe states that the *Beinoni* has never transgressed, he does not mean that the *Beinoni* never sinned in his life *as a human being*, but that in his life *as a Beinoni* he has no history of sin. The *Beinoni*'s present spiritual state is such that sin — in the past as well as in the future — has no place in his life. He would not sin even if he were subject to the same temptations and trials which led him to sin in the past. It is therefore true to state that from the perspective of his *present state* he has never sinned.

Likewise, the Alter Rebbe's statement that the *Beinoni* “will never sin” is to be understood in the same vein. The intention is not that it is impossible for him to sin; he does not, after all, lose his freedom of choice. Rather, as explained above, his *present state* is such that it precludes his sinning in the future, despite the trials that the future may bring.

To be classified as a true *Beinoni*, one must fulfill these conditions. For if one's spiritual state precludes his sinning only under present conditions, but he would succumb to sin were he subject to the temptations of the past or those the future may bring, then he is, *in potentia*, a *rasha*; he could and would sin, except that the prevailing circumstances are not sufficiently conducive for him to do so.

In the same vein, the Alter Rebbe concludes, “The name ‘*rasha*’ (referring to one who sins in thought, speech or action) has never (again, *in his state of Beinoni*) been applied to him, however temporarily...” For the *Beinoni* has reached a state where sin is precluded under *any* circumstances, whether of the past or future.

It remains to be understood, however, why such a lofty person is considered merely a *Beinoni*, not a *tzaddik*. This matter is now clarified.

אך מהות ועצמות נפש האלקית, שהן עשר בחינותיה

However, the essence and being of the divine soul, which are its ten faculties,

(The three soul-powers of intellect and the seven emotional faculties are referred to as the “essence” of the divine soul, in contrast with the soul’s “garments” (thought, speech and action), which serve merely as outlets and means of expression for the soul’s essential faculties.)

לא להן לבדן המלוכה והממשלה בעיר קטנה

do not hold undisputed sovereignty and sway over the “small city” — the body.

For, as shall be explained later, the faculties of the animal soul, too, exercise some degree of control over the body, through awakening in one’s heart desires for worldly pleasures, which in turn cause forbidden thoughts to enter his mind.

כי אם בעתים מזומנים כמו בשעת קריאת שמע ותפלה

Only at specific times do the faculties of the divine soul hold undisputed sovereignty over the *Beinoni* with the animal soul having no effect whatever on him, such as during the recital of the *Shema* or the *Amidah*.

שהיא שעת מוחין דגדלות למעלה

At this time [of prayer], the Supernal Intellect above is in a sublime state — it is a time of great spiritual illumination in the higher spiritual worlds;

וגם למטה היא שעת הכושר לכל אדם

likewise below — in this physical world — the time [of prayer] is propitious for every man to ascend to a higher spiritual level.

שאז מקשר חב"ד שלו לה'

Then, during the recital of *Shema* or during prayer, [the *Beinoni*] binds his *CHaBaD* — his intellectual faculties, consisting of *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat* — to G-d,

להעמיק דעתו בגדולת אין סוף ברוך הוא

meditating deeply on the greatness of the blessed *Ein Sof*,

ולעורר את האהבה כרשפי אש בחלל הימני שבלבו

and arousing through this meditation a burning love [of G-d] in the right part of his heart; for, as explained in previous chapters, meditation on G-d’s greatness arouses the love of Him within one’s heart.

לדבקה בו בקיום התורה ומצותיה מאהבה



This love, in turn, leads the *Beinoni* to desire to cleave to Him by means of fulfilling the Torah and its commandments out of love.

The realization that only the fulfillment of Torah and *mitzvot* will fulfill his desire to become one with G-d channels the *Beinoni's* love into a desire to observe Torah and *mitzvot*.

שזה ענין המבואר בקריאת שמע דאורייתא

This arousal of love for G-d, and its accompanying resolve to adhere to Torah and *mitzvot* and thereby to cleave to Him, is the essential subject of the *Shema*, which Biblical (*deoraysa*) commandment enjoins us to recite;

וברכותיה שלפניה ולאחריה שהן מדרבנן הן הכנה לקיום הקריאת שמע, כמו שכתוב במקום אחר

likewise, the Rabbinically ordained (*derabbanan*) blessings preceding and following [the *Shema*] are a preparation enabling us to fulfill [that which we recite in] the *Shema*, as explained elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

ואז הרע שבחלל השמאלי כפוף ובטל לטוב המתפשט בחלל הימני מחב"ד שבמוח המקושרים בגדולת אין סוף ברוך הוא

At such time, during the *Shema* or prayer, when the love of G-d burns in the heart of the *Beinoni*, the evil in the left part of his heart (the animal soul's principal area of manifestation) is subjected to and is nullified before the goodness (i.e., the love of G-d) that spreads into the right part of the heart, where the divine soul is manifest, from the *CHaBaD* faculties in the brain which are bound [in meditation] to the greatness of the blessed *Ein Sof*.

Contemplating G-d's greatness with the three intellectual faculties — Wisdom, Understanding and Knowledge (*CHaBaD*) — arouses and diffuses a love of G-d in (the right part of) the heart. This arousal of love causes the evil of the animal soul to be nullified in the good of the divine soul now pervading the heart. During the time of prayer, therefore, when the *Beinoni* arouses his love of G-d through meditation, his animal soul is inactive, and he feels no inclination for physical pleasures. Thus, during prayer the *Beinoni's* divine soul is his "undisputed sovereign," as the Alter Rebbe stated above.

אבל אחר התפלה, בהסתלקות המוחין דגדלות אין סוף ברוך הוא, הרי הרע חוזר וניעור בחלל השמאלי, ומתאווה תאוה לתאות עולם הזה ותענוגיו

But this state of affairs lasts only for the duration of the spiritually-charged time of prayer. After prayer, however, when the intellect of the blessed *Ein Sof* is no longer in a state of sublimity, i.e., when the spiritual illumination engendered by prayer ceases, the evil of the animal soul in the left part of the heart reawakens, and he (the *Beinoni*) [once again] feels a desire for the lusts of this world and its delights, since the evil of the *Beinoni's*

animal soul remains undiminished even after prayer (as the Alter Rebbe will explain shortly).

רק מפני שלא לו לבדו משפט המלוכה והממשלה בעיר, אינו יכול להוציא תאוותו מכה אל הפועל להתלבש באברי הגוף

Yet, because the evil of the animal soul has not the sole authority and dominion over the “city”, for the good of the divine soul (situated in the brain) has its say as well, it is unable to implement this desire by clothing itself in the limbs of the body,

במעשה דבור ומחשבה ממש

[to engage] in deed, speech, or actual thought —

להעמיק מחשבתו בתענוגי עולם הזה, איך למלאת תאוות לבו

“actual” thought meaning: to concentrate his attention on worldly pleasures [with a view to] devising means of satisfying the lust of his heart,

The *Beinoni*'s desire for worldly pleasures will cause thoughts of such matters to rise from the heart to his mind; these thoughts are beyond his control, beyond the sphere of dominance of his divine soul. He can, however, control his “actual” — i.e., conscious and wilful — thought, so that immediately he becomes aware of the forbidden thoughts he dismisses them from his mind, not permitting himself to dwell on them, nor to think how to implement them (as the Alter Rebbe will state at greater length further in this chapter).

Returning now to his statement that the divine soul of the *Beinoni* keeps the desires of his animal soul in check, preventing their expression in deed, speech and actual thought, the Alter Rebbe explains why this is possible.

כי המוח שליט על הלב כמו שכתוב ברעיא מהימנא פרשת פנחס בתולדתו וטבע יצירתו

because the brain rules over the heart (as it is written in *Ra'aya Mehemna, Parshat Pinchas*<sup>2</sup>) by virtue of its innately created nature.

שכך נוצר האדם בתולדתו, שכל אדם יכול ברצונו שבמוחו להתאפק ולמשול ברוח תאוותו שבלבו

For man was so created from birth, that every person may, with the power of the will in his brain — i.e., the will created of his mind's understanding — restrain himself and control the drive of his heart's lust,

שלא למלאת משאלות לבו במעשה דבור ומחשבה

preventing his heart's desires from finding expression in deed, word and thought, when the mind understands the evil inherent in such deed, word or thought,

ולחסיח דעתו לגמרי מתאות לבו אל ההפך לגמרי

and [he can, if his mind will it] divert his attention completely from that which his heart craves [and turn his attention] to the exactly opposite direction.

This principle of mind over heart holds true even where the restraint of one's desires is dictated by simple logic, without motives of holiness; the demands of the mind's logic are, alone, sufficiently powerful to steer one's attention in a direction diametrically opposite to that which his heart craves.

ובפרט אל צד הקדושה

If this is true whatever his motives, it is true particularly in the direction of holiness.

When, motivated by the knowledge that his lustful thoughts are sinful, and thoughts of Torah and *mitzvot* good and praiseworthy, one seeks to divert his attention from the former to the latter, so that both his goal and his motives are holy, his mind's will is particularly effective in mastering his heart and thoughts.

כדכתיב: וראיתי שיש יתרון לחכמה מן הסכלות, כיתרון האור מן החושך

[For] thus is it written:<sup>3</sup> “Then I saw that wisdom surpasses folly as light surpasses darkness.”

Clearly, the use of analogy indicates that a difficult and unfamiliar idea is to be clarified by comparison with a simple, familiar one. However, nothing seems to be gained by equating wisdom and folly with light and darkness; both are equally comprehensible.

Even assuming that the reference here is to a deeper aspect of “wisdom”, namely holiness (as in Ecclesiastes' depiction of man's inclination for good as “a poor and *wise* child”<sup>4</sup>), and that “folly” refers to evil (as in his portrayal of the evil inclination as “an old and foolish king”), there is still no need for analogy. Clearly, holiness is vastly superior to evil.

Rather, the Alter Rebbe goes on to explain, the analogy is used here to illustrate *how* wisdom is superior to folly: The superiority of light over darkness is manifest in the ability of a tiny ray of light to banish a great deal of darkness. Furthermore, the light need not battle darkness to banish it; the darkness disappears as a matter of course with the appearance of light. In the same way is the wisdom of holiness superior to the folly of evil. A mere ray of holiness suffices to banish — as a matter of course — a great deal of evil folly.

In the Alter Rebbe's words:

פירוש: כמו שהאור יש לו יתרון ושליטה וממשלה על החושך

This [analogy] means that just as light has superiority, power and dominion over darkness,

שמעט אור גשמי דוחה הרבה מן החשך, שנדחה ממנו מאליו וממילא

so that a little physical light banishes a great deal of darkness, which is displaced automatically and inevitably, without any effort on the part of the light,

כך נדחה ממילא סכלות הרבה של קליפה וסיטרא אחרא שבחלל השמאלי

so is there driven away, automatically, much foolishness of the *kelipah* and *sitra achra* of the animal soul located in the left part of the heart,

כמאמר רז"ל: אלא אם כן נכנס בו רוח שטות וכו'

(as indeed our Sages say,<sup>5</sup> “A man does not sin unless a spirit of folly enters him”).

מפני החכמה שבנפש האלקית שבמוח

Thus our Sages described the desires of the animal soul as “folly”. Hence they are automatically banished by the wisdom of the divine soul that is in the brain,

אשר רצונה למשול לבדה בעיר ולהתלבש בשלשה לבושיה הנ"ל בכל הגוף כולו כנ"ל

which desires to rule alone over the “city” — the body — and to pervade the entire body by means of its aforementioned<sup>6</sup> three garments,

שהם מחשבה דבור ומעשה של תרי"ג מצות התורה כנ"ל

namely thought, speech and action connected with the 613 *mitzvot* of the Torah, as discussed above.<sup>7</sup>

In the *Beinoni*, this desire of the divine soul in the brain — that it alone pervade his thought, speech and action, and hence his entire body — controls the lustful desires which the animal soul arouses in his heart. Moreover, it prevents their actual expression because of the natural supremacy of mind over heart and of holiness over evil.

But if the divine soul of the *Beinoni* indeed dominates his every area of practical expression, alone dictating his every thought, word and deed, why is he not considered a *tzaddik*?

The Alter Rebbe explains:

ואף על פי כן אינו נקרא צדיק כלל

Nevertheless, he is not deemed a *tzaddik* at all.

מפני שיתרון הזה אשר לאור נפש האלקית על החושך וסכלות של הקליפה הנדחה ממילא

For this dominance that the light of the divine soul has over the darkness and folly of the *kelipah* of the animal soul, which is automatically dispelled,

אינה אלא בשלשה לבושיה הנ"ל

is limited to the divine soul's aforementioned three garments — *only* in thought, speech and action does the divine soul of the *Beinoni* dominate his animal soul,

ולא במהותה ועצמותה על מהותה ועצמותה של הקליפה

but the essence and core of the divine soul does *not* dominate the essence and core of the [animal soul deriving from the] *kelipah*.

כי מהותה ועצמותה של נפש הבהמית שמהקליפה שבחלל השמאלי לא נדחה כלל ממקומו בבינוני

For in the *Beinoni*, the essence and core of the animal soul originating in *kelipah*, which is lodged in the left part of the heart, remains undisturbed (not displaced by the divine soul)

אחר התפלה, שאין רשפי אש אהבת ה' בהתגלות לבו בחלל הימני

after prayer, when the burning love of G-d is no longer in a revealed state in the right part of his heart, as it was during prayer when the love glowed openly and was palpably felt there;

כי אם תוכו רצוף אהבה מסותרת, שהיא אהבה הטבעית שבנפש האלקית, כמו שכתוב לקמן

rather, the love is (after prayer) only on the inside — his heart is inlaid with hidden love, meaning that love which is natural to the divine soul, not the revealed love born of meditation that the *Beinoni* experiences during the prayer, but a natural, hidden love of G-d, as will be discussed further in ch. 18 — that in the heart of every Jew lies hidden a natural love of G-d.

ואזי יכול להיות סכלות הכסיל הרע בהתגלות לבו בחלל השמאלי

Then after prayer, when the love of G-d is no longer revealed in the heart of the *Beinoni*, it is possible for the folly of the “wicked fool” (i.e., the animal soul) to reveal itself in the left part of the heart,

להתאות תאוה לכל ענייני גשמיות עולם הזה, בין בהיתר בין באיסור חס ושלום

craving all physical matters of this world, whether permitted (except that they should be desired and used as means of serving G-d, whereas at this time the *Beinoni* craves them for their own sake, for the pleasure they provide) or whether prohibited, G-d forbid,

כאלו לא התפלל כלל

as though he had never prayed.

אלא שבדבר איסור אינו עולה בדעתו לעשות האיסור בפועל ממש, חס ושלום

[His craving is limited] only [in that] in the case of [a craving for] a prohibited matter, it does not enter his mind to transgress in actual practice, G-d forbid.

אלא הרהורי עבירה הקשים מעבירה יכולים לפעול לעלות למוחו, ולבלבלו מתורה ועבודה

But thoughts of sin, which are in certain respects (as explained in the previous chapter) “more heinous than actual sin,” can manage to rise to his mind, and to distract him from Torah and divine service,

וכמאמר רז"ל: ג' עבירות אין אדם ניצול מהן בכל יום

as our Sages say,<sup>8</sup> “There are three sins so difficult to avoid that no man is safe from [transgressing], daily:

הרהור עבירה, ועיון תפלה כו'

thoughts of sin, [lack of] concentration in prayer... [and slanderous gossip]“; thus the *Beinoni* is included in the generalization that “no man“ avoids thoughts of sin.

רק שלזה מועיל הרשימו במוחין, ויראת ה' ואהבתו המסותרת בחלל הימני

However, the impression retained in his mind from his meditation, during prayer, on G-d's greatness, and the [natural] love and fear of G-d hidden in the right part of his heart, enable him

להתגבר ולשלוט על הרע הזה המתאווה תאוה

to prevail over and dominate the evil [animal soul's] craving,

שלא להיות לו שליטה וממשלה בעיר, להוציא תאוותו מכח אל הפועל, להתלבש באברי הגוף

preventing the evil from gaining the supremacy and dominion over the “city” (the body), and carrying out its craving from the potential to the actual by clothing itself in the organs of the body in actual speech or deed.

ואפילו במוח לבדו, להרהר ברע, אין לו שליטה וממשלה להרהר חס ושלום ברצונו שבמוחו

Furthermore: even in the mind alone, with respect to sinful thought, the evil has not the dominion and power to cause him (G-d forbid) to think such thoughts consciously;

שיקבל ברצון חס ושלום הרהור זה הרע העולה מאליו מהלב למוח כנ"ל

i.e., [to cause the mind] to accept willingly, G-d forbid, the evil thought that rises of its own accord — unbidden — from the heart to the mind, as explained above.<sup>9</sup>

Evil thoughts will occur to him involuntarily, because the evil in his heart craves evil; however, the evil does not have the final say on what he will let his mind accept willingly; the *Beinoni's* conscious mind is dominated by the divine soul.

אלא מיד בעלייתו לשם, דוחהו בשתי ידים ומסיה דעתו

Instead, immediately upon [the thought's] rising to [the mind], he — the *Beinoni* — thrusts it aside as it were with both hands, and averts his mind from it,

מיד שנזכר שהוא הרהור רע

the instant he realizes that it is an evil thought.

ואינו מקבלו ברצון, אפילו להרהר בו ברצון, וכל שכן להעלותו על הדעת לעשותו, חס ושלום, או אפילו לדבר בו

He will refuse to accept it even as a subject for mere conscious thought, and will certainly not entertain the notion of acting on it, G-d forbid, or even speaking of it.

כי המהרהר ברצון נקרא רשע באותה שעה

For he who willingly indulges in such thoughts is deemed a *rasha* at that moment,

והבינוני אינו רשע אפילו שעה אחת לעולם

while the *Beinoni* is never wicked even for a single moment. Obviously, then, the *Beinoni* would not willingly entertain evil thoughts.

The discussion of his mastery over his animal soul has thus far centered on matters pertaining to man's relationship with G-d. It now moves to another area:

וכן בדברים שבין אדם לחבירו

So, too, in matters “between man and his fellow-man.”

The *Beinoni* will not grant expression in thought, speech or action to any evil feelings toward his fellow.

מיד שעולה לו מהלב למוח איזו טינא ושנאה, חס ושלום

As soon as there rises from his heart to his mind any animosity or hatred, G-d forbid,

או איזו קנאה או כעס או קפידא ודומיהן

or jealousy, anger or a grudge, and their like,

אינו מקבלן כלל במוחו וברצונו

he will bar them from his mind and will, refusing even to think of them.

ואדרבה המוח שליט ומושל ברוח שבלבו לעשות ההפך ממש

On the contrary, his mind will prevail over and dominate the feelings of his heart, to do the exact opposite of that which the heart desires,

להתנהג עם חבירו במדת חסד

namely, to conduct himself toward his fellow with the quality of kindness (as opposed to the quality of “severity”, where hatred and anger originate),

וחיבה יתרה מודעת לו, לסבול ממנו עד קצה האחרון

and to display towards his fellow a disproportionate love, in suffering from him to the furthest extreme,

ולא לכעוס חס ושלום וגם שלא לשלם לו כפעלו, חס ושלום

without being provoked into anger, G-d forbid, or to take revenge in kind, G-d forbid, even without anger;

אלא אדרבה לגמול לחייבים טובות

but, on the contrary, to repay offenders with favors,

כמו שכתוב בזהר ללמוד מיוסף עם אחיו

as taught in the *Zohar*,<sup>10</sup> that we should learn from the example of Joseph’s conduct with his brothers, when he repaid them for the suffering they brought upon him, with kindness and favors.

Thus, in his relations with his fellow-man as well, the *Beinoni* does not permit the evil in his heart to express itself in thought, word or deed.

It is thus understood from this chapter, that with regard to practice the divine soul is the *Beinoni’s* only master. He neither thinks, speaks nor does anything forbidden, but acts only in accordance with *Torah* and *mitzvot*. As regards his essence, however, i.e., his intellect and emotions, he has another master as well; his animal soul is still powerful, and it can and does arouse evil desires in his heart.



In connection with the statement made earlier in this chapter, that the time of prayer is propitious for spiritual elevation, an aphorism of the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi J.I. Schneersohn, comes to mind:

When a Jew studies Torah he feels like a student before G-d, his teacher, Whose wisdom he is studying. When he prays, he feels like a child before his father.

#### FOOTNOTES [1.](#)

Generally speaking, the blessings recited over the performance of a *mitzvah* are a Rabbinic contribution to the Biblical *mitzvah*. This contribution may be understood as follows.

Every *mitzvah* is a channel drawing down holiness upon the soul of the Jew performing it. In order that one be a fitting vessel for this sanctity, the Sages ordained that he recite a blessing before performing the *mitzvah*. The connection between the blessing and the *mitzvah* is always clear: The blessing actually mentions the particular commandment to be performed and thanks G-d for sanctifying us by commanding us to perform it. For example, the blessing over the *tefillin* concludes with the words, "...and He commanded us to don the *tefillin*." In the case of the blessings said before reciting the *Shema*, however, it is not clear what the blessings accomplish. They do not mention the *mitzvah* of reciting these passages, nor have they any apparent connection with their contents. Why were they ordained to be said at this particular juncture?

In ch. 49, the Alter Rebbe gives the following explanation.

The intention behind the reading of the *Shema* is that one should come to "love G-d your L-rd with all your heart, soul and might" (as the Alter Rebbe states in our text). To achieve this, one must prepare himself by contemplating those matters which evoke the love of G-d.

To this end, the Sages instituted two blessings. The first describes aspects of the greatness of G-d — how the loftiest angels are utterly nullified before Him, how He is far removed from them, and so forth. The second *berachah* speaks of His great love for the Jewish People, how He draws them close to Him, and so on. After meditating on the ideas expressed in these blessings one is indeed ready to fulfill the precept of *Shema* — to fill his heart with the love of G-d.

[2.](#) *Zohar* III, p. 224a. The doctrine of the inherent supremacy of "intellect over emotion" is one of the basic, though not original, tenets of *ChaBaD*. Cf. *Rambam, Moreh Nevuchim* III, 8. [3.](#) *Kohelet* 2:13. [4.](#) *Kohelet* 4:13. [5.](#) *Sotah* 3a. [6.](#) Ch. 4. [7.](#) Ch. 9. [8.](#) *Bava Batra* 164b. [9.](#) Ch. 9. [10.](#) *Zohar* I, p. 201a.

# Chapter 13

In the previous chapter the Alter Rebbe described the spiritual profile of the *Beinoni*. In the *Beinoni's* heart, said the Alter Rebbe, evil desires may often arise, but his divine soul constantly prevents such desires from finding expression in actual thought, speech or action. On the contrary, these three soul-garments are the exclusive domain of the divine soul and are utilized by the *Beinoni* only for thought, speech and action of Torah study and the fulfillment of the *mitzvot*.

ובזה יובן לשון מאמר רז"ל: בינונים זה וזה שופטן פירושו: יצר טוב ויצר הרע

Accordingly, we may understand the comment of our Sages<sup>1</sup> that “*Beinonim* are judged by both [their good and evil inclinations]” — both “judge” him and dictate his conduct. As Scriptural support for this contention, the *Talmud* cites:

דכתיב: כי יעמוד לימין אביון להושיע משופטי נפשו

For it is written:<sup>2</sup> “*He* —the Almighty — stands at the right hand of the poor man, to save him from them that judge his soul.” The plural “them that judge” indicates the presence of two judges within the person, the evil inclination and the good.

We thus find that the *Beinoni's* inclinations are described as his “judges”. Now, were the term *Beinoni* to be understood in its simple, literal sense of one who has an equal history of good deeds and bad, it should more properly be said that “the *Beinoni* is ruled by both [inclinations]”. For one to sin, his evil inclination must rule him; for him to do good his good inclination must rule. The *Beinoni* who supposedly does both, must be ruled (and not merely “judged”) by both.

However, according to the explanation of the term *Beinoni* given in the previous chapter, it is clear that, indeed, the *Beinoni* is merely *judged* by both inclinations, not *ruled* by both, as shall be explained presently.

ולא אמרו: זה וזה מושלים, הם ושלו

Note that [our Sages] did not say, “He is ruled by both the good inclination and the evil,” G-d forbid,

כי כשיש איזו שליטה וממשלה ליצר הרע בעיר קטנה, אפילו לפי שעה קלה

because where the evil nature gains any rule and dominion, albeit momentarily, over the “small city,” i.e., whenever the evil rules one’s body (likened to a city which both the good inclination and the evil seek to conquer),

one is deemed “wicked” (*rasha*) at such times.

אלא היצר הרע אינו רק, על דרך משל, כמו שופט ודיין האומר דעתו במשפט

Rather, the evil inclination in the *Beinoni* is no more than, for example, a magistrate or judge who expresses his opinion on a point of law,

ואף על פי כן יכול להיות שלא יהיה פסק הלכה כך למעשה, מפני שיש עוד שופט ודיין החולק עליו

yet in fact his decision is not necessarily final, for there is another magistrate or judge who disagrees with him.

וצריך להכריע ביניהם, והלכה כדברי המכריע

It then becomes necessary, in order to formulate a binding decision, to arbitrate between the two, and the final verdict will rest with the arbitrator.

כך היצר הרע אומר דעתו בחלל השמאלי שבלב

Similarly, in the battle between the evil inclination and the good: The evil inclination states its opinion in the left part of the [*Beinoni's*] heart, i.e., it creates an evil desire in his heart and demands that he act accordingly, thus rendering “judgment” as to his future conduct.

ומהלב עולה למוח להרהר בו

From the heart [the desire] ascends to the mind for contemplation. This ascent is automatic; whenever a desire is awakened in the heart, the brain will contemplate it.

ומיד חולק עליו השופט השני, שהוא הנפש האלקית שבמוח

Immediately upon its ascent to the brain it is challenged by the second “judge”, the divine soul [residing] in the brain,

המתפשט בחלל הימני שבלב, מקום משכן היצר הטוב

which extends into the right part of the heart where the good inclination abides (i.e., reveals itself).

The good inclination is actually the voice of the divine soul’s emotional attributes, and is hence active in the right part of the heart; see ch. 9. The good inclination thus battles the evil, ensuring that the latter’s passion not be realized, for the “opinion” of the good inclination is that all of the body’s faculties and organs be utilized only for matters of holiness.

והלכה כדברי המכריע, הוא הקב"ה, העוזרו להיצר טוב

The final verdict rests with the arbitrator — the Holy One, blessed be He, who comes to the aid of the good inclination, enabling it to prevail over the evil inclination.

כמאמר רז"ל: אלמלא הקב"ה עוזרו אין יכול לו

As our Sages say,<sup>3</sup> “[Man’s evil inclination gathers strength daily,...and] if the Almighty did not help him (i.e., help his good inclination) he could not overcome it (his evil inclination).”

והעזר היא ההארה שמאיר אור ה' על נפש האלקית

The help that G-d grants him is the glow of divine light that illuminates his divine soul,

להיות לה יתרון ושליטה על סכלות הכסיל ויצר הרע, כיתרון האור מן החושך, כנ"ל

that it may gain superiority and mastery over the folly of the “fool”, the evil inclination, [a dominion] paralleling the superiority of light over darkness, as stated above, in ch. 12.

Just as a little light banishes much darkness, so is the abounding folly and darkness of one’s evil inclination driven away by dint of the little light of holiness emanating from his divine soul. It is this ray of divine illumination that constitutes G-d’s assistance to the divine soul.<sup>4</sup>

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to resolve the contradiction and answer the question noted in the opening words of the *Tanya*:

The *Talmud* states that a Jew is charged with an oath to regard himself as wicked, whereas elsewhere, the *Mishnah* declares: “*Be not* wicked in your own estimation.” Also: “If a person considers himself wicked, he will be grieved at heart and depressed, and will not be able to serve G-d joyfully and with a contented heart.”

He now explains that the meaning of the oath — which literally reads, “Be in your own eyes like a *rasha*” — is that one regard himself not as an actual *rasha*, but as *like* one, having traits similar to those of a *rasha*. This means that he must consider himself a *Beinoni*, who possesses the same evil in his soul as does a *rasha* and can desire evil just as a *rasha* does.

In the Alter Rebbe’s words:

אך מאחר שהרע שבחלל השמאלי בביוני הוא בתקפו כתולדתו, להתאות תאוה לכל תענוגי עולם הזה

Yet, inasmuch as the evil in the left part of the *Beinoni*’s heart is in its native strength, craving after all the pleasures of this world,

ולא נתבטל במיעוט לגבי הטוב ולא נדחה ממקומו כלל

and is neither so minute as to be nullified before the good of the divine soul (as is the case with a *tzaddik*), nor has it been displaced from its position to any degree,

רק שאין לו שליטה וממשלה להתפשט באברי הגוף

but merely lacks authority and power to become diffused throughout the limbs of the body to cause them to do, speak or think evil; nor is the evil's lack of ability attributable to the *Beinoni's* efforts, for his evil, like that of the *rasha*, retains its native strength to pervade the entire body; rather, the evil is powerless merely

מפני הקב"ה העומד לימין אביון, ועוזר ומאיר לנפש האלקית

because of the Holy One, blessed be He, who “stands at the right hand of the poor man,” helping him and irradiating his divine soul so that it may be able to prevail over the evil.

Thus it is only Divine intervention that prevents the evil from pervading the body; essentially, however, the evil of the *Beinoni's* animal soul is as strong as it was at birth.

לכן נקרא כרשע, כמאמר רז"ל: אפילו כל העולם כולו אומרים לך צדיק אתה, היה בעיניך כרשע

Therefore [the *Beinoni*] is described as being “*k'rasha*” (“*like a rasha*”), but not actually a *rasha*, as in the statement of our Sages, “Even if the whole world tells you that you are a *tzaddik*, be in your own eyes *like a rasha*.”

ולא רשע ממש

He should not [regard himself as] an actual *rasha*, for the *Mishnah* admonishes,<sup>5</sup> “Be not wicked in your own estimation.”

Moreover, regarding oneself as a *rasha* hinders one from serving G-d joyfully.

אלא שיחזיק עצמו לבינוני

Rather, one should consider oneself a *Beinoni*,

ולא להאמין להעולם שאומרים שהרע שבו נתבטל לגבי הטוב, שזו מדרגת צדיק

and should not believe i.e., accept the world's opinion which would have him believe that the evil in him has been nullified by the good, for this is the level of a *tzaddik*.

Only the *tzaddik* succeeds in nullifying and transforming the evil within him. But the “world”, which judges the *Beinoni* by his actions and sees that he never transgresses, assumes that he too has effectively banished from within him the evil that is the cause of sin; consequently, people regard him as a *tzaddik*.

He is therefore cautioned against accepting the opinion of “the world.”

אלא יהיה בעיניו כאלו מהותו ועצמותו של הרע הוא בתקפו ובגבורתו בחלל השמאלי כתולדתו

Instead, he should take the view that the essence and core of the evil is in its full native strength and might, in the left part of his heart,

ולא חלף והלך ממנו מאומה

not having vanished or departed from him at all.

ואדרבה נתחזק יותר בהמשך הזמן שנשתמש בו הרבה

On the contrary, with the passage of time [the evil] has gained strength because he utilized it i.e., the animal soul considerably,

באכילה ושתייה ושאר עניני עולם הזה

in eating and drinking and in other mundane pursuits.

As with every faculty, constant use of the animal soul causes it to become even stronger than it was at birth.

The Alter Rebbe thus concludes that the words “consider yourself *‘like a rasha’*” mean that one must consider himself a *Beinoni*. The above applies even to those who have reached a lofty spiritual level; they too should consider themselves *Beinonim*. For should one consider himself a *tzaddik* and maintain that the evil within him has already been nullified by the good, he will cease to do battle with the evil. If he is mistaken and is not in fact a *tzaddik*, such an unfounded attitude can cause him to slip drastically from his level, descending even lower than the level of a *Beinoni* to that of a *rasha*.

\* \* \*

Until now we have been speaking of a working man who does not have the opportunity to spend all his time in Torah study and divine service. Now the discussion turns to the individual who spends all his time immersed in the study of Torah.

ואף מי שבתורת ה' חפצו, ויהגה בה יומם ולילה לשמה

Even if one's entire aspiration is in G-d's Torah, which he studies day and night for its own sake,

אין זו הוכחה כלל שנדחה הרע ממקומו

this is still no proof whatever that the evil has been dislodged from its place.

אלא יכול להיות שמהותו ועצמותו הוא בתקפו ובגבורתו במקומו בחלל השמאלי

Perhaps, rather, the essence and substance of the evil are in their full strength and might in its abode in the left part of the heart,

רק שלבושיו שהם מחשבה דבור ומעשה של נפש הבהמית אינן מתלבשים במוח והפה והידים ושאר אברי הגוף

except that its garments — namely, the thought, speech and action of the animal soul — are not invested in the brain, mouth and hands and other parts of the body, to think and do that which is forbidden,

מפני ה' שנתן שליטה וממשלה למוח על הלב

because G-d has granted the mind supremacy and dominion over the heart.

ולכן נפש האלקית שבמוח מושלת בעיר קטנה, אברי הגוף כולם

Therefore the divine soul in the mind rules over the “small city,” i.e., [over] all the parts of the body,

שיהיו לבוש ומרכבה

making them, the body's organs, serve as “garment and vehicle”

I.e., as a means of expression (“garment”) that is totally subservient to its user (as is a “vehicle” to its rider); thus, because of its G-d-given supremacy, the divine soul is able to use the body's organs as a “garment and vehicle” —

לשליש לבושה שיתלבשו בהם, שהם מחשבה דבור ומעשה של תרי"ג מצות התורה

through which its three “garments” — namely, the thought, speech and action of the Torah's 613 commandments — are expressed (“clothed”).

It may be, then, that with regard to this individual's thinking and speaking words of Torah and performing the *mitzvot*, the divine soul rules over the body; in this area the divine soul has the upper hand and the animal soul is subservient.

אבל מהותה ועצמותה של נפש האלקית אין לה שליטה וממשלה על מהות ועצמותה של נפש הבהמית בנינוני

However, in its essence and substance the divine soul has no preponderance over the essence and substance of the animal soul, in the case of a *Beinoni*,

כי אם בשעה שאהבת ה' הוא בהתגלות לכו

except at those times when his love for G-d manifests itself in his heart

בעתים מזומנים כמו בשעת התפלה וכיוצא בה

on propitious occasions such as during prayer and the like.

Then, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the *Beinoni* is aroused to a burning love of G-d that causes the evil of the animal soul to be nullified before the goodness of the divine soul.

ואף גם זאת הפעם

Even then, during those times when the divine soul gains the upper hand over the animal soul,

אינה רק שליטה וממשלה לבד

it is limited to preponderance and dominion alone, i.e., the divine soul succeeds in dominating the animal soul, not in vanquishing it, in the sense of nullifying its essence.

כדכתיב: ולאום מלאום יאמץ

As is written of the battle between Jacob and Esau,<sup>6</sup> allegorically representing the war between the good and evil in man's soul: "And one nation shall *prevail* over the other." Jacob, exemplifying the good, merely *prevails* over Esau, the evil, but does not succeed in totally vanquishing him.

כשזה קם זה נופל, וכשזה קם כו'

This agrees with our Sages' comment on this verse: "When this one rises and prevails that one falls, and when that one rises...[this one falls]."

The animal soul, although it had "fallen" during prayer, is afterwards able to "rise" and rally once again, indicating that the divine soul had not succeeded in vanquishing it even during prayer, for which reason even its dominance is only temporary.<sup>7</sup>

שנפש האלקית מתאמצת ומתגברת על נפש הבהמית במקור הגבורות, שהיא בינה

Thus, the divine soul gains strength and ascendancy over the animal soul, in the source of strength [*"Gevurot"*], which is understanding [*"Binah"*] —

In the Kabbalah's description of the *Sefirot*, *Binah* is the source of *Gevurah*. In terms of one's divine soul, this means that the source of its strength ("*Gevurah*") to combat the animal soul is found in its faculty of understanding ("*Binah*"), the faculty with which it understands the greatness of G-d.

להתבונן בגדולת ה' אין סוף ברוך הוא, ולהוליד אהבה עזה לה' כרשפי אש בחלל הימני שבלבו



[Thus, when the divine soul gains strength...over the animal soul...during prayer,] pondering on the greatness of G-d, the blessed *Ein Sof*, and [thereby] giving birth to intense and flaming love of G-d in the right part of his heart;

ואז אתכפיא סטרא אחרא שבחלל השמאלי

and then when the divine soul dominates the animal soul with its intense and revealed love of G-d, the *sitra achra* (the evil of the animal soul) in the left part of the heart is subjugated.

אבל לא נתבטל לגמרי בבינוני, אלא בצדיק, שנאמר בו: ולבי חלל בקרבי

But it is not entirely abolished, in the case of the *Beinoni*; it is so only in a *tzaddik*, concerning whom it is said,<sup>8</sup> “My heart is void<sup>9</sup> within me.” The abode in the heart usually occupied by the evil inclination is void in the heart of a *tzaddik*.

והוא מואס ברע ושונאו בתכלית השנאה והמיאוס, או שלא בתכלית השנאה כנ"ל

He — the *tzaddik* — despises and loathes evil with a consummate hatred if he is a “complete” *tzaddik*, or without quite such utter hatred if he is an “incomplete” *tzaddik*, as explained above in ch. 10.

אבל בבינוני הוא דרך משל כאדם שישן, שיכול לחזור וליעור משנתו

All the above applies to the *tzaddik*. But in a *Beinoni* [the evil] merely lies dormant, as with a sleeping man, for example, who can awaken from his sleep at any time and reactivate his faculties.

כך הרע בבינוני הוא כישן בחלל השמאלי

So is the evil in the *Beinoni* dormant, as it were, in the left part of the heart, not functioning at all, not even *desiring* physical pleasures —

בשעת קריאת שמע ותפלה, שלבו בוער באהבת ה'

during the recital of the *Shema* and *Amidah*, when his heart is aglow with the love of G-d, causing the evil of the animal soul to be dormant.

ואחר כך יכול להיות חוזר וניעור

[Therefore,] after prayer it can reawaken.

The Alter Rebbe will now describe an even higher level of *Beinoni* — one who is permeated throughout the day with the same degree of love for G-d that he feels during prayer. The animal soul of such a *Beinoni* is permanently dormant. Accordingly, we will understand how it was possible for Rabbah to classify himself mistakenly as a *Beinoni*.

In ch. 1 it was proved that the term *Beinoni* could not refer (as a literal interpretation would lead us to believe) to a person half of whose deeds are virtuous and half sinful. Were this so, how could such a sage like Rabbah, who never neglected his Torah study for even a moment, make the mistake of classifying himself as a *Beinoni*?

However, the Alter Rebbe's definition of *Beinoni* as one who does not sin *in practice*, does not seem to satisfy this difficulty. Indeed, as the Alter Rebbe explained in ch. 12, a *Beinoni* never sins; yet he has sinful desires. Rabbah, who was in fact a *tzaddik*, must have known full well that he was free of such desire. How then could he even mistakenly classify himself as a *Beinoni*?

According to the discussion which now follows concerning the level of the *Beinoni* who never even desires evil, this matter is readily understood:

ולכן היה רבה מחזיק עצמו כבינוני, אף דלא פסיק פומיה מגירסא

For this reason Rabbah considered himself a *Beinoni*, though his mouth never ceased from Torah study,

ובתורת ה' חפצו יומם ולילה בחפיצה וחשיקה ותשוקה

and his desire was in [studying] G-d's Torah day and night, with a craving, desire and longing,

ונפש שוקקה לה' באהבה רבה, כבשעת קריאת שמע ותפלה

his soul yearning for G-d with overwhelming love, such as that experienced during the recitation of the *Shema* and the *Amidah*.

During prayer, as mentioned above, the *Beinoni*'s heart is aroused to a love of G-d so passionate that he does not feel the evil of his animal soul at all. Rabbah, however, experienced this arousal of love not only during prayer but throughout the day. Therefore, his animal soul was always dormant and he *never* desired mundane matters.

ונדמה בעיניו כבינוני המתפלל כל היום

It was therefore possible for him to consider himself a *Beinoni*, for he appeared in his own eyes as a *Beinoni* who prays all day, i.e., a *Beinoni* who throughout the day retains the level attained during prayer,

וכמאמר רז"ל: הלואי שיתפלל אדם כל היום כלו

as, indeed, our Sages have said,<sup>10</sup> “Would that a man pray the whole day long!”

Such a *Beinoni* is constantly ablaze with the love of G-d, and consequently his desire for evil is always dormant, as explained. Therefore, the absence of any evil desires did not

conclusively prove to Rabbah that he was a *tzaddik*; it was still possible for him to maintain that he was a *Beinoni* — a *Beinoni* “who prays all day long.”

What emerges from all that has been said is that even during prayer when the *Beinoni* succeeds in arousing his love of G-d and rendering the evil dormant, his divine soul has merely *prevailed* over his animal soul but has not vanquished it, for which reason it is possible for this state to cease after prayer. Therefore, the *Beinoni*'s level of divine service is not considered truthful when compared to the service of the *tzaddik*. For “truth” implies continuity and consistency.

The Alter Rebbe goes on to explain that nevertheless, the *Beinoni*'s love — relative to *his* standing — is considered a true form of service.

והנה מדת אהבה זו האמורה בבינונים בשעת התפלה על ידי התגברות הנפש האלקית כו'

Now, this aforementioned love attained by *Beinonim* at the time of prayer by virtue of the temporary preponderance of the divine soul over the animal soul, etc.,

הנה לגבי מדרגת הצדיקים עובדי ה' באמת לאמיתו, אין בחינת אהבה זו נקראת בשם עבודת אמת כלל

when compared to the standard of the *tzaddikim* who serve G-d in perfect truth (“in the truest manner of truth”), [this love] is not called “true service” at all,

מאחר שחולפת ועוברת אחר התפלה

since it passes and disappears after prayer;

וכתיב: שפת אמת תכון לעד, ועד ארגיעה לשון שקר

whereas it is written,<sup>11</sup> “The language (lit., ‘the lip’) of truth shall be established forever, but the tongue of falsehood is only momentary.”

Thus, the term “truth” refers to something immutable; the temporary and passing are not considered “true”. The same applies here as well: Since the *Beinoni*'s love of G-d is felt only during prayer and disappears afterwards, it does not measure up to the “truest” sense of truth — the perfect truth attained by *tzaddikim*.

ואף על פי כן לגבי מדרגת הבינונים נקראת עבודה תמה באמת לאמיתו שלהם

Nevertheless, in relation to the rank of the *Beinoni*, [this level of love] is regarded as a truly perfect service in terms of *their* level of truth, i.e., the level of *Beinonim*,

איש איש כפי מדרגתו במדרגת הבינונים

in each man relative to his standing in the category of the *Beinonim* (for, as mentioned earlier, the rank of *Beinoni* is subdivided into many levels).

והריני קורא באהבתם שבתפלתם גם כן: שפת אמת תכון לעד

Their love, too, which they possess [only] during prayer, I term, “The language of truth [which] shall be established for ever,” i.e., their love is true and permanent, though manifest only during prayer,

הואיל ובכח נפשם האלקית לחזור ולעורר בחינת אהבה זו לעולם, בהתגברותה בשעת התפלה מדי יום ביום

since their divine soul has the power to reawaken this love constantly, whenever it gathers strength during prayer, day after day,

על ידי הכנה הראויה לכל נפש כפי ערכה ומדרגתה

by means of the spiritual preparation appropriate to each soul’s quality and rank. The higher the level of the soul, the less preparation it requires to awaken its love of G-d. Regardless, every soul has the capacity to arouse its love of G-d during prayer.

The *Beinoni*’s love of G-d is thus constant, since it is either in an active, revealed state, or is *in potentia*, and can be revealed at any moment throughout the day (for, as mentioned earlier, every *Beinoni* has the potential to attain the level of “praying the whole day long.”

One difficulty yet remains: How is it possible for the same level of service to be considered untrue by the standards of *tzaddikim*, and true with regard to *Beinonim*? Is truth not absolute?

This matter is now explained as follows:

The quality of truth is to be found on every level. In each, truth means the essence and core of that level; i.e., truth is defined as that which agrees with the essence of that particular level where it is measured.

Since this is so in all the myriad levels of the spiritual worlds, from the very highest to the very lowest, and since the lowest levels are incomparable to the highest, how can it be said that the lower grades possess truth? We must say, therefore, that the term “truth” is relative to the level on which it is found, that each grade has its own core of truth. Things are true if they agree with [the essence of] their own level and untrue if they do not; they need not agree with a higher level to be considered “true”.

In the Alter Rebbe’s words:

כי הנה מדת אמת היא מדתו של יעקב, הנקרא בריח התיכון המבריה מן הקצה אל הקצה

For truth is the attribute of Jacob, as the verse states:<sup>12</sup> “You give truth to Jacob,” who is called<sup>13</sup> “the middle bolt which secures everything from end to end,”<sup>14</sup> just as the

middle bolt in the Tabernacle secured and bolted together all the boards by passing through them all.

מרום המעלות ומדרגות עד סוף כל דרגין

In spiritual terms, this means that the attribute of truth passes from the highest gradations and levels to the end (i.e., lowest) of all grades.

ובכל מעלה ומדרגה מבריח תוך נקודה האמצעית

in each gradation and level it passes through the central point of that particular level,

שהיא נקודת ובחינת מדת אמת שלה

which is, i.e., which then becomes the point and quality (i.e., the standard) of [that level's] attribute of truth.

Proof is now given that each grade has its own standard of truth, as it were:

ומדת אמת היא נחלה בלי מצרים, ואין לה שיעור למעלה עד רום המעלות

The attribute of truth is an unbounded inheritance; it has no upper limit [as it extends] to the highest levels,

וכל מעלות ומדרגות שלמטה הם כאין לגבי מעלות ומדרגות שלמעלה מהן

and all lower gradations and levels are as nothing compared with those superior to them.

If, then, truth is found on all levels despite their disparity, we must conclude that the standard of truth on each level is relative to the core of that level.

In support for his statement that the lower levels and grades are incomparable to the higher ones, the Alter Rebbe cites:

כידוע לידועי ח"ן שבחינת ראש ומוחין של מדרגות תחתונות הן למטה מבחינת עקביים ורגלי מדרגות עליונות  
מהן

As is known to those familiar with the Esoteric Discipline (i.e., Kabbalah), the quality that is the “head and intellect” — the highest level — within lower grades, is inferior to the “soles” and “feet” — the very lowest level — within the higher grades;

וכמאמר רז"ל: רגלי החיות כנגד כולן

as our Sages say,<sup>15</sup> “The feet of the *chayyot* surpass all those levels lower than them, including the highest degree within those lower levels.”)

The attribute of truth, then, is measured according to the standards of each level. We may thus conclude that the divine service of the *Beinoni* is considered “true” service *relative to their level*, although when compared with the service of *tzaddikim* it is not considered “true”, since it passes after prayer.

FOOTNOTES [1. Berachot 61b.](#) [2. Tehillim 109:31.](#) [3. Kiddushin 30b.](#) [4.](#)

It was stated in the previous chapter that man’s mind innately rules his heart. Why, then, should he need special divine assistance in curbing his appetites?

The Rebbe answers:

This divine assistance is necessary whenever the conflict between the two souls does not involve a struggle of mind vs. heart; e.g., (1) when the divine soul wishes to prevent sinful thoughts from arising in the *mind*, or (2) when the *emotive* faculties of the divine soul seek to overpower those of the animal soul (without recourse to contemplation and meditation).

But now the question may be reversed: Why in ch. 12 does the Alter Rebbe use the argument of the mind’s natural supremacy over the heart to point out the divine soul’s supremacy over the animal soul?

To this the Rebbe answers: In ch. 12, the Alter Rebbe speaks of the state of the *Beinoni* after prayer, when the effect of his meditation on G-dliness during prayer still lingers in his mind. At such time his mind is suffused with G-dliness to the point where the animal soul cannot so much as voice an opinion there. Thus, any struggle between the souls at that time would be a case of mind vs. heart, where the natural supremacy of the mind could confer victory on the divine soul.

[5. Avot 2:13.](#) [6. Bereishit 25:23.](#) [7.](#) Based on a note by the Rebbe. The Rebbe explains thereby why the Alter Rebbe quotes only half of the second phrase — “When this one (referring to the divine soul) rises, that one (the animal soul) falls; and when that one (the animal soul) rises...” — without concluding the part of the quotation that deals with the divine soul. The Alter Rebbe’s purpose in quoting the second phrase is to show that the animal soul could rise once again, though it had “fallen” during prayer. The rest of the phrase is thus irrelevant here. [8. Tehillim 109:22.](#) [9.](#)

The word הלל has two meanings: “void”, and “slain”. The Rebbe points out that the Alter Rebbe understands the הלל of this verse to mean “void”. This may be inferred from ch. 1, where he interprets the verse as meaning that “he (David HaMelech) had no *Yetzer Hara*.” The Alter Rebbe continues there: “for he had slain it through fasting,” only as added explanation (not in order to interpret the word הלל) — to indicate that David had not attained the level of Avraham Avinu, who had transformed his *Yetzer Hara* (as stated in *Talmud Yerushalmi*, end of *Berachot* ch. 9; David had merely slain it. In the case of Avraham Avinu, his heart was indeed *not* void, but in fact this was his virtue: his heart

still housed the *Yetzer Hara*, but that *Yetzer Hara* had undergone such a metamorphosis that it was now a *Yetzer Tov*.

From *Rashi's* commentary on *Berachot*, however, and also from the plain sense of the *Yerushalmi*, it appears that the meaning of הלל is "slain". In his commentary on this verse in *Tehillim*, *Rashi* cites both interpretations.

[10. Berachot 21a.](#) [11. Mishlei 12:19.](#) [12. Micah 7:20.](#) [13. Zohar I, p. 1b; p. 224a.](#) [14. Paraphrase of Shmot 26:28.](#) [15. Chagigah 13a.](#)

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## Chapter 14

In previous chapters the Alter Rebbe explained that though the *Beinoni* is unsullied by sin in thought, speech or action, the internal evil of his animal soul remains strong enough to desire evil. That these desires do not find any practical expression is due only to the divine soul's restraining them, with the aid given it by the Almighty. The Alter Rebbe now continues:

והנה מדת הבינוני היא מדת כל אדם ואחריה כל אדם ימשוך

Now, the rank of *Beinoni* is one that is attainable by every man; each person should strive after it if he has not yet attained it, and should not think it beyond his reach,

שכל אדם יכול להיות בינוני בכל עת ובכל שעה

for every person can, at any time or hour, be a *Beinoni*,

כי הבינוני אינו מואס ברע

because a *Beinoni* does not abhor evil; unlike the *tzaddik*, he does not find worldly pleasures revolting and loathsome.

שזהו דבר המסור ללב

For this is a matter entrusted to the heart, and as explained earlier, the *Beinoni* has yet to conquer [the evil in] his heart; consequently, he does not loathe evil.

ולא כל העתים שוות

Also, not all times are alike.

There are times — such as during prayer — when one’s heart is open and receptive; at such time he may evoke a loathing towards evil. At other times the heart may be “blocked” and spiritually insensitive, and one is incapable of loathing evil.

Inasmuch as the *Beinoni’s* attitude towards evil varies, while his status of *Beinoni* remains constant, it is understood that loathing evil is not the measure of the *Beinoni*.

אלא סור מרע ועשה טוב דהיינו בפועל ממש במעשה דבור ומחשבה

Rather, the task of the *Beinoni* is only to “turn away from evil and do good,” in actual practice — in deed, speech and thought.

שבהם הבחירה והיכולת והרשות נתונה לכל אדם

In these matters, as opposed to “matters of the heart,” every man is given the choice, ability and freedom

לעשות ולדבר ולחשוב גם מה שהוא נגד תאות לבו והפכה ממש

to act, speak and think even that which is contrary to the desire of his heart and diametrically opposed to it.

כי גם בשעה שהלב חומד ומתאוה איזו תאוה גשמיית בהיתר, או באיסור חס ושלום

For even when one’s heart craves and desires a material pleasure, whether permitted, in which case it is only the lustful nature of the desire that is evil (instead of desiring the pleasure “for the sake of heaven,” as he should, he seeks self-gratification), or whether, G-d forbid, he desires that which is forbidden, and the desire is intrinsically evil; whatever sort of craving it is —

יכול להתגבר ולהסיח דעתו ממנה לגמרי, באמרו ללבו

he can conquer [this desire] and divert his attention from it altogether, by declaring to himself (“saying to his heart”) [as follows]:

אינני רוצה להיות רשע אפילו שעה אחת

“I do not want to be a *rasha* — in succumbing to the blandishments of the animal soul — even for a moment,

כי אינני רוצה להיות מובדל ונפרד חס ושלום מה' אחד בשום אופן, כדכתיב: עונותיכם מבדילים וגו'

because under no circumstances do I want to be parted and severed, heaven forbid, from the One G-d; as is written,<sup>1</sup> “Your iniquities separate. [you from G-d].”



By reflecting that sin separates one from G-d, one will conclude that he does not wish to be a *rasha*, since he will thereby sever his bond with Him. In this way, one can *always* “turn away from evil” and refrain from sin although his heart craves it.

Similarly, in order for one to “do good” and actively perform the *mitzvot*, he should declare to himself:

רק אני רוצה לדבקה בו נפשי ונשמתי, בהתלבשן בשלשה לבושי יתברך

“I desire, instead, to unite my *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah* with G-d through investing them in ‘His’ three garments,

שהם מעשה דבור ומחשבה בה' ותורתו ומצותיו

namely, action, speech and thought dedicated to G-d, His Torah and His commandments.

These are called “His” (G-d’s) three garments because they lend expression to His wisdom (Torah) and Will (*mitzvot*), which are one with G-d Himself.

מאהבה מסותרת שבלבי לה', כמו בלב כללות ישראל שנקראו אוהבי שמך

“This desire to unite with G-d arises out of the love of G-d that is (surely) hidden in my heart though I do not feel it, just as [this love is found] in the heart of all Jews, who are called [2](#) ‘lovers of Your (G-d’s) Name’ by reason of their inherent love of G-d, although they do not all feel this love consciously.

ואפילו קל שבקלים יכול למסור נפשו על קדושת ה', ולא נופל אנכי ממנו בודאי

“For this reason, even a *kal shebekalim* (a most unworthy Jew) is capable of sacrificing his life for the sanctity of G-d should he be forced to deny Him, G-d forbid. Surely I am not inferior to him.

As will be explained in later chapters, the ability of even the lowliest Jew to give up his very life for G-d stems from every Jew’s innate, hidden love of G-d, which is activated and aroused whenever he feels that he is being torn away from Him. But if the *kal shebekalim* does indeed love G-d so deeply that he will surrender his life for Him, why is he a *kal shebekalim*? Why does he sin? Why does he not observe the *mitzvot*?

אלא שנכנס בו רוח שטות, ונדמה לו שבעבירה זו עודנו ביהדותו, ואין נשמתו מובדלת מאלקי ישראל

“It is only that a spirit of folly has overcome (lit., ‘entered’) him, as our Sages say: [3](#) ‘No man sins unless overcome by a spirit of folly’; he imagines that committing this sin will not affect his Jewishness, and that his soul will not be severed thereby from the G-d of Israel.

In fact, at the moment that a Jew sins he becomes separated from G-d. Were the *kal shebekalim* to realize this, he would never sin. The “spirit of folly,” however, deludes him into thinking otherwise.

וגם שוכח אהבתו לה' המסותרת בלבו

“Similarly, the *kal shebekalim* neglects the positive *mitzvot*, although his natural love of G-d dictates that he fulfill them, because he also forgets the love of G-d hidden in his heart. Were he aware of this love, he would seek out *mitzvot* to perform in order to unite with G-d.

אבל אני אינני רוצה להיות שוטה כמוהו לכפור האמת

All this applies to the *kal shebekalim*. “But as for me — one should say to himself — I have no desire to be such a fool as he, to deny the truth!”

For the truth of the matter is that sin does separate man from G-d, and that one does have a natural love of G-d that dictates the performance of *mitzvot*. “These truths,” one must say to himself, “I do not wish to deny.”

Such arguments are effective in a conflict with one’s animal soul over actual thought, speech and action. Using the above-mentioned reasoning one can prevail over his evil inclination at all times (in both “turning from evil” and “doing good”), and thereby attain the rank of the *Beinoni*.

מה שאין כן בדבר המסור ללב, דהיינו שיהא הרע מאוס ממש בלב ושנאוי

It is different, however, with something entrusted to the heart, i.e., involving one’s feelings, meaning, in our case, that one’s heart actually abhor and despise the evil that he now craves,

בתכלית שנאה, או אפילו שלא בתכלית שנאה

[whether] with absolute hatred as the perfect *tzaddik* does, or even not quite so utterly, as does the “incomplete *tzaddik*.”

הנה זה אי אפשר שיהיה באמת לאמיתו אלא על ידי גודל ותוקף האהבה לה', בבחינת אהבה בתענוגים להתענג על ה'

This cannot be attained in complete truth except through that level of intense love of G-d called “love of delights,” which consists of delighting in G-dliness,

מעין עולם הבא

akin to [the bliss of] the World to Come, concerning which our Sages say that souls “will bask in the radiance of the Divine Presence.” Only such “love of delights” creates a hatred of evil, as explained in the previous chapters.

ועל זה אמרו רז"ל: עולמך תראה בחיך כו', ואין כל אדם זוכה לזה כי זה כעין קבול שכר

Concerning one who experiences this [“love of delights”] our Sages said,<sup>4</sup> “You shall see a glimmer of your reward in the World to Come in your lifetime.” Not every man is privileged to attain this state, for it is in the nature of a reward received from above, and a reward can only be received, not taken.

וכדכתיב: עבודת מתנה אתן את כהונתכם וגו'

Thus it is written,<sup>5</sup> “I (G-d) will make your priestly office a rewarding service,”

Service of G-d with this ecstatically blissful love is designated “priesthood” even though it is not restricted to the *Kohanim*, members of the priestly family of Aaron. The above-quoted verse tells us that this lofty level of divine service is a gift from G-d,

כמו שכתוב במקום אחר

as is explained elsewhere.<sup>6</sup>

Consequently, the rank of *tzaddik* is not within every man’s reach: it is dependent upon one’s loathing of evil, which is in turn contingent on his experiencing that blissful love which is a gift from G-d. The level of *Beinoni*, however, is attainable by all.

With this in mind, the Alter Rebbe clarifies the Talmudic passage that describes Job as saying to G-d: “You have created *tzaddikim* (righteous men), and You have created *resha'im* (wicked men).” In the first chapter of *Tanya* the Alter Rebbe asked: How can G-d be said to have “created” righteous and wicked men? If man is wicked, it is his own doing. G-d ordains only whether one shall be clever or foolish, strong or weak, and the like; he does not declare whether one will be righteous or wicked, for doing so would negate man’s freedom of choice. How, then, could Job say, “You have *created* men as *tzaddikim* and *resha'im*?”

The matter becomes clear, however, in light of the Alter Rebbe’s statement here that the ability to become a *tzaddik* is a gift from G-d, not granted to every man. “You have created *tzaddikim*” thus means that G-d created souls *capable* of attaining the rank of *tzaddik*. In the Alter Rebbe’s words:

ולכן אמר איוב: בראת צדיקים כו'

Therefore did Job say, “You created *tzaddikim*....”

We can now understand Job's statement as a reference to those souls created with the capacity of attaining the rank of *tzaddik*. (The meaning of "You have created *resha'im*" is explained in ch. 27.)

וכדאיתא בתיקונים, שיש בנשמות ישראל כמה מיני מדרגות ובחינות

As stated in *Tikkunei Zohar*,<sup>7</sup> there are many grades and degrees in Jewish souls:

חסידים, גבורים המתגברים על יצרם, מארי תורה, נביאים כו', צדיקים כו', עיין שם

Pious men ("chassidim"), strong men ("*gibborim*") who gain mastery over their evil inclination, scholars of the Torah, prophets,...*tzaddikim*, and so forth. Note there.

Accordingly, within the ranks of the souls there are those who are categorized as *tzaddikim*.<sup>8</sup>

ובזה יובן כפל לשון השבועה: תהי צדיק ואל תהי רשע

Now we may understand the repetitious wording in the oath administered to every Jew before birth, "Be a *tzaddik* and be not a *rasha*" (as quoted from the *Talmud* in the opening words of *Tanya*).

דלכאורה תמוה, כי מאחר שמשביעים אותו: תהי צדיק, למה צריכים להשביעו עוד שלא יהיה רשע

At first glance it seems unintelligible: once he is charged to "be a *tzaddik*," implying clearly that he not be a *rasha*, why the need to adjure him again not be a *rasha*?

אלא משום שאין כל אדם זוכה להיות צדיק, ואין לאדם משפט הבחירה בזה כל כך, להתענג על ה' באמת, ושיהיה הרע מאוס ממש באמת

The answer is that inasmuch as not everyone is privileged to become a *tzaddik*, nor has a person the full advantage of choice in this matter of experiencing true delight in G-d and of actually and truly abhorring evil,

ולכן משביעים שנית: אל תהי רשע על כל פנים

[each person] is consequently adjured a second time: "You shall, at any rate, not be a *rasha*."

Even if a person is not privileged to become a *tzaddik* he should at the very least not be a *rasha*, being instead a *Beinoni*.

שבזה משפט הבחירה והרשות נתונה לכל אדם

With regard to this (not being a *rasha*) the right of choice and freedom is extended to every man,

למשול ברוח תאוותו שבלבו ולכבוש יצרו, שלא יהיה רשע אפילו שעה אחת כל ימיו

to control the spirit of lust in his heart and to conquer his nature, so that he shall not be wicked for even one moment throughout his life.

בין בבחינת סור מרע בין בבחינת ועשה טוב, ואין טוב אלא תורה

[This applies] both in the realm of “turning away from evil” — refraining from transgression, and in that of “doing good” — performing all the positive *mitzvot* in which he is obligated; and especially the *mitzvah* of Torah study, which is specifically termed “good”, as our Sages say,<sup>9</sup> “There is no ‘good’ other than Torah,”

דהיינו תלמוד תורה שכנגד כולן

meaning the study of Torah, which “balances (i.e., is equal to) all [the other *mitzvot* combined].”

By reason of the freedom of choice granted him, one is expected to surmount even the difficulty of faithfully observing this most difficult *mitzvah* of Torah study.

For this reason the oath is administered a second time. Even if one does not have the opportunity to become a *tzaddik*, it is still possible for him — and therefore expected of him — not to be a *rasha*.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to state that everyone should strive to emulate the *tzaddik's* service of G-d, although he may never actually reach the rank of *tzaddik*. Specifically, one should train oneself to loathe worldly pleasures; and, conversely, he should try to awaken in himself a delight in the love of G-d, which is accomplished through reflecting deeply on His greatness. Thereby one fulfills the charge, “Be a *tzaddik*,” to the best of his ability.

אך אף על פי כן צריך לקבוע לו עתים גם כן לשית עצות בנפשו להיות מואס ברע

Nevertheless, though it has been said that not every person can loathe evil and attain the “love of delights” characteristic of a *tzaddik* — and we are dealing here with a *Beinoni* — yet one must also set aside specific periods to seek for himself means of abhorring evil — i.e., of loathing worldly pleasures.

כגון בעצת חכמינו ז"ל: אשה חמת מלאה צואה, וכהאי גוונא

For example, [following] the advice of our Sages on overcoming a lust for women, let one reflect on their words, “Woman is a vessel full of filth,” and the like.

וכן כל מיני מטעמים ומעדנים נעשים כך חמת מלא כו'

So, too, one may learn to despise gluttony by reflecting that all dainties and delicacies similarly become “vessels full of waste.”

וכן כל תענוגי עולם הזה: החכם רואה הנולד מהן, שסופן לרקוב ולהיות רמה ואשפה

Likewise with regard to all the pleasures of this world: the wise man foresees what becomes of them; they ultimately rot and become worms and refuse.

In this way one cultivates an abhorrence of worldly pleasures.

וההפך, להתענג ולשמוח בה' על ידי התבוננות בגדולת אין סוף ברוך הוא כפי יכולתו

Conversely, one should train himself to delight and rejoice in G-d, by reflecting, to the best of his ability, on the greatness of the blessed *Ein Sof*.

אף שיודע בנפשו שלא יגיע למדרגה זו באמת לאמיתו, כי אם בדמיונות

He may well know that he will not attain this degree of loathing evil and delighting in G-dliness with the fullest measure of truth, but will only imagine it.

He will fancy that he truly abhors evil and delights in G-dliness; why, then, should he exert himself merely to produce a fantasy (especially in the service of G-d, where sincerity is essential)?

אף על פי כן הוא יעשה את שלו, לקיים את השבועה שמשביעים: תהי צדיק

Nevertheless, he should do his part to uphold the oath administered to him to “Be a *tzaddik*,”

וה' יעשה הטוב בעיניו

And G-d will do as He sees fit — whether to grant him the level of *tzaddik*, or not.

ועוד

Furthermore, emulating the *tzaddik* in loathing evil and delighting in G-d produces another benefit for the *Beinoni*:

שההרגל על כל דבר שלטון, ונעשה טבע שני

Habit reigns supreme in all matters; it becomes second nature.

וכשירגיל למאס את הרע, יהיה נמאס קצת באמת

Therefore, when one accustoms himself to loathe evil, he will begin to find it truly loathsome, to some extent.

וכשירגיל לשמח נפשו בה' על ידי התבוננות בגדולת ה'

And when he accustoms himself to rejoice in G-d through reflecting on His greatness,

הרי באתערותא דלתתא אתערותא דלעילא, וכולי האי ואולי יערה עליו רוח ממרום

then, [on the principle that] “an arousal of man below brings a corresponding arousal above,” perhaps after all this effort of his, “a spirit [*Ruach*] from above will descend upon him,”

ויזכה לבחינת רוח משרש איזה צדיק שתתעבר בו, לעבוד ה' בשמחה אמיתית

and it will be granted him that the [soul-level of] *Ruach*, originating in the soul of some *tzaddik*, will be “impregnated” in him, so that he may serve G-d with joy.

Kabbalah speaks of the soul of a *tzaddik* “impregnating” another’s soul with its faculties so that the latter may serve G-d as the *tzaddik* does. (This concept is somewhat akin to *gilgul* — transmigration — where a soul is attached to some object or animal, or another human being, except that in the case of *gilgul* the soul is chained to and dominated by the body to which it attaches, whereas in the case of “impregnation” it is not; the soul of the *tzaddik* serves merely as an additional spiritual charge for the soul of the recipient.)

In our context, the “impregnation” of the *Beinoni*’s soul with the (*Ruach* originating in) the *tzaddik*’s soul enables the *Beinoni* to experience a delight in G-d that he could not attain on his own.

דכתיב: שמחו צדיקים בה'

Thus is it written,<sup>10</sup> “Rejoice, O *tzaddikim*, in G-d.”

This alludes also to the idea that when two types of *tzaddikim* are joined together (the verse addresses *tzaddikim*, in the plural form), when the *Beinoni* — called a “lower-level *tzaddik*” — is impregnated with the soul of a *tzaddik* — a “higher-level *tzaddik*” — they *both* rejoice in G-d, for the *tzaddik* imparts his delight in G-dliness to the *Beinoni*.<sup>11</sup>

ותתקיים בו באמת השבועה שמשביעים: תהי צדיק

In this way, the oath charging him to “be a *tzaddik*” will be truly fulfilled.

FOOTNOTES <sup>1.</sup> *Yeshayahu* 59:2. <sup>2.</sup> *Tehillim* 5:12. <sup>3.</sup> *Sotah* 3a. <sup>4.</sup> *Berachot* 17a. <sup>5.</sup> *Bamidbar* 18:7. <sup>6.</sup> See further, ch. 43. <sup>7.</sup> Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar* 1b. <sup>8.</sup> This appears to be the Alter Rebbe’s intention in citing *Tikkunei Zohar*. However, the Rebbe remarks: “This bears examination.” Possibly, the Rebbe is implying doubt as to whether the Alter Rebbe understands the mention of *tzaddikim* in *Tikkunei Zohar* as referring to those souls born with the capacity to become *tzaddikim*, since the other qualities mentioned there — especially those that characterize the “*gibborim*, who prevail with

might over their *Yetzer Hara*” — are not hereditary, but are attained by dint of one’s efforts. On the other hand, “*gibborim*” may refer to souls that are inherently inclined toward *Gevurah*, as are “*chassidim*” toward *Chesed*, and so on. [9. Berachot 5a.](#) [10. Tehillim 97:12.](#) [11.](#) Yet, as the Rebbe points out, his own soul is not transformed (to the rank of the *tzaddik*); it is merely activated by the soul of the *tzaddik*. Thus, this does not contradict the statement: “You have created *tzaddikim*,” as explained above at length.



## Chapter 15

In the previous chapters, the Alter Rebbe discussed the difference between the *tzaddik* and the *Beinoni*. The *tzaddik* has no evil inclination. Since there is no longer any evil in his own soul, evil holds no attraction for him. In the *Beinoni*, however, the evil remains strong. The *Beinoni* therefore finds evil desirable, and it is only through the constant vigilance and struggle of his divine soul that he is able to prevent his animal soul from implementing its desires in thought, speech and action.

ובזה יובן מה שכתוב

With this distinction in mind, we may understand the verse:[1](#)

ושבתם וראיתם בין צדיק לרשע, בין עובד אלקים לאשר לא עבדו

“And you will return and see the difference between the righteous man and the wicked one, between he who serves G-d and he who serves Him not.”

The *Talmud*[2](#) raises the question: The term “righteous man” is identical with “he who serves G-d,” and “the wicked man” is obviously “he who serves Him not.” Why, then, does the text repeat the contrast? In answer, the *Talmud* states: “Both ‘he who serves G-d’ and ‘he who serves Him not’ are fully righteous; yet one who reviews his studies one hundred times cannot compare to he who reviews his studies 101 times.”[3](#)

However, this answer seems to clarify only the second set of seemingly repetitive terms — “the wicked man” and “he who serves Him not.” Far from being wicked, “he who serves Him not” is so described only because he reviews his Torah studies *no more than* 100 times. Yet we remain with the difficulty posed by the first set of identical descriptions — “the righteous man” and “he who serves G-d.” In fact, the above-quoted Talmudic interpretation of the verse adds yet a third category: “he who serves Him not,” yet is also righteous! It is this difficulty that the Alter Rebbe now resolves, based on his previous distinction between the *tzaddik* and the *Beinoni*.

שההפרש בין עובד אלקים לצדיק הוא שעובד הוא לשון הוה, שהוא באמצע העבודה



The difference between “he who serves G-d” (*oved*) and a righteous man (*tzaddik*) is that “he who serves G-d,” written in the present tense, describes one who is still presently laboring in his divine service.

שהיא המלחמה עם היצר הרע, להתגבר עליו, ולגרשו מהעיר קטנה

This service consists of the struggle against one’s evil nature with the aim of overpowering it, and banishing it from the “small city” i.e., the body, which is like a city whose conquest is the objective of both the good and the evil nature,<sup>4</sup>

שלא יתלבש באברי הגוף

so that it should not vest itself in the organs of the body through evil thought, speech or action.<sup>5</sup> Doing battle against his evil nature is the *avodah* (“service”) of “he who serves G-d.”

שהוא באמת עבודה ועמל גדול להלחם בו תמיד

This constant battle with one’s evil nature truly entails much effort (“service”) and toil.

והיינו הבינוני

This is the *Beinoni*.

It is he who must wage this battle; it is the *Beinoni* who is called “he who serves G-d,” for he is actively engaged *at present* in his service.

אבל הצדיק נקרא עבד ה' בשם התואר

The *tzaddik*, on the other hand, is designated “a servant (*eved*) of G-d,” as a title conferred on the person himself; it is not merely a description of one’s active role as is the designation “one who serves.”

כמו שם חכם או מלך, שכבר נעשה חכם או מלך

The term “servant” is similar to the title “sage” or “king”, bestowed on one who has already become a sage or king.

כך זה כבר עבד וגמר לגמרי עבודת המלחמה עם הרע, עד כי ויגרשהו וילך לו, ולבו חלל בקרבו

So, too, he (the *tzaddik*) has already effected and completely accomplished his “service” of waging war with the evil in him. He has banished it and it is gone from him, leaving the seat of evil nature in his heart<sup>6</sup> “void within him.” Having completed this task, the *tzaddik* has earned the title “servant of G-d.”

We now see that the expressions “a righteous man” and “he who serves G-d” are not repetitious; “he who serves G-d” is not a description of a *tzaddik* but of a *Beinoni*.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to discuss the difference between “he who serves G-d” and “he who serves Him not,” who, as the *Talmud* declares, is *not* wicked.

ובבינוני יש ג"כ שתי מדרגות, עובד אלקים ואשר לא עבדו

In the category of *Beinoni* there are also two levels: “He who serves G-d” and “he who serves Him not.”

ואף על פי כן אינו רשע

Yet he who “serves Him not” is not wicked, although he does not wage war with his evil nature,

כי לא עבר מימיו שום עבירה קלה

for never in his life has he committed even a minor transgression in the realm of negative commandments.

וגם קיים כל המצות שאפשר לו לקיימן, ותלמוד תורה כנגד כולם

He has also fulfilled all the positive commandments which he was able to fulfill, including the precept of Torah study — which is equal to all the other commandments combined—

ולא פסיק פומיה מגירסא

to the extent that his mouth never ceased from study, despite the difficulty involved in this.

אלא

Yet he is still described as one who “does not serve G-d,” for

שאינו עושה שום מלחמה עם היצר

he does not wage any battle against his evil inclination

לנצחו על ידי אור ה' המאיר על נפש האלקית שבמוח, השליט על הלב כנ"ל

to vanquish it through the aid of the Divine light that illuminates the G-dly soul abiding in the brain, which rules over the heart — as explained above<sup>7</sup> that the G-dly soul and the Divine light illuminating it are the *Beinoni*'s answer to his evil inclination. He (“who serves Him not”) does not struggle with it —

מפני שאין יצרו עומד לנגדו כלל לבטלו מתורתו ועבודתו, ואינו צריך ללחום עמו כלל

for his evil inclination does not oppose him at all in an attempt to deter him from his Torah study and divine service, and thus he need not wage any war against it.

כגון שהוא מתמיד בלמודו בטבעו מתולדתו, על ידי תגבורת המרה שחורה

So it is, for example, with one who is by nature an assiduous student due to his stolid temperament,

וכן אין לו מלחמה מתאות נשים מפני שהוא מצונן בטבעו

and who is also free of conflict with sexual desire due to his frigid nature;

וכן בשאר תענוגי עולם הזה הוא מחוסר הרגש הנאה בטבעו

and similarly with other mundane pleasures he need not exert himself to master a desire for them, for he naturally lacks any feeling for enjoyment.

ולכן אין צריך להתבונן כל כך בגדולת ה', להוליד מבינתו רוח דעת ויראת ה' במוחו

For this reason he does not need to contemplate so much on the greatness of G-d to consciously create a spirit of knowledge and fear of G-d in his mind

להשמר שלא לעבור על מצות לא תעשה

in order to guard himself from transgressing any prohibitive commandments.

ואהבת ה' בלבו, לדבקה בו בקיום המצות, ותלמוד תורה כנגד כולן

He also need not create a love of G-d in his heart, which would motivate him to bind himself to Him through fulfilling the positive commandments and through Torah study which equals all the other commandments together.

אלא די לו באהבה מסותרת אשר בלב כללות ישראל, שנקראו אוהבי שמו

The hidden love of G-d found in the heart of all Jews, who are called [8](#) “the lovers of His name,” is sufficient for him to motivate his fulfilling the commandments, since he is naturally so inclined.

For a Jew who must engage in battle with his evil inclination, the love hidden in his heart is not enough. He must arouse it to an active, conscious state. For the person who is free of conflict with evil, however, this hidden love (together with his naturally favorable character traits) is sufficient.

ולכן אינו נקרא עובד כלל

For this reason, he is not considered “one who is serving G-d” at all.

כי אהבה זו המסותרת אינה פעולתו ועבודתו כלל, אלא היא ירושתנו מאבותינו לכלל ישראל, וכמ”ש לקמן

For this latent love is not of his making or achievement by any means. It is our inheritance, bequeathed by our Patriarchs to the entire Jewish nation, as will be explained further.<sup>9</sup>

With this the Alter Rebbe concluded the thought that within the level of *Beinoni* there are two sub-categories — “he who serves G-d,” and “he who serves Him not.”

He now goes on to say that even one who is not naturally endowed with traits favorable to G-d’s service, may yet come under the category of “he who serves Him not.”

וכן אף מי שאינו מתמיד בלמודו בטבעו, רק שהרגיל עצמו ללמוד בהתמדה גדולה, ונעשה ההרגל לו טבע שני

So, too, he who is not inherently studious, but has accustomed himself to study diligently, so that this habit has become his second nature; thus, diligence is now natural for him,—

די לו באהבה מסותרת זו, אלא אם כן רוצה ללמוד יותר מרגילותו

for him, too, the hidden love of G-d is now sufficient, unless he wishes to study more than he usually does.

To do so, he must arouse a conscious love of G-d in his heart. Only such a love can supply the strength necessary to free himself from the restraints of his acquired nature.

ובזה יובן מ”ש בגמרא דעובד אלקים היינו מי ששונה פרקו מאה פעמים ואחד, ולא עבדו היינו מי ששונה פרקו מאה פעמים לבד

This explains the Talmudic statement<sup>10</sup> that “he who serves G-d” refers to one who revises his studies 101 times, while “he who serves Him not” refers to one who revises his studies only 100 times.

It seems strange that this 101st revision should outweigh all the previous hundred, and should earn the student the designation of “he who serves G-d.” However, when we appreciate the struggle one must face in order to learn more than is his custom, this is readily understood, as the Alter Rebbe goes on to explain.

והיינו משום שבימיהם היה הרגילות לשנות כל פרק מאה פעמים

This is so because in those Talmudic days, it was customary to review each lesson one hundred times.

Thus, to review one hundred times did not require any effort; it was second nature. Only the 101st revision, which required effort beyond the student's custom, could gain him the appellation of "he who serves G-d."

כדאיתא התם בגמרא משל משוק של חמרים, שנשכרים לעשר פרסי בזווא ולאחד עשר פרסי בתרי זוזי, מפני שהוא יותר מרגילותם

The *Talmud* illustrates this by the analogy of the market of the donkey drivers. The drivers would charge one *zuz* for ten *parsi* (Persian miles), but demanded *two zuz* for driving 11 *parsi*, for driving an eleventh mile exceeded their customary practice.

ולכן זאת הפעם המאה ואחת היתרה על הרגילות שהורגל מנעוריו שקולה כנגד כולן

Therefore, this 101st revision, which is beyond the normal practice to which the student has been accustomed since his childhood, is equivalent to all the previous one hundred revisions combined.

ועולה על גביהן ביתר שאת ויתר עז, להיות נקרא עובד אלקים

In fact its quality surpasses them in its greater strength and power, so that it is only this one extra revision which entitles the student to be called "he who serves G-d."

מפני שכדי לשנות טבע הרגילות, צריך לעורר את האהבה לה' על ידי שמתבונן בגדולת ה' במוחו

For in order to change his habitual nature he must arouse within himself the love of G-d, by contemplating G-d's greatness in his mind,

לשלוט על הטבע שבחלל השמאלי המלא דם הנפש הבהמית שמהקליפה

in order to master the nature that is in the left part of the heart, the seat of the animal soul, which is full of the blood of the animal soul originating in *kelipah*,

שממנה הוא הטבע

whence comes this nature; and the power of his love enables him to transcend his nature.

וזו היא עבודה תמה לבינוני

And this — to overpower one's animal soul through a love of G-d generated by meditation — is a perfect service for a *Beinoni*.

או לעורר את האהבה המסותרת שבלבו

An alternate type of service for a *Beinoni* is to arouse to a revealed state the love of G-d inherently found hidden in his heart,

למשול על ידה על הטבע שבחלל השמאלי

thereby to control the nature that is in the left part of the heart.

שזו נקרא גם כן עבודה

This, too, is called serving G-d, although an imperfect service—

להלחם עם הטבע והיצר על ידי שמעורר האהבה המסותרת בלבו

to wage war against his nature and inclination by arousing the love hidden in his heart.

מה שאין כן כשאין לו מלחמה כלל

If, however, he wages no war at all — not engaging even in the lesser struggle of arousing the love hidden within him, e.g., when he studies only to the limits of his natural diligence, then although he employs his hidden love of G-d in his divine service,<sup>11</sup> yet —

אין אהבה זו מצד עצמה נקראת עבודתו כלל

This love in itself can in no way be credited to his service and he is therefore called “he who serves Him not.”

To be designated “one who serves G-d,” the *Beinoni* must engage in a struggle with his evil inclination, either through a love of G-d born of meditation or at least by arousing his hidden love.

FOOTNOTES <sup>1.</sup> *Malachi* 3:18. <sup>2.</sup> *Chagigah* 9b. <sup>3.</sup> The significance of the 101st revision will be explained further in this chapter. <sup>4.</sup> *Kohelet* 9:14; *Nedarim* 32b; and see above, ch. 9. <sup>5.</sup> See ch. 12. <sup>6.</sup> See ch. 1. <sup>7.</sup> See chs. 12 and 13. <sup>8.</sup> *Tehillim* 69:37. <sup>9.</sup> Chs. 18, 19, and 44. <sup>10.</sup> *Chagigah* 9b. <sup>11.</sup> He must employ at least his hidden love of G-d to motivate him to study Torah, for although he may be studious by nature yet he still desires his bodily comforts more than the constant study that displaces them.



## Chapter 16

זוה כלל גדול בעבודת ה' לבינונים

This, then, is the important principle regarding the divine service of the *Beinoni*:

העיקר הוא למשול ולשלוט על הטבע שבחלל השמאלי

The essential thing is to govern and rule the nature that is in the left part of the heart,

על ידי אור ה' המאיר לנפש האלקית שבמוח

by means of the Divine light that illuminates the divine soul abiding in the brain,

ולשלוט על הלב

and to rule the desires of the heart.

To enable him to master his desires the *Beinoni* requires (in addition to the natural ability of one's mind to govern his heart) the help of the Divine light which illuminates his mind<sup>1</sup> upon contemplating G-d's greatness.

כשמתבונן במוחו בגדולת אין סוף ברוך הוא, להוליד מבינתו רוח דעת ויראת ה' במוחו

This mastery of one's nature and desires is achieved when he meditates in his mind on the greatness of the blessed Infinite G-d, so as to create through his understanding a spirit of knowledge and fear of G-d in his mind.

להיות סור מרע דאורייתא ודרבנן, ואפילו איסור קל של דבריהם חס ושלום

This knowledge and fear will cause him to turn away from the evil condemned by the Torah or by our Sages, even from a minor Rabbinic prohibition, heaven forbid.

ואהבת ה' בלבו בחלל הימני

Contemplation on G-d's greatness will bring about also a love of G-d which will reveal itself in the right part of his heart — the seat of the G-dly soul's emotional faculties,

בחשיקה וחפיצה לדבקה בו בקיום המצות דאורייתא ודרבנן, ותלמוד תורה שכנגד כולן

with a longing and desire to cleave to Him by fulfilling the precepts of the Torah and of the Rabbis, and the study of Torah which is equivalent to them all.

As the Alter Rebbe has already pointed out,<sup>2</sup> the commandments cannot be performed fully, that is, with the totality of one's being, unless the performance is motivated by love of G-d (for the fulfillment of the positive commandments) and fear of G-d (for avoiding transgression of the negative commandments). When one's observance is so motivated, his love and fear of G-d permeate the performance of the commandments, and enhance them with their power.

Seemingly, however, this is true only of a love and fear that are openly felt in one's heart. What if, despite one's efforts in meditating on G-d's greatness, he cannot excite himself to an arousal of love or fear of G-d? In answer, the Alter Rebbe now goes on to say that even if the love and fear born of one's meditation remain hidden in one's mind and heart

(in a state which the Alter Rebbe refers to as *tevunah* — an “intellectual love”), they still permeate his performance of the commandments, as though these emotions were open and aroused.

ויתר על כן צריך לידע כלל גדול בעבודה לבינונים

Furthermore, one must know an additional important principle in the *Beinoni*'s service of G-d:

שגם אם אין יד שכלו ורוח בינתו משגת להוליד אהבת ה' בהתגלות לבו

Even if one's intellect and understanding are incapable of producing a revealed love of G-d in his heart,

שיהיה לבו בוער כרשפי אש, וחפ' בחפיצה וחשיקה ותשוקה מורגשת בלב לדבקה בו

to make it burn as it ought with fiery flames, with a desire and a longing and a passion manifestly felt in the heart, to cleave to G-d;

רק האהבה מסותרת במוחו ותעלומות לבו

instead, the love is hidden in his mind and in the recesses of his heart\* —[3](#)

At this point the Alter Rebbe inserts a note, stating that one's inability to reveal the love in his heart does not indicate a fault in his meditation; the cause may well be inherent in the spiritual root of his soul.

הגהה

והסיבה לזה הוא מפני היות המוחין שלו ונפש רוח נשמה שלו מבחינת עיבור והעלם תוך התבונה, ולא מבחינת לידה והתגלות, כידוע ליודעי ח"ן

\*NOTE

The reason for this [inhibition] is that this person's intellect and *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah* derive from the so-called *ibbur* (conception) and concealment within the [Supernal] understanding, and not from the quality of *leidah* (birth) and revelation — as is known to those familiar with the Kabbalah.

END OF NOTE

Briefly, this means:

In human emotions born of the intellect (e.g., a love of G-d is “born” through meditation on G-d's greatness), there are two states: (1) where the emotion has already been born and revealed, and (2) an earlier stage, where the emotion is still part of the intellect. In



this latter state, the “emotion” consists merely of an intellectual inclination toward the object of one’s understanding.

These two stages are similarly found in the Divine attributes, to which the human emotions are analogous. The Divine attributes — the *middot* of kindness (*Chesed*), severity (*Gevurah*), etc. — prior to their existence in a revealed state, are concealed within and encompassed by the Supernal Intellect (*Binah*) which is their source. The soul, in turn, stems from the Divine attributes, and hence reflects their characteristics. Thus, those souls which derive from the attributes as they are in their revealed state possess the quality of revelation, i.e., they are capable of bringing their love of G-d into a revealed state; whereas the souls deriving from the concealed state of the attributes lack this capacity, and their emotions remain concealed within their intellect.

\* \* \*

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to describe a love of G-d as it is concealed within one’s intellect.

דהיינו שהלב מבין ברוח חכמה ובינה שבמוחו

This means that the heart comprehends, with the spirit of wisdom and understanding in the brain (i.e., instead of being excited with the love of G-d, as it ought to be, the heart merely experiences an *understanding* of)

גדולת אין סוף ברוך הוא, דכולא קמיה כלא חשיב ממש

the greatness of the blessed Infinite G-d, before Whom all else is as naught,

אשר על כן יאתה לו יתברך שתכלה אליו נפש כל חי לידבק ולהכלל באורו

for which reason it is fitting and due unto Him, blessed be He, that the soul of every living thing should pine for Him, to cleave to and become absorbed in His Divine light.

וגם נפשו ורוחו אשר בקרבו, כך יאתה להן, להיות כלות אליו בחשיקה וחפיצה לצאת מנרתקן הוא הגוף, לדבקה בו

It is likewise fitting for his own soul, the *Nefesh* and *Ruach* within him,<sup>4</sup> to languish for Him with a fervent desire to leave their sheath, i.e., the body, which surrounds and conceals the soul like a sheath, in order to cleave to Him.

רק שבעל כרחן חיות הנה בתוך הגוף, וצרורות בו כאלמנות חיות

So intensely, his thoughts continue, should his *Nefesh* and *Ruach* long for G-d, that only against their will do they dwell in the body; they are bound to it like deserted wives (literally, “living widows,” who are bound to their husbands and are forbidden to remarry as long as the husbands who left them are alive).

ולית מחשבה דילהון תפיסא ביה כלל, כי אם כאשר תפיסא ומתלבשת בתורה ובמצותיה

In their present state their thought cannot grasp G-d at all, except when it grasps and vests itself in the Torah and its commandments. By studying Torah and observing its commandments, one grasps G-d's Will and His wisdom, which are one with G-d Himself,

כמשל המחבק את המלך, הנזכר לעיל

as illustrated previously<sup>5</sup> by the example of one who embraces the king.

Although the king is dressed in his robes, this does not detract from the royal embrace; similarly, although the Torah and its commandments are clothed in material matters, yet, since they express G-d's Will and wisdom, when one grasps them it is as though he grasped G-d Himself.

ואי לזאת יאתה להן לחבקו בכל לב ונפש ומאד

All the above thoughts pass through his mind and heart, and lead him to resolve that: It is therefore fitting and proper for them — for his *Nefesh* and *Ruach* — to embrace G-d with all their heart, soul and might.

דהיינו קיום התרי"ג מצות במעשה ובדבור ובמחשבה, שהיא השגת וידיעת התורה כנזכר לעיל

This means, in a practical sense, to fulfill the 613 commandments in act, speech and thought, the thought being the comprehension and knowledge of the Torah, as explained above in the previous chapters, that through Torah and the commandments one grasps G-d Himself, so to speak.

Thus we see that what motivates this person's actual observance of the commandments is meditation on G-d's greatness; this brings about the realization that one ought to strive to bind himself to G-d — a bond which can be achieved only through the commandments.

הנה כשמעמיק בענין זה בתעלומת תבונות לבו ומוחו

Consequently, when the *Beinoni* ponders this subject in the recesses of his heart's and mind's understanding,

ופיו ולבו שוין

and his mouth and heart are in accord, i.e., what his heart feels, finds full expression in his speech,

שמקיים כן בפיו כפי אשר נגמר בתבונת לבו ומוחו

in that he fulfills with his mouth, in his speech, the resolve of his mind's and heart's understanding —

דהיינו להיות בתורת ה' הפצו, ויהגה בה יומם ולילה בפיו

namely, to direct his desire towards G-d's Torah, meditating on it day and night in oral study,

וכן הידים ושאר אברים מקיימים המצות כפי מה שנגמר בתבונת לבו ומוחו

and when his hands and other bodily organs, too, carry out the commandments, as was resolved in his mind's and heart's understanding;

הרי תבונה זו מתלבשת במעשה דבור ומחשבת התורה ומצותיה להיות להם בחינת מוחין וחיות וגדפין לפרהא לעילא

then when he implements his resolution this *tevunah* — the “intellectual emotion,” which cannot properly be called love or fear, but *tevunah*, literally, “understanding” — is clothed in the act, speech and thought of the Torah and its commandments, providing them with intellectual power, and vitality, and “wings” that enable them to soar on high,

for so it is written in the *Zohar*:<sup>6</sup> “Torah without love and fear (of G-d) does not soar aloft.”

כאלו עסק בהם בדחילו ורחימו ממש אשר בהתגלות לבו

The love and fear referred to as *tevunah*, although not heartfelt emotions, nevertheless serve as “wings” for one's Torah and *mitzvot* in the same way as if he practiced them with real fear and love as revealed in the heart,

בחפיצה וחשיקה ותשוקה מורגשת בלבו ונפשו הצמאה לה, מפני רשפי אש אהבתו שבלבו כנ"ל

(<sup>7</sup>in which case he would have performed them with a desire, fervor and passion that are felt in the heart and soul thirsting for G-d, due to the flaming love of G-d in his heart, as explained above — that a revealed love of G-d elevates one's Torah and *mitzvot*, by lending warmth and vitality to one's actions).

However, the statement that the *tevunah*-love too possesses this power requires further elucidation. When does the *tevunah*-love add to the quality of one's observance, that would enable it to elevate his actions? This the Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain.

הואיל ותבונה זו שבמוחו ותעלומות לבו היא המביאתו לעסוק בהם

For it is this *tevunah* in his mind and in the recesses of his heart that leads him to engage in the Torah and *mitzvot*, as explained above.

ולולי שהיה מתבונן בתבונה זו לא היה עוסק בהם כלל, אלא בצרכי גופו לבד

Had he not meditated on this *tevunah*, he would not have occupied himself with them at all, but with his physical needs alone.

וגם אם הוא מתמיד בלמודו בטבעו, אף על פי כן אוהב את גופו יותר בטבעו

(8Even if he is an assiduous student by nature, nevertheless he naturally loves his body more.)

What is it, then, that diverts one from his natural inclination to engage in his bodily wants, and that enables his diligence to overcome his physical self-love? It is the love of G-d — in this case, the hidden *tevunah*-love. For this reason, the *tevunah* provides his Torah and *mitzvot* with “wings”, enabling them to rise heavenward, as though motivated by a revealed and conscious love of G-d.

וזה רמזו רבותינו ז"ל

Our Sages, of blessed memory, hinted at this principle stated here, that the *tevunah*-love, too, has the power of elevating one's Torah and *mitzvot*

באמרם: מחשבה טובה הקב"ה מצרפה למעשה

when they said:<sup>9</sup> “The Holy One, blessed be He, joins a good thought to the deed.”

והוה ליה למימר: מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו עשאה

The simple meaning of the phrase, that when one intends to do a *mitzvah*, but is prevented from doing so, G-d ascribes it to him as though he had actually performed it, warrants the expression: “Torah considers him as though he had actually done it.”

Why the oblique expression, “G-d joins the thought to the deed,” which seems to indicate that the thought was indeed implemented, but that the action is somehow detached from it, and requires that G-d join the two together?

אלא הענין

The explanation, however, lies in the previously-mentioned principle:

כי דחילו ורחימו שבהתגלות לבו הם המתלבשים במעשה המצות, להחיותם לפרחא לעילא

It is the revealed fear and love of G-d in the heart that vest themselves in one's performance of the commandments, giving them vitality to soar on high.

כי הלב הוא גם כן חומרי, כשאר אברים שהם כלי המעשה

For the heart is also corporeal, like the other organs of the body which are the instruments of action.

Therefore, when one feels a palpable love in his heart — which indicates that the revelation in the soul has become “materialized” to the point where it can be experienced as a feeling of love in the corporeal heart — then this soul-revelation, this love, can also be received by and expressed in the other corporeal organs of the body. When it is so received, and when the organs act in accordance with the love in the heart, then this love lends vitality to these actions, for the heart is the source of vitality for all the organs, as the Alter Rebbe goes on to say.

אלא שהוא פנימי וחיות להם

The heart is, however, internal and is the organs’ source of vitality.

ולכן יכול להתלבש בהם להיות להם גופין להעלותם

Therefore, because the heart, in its corporeality, is close to the other organs, and also provides their vitality, it can clothe itself in their actions, to be their “wings”, elevating them.

As we see in practice: When one acts out of love, his hands suddenly become animated; for, as stated, when the soul’s revelation reaches the point where it is felt in a *revealed* love, it has become so materialized that it can be experienced in the other organs of the body, and can therefore animate their actions.

אך הדחילו ורחימו שבתבונות מוחו ותעלומות לבו הנ"ל

However, the above-mentioned fear and love that are in the intelligence of the brain and the recesses of the heart

גבהו דרכיהם למעלה מעלה מבחינת המעשה

are of a far higher order than the level of “action”.

ואי אפשר להם להתלבש בבחינת מעשה המצות, להיות להם בחינת מוחין וחיות, להעלותן לפרחא לעילא

Therefore, they cannot clothe themselves in the performance of the commandments, to become their intellectual power and vitality, to elevate them, so that they may soar on high;

The inability of the love to find expression beyond the mind — which is far more spiritual than the other organs — indicates that the revelation of soul present in the *tevunah*-love has not become materialized enough to affect the other, more corporeal organs. As we see, when one’s actions are motivated, not by the desire of his heart, but solely by his understanding that he ought to act in a particular manner, then his actions lack vitality. So it is too of the *tevunah*-love, and *tevunah*-fear; they are so far removed from the organs, that they are incapable of lending vitality to the actual performance of the *mitzvot*, and to elevate them thereby.

אם לא שהקב"ה מצרפן ומחברן לבחינת המעשה

if not for the fact that G-d joins and unites them together with the action, so that they may serve as its “wings”.

והן נקראות בשם מחשבה טובה, כי אינן דחילו ורחימו ממש בהתגלות לבו

They — the *tevunah*-fear and love — are called “good thought,” for they are not actual fear and love in a revealed state in the heart,

כי אם בתבונת מוחו ותעלומות לבו כנ"ל

but only in the intelligence of the brain and the recesses of the heart, as mentioned above;\* since they express themselves in the mind, they are called “good thought.”

This, then, is the allusion contained in the statement, “G-d joins the good thought to the deed”: G-d joins the “good thought” — the *tevunah*-love and fear — to the good deed (that one has actually performed), so that the deed is not separate from the thought, but instead is elevated by it.

In the following note, the Alter Rebbe states that this idea is expressed in the Kabbalah in terms of the *Sefirot* (the Divine attributes), and from this we may understand its parallel in the human faculties.

הגהה

וכמו שכתוב בזוהר וע' חיים, דתבונה אותיות ב"ן וב"ת שהן דחילו ורחימו

\*NOTE

Thus it is also written in the *Zohar* and *Etz Chayim*, that the Hebrew word תבונה (“understanding”) comprises the letters which form the words בן and בת (“son” and “daughter”), which, *in terms of human emotions*, represent love and fear.

ולפעמים התבונה יורדת להיות מוחין בנוקבא דזעיר אנפין, שהן אותיות התורה והמצות

Sometimes the *tevunah* descends to become the intelligence in the feminine aspect of the “small image” (*i.e., the recipient of the Divine middot, or attributes, which are referred to collectively as the “small image”*), which, *in the human sphere*, refers to the letters of Torah and *mitzvot*.

The normal order would be that the *tevunah* descend first to the “small image” (the *middot*) and thence to the “feminine aspect” (the attribute of *Malchut*). Sometimes, however, there is a direct flow from *Binah* to *Malchut*, bypassing the intervening *middot*. In terms of one’s service to G-d this means: The normal procedure should be that the understanding derived from one’s meditation should affect his emotions, arousing a love

and fear within him, and these emotions should, in turn, express themselves in one's actual performance of the commandments. There is, however, an alternative method of affecting one's actions — through the direct influence of the *tevunah*.

והמשכיל יבין

The initiated shall understand. *I.e., the kabbalistic references contained in the note will be more fully elucidated in the course of further study.*

#### END OF NOTE

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to say that the effect of G-d's joining the "good thought" of *tevunah* to one's good deeds, is that in this way the *mitzvot* are able to ascend to the World of *Beriah*. This is a "world of comprehension," and all the *mitzvot* motivated by emotions arising from an understanding of G-d's greatness ascend thereto. But even without this act of joining the good thought to the deed, one's Torah and *mitzvot* ascend to the (lower) World of *Yetzirah*, a "world of feeling," since one's performance is motivated (at the very least) by the inherent love and fear of G-d that is hidden in the heart of every Jew.

אך צירוף זה מצרף הקב"ה כדי להעלות מעשה המצות ועסק התורה, הנעשים על ידי מחשבה טובה הנ"ל, עד עולם הבריאה

But G-d effects this joining of *tevunah* to action in order to elevate the performance of the commandments and the Torah study — which are carried out through the influence of the "good thought" (*viz., the tevunah*) mentioned above — into the World of *Beriah*;

מקום עליית התורה והמצות הנעשים על ידי דחילו ורחימו שכליים, אשר בהתגלות לבו ממש

the World of *Beriah* being the level to which ascends the performance of Torah and *mitzvot* when motivated by a fear and love deriving from one's meditation, and which are truly revealed in one's heart.

אבל בלאו הכי נמי עולים לעולם היצירה על ידי דחילו ורחימו טבעיים המסותרים בלב כל ישראל בתולדותם, כמו שכתוב לקמן באריכות

However, even without this joining they rise to the World of *Yetzirah*, by means of the natural fear and love which are latent in the heart of all Jews from birth, as will be later explained at length.[10](#)

In summary: Even he who cannot create a conscious, palpable love and fear of G-d in his heart, can serve G-d with a perfect service through the *tevunah*-emotions. Thereby, too, his performance of the Torah and *mitzvot* will ascend to the same level as that motivated by a revealed love and fear of G-d.

#### FOOTNOTES

- [1.](#) See above, ch. 13.
- [2.](#) In ch. 4.
- [3.](#) Not to be confused with the “hidden love” mentioned in ch. 15. The love mentioned there is inherent, and cannot be said to constitute *avodah* — divine service — while in its latent (“hidden”) state. The love spoken of here is of man’s making and does, indeed, constitute *avodah*. It is “hidden” only in the sense that it is marked by the reserve characteristic of the intellect, and thus lacks the intensity and the force of expression of an emotionally-charged love.
- [4.](#) *Neshamah* is omitted here, for it is already alluded to in the “hidden love in the brain and the recesses of the heart,” just mentioned.
- [5.](#) Ch. 4.
- [6.](#) *Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 10.*
- [7.](#) Parentheses are in the original text.
- [8.](#) Parentheses are in the original text.
- [9.](#) Cf. *Kiddushin 40a.*
- [10.](#) Chs. 38, 39, 40.



## Chapter 17

ובזה יובן מה שכתוב

With this explanation — that even a fear and love of G-d which remain concealed in one’s mind and heart suffice to infuse one’s fulfillment of the commandments with vitality, thereby perfecting and elevating them, we will understand the verse:<sup>1</sup>

כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד, בפֿיך ובלבבך לעשותו

“For this thing is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.”

The verse states that it is easy for one to fulfill Torah and *mitzvot* with all three “garments” of the soul — thought, speech and action. The words “with your mouth” refer to speech, “with your heart” — to thought, and “that you may do it” refers to action. In a deeper sense, however, “your heart” refers not only to the power of thought, but also to the heart as the seat of the emotions — love, fear, and so on. The verse is telling us, then, that it is within easy reach of every Jew to fulfill the *mitzvot* with a feeling of awe and love of G-d. Concerning this, the Alter Rebbe poses the question:



דלכאורה הוא בלבבך נגד החוש שלנו

At first glance, [the statement that “this thing is very near to you]...in your heart” seems contrary to our experience — in our experience we find that it is no simple feat to acquire a spirit of love and fear of G-d.

והתורה היא נצחית

([2](#) Yet the Torah is eternal), [3](#) hence it could not refer only to Moses’ generation — “a generation of understanding” — but must hold true for our own age as well.

שאינן קרוב מאד הדבר, להפך לכו מתאוות עולם הזה לאהבת ה' באמת

In our experience we see that it is not a “very near thing” to change one’s heart from worldly desires to a sincere love of G-d, for by nature one is inclined toward the former.

And as is written in *The Duties of the Heart*, [4](#) “Desires for worldly pleasures are unable to dwell in the heart together with a love of G-d.” In order to attain a love of G-d, therefore, it is necessary for one to change his nature from one extreme to the other — by no means an easy matter!

וכמו שכתוב בגמרא: אטו יראה מילתא זוטרתא היא

Indeed, commenting on Moses’ statement: “What does G-d ask of you, but to fear Him?” the *Talmud* queries: [5](#) “Is fear of heaven a small matter?”

This indicates, as the Rebbe points out, that even in Moses’ generation (and surely in subsequent generations) it was no simple matter to acquire a fear of G-d.

וכל שכן אהבה

And if this is true of fear of G-d, then how much more so — a love of G-d, for fear of G-d is generally more easily attainable than love of G-d.

Thus, not only our experience, but also this quotation from the *Talmud* seems to contradict the verse which states that fear and love of G-d are “very near to you.”

וגם אמרו רז"ל דצדיקים דוקא לבם ברשותם

Moreover, our Sages also said [6](#) that only *tzaddikim* have control over their hearts — to arouse a love and fear of G-d whenever they so desire.

This latter quotation intensifies the question, as the Rebbe points out. Not only is it not “very near” to us to achieve a love of G-d, but on the contrary, it is possible only for *tzaddikim*, who are a minority. Surely the Torah does not address only *tzaddikim*; how,

then, can it state that a love of G-d is very near to us, indicating that our heart *is* in our control, that we *can* divert it from mundane desires to a love of G-d?

אלא דלעשותו רצונו לומר: האהבה המביאה לידי עשיית המצות בלבד

But the words “that you may do it” refer to a love which merely leads to the fulfillment of the commandments, although, strictly speaking, it is not an actual love.

The author thus interprets the words “that you may do it” as a qualification of the earlier phrase “for it is near to you...with your heart.” What is “near to you with your heart” (i.e., What sort of love is easily attainable)? That love which pertains to *action* (“that you may do it”).

Thereby we may also understand the order of the words in the verse. The words “in your mouth, in your heart, that you may do it” refer to the three “soul-garments” of thought, speech, and action, as we have observed earlier. However, the order in which they are listed in the verse is difficult to understand, for it seems to be neither an ascending order (action, speech, thought) nor a descending order (thought, speech, action). Why is the middle faculty, speech, put first, followed by thought (“in your heart”), and then action (“that you may do it”)? However, according to the interpretation of the words “that you may do it” given here, this is readily understood. These words follow immediately after the words “in your heart,” for they serve to explain and to qualify them: the love of which the verse speaks here (“in your heart”), is that which leads to action (“that you may do it”).

שהיא רעותא דלבא שבתעלומות לב, גם כי אינה בהתגלות לבו כרשפי אש

This means the hidden desire of the heart; even if it does not burn openly like a flaming fire, yet it can still lead one to fulfill the commandments.

ודבר זה קרוב מאד ונקל לכל אדם אשר יש לו מוח בקדקדו

This matter of arousing a love which remains hidden in the heart is very easy and very near to every man who has a brain in his head.

כי מוחו ברשותו, ויכול להתבונן בו בכל אשר יחפוץ

For his mind is under his control even if his heart is not, and with it he can meditate as he pleases, on any subject.

וכשיתבונן בו בגדולת אין סוף ברוך הוא, ממילא יוליד במוחו על כל פנים האהבה לה', לדבקה בו בקיום מצותיו ותורתו

If, then, he will contemplate with it on the greatness of the Almighty, he will inevitably generate — in his mind, at least — a love of G-d, to cleave to Him through the performance of His commandments and the study of His Torah.

וזה כל האדם, כי היום לעשותם כתיב, שהיום הוא עולם המעשה דוקא

This Torah study and fulfilling the *mitzvot* constitutes<sup>7</sup> “the whole purpose of man,” for it is written:<sup>8</sup> “I command you these *mitzvot*, that you do them this day” — “this day” referring specifically to this world of physical action.

The Alter Rebbe’s point is that the main objective in the commandment to love G-d lies, not in the love itself, but in the practical and wholehearted fulfillment of the commandments that is motivated by this love, for the main thing in this world is action.

ולמחר כו' כמו שכתוב במקום אחר

Only “tomorrow” i.e., in the afterlife is the time of reward,<sup>9</sup> as is explained elsewhere.

Hence the true love of G-d, which is in itself a partial reward for one’s serving Him, is not as important in this life as the actual performance of the *mitzvot*, which can be generated even by a love which remains hidden in the mind and heart. This, then, is the love referred to in the verse, “for it is very near to you in your heart that you may do it” — a love which, though it may not find overt expression in the heart, is yet sufficient to motivate the performance of the *mitzvot*, and within reach of every Jew.

How does this love motivate one to perform the commandments? This the Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain:

והמוח שליט בטבעו ותולדתו על חלל השמאלי שבלב, ועל פיו ועל כל האברים שהם כלי המעשה

The mind, by virtue of its inherent nature, is master over the left part of the heart, the seat of the animal soul, whence come one’s mundane desires and evil thoughts, and over the mouth and the other bodily organs, which are the instruments of action.

Hence by having — in his mind, at least — a love of G-d and a desire to fulfill the *mitzvot*, one can utilize the natural mastery of the mind to overcome the desires of his heart, and to motivate his mouth and other bodily organs to study Torah and fulfill its commandments. We thus see that this can be done even by one whose heart is not under his control, as is a *tzaddik*’s.

אם לא מי שהוא רשע באמת

This is true of everyone except he who is truly wicked — that is, not the *Beinoni* who is considered “like a *rasha*,” but one who is truly a *rasha*; in his case it cannot be said that his mind is master over his heart.

כמאמר רז"ל, שהרשעים הם ברשות לבם ואין לבם ברשותם כלל

On the contrary, our Sages state<sup>10</sup> that the wicked are under the control of their heart but their heart is not under their control at all — they are unable to master the desires of their heart, for their mind has no active control over it.

This also resolves an apparent contradiction. The statement, “*Tzaddikim* have control over their heart,” indicates that anyone of a lesser rank, including a *Beinoni*, is not in control of his heart, while the statement that only the wicked are “under the control of their heart,” implies that anyone outside the category of *rasha* — even a *Beinoni* — is in control of his heart. Where, then, does the *Beinoni* actually stand? The previous discussion of the mastery of mind over heart explains this point. There are actually not two alternatives — of either being in control of one’s heart or controlled by it — but three. The *tzaddik* controls his heart. He can arouse a love of G-d in his heart, *directly*, without resorting to his mind as a medium of influence. The *rasha*, on the other hand, not only does not control his heart, but is controlled by it. The *Beinoni*, although not in control of his heart, as is a *tzaddik*, rules his heart by way of his mind, which is under his control. To a certain extent, then, i.e., as regards the practical effect of his heart on his thought, speech, and action, the *Beinoni* does in fact control his heart. Therefore the Alter Rebbe says of the *rasha* “his heart is not under his control *at all*,” emphasizing that he is unable to influence his heart even by means of his mind.

The author previously stated that the ability of the mind to master the heart is natural and inherent in the mind. Why, then, do the wicked (*resha'im*) lack this capacity? He answers:

וזה עונש על גודל ועוצם עונם

This is a punishment for the enormity and potency of their sinfulness.

However, this raises another question: If they have in fact lost the ability to master their heart, how can it be “very near” to them to observe the *mitzvot* “with their heart”? In answer, the author states:

ולא דברה תורה במתים אלו שבחייהם קרוים מתים

The Torah does not speak of the dead, that is, those wicked ones who are considered dead<sup>11</sup> even during their lifetime.<sup>12</sup>

כי באמת אי אפשר לרשעים להתחיל לעבוד ה' בלי שיעשו תשובה על העבר תחלה

Indeed, it is impossible for the wicked to begin to serve G-d, that is, to observe the *mitzvot* out of a feeling of love and fear of G-d, without first repenting for their past,

לשבר הקליפות, שהם מסך מבדיל ומחיצה של ברזל המפסקת בינם לאביהם שבשמים

in order to shatter the *kelipot* that were created by their sins, which form a sundering curtain and an “iron wall” that interposes between them and their Father in Heaven.<sup>13</sup>

על ידי שבירת לבו ומרירת נפשו על חטאיו

How are these *kelipot* shattered? — By means of contriteness of heart and bitterness of soul over one's sins.

כמו שכתוב בזהר על פסוק: זבחי אלקים רוח נשברה לב נשבר וגו' שעל ידי לב נשבר, נשברה רוח הטומאה דסיטרא אחרא

As the *Zohar* interprets the verse,<sup>14</sup> “The sacrifices to the Almighty (*Elokim*) are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart...,” to mean that through one's breaking his heart the unclean spirit of the *sitra achra* (the *kelipot*) is broken, and *this* is the sacrifice that we offer to the Divine Name, *Elokim*.

When speaking of the sacrifices and the laws pertaining to them, the Torah mentions only the Divine Name *Havayeh* (as in the oft-repeated phrase describing the sacrifices: “an appealing fragrance to G-d (*Havayeh*)”). No mention is made of a sacrifice to the Divine Name, *Elokim*. What, asks the *Zohar*, does constitute a sacrifice to that Name? The *Zohar* interprets the previously quoted verse as answering this question. “The sacrifice to *Elokim* is a broken spirit” (i.e., breaking the spirit of the *sitra achra*; and this is accomplished by means of) “a broken and contrite heart.”

(עיין שם פרשת פינחס דף ר"מ, ופרשת ויקרא דף ה' ודף ה' עמוד א', ובפירוש הרמ"ז שם)

<sup>15</sup>(See *Zohar* on *Parshat Pinchas*, p. 240, and on *Parshat Vayikra*, p. 8 and p. 5a, and the commentary of Rabbi Moshe Zacuto thereon.)

Returning now to his original point, that the wicked cannot begin serving G-d with love and fear before repenting their sins, the Alter Rebbe says:

והיא בחינת תשובה תתאה, להעלות ה' תתאה להקימה מנפילתה שנפלה אל החיצונים

This is the lower category of repentance, whereby the lower letter *hei* is raised up from its fall into the forces of evil, the *kelipot*.

*Teshuvah* (repentance), spelled תשובה, forms the words “returning the *hei*”; this implies that repentance “returns” the *hei* of the Divine Name, *Havayeh* (*yud hei vav hei*), to its proper place. The higher category of *teshuvah* returns the “higher” (the first) *hei* to the *yud* preceding it, while the lower form of *teshuvah* returns the “lower” *hei* to the *vav* preceding it. The *teshuvah* mentioned earlier as a prerequisite for a love and fear of G-d, is of the lower category.

שהוא סוד גלות השכינה, כמאמר רז"ל: גלו לאדום שכינה עמהם

This fall of the lower *hei* of the Divine Name into the *kelipot* is the mystery of the *Shechinah* (the Divine Presence) in exile, as our Sages have said:<sup>16</sup> “When the Jews were exiled to Edom, the *Shechinah* went into exile with them.”

דהיינו כשאדם עושה מעשה אדום, מוריד וממשיך לשם בחינת וניצוץ אלקות המחיה את נפש רוח ונשמה שלו

In a spiritual sense, in terms of one's service to G-d, this statement means that when one acts like "Edom", the embodiment of evil, when he sins, he degrades and draws down to *Edom*, to the *kelipot*, the Divine spark which vitalizes his *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, and *Neshamah* with G-dly, holy life. In this way, the *Shechinah* within him is drawn into exile.

המלובשים בנפש הבהמית מהקליפה שבלבו שבחלל השמאלי, המולכת בו בעודו רשע ומושלת בעיר קטנה  
שלו

What constitutes "exile" in this case is the fact that the Divine spark gives life to his G-dly soul which is clothed in the animal soul of *kelipah* situated in the left part of his heart; and as long as he remains wicked, the animal soul reigns over him, dominating his "small city," his body. Thus the Divine spark within his G-dly soul is in exile in the *kelipah* of his animal soul.

ונר"נ כבושים בגולה אצלה

The *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah* are thus held captive in exile under it.

A captive not only lacks the freedom to act as he wishes, but is also forced to carry out the wishes of his captor. The Divine spark within the soul, however, although in exile, is still not in captivity. It has merely lost its ability to affect the person with its G-dly vitality.

וכשנשבר לבו בקרבו, ונשברה רוח הטומאה וסיטרא אחרא, ויתפרדו כו'

When the heart of the *rasha* is broken within him, and thereby the spirit of uncleanness and of the *sitra achra* are broken, and the forces of evil are dispersed,

היא קמה מנפילתה וגם נצבה, כמו שכתוב במקום אחר

then the lower *hei* of the Divine Name — the *Shechinah* — rises from its fall and stands firm, as discussed elsewhere.

Only when he repents and thereby frees the *Shechinah* from exile, and allows the Divine spark within him to affect his soul and body, may he begin to serve G-d with love and fear.

\* \* \*

In summary: It is indeed "very near" to us to love and fear G-d, for we are able to create at least an "intellectual emotion" by means of our mind, which is under our control even if our heart is not. However, this does not apply to the *rasha*, who is a slave to the desires of his animal soul, and must repent before beginning to serve G-d with love and fear.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Devarim* 30:14. [2.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [3.](#) Maimonides, *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah*, 9:1. [4.](#) *Chovot HaLevavot*, introduction to *Shaar Ahavat HaShem*. [5.](#) *Berachot* 33b; *Megillah* 25a. [6.](#) *Bereishit Rabbah* 34:10; 67:8. [7.](#) *Kohelet* 12:13. [8.](#) *Devarim* 7:11. [9.](#) *Eruvin* 22a. [10.](#) *Bereishit Rabbah* 34:10; 67:8. [11.](#) *Berachot* 18b. [12.](#) The Rebbe notes that in the following sentences the Alter Rebbe addresses a difficulty which arises from his previous statement concerning the *rasha*: If indeed, the mind of the *rasha* is under the control of his heart, and if the heart is naturally inclined, not toward love and fear of G-d (in any form, not even a love which remains hidden in the mind) but toward material pleasures, then (a) It is not only “far”, but in fact *impossible* for him to acquire a love or fear of G-d; (b) It will remain impossible for him *forever*, G-d forbid, for what will arouse him to love and fear once he has lost control over his mind, which is the medium of influence on the heart? Indeed, answers the Alter Rebbe; in his present state, it is in fact impossible for the *rasha* to attain a love or fear of G-d. But it is in his hands to change this state of affairs — through repentance, which destroys the evil in his *heart*. In this way, the *rasha* tackles the problem at its source. Once his heart rules him no longer, his mind is free to influence it, and to arouse a love and fear of G-d. [13.](#) Cf. *Yeshayahu* 59:2. [14.](#) *Tehillim* 51:19; *Zohar* II, 116b. [15.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [16.](#) Cf. *Megillah* 29a.



## Chapter 18

In the previous chapter the Alter Rebbe discussed the verse, [1](#) “For this thing is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it” (i.e., it is simple for you to fulfill the *mitzvot* with your heart, with love and awe of G-d). He explained that through contemplating G-d’s greatness every person can come to experience such love and awe. Not every man, to be sure, is a *tzaddik*, with his heart under his control. But everyone’s mind *is* under his control, and he can focus his mind in meditation on any subject he chooses. Even if the love and awe produced by such meditation do not make themselves felt in the heart in a revealed way, they will at least appear in his mind, and in the recesses of his heart, as an *attitude* of love and awe. Even this detached form of love and awe is sufficient to motivate one to observe the *mitzvot*, and will enable the *mitzvot* so motivated to soar heavenward as though he had observed them with a true love and awe of G-d actually felt in the heart.

But it cannot truly be said of love and awe which must be created by way of meditation, that their attainment is “very near” to everyone. Meditation requires knowledge of the subject at hand, and intellectual predisposition. If one’s understanding of G-d’s greatness is scant, or if he lacks the intellectual capacity for meditation, how is it “very near” to him to observe the *mitzvot* with love and awe of G-d?

In the following chapters the Alter Rebbe will therefore explain an alternative method of attaining the love and awe of G-d, a method that may be used even by one with the aforementioned shortcomings. It consists of arousing the natural love of G-d that lies hidden in the heart of every Jew, a love that is his birthright, his inheritance from our Patriarchs. No meditation is needed to arouse it; all that is required of him is to recall and to make himself aware of this love — and he will be motivated by this recollection to observe the *mitzvot*. Since no meditation is required to create them, such love and awe of G-d are indeed “very near.” They are accessible to all.

ולתוספת ביאור באר היטב מלת מאד שבפסוק: כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד וגו'

To explain more clearly and more precisely the word “very” in the verse,<sup>2</sup> “For this thing is very near to you...,”

The word “very” indicates that it is an extremely simple matter to serve G-d “with one’s heart” — with love and fear of G-d. In the previous chapter the Alter Rebbe explained that a love of G-d is readily attainable through meditation on G-d’s greatness, whereby one can generate at least an “intellectual love” — *tevunah*. Yet it cannot be said of profound meditation that it is “very near to you.”

צריך לידע נאמנה כי אף מי שדעתו קצרה בידיעת ה', ואין לו לב להבין בגדולת אין סוף ברוך הוא

one should recognize with certainty that even the person who has only a limited understanding of G-d’s greatness, so that he lacks the materials necessary for meditation, and he has no heart to comprehend the greatness of the blessed infinite G-d — his mind and heart are not suited to meditation, so that he lacks the tools of meditation,

להוליד ממנה דחילו ורחימו, אפילו במוחו ותבונתו לבד

to produce, through meditation, a fear and love even in his mind and understanding alone — how much more so is he unable to produce a vibrant, fervent love and fear:

אף על פי כן קרוב אליו הדבר מאד לשמור ולעשות כל מצות התורה, ותלמוד תורה כנגד כולן

yet it is a “very near thing” for him to guard himself from transgressing the prohibitive commandments, through a fear of G-d, and to practice the positive commandments, which require a love of G-d — these together comprising all the commandments of the Torah, and in particular the study of Torah which counterbalances them all.

בפיו ובלבבו ממש, מעומקא דלבא באמת לאמיתו, בדחילו ורחימו

He can fulfill all this in his mouth and in his heart — in the true sense of “heart” — that is, not only in the superficial sense of the word “heart,” which means to say “in his thoughts”; but in the true sense of “with heart” — namely, “with feeling,” from the depths of his heart, in absolute sincerity, with love and fear, as opposed to the *tevunah*-



emotions, which cannot properly be called love and fear; they are so designated only insofar as they motivate one's actions.

The love and fear of which the Alter Rebbe will now speak are emotions in the fullest sense of the word. But how can one acquire a true love and fear of G-d if he is incapable of meditation? In answer, the author continues:

שהיא אהבה מסותרת שבלב כללות ישראל שהיא ירושה לנו מאבותינו

This is the hidden love present in the heart of all Jews, which is an inheritance to us from our Patriarchs.

Since every Jew already possesses this love as an inheritance, he need not create it through meditation; all that is required of him is that he arouse it and implement it in his observance of the *mitzvot*. In order to explain how one goes about doing so, the author first discusses the characteristics of this love.

רק שצריך לבאר ולהקדים תחלה באר היטב שרש אהבה זו ועניינה

But we must first preface a clear and precise explanation of the origin of this love, i.e., which level of the soul it stems from, and its character, i.e., what sort of striving this love constitutes.

There is a love of G-d which seeks a unity with G-d while still remaining a separate entity — a soul clothed in a body; there is another kind of love which is a yearning for self-extinction; and so forth. What drive is contained in this love which is our inheritance?

ואיך היא ירושה לנו, ואיך נכלל בה גם דחילו

Also, how did this love become our inheritance? How does one inherit a love? And how is fear also incorporated in it?

For, as stated previously, observance of the prohibitive commandments requires a fear of G-d. Therefore, the statement that the hidden *love* in every Jew will lead him to observe *all* the commandments, implies that this love also contains an element of awe.

והענין: כי האבות הן הן המרכבה

The explanation is as follows:<sup>3</sup> The Patriarchs were truly the “chariot” of G-d, i.e., they were completely subservient to Him and had no other will but the Divine Will, just as a chariot has no will of its own but is directed solely by the will of the rider.

ועל כן זכו להמשיך נפש רוח ונשמה לבניהם אחריהם עד עולם, מעשר ספירות דקדושה שבארבע עולמות אצילות בריאה יצירה עשיה, לכל אחד ואחד כפי מדרגתו וכפי מעשיו

Therefore, they merited the privilege of drawing down, for all subsequent generations of their descendants, forever, a *Nefesh, Ruach* and *Neshamah* from the ten holy *Sefirot* of the Four Worlds of *Atzilut, Beriah, Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*.<sup>4</sup> In which of the Four Worlds, and from which *Sefirah* within these Worlds, does the soul originate? Each individual — according to his level and according to his deeds.

“His level” refers to the level of the *root* of his soul; “his deeds” refers to one’s efforts towards refining himself — as the *Zohar* states: “When one better himself, he is given a higher order of soul.”

ועל כל פנים אפילו לקל שבקלים ופושעי ישראל נמשך בזיווגם נפש דנפש דמלכות דעשיה

At any rate, even the unworthiest and most sinful Jews draw down, by their marital union, a *Nefesh* from the level of *Nefesh* of *Malchut deAsiyah* (“the Attribute of Royalty in the World of Action”).

This means to say that the union of every Jewish couple, no matter how low their spiritual level, brings forth a soul from, at the very least, the lowest level of holiness. This lowest level is *Nefesh deMalchut deAsiyah*. For *Asiyah* is the lowest of the Four Worlds, and *Malchut* is the lowest *Sefirah* within that World. *Malchut* itself is further composed of three levels — *Nefesh, Ruach* and *Neshamah*, *Nefesh* being the lowest of the three. In addition, as we have seen in the previous chapters, the soul itself consists of the three levels of *Nefesh, Ruach* and *Neshamah*. Thus, one who has been given only a *Nefesh* which stems from *Nefesh deMalchut deAsiyah*, has the lowest order of soul deriving from the lowest level in the spiritual hierarchy — as the Alter Rebbe now goes on to say.

שהיא מדרגה התחתונה שבקדושת העשיה

This is the lowest level of holiness in the world of *Asiyah*.

ואף על פי כן, מאחר שהיא מעשר ספירות קדושות

Yet, since [*Malchut*] is one of the ten holy *Sefirot*, and since holiness is the realm of unity, where every level is comprised of all the other levels, perforce

היא כלולה מכולן, גם מחכמה דעשיה

it (the lowest level in *Asiyah*) is compounded of all the other levels in *Asiyah*, including *Chochmah deAsiyah* (“Wisdom of the World of Action”), the highest *Sefirah* in *Asiyah*.

שבתוכה מלובשת חכמה דמלכות דאצילות

Within [*Chochmah deAsiyah*] is clothed *Chochmah deMalchut deAtzilut* (“Wisdom of Royalty in the World of Emanation”).

As the author explains in ch. 52, the *Sefirah* of *Malchut deAtzilut* clothes itself in, and illuminates, the World of *Asiyah*. Since *Malchut deAtzilut* contains all the *Sefirot* of *Atzilut*, the illumination of *Asiyah* by *Malchut* thus means that each *Sefirah* of *Atzilut* as it is contained in *Malchut deAtzilut*, garbs itself in the corresponding *Sefirah* of *Asiyah* — *Chochmah deMalchut deAtzilut* in *Chochmah deAsiyah*, *Binah deMalchut deAtzilut* in *Binah deAsiyah*, and so forth.

שבתוכה חכמה דאצילות, שבה מאיר אור אין סוף ברוך הוא ממש

In *Chochmah deMalchut deAtzilut* is clothed *Chochmah deAtzilut*, since all the *Sefirot* of *Atzilut* incorporate each other, which, in turn, is illuminated by the actual light of the blessed *Ein Sof*,

דכתיב: ה' בחכמה יסד ארץ, וכולם בחכמה עשית

as it is written,<sup>5</sup> “G-d, in His wisdom, founded the earth”; The words “G-d in His wisdom” show that the light of the *Ein Sof* illuminates the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah*, while the words “wisdom founded the earth” indicate that *Chochmah* is clothed in *Malchut*, which is called “earth” (for, like the earth, *Malchut* is the lowest level in its hierarchy); and it is further written,<sup>6</sup> “In wisdom you have made them all” (the word “made” indicating that *Chochmah* is clothed in *Asiyah* — action).

ונמצא כי אין סוף ברוך הוא מלוּבש בבחינת חכמה שבנפש האדם, יהיה מי שיהיה מישראל

Thus we see that the light of the blessed *Ein Sof* is garbed in the faculty of wisdom in the human soul, of whatever sort of a Jew he may be. (Further in the chapter, the Alter Rebbe explains why it is the faculty of wisdom in the soul that receives the illumination of the *Ein Sof*.)

ובחינת החכמה שבה, עם אור אין סוף ברוך הוא המלוּבש בה, מתפשטת בכל בחינת הנפש כולה להחיותה מבחינת ראשה עד בחינת רגלה

In turn, the soul's faculty of wisdom, together with the light of the blessed *Ein Sof* that is garbed in it, suffuses all the levels of the soul in its entirety, from head to foot, as it were, i.e., from the highest level of the soul to the lowest, to animate them with G-dly vitality,

דכתיב: החכמה תחיה בעליה

as it is written,<sup>7</sup> “Wisdom gives life to those who possess it” — the soul, which possesses the faculty of wisdom, receives its life by means of this faculty, as stated above.

ולפעמים ממשיכים פושעי ישראל נשמות גבוהות מאד שהיו בעמקי הקליפות, כמו שכתוב בספר גלגולים

(<sup>8</sup>At times, the sinners of Israel may even bring down for their children very lofty souls which had been in the depths of the *kelipot*, as is explained in *Sefer Gilgulim*.)<sup>9</sup>

A soul that has fallen captive in the hands of the *kelipot* remains in this state until the *kelipot* release it of their own will. Anything in the hold of the *kelipot* cannot be wrested from them against their will, for the principle that<sup>10</sup> “G-d does not make unjustifiable demands of His creations,” holds true even with regard to *kelipot*. In the case of a child to be born to sinful parents, the *kelipot* willingly release the soul, in the hope that such a child will be influenced by its parents, and will become a sinner like them. In this way, the *kelipot* stand to extract an even greater measure of vitality from the holiness of the soul by means of its eventual sins. However, having such a lofty soul, the child is able to overcome the obstacles imposed by its parents’ wickedness, and may rise to the level of a *tzaddik*. In this way, paradoxically, it comes to pass that a *tzaddik* may be born to wicked parents *because* of their wickedness.<sup>11</sup>

Returning to his original point, that every Jew has a soul which stems from the holy *Sefirot*, and that ultimately each soul is animated by the light of the *Ein Sof* by way of the soul’s faculty of wisdom (*Chochmah*), the Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain why it is *Chochmah* that is the original recipient of the light of the *Ein Sof*. The explanation is based on a discussion of the nature of the soul’s faculty of wisdom, which now follows:

הנה החכמה היא מקור השכל וההבנה

Now *Chochmah* which, as explained in ch. 3, is the initial flash of intellect, the nebulous, seminal glimmer of an idea, is the source of intelligence and comprehension which first begin to emerge in the faculty of *Binah*, for, as explained there, *Binah* represents the ability to grasp an idea in all its details and ramifications;

והיא למעלה מהבינה, שהוא הבנת השכל והשגתו

it is higher than *Binah*, which is the faculty of understanding an idea and grasping it.

והחכמה היא למעלה מההבנה וההשגה, והיא מקור להן

So that in its relation to the soul’s lower faculties, this single level of *Chochmah* comprises two opposite aspects: On one hand *Chochmah* is above comprehension and understanding — thus it transcends the lower faculties of the soul, and it is this aspect of *Chochmah* which enables it to be the recipient of the light of the *Ein Sof*, as will soon be explained; while on the other hand *Chochmah* is the source of intelligence and comprehension and is thus connected to the lower faculties.

It is this latter aspect of *Chochmah* which enables it to suffuse the entire soul (as stated earlier), and, in its active state, to affect even one’s thought, speech and action (which are even lower than the soul’s lowest faculties, being merely the “garments”, the organs of expression, for the soul), as will be stated further, in ch. 19.

וזהו לשון חכמה כ"ח מ"ה, שהוא מה שאינו מושג ומוכן ואינו נתפס בהשגה עדיין

The etymological composition of the word *Chochmah* indicates this dual nature. *Chochmah* contains two words: מ"ה כ"ח — “the faculty of the unknown.” (Literally, מה means “What?” — as one would ask of something he cannot comprehend, “What is it?”) Hence, while it is an intellectual faculty (and thus related to the other, lower faculties, yet it is a faculty which cannot as yet be comprehended or grasped by the intellect, and is therefore also above and beyond the others.<sup>12</sup>

ולכן מתלבש בה אור אין סוף ברוך הוא, דלית מחשבה תפיסא ביה כלל

For this reason, the light of the *Ein Sof*, blessed be He, who can in no way be comprehended by any thought, is vested in *Chochmah*.

Those faculties whose functions are intelligence and comprehension cannot serve as receptacles for the light of the *Ein Sof*, for knowledge cannot grasp the unknowable. Only *Chochmah*, which itself is higher than comprehension, can receive this light.

ולכן כל ישראל אפילו הנשים ועמי הארץ הם מאמינים בה', שהאמונה היא למעלה מן הדעת וההשגה

Hence all Jews, even the women and the illiterate, who have no knowledge of G-d's greatness, believe in G-d, since faith is beyond understanding and comprehension; i.e., faith represents the ability to grasp that which the intellect cannot.

כי פתי יאמין לכל דבר, וערום יבין וגו'

For, as Scripture states:<sup>13</sup> “The fool believes everything, but the clever man understands.”

That is, the fool, lacking understanding, grasps every subject through the medium of faith, while the clever man's grasp is based on reason. However, this derogation of the fool for approaching every idea with faith, can apply only where the subject of his belief is within the grasp of reason. In this case, the basis for his faith is his own lack of understanding, and he is therefore called a fool. When dealing with G-dliness, however, which is essentially beyond comprehension, there is no other approach, as the Alter Rebbe goes on to say:

ולגבי הקב"ה, שהוא למעלה מן השכל והדעת, ולית מחשבה תפיסא ביה כלל, הכל כפתיים אצלו יתברך

In relation to the Almighty, Who is beyond intelligence and knowledge, and Who can in no way be comprehended by any thought — all men are like fools before Him, and they can therefore grasp Him only through faith.

כדכתיב: ואני בער ולא אדע, בהמות הייתי עמך, ואני תמיד עמך וגו'

As it is written,<sup>14</sup> “I am foolish and ignorant, I am as a beast before You — and I am constantly with You...”

כלומר שבזה שאני בער ובהמות, אני תמיד עמך

meaning that “*because* I approach You as a fool and a beast — i.e., through the irrational power of faith — precisely therefore and thereby am I constantly with You.”

ולכן אפילו קל שבקלים ופושעי ישראל מוסרים נפשם על קדושת ה' על הרוב, וסובלים עינוים קשים, שלא לכפור בה' אחד

Therefore, as a rule, even the most worthless of the worthless and the sinners among Israel sacrifice their lives for the sanctity of G-d's Name and suffer harsh torture rather than deny G-d's unity,

ואף אם הם בורים ועמי הארץ ואין יודעים גדולת ה'

even if they be boors and illiterates who are ignorant of G-d's greatness.

וגם במעט שיודעים אין מתבוננים כלל, ואין מוסרים נפשם מחמת דעת והתבוננות בה' כלל

Even the little knowledge that they do possess is not what motivates them, for they do not delve into it at all; so that by no means does their self-sacrifice result from any knowledge or contemplation of G-d.

אלא בלי שום דעת והתבוננות, רק כאלו הוא דבר שאי אפשר כלל לכפור בה' אחד

Rather, they are prepared to sacrifice their lives without any knowledge or reflection, but as though it were absolutely impossible to renounce the one G-d,

בלי שום טעם וטענה ומענה כלל

without any reason or rational argument whatsoever.

Were their readiness to face martyrdom intellectually motivated, the benefits and costs of the act would first be carefully weighed. But in fact we see that the decision to sacrifice oneself is not based on such rational arguments, stemming instead from a non-intellectual resolve that it is simply impossible to do otherwise.

והיינו משום שה' אחד מאיר ומחיה כל הנפש

This is so because the one G-d illuminates and animates the entire soul,

על ידי התלבשותו בבחינת חכמה שבה, שהיא למעלה מן הדעת והשכל המושג ומובן

through being clothed in its faculty of *Chochmah*, which is beyond any graspable knowledge or intelligence.

Since the light of the *Ein Sof* is vested in every Jew's soul, everyone, regardless of his level of knowledge, is prepared to sacrifice his life for his faith in G-d.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Devarim* 30:14. [2.](#) *Devarim* 30:14. [3.](#) See ch. 23. [4.](#) These terms are explained above, ch. 2. [5.](#) *Mishlei* 3:19. [6.](#) *Tehillim* 104:24. [7.](#) *Kohelet* 7:12. [8.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [9.](#) *Book on Transmigration*, by R. Chayim Vital. [10.](#) *Avodah Zarah* 3a. [11.](#) The relevance of this point here is clarified by the explanation given by the Rebbe of the final passage of ch. 2. See there. [12.](#) Our interpretation of the foregoing passage follows a comment by the Rebbe where the Rebbe dismisses the notion that the Alter Rebbe speaks here of two sub-levels within *Chochmah*. The Rebbe maintains that neither the context nor the wording permit such an interpretation. [13.](#) *Mishlei* 14:14. [14.](#) *Tehillim* 73:22-23.

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## Chapter 19

In the previous chapter the Alter Rebbe began to discuss the “hidden love of G-d” inherent in every Jew, by virtue of which it is indeed “very near” to us to fulfill all the commandments out of a spirit of love and awe of G-d. He stated that this love originates in the divine soul's faculty of *Chochmah* where the light of *Ein Sof* is vested, and that it is this love which causes every Jew to choose death rather than repudiate his faith in G-d. It was further explained that the divine soul, and thus also the love of G-d intrinsic to it, is every Jew's inheritance from the Patriarchs, who merited to bequeath it to their descendants, eternally.

Thus, of the four questions raised in the previous chapter concerning the “hidden love,” two have been answered: (1) What is the root of this love? (2) How did we come to inherit it?

Two questions remain: (1) What is the nature of this love (i.e., what does it strive for)? (2) How is fear of G-d incorporated in it?

They will be dealt with in this chapter.

ולתוספת ביאור צריך לבאר היטב מה שכתוב: נר ה' נשמת אדם

To further elucidate [the nature of the “hidden love”], it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the verse,<sup>1</sup> “The soul (*Neshamah*) of man is a candle of G-d.”

פירוש: שישראל, הקרוים אדם, נשמתם היא למשל כאור הנר

This means that the souls of Jews, who are called “man”, (as our Sages remark,<sup>2</sup> “You — the Jewish people — are called ‘man’”) are, by way of illustration, like the flame of a candle

שמתנענע תמיד למעלה בטבעו

whose nature it is always to flicker upwards;

מפני שאור האש חפץ בטבע ליפרד מהפתילה, ולידבק בשרשו למעלה ביסוד האש הכללי שתחת גלגל הירח, כמו שכתוב בעץ חיים

for the flame of the fire intrinsically seeks to part from the wick that holds it, and to unite with its source above — in the universal element of Fire which is in the sublunar sphere, as is explained in *Etz Chayim*.

The four elements — Earth, Water, Air, and Fire — are so positioned that the higher and more ethereal elements surround and encompass the lower, coarser elements.

Earth is the coarsest of the elements; it is therefore physically the lowest. Water, the next highest element, should, by right, surround and be located above the earth: it is only because of G-d’s kindness that the earth is above the waters, as it is written:<sup>3</sup> “He spreads the earth over the waters, for His kindness is everlasting.” The element of Air is higher than Water and therefore surrounds it. Fire, the highest element, surrounds the entire atmosphere and is found in the sublunar sphere. The flame’s constant drawing upwards thus represents its desire to unite with its source.

ואף שעל ידי זה יכבה ולא יאיר כלום למטה, וגם למעלה בשרשו יתבטל אורו במציאות בשרשו

Although thereby — by parting from the wick and becoming part of its source — it would be extinguished, and would emit no light at all here below; also above, in its source, its identity would be lost within that of its source.

I.e., it would cease to be a luminary — for since a candle is ineffective in illuminating its environment when surrounded by the overwhelmingly greater brilliance of daylight, surely within the element of fire itself its identity is completely nullified. The flame’s striving to unite with its source cannot, therefore, be construed as seeking a higher form of existence. Furthermore, this desire for unification with its source which can be achieved only through self-annihilation, defies the axiom that “Every existing being desires its continued existence.” Logically, then, the flame ought not to draw upwards, to its source.

אף על פי כן, בכך הוא חפץ בטבעו

Yet this is what it “desires” by nature, i.e., it constantly strains upwards as though this were its conscious “desire”.



כך נשמת האדם, וכן בהינת רוח ונפש

Just as the candle constantly seeks to reunite with its source, so also the *Neshamah* of a Jew, and also the levels of *Ruach* and *Nefesh*.

Although the verse states that the *Neshamah* of man is the candle of G-d, this comparison is not limited to one within whom the higher soul-level of *Neshamah* is actively revealed. The word *Neshamah* is used here in the broader sense of “soul”, which includes also the levels of *Ruach* and *Nefesh*; thus the analogy of the candle extends also to those within whom only the lower soul-level of *Ruach* or *Nefesh* is revealed.

חפצה וחשקה בטבעה ליפרד ולצאת מן הגוף, ולידבק בשרשה ומקורה בה' חיי החיים ברוך הוא

[The soul] naturally desires and yearns to separate itself and depart from the body, and to unite with its origin and source in G-d, blessed be He, Who is the fountainhead of all life.

The soul whose very essence is life is thus especially drawn to G-d, the Source of all life, and desires to sever its connection with the body which hinders its ability to become one with G-d.

הגם שתהיה אין ואפס ותתבטל שם במציאות לגמרי, ולא ישאר ממנה מאומה ממהותה ועצמותה הראשון

Though thereby it would become null and naught, and its identity would there — in its source — be completely nullified, with nothing at all remaining of its original essence and self,

אף על פי כן זה רצונה וחפצה בטבעה

yet this is its will and desire by its nature.

Note the expression, “with nothing at all remaining of its original self.” Unity with its source would not cause the soul to cease to exist. On the contrary, this is the soul’s true quintessence. However, in this state the soul ceases to exist as it exists while clothed in the body — a distinct entity, with its own intellectual and emotional powers, and so on. Therefore it cannot be postulated that the soul’s yearning to unite with its essence merely represents a desire for self-elevation, for self-elevation is possible only where the original self remains. For example, a person may well strive to better himself — to become wiser, stronger, etc. — but he cannot strive to become something which is not himself (e.g., an angel). Why then should the soul desire to leave the body and unite with its source, since this union causes the cessation of its original self? Indeed, there is no rational explanation for this desire. It comes only as a result of the soul’s intrinsic nature.

The term “nature” is usually used derogatorily, in the sense that it denotes irrationality (phenomena lacking any rational basis are usually ascribed to “nature”). In our case, however, the term is used complimentarily, as it describes the soul’s *supra*-rational desire. This the Alter Rebbe now goes on to say:

וטבע זה הוא שם המושאל לכל דבר שאינו בבחינת טעם ודעת

“Nature” is an applied term for anything that is not in the realm of reason and comprehension.

וגם כאן הכוונה שרצון וחפץ זה בנפש אינו בבחינת טעם ודעת ושכל מושג ומובן, אלא למעלה מהדעת ושכל המושג והמובן

Here, too — with regard to the soul’s desire to unite with its source — the inference of the word “nature” is that the soul’s will and desire is not based on reason, knowledge and intelligence that can be understood, but rather is beyond the grasp and comprehension of rational intelligence,

והיא בחינת חכמה שבנפש, שבה אור אין סוף ברוך הוא

for this (nature) is the soul’s faculty of *Chochmah* and, as discussed in the previous chapter, *Chochmah* is a faculty that transcends comprehension — a faculty wherein the light of the blessed *Ein Sof* abides; and as a result, the soul is drawn to its Source, the *Ein Sof*, with a longing beyond comprehension.

Thus we see that the “nature” of the “hidden love,” i.e., its quest, is the longing of the soul to be united with its Source. The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain the designation “*hidden love*.”

וזהו כלל בכל סטרא דקדושה שאינו אלא מה שנמשך מחכמה, שנקראת קודש העליון

Now this is a general principle in the whole realm of holiness: Holiness (*קדושה*) is only that which derives from *Chochmah*, called *העליון קודש* — “supernal holiness.”

The word *קודש* refers to *Chochmah*, while *קדושה* refers to any manifestation of holiness as derived from *Chochmah*. As *Chochmah* represents nullification of self before G-d, only those matters that manifest this character of *Chochmah* may be said to possess holiness. Those matters in which this characteristic is lacking, lack holiness as well. The Alter Rebbe continues, speaking of *Chochmah*:

הבטל במציאות באור אין סוף ברוך הוא המלוכבש בו, ואינו דבר בפני עצמו כנ"ל

Its very existence is nullified in the light of the blessed *Ein Sof* which is clothed in it, and it is not a thing apart — as explained earlier.<sup>4</sup>

ולכן נקרא כ"ח מ"ה

Therefore, this faculty is called *Chochmah*, which consists of the two words *מ"ה כ"ח* (the power of humility and abnegation).

The word מה — literally meaning “What?” — denotes immateriality, as one might say when belittling himself: “What am I?” Thus “holiness” refers to anything which, like *Chochmah*, draws down from G-d, and nullifies itself before Him.

והוא הפך ממש מבחינת הקליפה וסיטרא אחרא, שממנה נפשות אומות העולם

This stands in direct contrast to the *kelipah* and *sitra achra*, from which are derived the souls of the gentiles<sup>5</sup>

דעבדין לגרמיהו ואמרין הב הב והלעיטני, להיות יש ודבר בפני עצמו כנ"ל, הפך בחינת החכמה

who act only for themselves, saying<sup>6</sup> “Give, give!” and (as Esau said:<sup>7</sup>) “Feed me!” — in order to be independent beings and entities (separated from G-d), as mentioned earlier, that *kelipah* is a separate and distinct entity, far removed from G-d, in direct contrast to *Chochmah* (whose nature is humility and self-nullification).

ולכן נקראים מתים, כי החכמה תחיה, וכתיב: ימותו ולא בחכמה

Therefore they (those of the realm of *kelipah*) are described<sup>8</sup> as “dead,” for<sup>9</sup> “Wisdom (*Chochmah*) gives life” (hence that which is the opposite of *Chochmah* lacks life), and it is written:<sup>10</sup> “They die, without wisdom”; i.e., “death” is a direct result of lack of wisdom — *Chochmah* — therefore the nations that receive their life-force from *kelipah* are considered “dead.”

וכן הרשעים ופושעי ישראל קודם שבאו לידי נסיון לקדש השם

(Just as the heathen nations are called “dead”) so too are the wicked and the sinners of Israel<sup>11</sup> — (but only) before they are put to the test of sanctifying G-d’s Name.

For, facing such a test, the *Chochmah* within them is aroused until it fills the entire soul with its spirit of self-nullification before G-d. At this point, they are “alive” once again. However, as long as they do not face this test, the level of *Chochmah* is dormant within them, as the Alter Rebbe continues:

כי בחינת החכמה שבנפש האלקית, עם ניצוץ אלקות מאור אין סוף ברוך הוא המלוכב בה

For the faculty of *Chochmah* in the divine soul, with the spark of G-dliness from the light of the blessed *Ein Sof* that is clothed in it,

הם בבחינת גלות בגופם, בנפש הבהמית מצד הקליפה שבחלל השמאלי שבלב, המולכת ומושלת בגופם

are in a state of exile in their body, within the animal soul of the realm of *kelipah* in the left part of the heart, which reigns over them and dominates their body.

בסוד גלות השכינה כנ"ל

This “exile” of the faculty of *Chochmah* while the animal soul dominates the body echoes the esoteric doctrine of the exile of the *Shechinah* (since the *Ein Sof* abides in *Chochmah*), as mentioned earlier.<sup>12</sup>

ולכן נקראת אהבה זו בנפש האלקית, שרצונה וחפצה לדבק בה' חיי החיים ברוך הוא, בשם אהבה מסותרת

For this reason, this love found in the divine soul, whose wish and desire is to unite with G-d, “the fountainhead of all life,” is called “hidden love” — an apparent contradiction in terms; love denotes a manifest emotion and is not at all hidden.

It is called “hidden” only when it is obstructed by an alien entity, and not because of any inherent quality of concealment, as the Alter Rebbe goes on to say:

כי היא מסותרת ומכוסה בלבוש שק דקליפה במושעי ישראל

For it is hidden and veiled, in the case of the transgressors of Israel, in the sackcloth of the *kelipah*.

וממנה נכנס בהם רוח שטות לחטוא, כמאמר רז"ל: אין אדם חוטא כו'

From the *kelipah*, there enters into them a “spirit of folly” which leads them to sin, as our Sages remark:<sup>13</sup> “A person does not sin unless a spirit of folly enters into him.”

As the Alter Rebbe explains further, the foolishness consists of the self-delusion that one remains “a good Jew” in spite of his sins — an insensitivity to the serious breach that his sins create between himself and G-d. If a Jew felt how each sinful act tore him away from G-d, he would never sin; for after all, every Jew’s love of G-d is so strong that he is prepared to sacrifice his very life for G-d (as discussed in the previous chapter). It is only that the “spirit of folly” dulls his senses so that he does not feel the wrench caused by each sin.

However, if his senses are so dulled, why is it that even the worst sinner will willingly sacrifice his life for G-d, when his faith is put to the test? In answer, the Alter Rebbe explains that the *kelipah* can obstruct only those matters that do not directly affect the G-dly soul’s level of *Chochmah*. However, in such matters as faith — a derivative of *Chochmah* — *kelipah* can neither penetrate nor obstruct. Consequently, in such matters the Jew is aware that to succumb to sin would mean being torn away from G-d, and therefore he will readily lay down his life rather than sin. This the Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain:

אלא שגלות הזה לבחינת חכמה אינו אלא לבחינה המתפשטת ממנה בנפש כולה להחיותה

But this exile of the faculty of *Chochmah* affects only that aspect of it which is diffused throughout the *Nefesh* and animates it [with Divine vitality].

Being in exile, it is unable to pervade the entire soul, and through it the entire body, with the feeling of self-nullification before G-d characteristic of *Chochmah*; thus, in this state of exile, it is unable to prevent one from sinning.

אבל שרש ועיקר של בחינת חכמה שבנפש האלקית הוא במוחין, ואינה מתלבשת בלבוש שק דקליפה שבלב  
בחלל השמאלי בבחינת גלות ממש

Yet, the root and core of the *Chochmah* in the divine soul is in the brain, and does not clothe itself in the sackcloth of the *kelipah* in the left part of the heart, in a true state of exile, i.e., so that it be powerless to prevent one from sinning.

רק שהיא בבחינת שינה ברשעים ואינה פועלת פעולתה בהם, כל זמן שעסוקים בדעתם ובינתם בתאוות העולם

It is merely dormant in the case of the wicked, not exercising its influence within them (i.e., not creating within the Jew the spirit of self-nullification before G-d that it ought to create), as long as their knowledge and understanding are preoccupied with mundane pleasures.

The soul-faculties of “knowledge” (*Daat*) and “understanding” (*Binah*) are lower than *Chochmah*; yet the level of *Chochmah* is prevented from acting upon them (and upon the other, still lower, faculties) as long as they are immersed in mundane pleasures. Thus, the *Chochmah* of their divine soul is dormant, not dead. It has lost none of its potency, only its ability to exercise it; just as when one sleeps he retains full possession of his faculties though he cannot use them.

אך כשבאים לידי נסיון בדבר אמונה, שהיא למעלה מהדעת ונגעה עד הנפש לבחינת חכמה שבה

However, when they (the wicked) are confronted with a test of faith, which transcends knowledge, touching the very soul and the faculty of *Chochmah* within it — the source of faith,

אזי היא ניצורה משנתה ופועלת פעולתה בכח ה' המלוכש בה

then it “arises from its sleep” (i.e., *Chochmah* reveals itself) and it exerts its influence with the Divine force that is clothed in it (its influence being to create a spirit of self-sacrifice for G-d, as the Alter Rebbe states further).

וכמו שכתוב: ויקץ כישן ה'

As it is written:<sup>14</sup> “Then the L-rd awakened as one out of sleep.”

This verse refers also to the level of *Chochmah* and the light of the *Ein Sof* clothed therein, which was previously in a state of “sleep” — inactive — but “arises” and exerts its influence when faced with a test of faith.

לעמוד בנסיון באמונת ה' בלי שום טעם ודעת ושכל מושג לו

The revelation of *Chochmah* leads even the sinner to withstand the test of faith in G-d, without any reasoning or knowledge that he can comprehend which would motivate him to sacrifice his life,

להתגבר על הקליפות ותאוות עולם הזה בהיתר ובאיסור שהורגל בהם, ולמאוס בהם

and to prevail over the *kelipot* and over his desires toward worldly matters, both permitted and forbidden, which he was accustomed to indulge, and even to despise them,

I.e., in this state of readiness for martyrdom, the sinner not only overcomes his desires for worldly pleasures, but loses them entirely, and the objects of his past desires are now detestable to him,

ולבחור לו ה' לחלקו ולגורלו

and to choose G-d as his portion and his lot,

I.e., he dedicates to G-d both his internal faculties of intellect and emotion, referred to as one's "portion", and his higher transcendent faculties — his will and pleasure, which are called one's "lot",

למסור לו נפשו על קדושת שמו

so that he is prepared to offer his soul to G-d in martyrdom for the sanctification of His Name.

ואף כי הקליפות גברו עליו כל ימיו ולא יכול להם, כמאמר רז"ל: שהרשעים הם ברשות לבם

Although the *kelipot* prevailed over him (over this sinner who is now prepared to accept martyrdom) all his life, and he was impotent against them, as the Rabbis have said that [15](#) "The wicked are under the control of their heart," i.e., the animal soul of the *kelipah*, situated in the left part of the heart,

מכל מקום כשבא לידי נסיון בדבר אמונה בה' אחד, שיסודתה בהררי קודש היא בחינת חכמה שבנפש האלקית, שבה מלובש אור אין סוף ברוך הוא

nevertheless, when he faces a test challenging his faith in the one G-d, [a faith] whose foundation is in [that level of the divine soul called] "the heights of holiness," namely, the faculty of *Chochmah* which is called קודש — the source of holiness — as previously explained, in which is clothed the light of *Ein Sof*, blessed be He,

הרי כל הקליפות בטלים ומבוטלים, והיו כלא היו ממש לפני ה'

then all the *kelipot* become nullified, and they vanish as though they had never been, in the presence of the L-rd.

כדכתיב: כל הגוים כאין נגדו וגו', וכתיב: כי הנה אויביך ה' כי הנה אויביך יאבדו יתפרדו וגו', וכתיב: כהמס  
דונג מפני אש יאבדו וגו', וכתיב: הרים כדונג נמסו

So it is written:<sup>16</sup> “All the nations including also the *kelipot* are as nothing before Him”; and<sup>17</sup> “For all Your enemies, O L-rd, referring also to the *kelipot*, which are the “enemies of G-d,“ all Your enemies will perish, they will be scattered...”; and again,<sup>18</sup> “As wax melts before fire, so shall the wicked perish”; and<sup>19</sup> “The hills referring to the *kelipot* which are compared to hills by reason of their hauteur melted like wax.”

All these verses illustrate how the *kelipot* vanish when the light of G-d found in the *Chochmah* of the divine soul reveals itself. Therefore, despite the fact that *kelipot* always had the upper hand over a sinner, he is able to overcome them when his faith is challenged. We thus see that every Jew has an inherent ability to overcome temptation by virtue of his soul’s “hidden love” of G-d originating in its faculty of *Chochmah*. He need merely arouse it.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain how this “hidden love” also comprises the fear of G-d necessary in observing the prohibitive commandments.

והנה אור ה' אין סוף ברוך הוא המלוּבש בחכמה שבנפש, גדול ועצום כחו כל כך

The force of the Divine light of the *Ein Sof* that is clothed in the soul’s faculty of *Chochmah* is so intense

לגרש ולדחות הסטרא אחרא והקליפות שלא יוכלו יגעו אפילו בלבושיו, שהם מחשבה דבור ומעשה של אמונת  
ה' אחד

as to banish and repel the *sitra achra* and the *kelipot* so that they are unable to touch even its “garments”, namely the thought, speech, and action that express one’s faith in the unity of G-d.

That is, not only can the *kelipot* not weaken one’s faith, but they cannot even prevent his faith from expressing itself in thought, speech and action.

דהיינו לעמוד בנסיון למסור נפשו אפילו שלא לעשות רק איזה מעשה לבד נגד אמונת ה' אחד, כגון להשתחוות  
לעבודה זרה אף שאינו מאמין בה כלל בלבו

This means that the Divine light vested in *Chochmah* enables him to withstand a test of self-sacrifice, to the extent of even refusing to do a mere (empty) act that is contrary to his belief in the one G-d, e.g., to bow down before an idol, even without acknowledging it in his heart at all, in which case it is not his faith that is being challenged, but its expression in the act of prostrating oneself; and even for his expression of faith a Jew will give his life.

וכן שלא לדבר תועה חס ושלום על אחדות ה' אף שאין פיו ולבו שוין, רק לבו שלם באמונת ה'

So too he will sacrifice his life so as not to speak falsely (G-d forbid) concerning the unity of G-d, even where his words do not reflect his true feelings, for his heart is perfect in its belief in G-d.

This readiness for self-sacrifice is not an expression of one's *love* of G-d which reveals itself when confronted with a test of faith, for his love is not directly affected by such empty actions or words. Rather, it expresses the *fear* contained in the "hidden love," the fear of being torn away from G-d.

וזה נקרא דחילו הנכלל ברחימו, שהיא אהבה הטבעית שבנפש האלקית שבכללות ישראל, שחפצה ורצונה  
בטבעה לידבק בשרשה ומקורה אור אין סוף ברוך הוא

This is called "the fear contained in love," meaning the natural love found in the divine soul of all Jews, whose intrinsic desire and will is to be attached to its origin and source — the light of the blessed *Ein Sof*.

שמפני אהבה זו ורצון זה היא יראה ומפחדת בטבעה מנגוע בקצה טומאת עבודה זרה חס ושלום, שהיא נגד  
אמונת ה' אחד

For by virtue of this love and this desire it instinctively recoils in fear and dread from touching (G-d forbid) even the fringe of the impurity of idolatry, which denies the faith in G-d's unity,

אפילו בלבושיה החיצונים שהם דבור או מעשה, בלי אמונה בלב כלל

even where such contact involves only its outer garments, namely, (idolatrous) speech and action, without any faith whatever in the heart in the validity of the idol worship.

Even this the soul dreads; and this dread represents the fear contained in the "hidden love."

When a Jew considers that he would willingly give up his life rather than be parted from G-d, he will surely realize that: (a) he should certainly refrain from sin for the very same reason, since every sin tears one away from G-d; and (b) he ought to fulfill all the commandments, for through them one achieves the objective of his "hidden love" — unity with G-d. In this way one may utilize his "hidden love" and the fear of G-d contained in it as a motivation for observing all the commandments, as will be explained at length in the coming chapters.

FOOTNOTES [1. Mishlei 20:27.](#) [2. Yevamot 61a.](#) [3. Tehillim 136:6.](#) [4. In ch. 6.](#) [5. Cf. ch. 1.](#) [6. Mishlei 30:15.](#) [7. Bereishit 25:30.](#) [8. Berachot 18b.](#) [9. Kohelet 7:12.](#) [10. Iyov 4:21.](#) [11. Berachot 18b.](#) [12. In ch. 17.](#) [13. Sotah 3a.](#) [14. Tehillim 78:65.](#) [15. Bereishit Rabbah 34:11.](#) [16. Yeshayahu 40:17.](#) [17. Tehillim 92:10.](#) [18. Ibid. 68:3.](#) [19. Ibid. 97:5.](#)



# Chapter 20

In the previous chapters the Alter Rebbe discussed the Torah's assertion that "it is very near" to us to fulfill all the commandments with a love and fear of G-d. He explained that it is indeed "very near," by means of the natural love of G-d inherent in every Jew. He further stated that this love stems from the faculty of *Chochmah* of the divine soul, in which the light of the *Ein Sof* is clothed. This love is the source of a Jew's power of self-sacrifice; it is what inspires every Jew, regardless of spiritual stature, to forfeit his life rather than deny G-d's unity. In fact, were a Jew to feel that sin tears him away from G-d, he would never sin — his love of G-d and his fear of separation from Him would not permit it. It is only the "spirit of folly" inspired by the *kelipah* — the self-delusion that sin does not weaken his attachment to G-d — that allows him to sin. But when he is confronted with an attempt to coerce him to practice idolatry, for example, no such delusion is possible; clearly he is being torn away from G-d. Thereupon, a Jew's inherent love of G-d is aroused, and even the most hardened sinner willingly suffers martyrdom for his faith in the One G-d.

This same power of self-sacrifice, says the Alter Rebbe, can enable a Jew to refrain from *every* transgression, and to fulfill *all* the commandments. But if, in fact, only a clear challenge to one's faith — such as idolatry — arouses and activates one's hidden love, how can this love serve to motivate one's observance of *all* the commandments? The Alter Rebbe begins to provide the answer in this chapter by explaining the relationship of all the positive commandments to the precept of belief in G-d's unity (stated in the first of the Ten Commandments: "I am G-d your L-rd"), and of all the prohibitive commandments to the prohibition of idolatry (the second commandment in the Decalogue: "You shall have no other gods...").

והנה מודעת זאת לכל כי מצות ואזהרת עבודה זרה, שהם שני דברות הראשונים, אנכי, ולא יהיה לך, הם כללות כל התורה כולה

It is well known that the [positive] commandment to believe in G-d's unity, and the admonition concerning idolatry, which form the first two commandments in the Decalogue: 1 "I am G-d..." and "You shall have no other gods..." comprise the entire Torah.

כי דבור אנכי כולל כל רמ"ח מצות עשה, ולא יהיה לך כולל כל שס"ה מצות לא תעשה

For the commandment "I am G-d" contains all the 248 positive precepts, while the commandment "You shall have no other gods" contains all the 365 prohibitive commandments. 2

ולכן שמענו אנכי ולא יהיה לך לבד מפי הגבורה, כמאמר רז"ל: מפני שהם כללות התורה כולה

That is why we heard only these two commandments, “I am...,” and “You shall not have...,” directly from G-d, while the other eight commandments were transmitted by Moses, as our Sages have said,<sup>3</sup> for they are the sum total of the whole Torah.

Thus, we actually heard the entire Torah from G-d Himself; for all the commandments are contained within these two, as are particulars within a generalization. Therefore just as one’s love of G-d motivates him to obey these two commandments even at the expense of his life, it may also serve to motivate him to observe *all* the commandments.

However, this concept requires further clarification. Why should all the positive precepts be considered as affirmations of G-d’s unity, and why should all the prohibitions be manifestations of idol-worship? It is readily understood that belief in G-d is the *basis* of all the commandments. The *Mechilta*<sup>4</sup> illustrates this idea by the parable of a king who entered a land, and was requested by the populace to provide them with a system of laws. To this the king replied: “First accept me as your king; afterwards I will issue my decrees.” In the same way, belief in the One G-d constitutes the foundation upon which all the other commandments are built. But why should the two commandments regarding G-d’s unity be considered the *sum total* of the entire Torah, all the other commandments being merely an extension of them?

The explanation is based on a deeper understanding of the concept of the unity of G-d. G-d’s unity means not only that there is but one Creator, but that G-d is the *only existing being*. All of existence is absolutely nullified before Him, and completely one with Him. Therefore when one acts in defiance of G-d’s Will as expressed in the commandments, he sets himself apart from G-d as though he were a separate and independent entity. This constitutes a denial of G-d’s unity, and the transgressor is therefore considered an idolator. This the Alter Rebbe now explains in detail.

ולבאר היטב ענין זה צריך להזכיר תחלה בקצרה ענין ומהות אחדותו של הקב"ה שנקרא יחיד ומיוחד

In order to elucidate this matter clearly, we must first briefly speak of the idea and the essence of the unity of G-d, Who is called “One and Unique.”

I.e., we must understand the essential meaning of this phrase, which lends itself to various interpretations: that there is only one G-d, one Creator; that He is one Being, not a compound of various powers; and so on.

וכל מאמינים שהוא לבדו הוא כמו שהיה קודם שנברא העולם ממש

All believe that He is One Alone<sup>5</sup> now, after creation, exactly as He was before the world was created, when He was [obviously] alone since nothing else had yet come into being, so too now after creation, nothing exists apart from Him.

וכמו שכתוב: אתה הוא עד שלא נברא העולם, אתה הוא משנברא כו'

As it is written in the prayer book:<sup>6</sup> “You are He Who was before the world was created, and You are He Who is since the world was created.”

If the meaning of this passage were only that G-d is eternal, without beginning or end, it could have been stated simply: “You were before the world was created...”; why the circumlocution of “You are He Who was before the world was created...”?

פירוש: הוא ממש בלי שום שינוי, כדכתיב: אני ה' לא שנית

This emphasis provided by the repeated phrase, “You are He who.” means: “You are exactly the same ‘He’ before and after creation, without any change,” as it is written:<sup>7</sup> “I, the L-rd, have not changed” since creation. G-d is still One alone despite the presence of myriad beings, as the Alter Rebbe goes on to explain.

כי עולם הזה וכן כל העולמות העליונים אינם פועלים שום שינוי באחדותו יתברך בהבראם מאין ליש

For this world, and likewise all the supernal worlds, do not effect any change in His unity by their having been created out of a state of nothingness.

שכמו שהיה הוא לבדו הוא יחיד ומיוחד קודם הבראם, כן הוא לבדו הוא יחיד ומיוחד אחר שבראם, משום  
דכולא קמיה כלא חשיב וכאין ואפס ממש

Just as G-d was One alone, single and unique, before they were created, so is He One alone, single and unique, after He created them.

How can it be so? What of all the creatures that exist besides Him?

Yet it is so, because all is as naught beside Him, as if absolutely nonexistent.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to clarify this point. His explanation in brief: All of creation came about through the Word of G-d. As we see with man, one word has no value whatever next to his power of speech, which has the capacity to allow him to go on speaking endlessly.

It has even less value compared to one’s power of thought, the source of speech; and next to the soul itself, whence derive both thought and speech, one word (or even many words) is certainly a nonentity. How much more so, then, that in comparison with G-d who is infinite, His Word, which represents His creative and animative powers, is as totally nonexistent.

What follows is a lengthy exposition of this concept, which is carried over into the next chapter.

כי התהוות כל העולמות עליונים ותחתונים מאין ליש, וחיותם וקיומם המקיימם שלא יחזרו להיות אין ואפס  
כשהיה

For the coming into being of all the upper and lower worlds out of nothingness, and their life and their existence, i.e., that [force] which sustains them so that they do not revert to nothingness and naught, as they were before they were created—

For unlike the product of a human craftsman, which (if left undisturbed) will remain in exactly the same state and shape as it was when it left the hands of the craftsman, the continued existence of creation is dependent on the constant renewal of the creative power. Were this power to cease, all of creation would revert to nothingness. This force, which animates and sustains the existence of all creation —

אינו אלא דבר ה' ורוח פיו יתברך המלוּבש בהם

is nothing other than the Word of G-d and the [§](#) “breath of His mouth” that is clothed in these worlds.

ולמשל כמו בנפש האדם כשמדבר דבור אחד, שדבור זה לבדו כלא ממש אפילו לגבי כללות נפשו המדברת

To illustrate from the soul of a human being: When a man utters a word, this single word is as absolutely nothing even when compared only to his articulate soul (i.e., power of speech) as a whole,

שהוא בחינת לבוש האמצעי שלה, שהוא כח הדבור שלה

which is the soul’s middle “garment” i.e., organ of expression, namely its faculty of speech.

The soul has three “garments” — thought, speech, and action, of which speech is the middle one, with action being lower than it, and thought, higher; one word has no value even in comparison with *this* faculty,

שיכול לדבר דבורים לאין קץ ותכלית

since this faculty can produce an infinite number of words — and next to infinity, one word has no value whatever.

In actual practice, there is a limit to the number of words one can speak. However, this is only because the physical organs involved in speech have a limited functional ability. The *soul's* capacity for speech is limitless.

וכל שכן לגבי בחינת לבוש הפנימי שלה שהוא המחשבה, שממנה נמשכו הדבורים והיא חיותם

Surely, then, this word has no value when compared to the soul’s innermost “garment” i.e., that “garment” which is closest to the soul itself, namely, its faculty of thought, which is the source of speech and its life-force.

Since thought is higher and closer to the soul than is speech, this one word surely has no value in comparison with it.

ואין צריך לומר לגבי מהות ועצמות הנפש, שהן עשר בחינותיה הנ"ל, חכמה בינה דעת כו'

It goes without saying, that this word is as naught when compared with the essence and entity as opposed to the "garments" of the soul, these being its ten attributes mentioned above: 9 *Chochmah, Binah, Daat*, and so on, i.e., the seven emotional attributes

שמהן נמשכו אותיות מחשבה זו המלוכשות בדבור זה כשמדבר

from which are derived the "letters" of thought that are clothed in one's speech, when it is uttered.

Since all of man's thoughts are either of an intellectual or an emotional nature, they derive from the soul's intellectual or emotional faculties. When one speaks, the letters of his thought descend to a lower level.

כי המחשבה היא גם כן בחינת אותיות כמו הדבור, רק שהן רוחניות ודקות יותר

For thought too, like speech, consists of letters, except that the letters of thought are more spiritual and refined — thus thought and speech share a common characteristic.

אבל עשר בחינות, חכמה בינה דעת כו', הן שרש ומקור המחשבה ואין בהם בחינת אותיות עדיין קודם שמתלבשות בלבוש המחשבה

But the ten attributes — *Chochmah, Binah, Daat*, and so on, are the root and source of thought and, before being clothed in the garment of thought, they as yet lack the element of letters.

The letters are formed only when one applies his thoughts to a particular idea or a feeling, as explained further.

Since the intellectual and emotional soul-powers are so subtle and amorphous that they cannot be defined even in terms of the spiritual thought-letters, they are obviously of an altogether different, more spiritual, order than thought, and the spoken word is surely without value in comparison to them. What follows is a description of the process whereby the letters of thought are formed.

למשל כשנפלת איזו אהבה וחמדה בלבו של אדם קודם שעולה מהלב אל המוח לחשב ולהרהר בה

For example, when a man suddenly becomes conscious of a certain love or desire in his heart, before it has risen from the heart to the brain to meditate on it and ponder it,

אין בה בחינת אותיות עדיין, רק חפץ פשוט וחשיקה בלב אל הדבר ההוא הנחמד אצלו

it has not yet acquired the element of letters; it is only a pure desire and longing for the object of his affection.

וכל שכן קודם שנפלה התאוה והחמדה בלבו לאותו דבר, רק היתה בכה חכמתו ושכלו וידיעתו

All the more so before he began to feel in his heart a craving and desire for that thing, when it was yet confined within the realm of his intellect (*Chochmah*), understanding (corresponding to *Binah*), and knowledge (*Daat*),

שהיה נודע אצלו אותו דבר שהוא נחמד ונעים וטוב ויפה להשיגו ולידבק בו, כגון ללמוד איזו חכמה או לאכול איזה מאכל ערב

meaning that the thing was known to him to be desirable and gratifying, something good and pleasant to attain and to cling to; as for instance, to study a certain discipline or to eat some delicacy — then, in this state of intellectual appreciation of the desirable object, before the appreciation has even developed into an emotion, there are certainly no “letters” present in one’s mind.

רק לאחר שכבר נפלה החמדה והתאוה בלבו בכה חכמתו ושכלו וידיעתו

Only after the desire and craving have already descended into his heart i.e., after they have developed into emotions through the stimulus of his wisdom, understanding and knowledge,

ואחר כך חזרה ועלתה מהלב למוח לחשב ולהרהר בה איך להוציא תאוותו מכח אל הפועל, להשיג המאכל או למידת החכמה בפועל

and only after they have ascended once again from the heart back to the brain, to think and meditate on how to implement his desire by actually obtaining that food or actually studying that subject,

הרי בכאן נולדו בחינת אותיות במוחו, שהן אותיות כלשון עם ועם המדברים ומהרהרים בהם כל עניני העולם

it is only at this point — when one applies his thoughts to implementing his desire — that “letters” are born in one’s mind, corresponding to the language of each of the nations, who employ these letters when speaking and thinking about everything in the world; i.e., each of us thinks in his own language.

“Pure” feeling, however, that is feeling that has not yet reached the “applied”, implemental stage of thought, transcends differences of nation and language, since it does not express itself in “letters”.

From all this we may understand the Alter Rebbe’s earlier statement that a spoken word is utterly without value in comparison with the soul’s intellectual and emotional powers (which are described here, for our purposes, as the essence of the soul). Surely, then, the Divine “Word” by which G-d creates and animates all the worlds has no value at all next

to G-d, Who is truly and absolutely infinite. Thus all the worlds created and sustained by the Divine Word are as if nonexistent, from G-d's perspective, and their presence does not effect any change in His unity. This theme will be further discussed in the following chapter.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Shmot* 20:2-3. [2.](#) See *Shnei Luchot HaBrit*, beg. *Parshat Yitro*; *Zohar* II, p. 276a. [3.](#) *Makkot* 24a. [4.](#) *Shmot* 20:2-3. [5.](#) Liturgy of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. [6.](#) Daily morning service. [7.](#) *Malachi* 3:6. [8.](#) *Tehillim* 33:6. [9.](#) Ch. 3.

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## Chapter 21

והנה מדת הקב"ה שלא כמדת בשר ודם

Now [1](#) the nature of the Divine order is not like that of a human being, a creature of flesh and blood. Therefore human terms cannot adequately describe Divine qualities. Thus in our case:

שהאדם כשמדבר דבור, הרי הבל הדבור שבפיו הוא מורגש ונראה דבר בפני עצמו מובדל משרשו, שהן עשר בחינות הנפש עצמה

When a man says something, the breath of the spoken word may be sensed, and is perceived as an independent entity separated from its source, namely, the ten intellectual and emotional faculties of the soul itself.

While still encapsulated in its source, the word is utterly nullified; however, when it is spoken and it leaves its source, it takes on an identity of its own. This is true, however, only with regard to human speech.

אבל הקב"ה אין דבורו מובדל ממנו יתברך חס ושלום, כי אין דבר חו' ממנו, ולית אתר פנוי מיניה

But the speech of G-d is not, heaven forbid, separated from His Divine self. For nothing is outside of Him, and [2](#) “no place is devoid of Him” — so that His speech is always contained within him.

ולכן אין דבורו יתברך כדבורנו חס ושלום כמו שאין מחשבתו כמחשבותינו, כדכתיב: כי לא מחשבותי מחשבותיכם, וכתיב: כן גבהו דרכי מדרכיכם וגו'

Therefore, His speech is not like our speech, G-d forbid (just as, obviously, His thought is not like our thought, as it is written: [3](#) “For My thoughts are not like your thoughts”; and it is also written: [4](#) “So My ways are higher than your ways [and My thoughts higher than your thoughts].” Similarly, G-d's speech is different from human speech.

But if Divine speech is indeed never separated from G-d, how can it be described as “speech” at all? Human speech constitutes communication *only because* the spoken word becomes separated from the speaker. (Thought, by contrast, because it remains within one’s soul, is hidden from all but the thinker himself.) But since nothing ever becomes separated from G-d, the term “speech” seemingly provides us with no understanding at all of the nature of Divine communication.

In explanation, the Alter Rebbe states that speech is distinguished by two characteristics: (a) it reveals that which was previously hidden in the speaker’s thoughts; (b) it becomes separated from its source. Only the former characteristic of human speech is analogous to Divine “speech”, which reveals to Creation that which was hitherto hidden within G-dliness.

In the Alter Rebbe’s words:

ולא נקרא דבורו יתברך בשם דבור רק על דרך משל, כמו שדבור התחתון שבאדם הוא מגלה לשומעים מה שהיה צפון ונעלם במחשבתו

G-d’s speech is called “speech” only in order to illustrate that quality of revelation which it possesses. For just as man’s speech reveals to his audience what was hidden and concealed in his thoughts,

כך למעלה באין סוף ברוך הוא, יציאת האור והחיות ממנו יתברך מהעלם אל הגילוי, לברוא עולמות ולהחיותם, נקראת בשם דבור

so too the emergence of the light and life-force of the *Ein Sof* from concealment before creation into revelation through the act of creation, for the purpose of creating and animating the worlds, is called “speech”.

In this case, the audience is the created being, which, from its own perspective at least, is separate from G-d.

והן הן עשרה מאמרות שבהן נברא העולם

It is these revelations of Divine light and life-force that comprise the 5 ten Divine utterances recorded in the Torah, namely, 6 “And G-d said, ‘Let there be light,’ ‘Let the earth sprout forth...,’” and so on, by which the world was created.

וכן שאר כל התורה נביאים וכתובים שהשיגו הנביאים במראה נבואתם

Likewise all the other words of the Torah, the Prophets, and the Holy Writings are also called “speech”, even though they were not revealed for the purpose of creation, since they too represent the Divine revelation which the Prophets perceived in their prophetic vision.



Hence, when we refer to G-d's revelation as His "speech", the analogy extends only to speech as revelation and communication, but not to speech as something separate from the speaker — an idea which is not applicable to G-dliness.

והרי דבורו ומחשבתו כביכול מיוחדות עמו בתכלית היחוד, דרך משל כמו דבורו ומחשבתו של אדם בעודן  
בכח חכמתו ושכלו

Thus, G-d's speech and thought are united with Him in absolute union, just like the speech and thought of man before he actually expresses them as speech and thought, rather as they are while still in his faculty of wisdom and intellect,

או בתשוקה וחמדה שבלבו קודם שעלתה מהלב למוח, להרהר בה בבחינת אותיות

or as they exist in a desire or craving that are still in the heart, before they rise from the heart to the brain, there to be meditated upon with the letters of thought.<sup>7</sup>

שאז היו אותיות המחשבה והדבור הזה, הנמשכות מחמדה ותשוקה זו, בכח בלב

At that point before one speaks or thinks, the letters of his speech and thought, which evolve from the aforementioned longing and desire, were still in a potential state in the heart,

ומיוחדות שם בתכלית היחוד בשרשן, שהן החכמה ושכל שבמוח, וחמדה ותשוקה שבלב

where they were absolutely unified with their source, namely, the wisdom and intellect in the brain, and the longing and desire in the heart.

In the case of a mortal, his thought and speech are completely unified with him *before* he speaks; at that point the letters which constitute his thought and speech are still telescoped within their source. In the case of the Creator, however, His "thought" and "speech" remain unified with Him even *after* He "thinks" and "speaks": they are *always* within their source — the omnipresent G-d, as the Alter Rebbe now concludes:

וככה ממש, דרך משל, מיוחדות דבורו ומחשבתו של הקב"ה בתכלית היחוד במהותו ועצמותו יתברך גם אחר  
שיצא דבורו יתברך אל הפועל בבריאות העולמות, כמו שהיה מיוחד עמו קודם בריאת העולמות

Precisely so, by way of analogy, are G-d's "speech" and "thought" absolutely united with His essence and being even *after* His "speech" has already become materialized in the creation of the worlds, just as it was united with Him before the worlds were created.

ואין שום שינוי כלל לפניו יתברך אלא אל הברואים המקבלים חיותם מבחינת דבורו יתברך בבחינת יציאתו  
כבר אל הפועל בבריאת העולמות

Thus, for G-d, nothing whatever was changed by the revelation of His creative power in Creation. The change wrought by Creation exists only with regard to the created beings,

who receive their life-force from G-d's Word when it proceeds (from concealment) to actualization, with the creation of the worlds.

For the created beings, the revelation of the creative power contained in G-d's Word represents the greatest possible change — the passage from nonexistence to existence, since they come into being only when the Divine Word begins to actually create worlds.

שמתלבש בהם להחיותם

at which time it clothes itself in these worlds, to give them life.

על ידי השתלשלות מעלה לעלול, וירידת המדרגות בצמצומים רבים ושונים

This process takes place through a gradual descent from level to level (with the higher level referred to as the עילה, the “cause”, and the lower level — the עלול, the “effect”), and a downward gradation by means of numerous and various contractions (*tzimtzumim*, i.e., a progressive decrease in the intensity of the revealed Divine powers).

עד שיוכלו הברואים לקבל חיותם והתהוותם ממנו ולא יתבטלו במציאות

G-d's Word descends and is contracted to the point where the created beings can derive their life-force and existence from it, without losing their identity.

An undimmed revelation of the G-dly life-force would create beings whose identity would be utterly nullified within their life-force. It was G-d's intention that His creations perceive themselves to be separate from Him, and that through their own efforts they achieve a spirit of self-nullification *vis-à-vis* their Creator. To this end, G-d revealed His creative power only through a series of contractions, whose effect the Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain:

וכל הצמצומים הם בחינת הסתר פנים, להסתיר ולהעלים האור והחיות הנמשך מדבורו יתברך, שלא יתגלה בבחינת גילוי רב שלא יוכלו התחתונים לקבל

All the contractions constitute a “veiling of the [Divine] Countenance”; that is, they veil and conceal the “face,” i.e., the essential aspects of the light and life-force that are derived from G-d's Word, so that it should not reveal itself with an intense radiance which the lower worlds would be incapable of receiving.

ולכן גם כן נדמה להם אור וחיות הדבור של מקום ברוך הוא המלוכבש בהם, כאלו הוא דבר מובדל ממהותו ועצמותו יתברך

Therefore too, because it is thus obscured through *tzimtzum*, the light and life-force of G-d's Word that is clothed in them appears to them as if it is something separate from G-d Himself,

רק שנמשך ממנו יתברך כמו דבור של אדם מנפשו

and as though it only issues from Him, just as the speech of a human being issues from him but then becomes separated from him.

This false perception of the G-dly life-force as something separate from G-d is possible only because the life-force is hidden from creation by means of the *tzimtzumim*.

אך לגבי הקב"ה אין שום צמצום והסתר והעלם מסתיר ומעלים לפניו, וכחשכה כאורה

Yet, in regard to G-d, no concealment or veil hides or obscures anything from Him; to Him,<sup>8</sup> “‘darkness’ (concealment) and ‘light’ (revelation) are alike,”

כדכתיב: גם חשך לא יחשיך ממך וגו'

as it is written:<sup>9</sup> “Even the darkness does not obscure [anything] from You.”

This may also be interpreted: “Even the darkness does not obscure *because it derives* from You”; i.e., the veil of *tzimtzum* is itself of divine origin, and therefore it cannot obscure G-dliness. For as the Alter Rebbe goes on to say, only a foreign body can constitute an obstruction; one cannot hide from his own self.

משום שאין הצמצומים והלבושים דבר נפרד ממנו יתברך, חס ושלום, אלא כהדין קמצא, דלבושיה מיניה וביה

For the *tzimtzumim* and the “veils” are not things distinct from Him, heaven forbid, since nothing is separate from G-d, but are<sup>10</sup> “like the turtle (or: ‘snail’), whose garment i.e., its shell is part of its body”; so too, the very “shell” — the process of *tzimtzum* — that hides G-dliness is itself G-dly.

כמו שכתוב: כי ה' הוא האלקים, וכמו שכתוב במקום אחר

Thus it is written:<sup>11</sup> “G-d — He is the Lord,” as is explained elsewhere.<sup>12</sup>

In Hebrew: “*Yud-hei-vav-hei* — He is *Elokim*.” The Four-Letter Name of G-d denotes Divine revelation and transcendence, while the Name *Elokim* refers to G-d’s power of self-concealment by which he vests Himself in creation. The equation points out that they are one; *Elokim* is G-dly just as is the level of G-dliness signified by the other Name. Thus, *Elokim* does not act as a veil obscuring G-d, since it is essentially one with *Yud-hei-vav-hei*, the power of revelation.

ולכן קמיה כולא כלא חשיב ממש

Therefore, in His presence, all else is of absolutely no account.

Since G-d is not affected by the *tzimtzumim* which make it possible for a created being to feel separate from Him, He perceives all the creations brought into being by His Word as being still within their source — Himself. There they are in a state of absolute nullification. From His perspective they are still nonentities, and the fact of their creation

in no way detracts from His absolute unity — He is One alone after Creation just as He was before Creation.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) Cf. *Berachot* 40a. [2.](#) *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 57, p. 91b. [3.](#) *Yeshayahu* 55:8. [4.](#) *Ibid.* v.9. [5.](#) *Avot* 5:1. [6.](#) *Bereishit* 1:3,11. [7.](#) See ch. 20, above. [8.](#) *Tehillim* 139:12. [9.](#) *Tehillim* 139:12. [10.](#) *Bereishit Rabbah* 21:5. [11.](#) *Devarim* 4:35. [12.](#) *Shaar HaYichud VahaEmunah*, ch. 6.

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## Chapter 22

In the previous chapter the Alter Rebbe contrasted human speech and Divine speech. He pointed out that human speech is marked by two characteristics: (1) it reveals to the hearer that which was previously hidden in the speaker's thoughts; (2) the spoken word becomes a distinct entity, separate from the speaker. Divine speech, however, cannot become separate from G-d, since nothing exists "outside" G-d. G-d's Word, even after being "spoken" and revealed (whether in Creation or in prophecy), is thus still united with Him, and nullified before Him, to the same degree that a word spoken by a human being is united with the speaker *before* he speaks, while the word was still within its source, viz., the desire or understanding that prompted the thought that ultimately produced the spoken word.

In this chapter the Alter Rebbe goes on to say that since, after all, the Torah does use the term "speech" with regard to Divine revelation, we must say that Divine speech contains, to some extent at least, the second characteristic of human speech as well (i.e., that it becomes separated from the speaker). He explains that this is in fact so, but only with respect to the beings created by Divine "speech" — *they* perceive G-d's Word that created them, and consequently also themselves, as being separate from G-d. This is specifically the case with the *kelipot* and the *sitra achra*, which represent a denial of G-d's unity.

רק שהתורה דברה כלשון בני אדם, ונקרא בתורה דבורו של מקום ברוך הוא בשם דבור ממש כדבורו של אדם

Yet<sup>1</sup> "the Torah employs human language," and in the Torah the "Word" of G-d is actually called "speech", like the speech of a human being which is characterized by separation from the speaker; indicating that, in some way at least, G-d's "Word" is also separated from Him.

לפי שבאמת כך הוא דרך ירידת והמשכת החיות לתחתונים

For in truth it is so — that G-d's Word is separated from Him; not indeed with respect to Himself, but only with respect to the various creations, as will soon be explained; and this separation comes about by way of the descent and flow of the life-force to the lower planes.

בצמצומים רבים ועצומים, מינים ממינים שונים, להבראות מהם ברואים רבים, מינים ממינים שונים

This descent is accomplished through many powerful contractions with each successive contraction increasingly veiling the Divine life-force; and these contractions are of various kinds, in order that many diverse creatures may be created through them.

Thus the diversity found in creation stems from the diverse contractions of the creative power.

וכל כך גברו ועצמו הצמצומים והסתר פנים העליונים

Indeed, so great and powerful are the contractions and the concealment of the “Supernal Countenance,” i.e., the inner, deeper aspect of the Divine life-force is so heavily veiled,

עד שיוכלו להתהוות ולהבראות גם דברים טמאים וקליפות וסטרא אחרא

that even unclean things, and *kelipot* and the *sitra achra*, can come into being and be created.

No amount of contractions could give rise to *kelipot*. Even at its lowest level, the Divine life-force would not ordinarily produce creations that *deny* G-d. It is the quality and intensity of the *tzimtzumim*, rather than their numerousness, that permits the *kelipot* to come into being,

ולקבל חיותם וקיומם מדבר ה' ורוח פיו יתברך, בהסתר פנים וירידת המדרגות

and to receive their life and existence from the Divine Word and the breath of His mouth, through the concealment of His Countenance and through the downward gradations.

ולכן נקראים אלהים אחרים מפני שיניקתם וחיותם אינה מבחינת פנים אלא מבחינת אחריים דקדושה

For this reason the *kelipot* are called אחרים אלהים — “other gods,” for their nurture and vitality which they draw from the realm of holiness — since *every* existing being draws its life-force from holiness — does not derive from the “Countenance”, i.e., the inner aspect of the Divine Will, but from the אחריים — the<sup>2</sup> “hinder-part” of holiness, i.e., the external, superficial aspect of the Divine Will.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain the terms “Countenance” and “hinder-part” as relating to the Divine Will. The explanation in brief: An “inner” will is a direct, pleasurable yearning for the object of one's desire. An “external” will is one that is, as it

were, “forced”; i.e., the object is desired only as a means to an end — the fulfillment of the “inner” will — and not as an end in itself.

ופירוש אהוריים: כאדם הנותן דבר לשונאו שלא ברצונו, שמשליכו לו כלאחר כתפו, כי מחזיר פניו ממנו משנאתו אותו

The meaning of “hinder-part” is exemplified in the act of a person who gives something unwillingly to his enemy with an ulterior motive; he throws the object to him over his shoulder, while he turns his face away from him, out of his hatred for him.

For one’s bodily actions express the feelings of his soul. Thus, when the act of giving is motivated by an *external* will, the giver turns away his face, which is where the *inner* facets of one’s soul express themselves.

כך למעלה: בחינת פנים הוא פנימית הרצון העליון וחפצו האמיתי, אשר חפץ ה' להשפיע חיות לכל הקרוב אליו מסטרא דקדושה

So too on high, the term “Countenance” represents the<sup>3</sup> inner quality of the Supernal Will and its true desire; namely, the desire of G-d to dispense life to all who belong to the realm of holiness, who are close to Him.

אבל הסטרא אחרא והטומאה היא תועבת ה' אשר שנא

But the *sitra achra*, and so too unholiness, is<sup>4</sup> “an abomination before G-d, which He hates.”

ואינו משפיע לה חיות מפנימית הרצון וחפצו האמיתי אשר חפץ בה, חס ושלום

He does not give it life from His inner Will and true desire as if He delighted in it, Heaven forbid,

כי אם כמאן דשדי בתר כתפוי לשונאו שלא ברצונו

but in the manner of one who unwillingly throws something over his shoulder to his enemy. This He does not out of His inner Will,

רק כדי להעניש את הרשעים וליתן שכר טוב לצדיקים דאכפיין לסטרא אחרא

but merely to punish the wicked who subjugate themselves to the *kelipot*, and derive their power from them, and to grant a rich reward to the righteous who subdue the *sitra achra*.

In order that there may be freedom of choice for one to be either righteous or wicked, the existence of the *sitra achra* is necessary, and for this reason G-d gives it life.

וזה נקרא בחינת אהוריים דרצון העליון, ברוך הוא

This is called the “hinder-part” of the Supernal Will.

Thus we see that the *kelipot* are designated אחרים אלהים — “other gods,” because they derive from אהוריים, the “hinder-part” of the Divine Will.

והנה רצון העליון בבחינת פנים הוא מקור החיים המחיה את כל העולמות

Now, the Supernal Will, of the quality of “Countenance”, i.e., the inner aspect of G-d’s Will, which is directed toward the ultimate object of G-d’s desire, is the source of life which animates all worlds.

ולפי שאינו שורה כלל על הסטרא אחרא, וגם בחינת אהוריים של רצון העליון אינו מלובש בתוכה ממש, אלא מקיף עליה מלמעלה, לכך היא מקום המיתה והטומאה, ה’ ישמרנו

But since it is not bestowed on the *sitra achra* at all, and even the “hinder-part” of the Divine Will is not actually clothed within it but merely encompasses it from above, therefore it is the abode of death and impurity (May G-d preserve us from them!).

כי מעט מזער אור וחיות שיונקת ומקבלת לתוכה מבחינת אהוריים דקדושה שלמעלה הוא בבחינת גלות ממש בתוכה, בסוד גלות השכינה הנ”ל

For the minute measure of light and life that it derives and that it absorbs internally from the external aspect of Divine holiness, is in a state of actual exile within it — as in the concept of the “exile of the *Shechinah* [within the *kelipot*]” described earlier.<sup>5</sup>

ולכן נקרא בשם אלהים אחרים

It is for this reason too that the *kelipah* is termed “other gods,” apart from the reason given above — namely, that the *kelipot* derive from אהוריים, the “hinder-part” of G-d’s Will,

שהיא עבודה זרה ממש, וכפירה באחדותו של מלך מלכי המלכים הקב”ה

for it constitutes actual idolatry and a denial of the unity of G-d, the Supreme King of kings — the Holy One, blessed be He.

The explanation of these two reasons is as follows: Every created being is animated by two types of Divine life-force. One is an internalized life-force, which is beamed to suit the character and capacity of each individual creature. It is this power that determines the character of each being; it becomes one with it and is felt by it — in fact, this internalized life-force constitutes its identity. The second type of life-force is of an encompassing, transcendental nature. It does not adapt itself to the individual character of each being, and is not clothed within it; rather, it animates from without, so to speak — from its own level, above the created being which it animates.

The *kelipot*, too, are animated by these two types of Divine life-force. The latter type, since it does not permeate them, does not conflict with their ego. The *kelipot* can thus consider themselves independent beings, even while acknowledging G-d as the source of their vitality. They need not deny Him. With regard to this type of G-dly life-force, the *kelipot* are called אחרים אלהים — “other gods,” only because they receive their life from the אחריים, from the “hinder-part” of G-d’s Will.

The *kelipot* cannot, however, acknowledge the former, internalized type of G-dly life-force, while asserting at the same time that they are separate from G-d. To do so would be self-contradictory; for, as explained, this kind of life-force constitutes the very identity of every created being. The *kelipot* therefore completely deny this life-force (and it is thus truly in a state of exile within them). It is thus with regard to this life-force that the *kelipot* are called אחרים אלהים — “other gods,” in the literal sense of the term — implying idolatry and a denial of G-d’s unity.

This the Alter Rebbe now goes on to say:

כי מאחר שאור וחיות דקדושה הוא בבחינת גלות בתוכה, אינה בטילה כלל לגבי קדושת הקב"ה

For inasmuch as the light and life of holiness i.e., the *internalized* life-force are in a state of exile within the *kelipah*, it does not surrender itself at all to the holiness of G-d.

ואדרבה מגביה עצמה כנשר, לומר אני ואפסי עוד, וכמאמר: יאור לי ואני עשיתי

On the contrary, it soars aloft like an eagle, saying<sup>6</sup>: “I am, and there is nothing beside me”; or, as in the statement of Pharaoh<sup>7</sup>: “The river is mine, and I have made myself!”

ולכן אמרו רז"ל שגסות הרוח שקולה כעבודה זרה ממש

That is why the Sages, of blessed memory, said that<sup>8</sup> arrogance is truly tantamount to idolatry.

כי עיקר ושרש עבודה זרה הוא מה שנחשב לדבר בפני עצמו, נפרד מקדושתו של מקום, ולא כפירה בה' לגמרי

For the essence and root of idolatry is that it is regarded as an independent entity, separate from the holiness of G-d; idolatry does not imply an outright denial of G-d;

כדאיתא בגמרא דקרו ליה אלקא דאלקיא

as it is stated in the *Gemara*<sup>9</sup> that they of the realm of *kelipah* call Him “the G-d of gods,” so that although they do not deny His supremacy, their statement nevertheless constitutes idolatry,

אלא שגם הם מחשיבים עצמם ליש ודבר בפני עצמו, ובזה מפרידים את עצמם מקדושתו של מקום, ברוך הוא, מאחר שאין בטלים לו יתברך



only because they consider themselves, too, to be separate entities and independent beings; and thereby they separate themselves from the holiness of G-d, since they do not efface themselves before Him.

כי אין קדושה עליונה שורה אלא על מה שבטל לו יתברך, כנ"ל

For the supernal holiness rests only on that which is surrendered to Him, as explained above. [10](#)

ולכן נקראים טורי דפרודא בזהר הקדוש

For this reason the *Zohar*[11](#) calls the *kelipot* “peaks of separation” i.e., they are as haughty as the mountain peaks, and are thus separate from G-d.

והרי זו כפירה באחדותו האמיתית, דכולא קמיה כלא חשיב, ובטל באמת לו יתברך

But this constitutes a denial of G-d’s true unity, since His unity implies that[12](#) “all is esteemed as nothing before Him,” and that all is utterly nullified before Him,

ולרצונו המחיה את כולם ומהוה אותם מאין ליש תמיד

and before His Will which animates them all, and which constantly brings them into being out of nothingness.

Arrogance, therefore, which is the aggrandizement of one’s own identity, is diametrically opposed to the *surrender* of one’s identity which is a corollary of the concept of G-d’s unity. Arrogance thus represents a denial of the unity of G-d, and for this reason the *Gemara* equates it with idolatry.

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To summarize briefly the points made in this chapter: Through many and varied *tzimtzumim* the Divine Word brought into being *kelipot* and the *sitra achra*, who perceive themselves to be entities separate from G-d. For this reason, G-d’s Word is described in the Torah as speech, for the element of separation found in human speech (where the spoken word becomes separated from the speaker) is also present in the Divine “speech” of Creation. However, this separateness exists only in the perspective from which the created beings view their relationship with their source; from G-d’s perspective there is no separation at all, for everything is united with Him and is contained within Him even after it is created.

With this, the Alter Rebbe concludes one step of the discussion begun in ch. 20. There he stated that in order to explain how all the commandments of the Torah are encapsulated in the two commandments concerning idolatry, it is first necessary to clarify the true meaning of idolatry. This in turn necessitated an in-depth discussion of the meaning of the unity of G-d, which idolatry denies. The Alter Rebbe has thus far explained that G-d’s

unity means not only that there is but one G-d: rather G-d is the only existing being. All else is as naught before Him. Thus, any feeling (such as the *kelipot* feel) of having an identity of one's own, apart from G-d, actually represents idolatry.

In the following two chapters the Alter Rebbe now resumes his discussion, explaining how the above concept of G-d's unity finds expression in all the *mitzvot* of the Torah.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Berachot* 31b. [2.](#) This teaching is based on the similarity between אהררים and אהוריים [3.](#) This teaching is based on the similarity between פנים and פנימיות. [4.](#) *Devarim* 12:31. [5.](#) Ch. 19. [6.](#) Yeshayahu 47:8; Tzephaniah 2:15. [7.](#) A compound of Yeshayahu 29:9 and 29:3. [8.](#) *Sotah* 4b. [9.](#) *Menachot* 110a. [10.](#) Ch. 6. [11.](#) I, 158a. [12.](#) *Zohar* I, 11b.

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## Chapter 23

In the previous chapters the Alter Rebbe explained that from G-d's perspective nothing is ever separate from Him. For the Divine "Word" which creates everything is unlike a word spoken by a human being. The latter becomes separated from the speaker, while the former remains always within its source — G-d. It is only from the subjective viewpoint of the created beings that they are considered as separate, independent entities. They are able to regard themselves as such because they receive the Divine life-force which animates them by way of many *tzimtzumim* and through the concealment of the Divine "Countenance", i.e., the concealment of the inner, ultimate aspect of G-d's Will.

The logical corollary to this idea is that anything in which the Divine Will stands revealed, is completely nullified before G-d, and absolutely one with Him. In this chapter the Alter Rebbe applies this idea to the Torah and the *mitzvot*, in which G-d's Will is manifest. He demonstrates how one can unite with G-d's Will and wisdom, and thereby with G-d Himself, through study of the Torah and observance of the *mitzvot*.

ועם כל הנ"ל יובן ויבואר היטב בתוספת ביאור מה שאמרו בזהר, דאורייתא וקודשא בריך הוא כולא חד

In light of all that has been said above, we can better understand and more fully and clearly elucidate the statement in the *Zohar*[1](#) that "The Torah and G-d are entirely one,"

ובתיקונים פירשו דרמ"ה פיקודין אינון רמ"ה אברין דמלכא

and the commentary in the *Tikkunei Zohar*[2](#) that "The 248 commandments are the 248 'organs' of the [Divine] King."

Just as every organ in the human body is a repository for the particular faculty of the soul that is vested in that organ (e.g., the eye is the receptacle for the faculty of sight, and the ear for the faculty of hearing), so too is every commandment a channel and a repository for the Divine Will that is vested and expressed in that particular commandment. (The commandments in general represent G-d's Will, and each individual *mitzvah* is an expression of a particular aspect of this Will.)

It should be noted, however, that according to this analogy the *mitzvot* are *no more than* G-d's "organs". An organ of the body is not one with the soul. True, when any particular soul-power is vested in its corresponding organ, they function together as one. But they remain two separate entities that have been joined together. By the same token, the *mitzvot* are not actually one with G-d: they are merely (as it were) joined to Him. Yet the Torah, whose whole purpose is to explain the *mitzvot*, is "entirely one with G-d," as quoted earlier from the *Zohar*. What is the meaning of this greater unity with G-d found in the Torah (and in the act of Torah study), that surpasses even the unity in the *mitzvot* and in their fulfillment? This the Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain.

לפי שהמצות הן פנימיות רצון העליון וחפצו האמיתי, המלוכב בכל העולמות העליונים ותחתונים להחיותם

For the *mitzvot* constitute G-d's innermost Will and His true desire, which is clothed in all the upper and lower worlds, thereby giving them life.

All the worlds are a product of G-d's Will. He desired that they exist, and this desire is what brought them into being. However, this desire is but an external manifestation of His underlying, internal Will — the desire for *mitzvot*. Why, in fact, does G-d desire that the worlds exist? Because He desires that the *mitzvot* be performed — and this is possible only when there is someone to perform them, and when there are objects with which to perform them. To this end G-d created all the worlds.

This can be illustrated by the analogy of a man who travels abroad on business. Naturally, he travels because he wishes to do so. But his "internal" (i.e., ultimate) desire in the journey, his underlying motive, lies in the profit he expects to reap. When we probe still deeper, we find that the desire for profit is itself an external expression of an even more "internal" desire — the desire for the things which he will be able to buy with the proceeds of his business. Here lies the true object of his pleasure. It is this desire which creates the desire for profit, which leads in turn to his desire to travel. So too in the case of the worlds and the *mitzvot*. G-d's external Will, His desire that the worlds exist, is motivated by His desire for the true object of His pleasure — the *mitzvot*. Thus, the *mitzvot* represent His innermost will. It is for their sake that G-d gives life to all the worlds.

כי כל חיותם ושפעם תלוי במעשה המצות של התחתונים כנודע

The very life and sustenance of all the worlds is dependent upon the performance of the *mitzvot* by the creatures of the lower worlds, as is known — that performing a *mitzvah* draws G-dly life and sustenance into all the worlds.

ונמצא שמעשה המצות וקיומן הוא לבוש הפנימי לפנימית רצון העליון

It follows that the performance and fulfillment of the *mitzvot* is the innermost garment for the innermost aspect of G-d's Will,

שממעשה זה נמשך אור וחיות רצון העליון להתלבש בעולמות

since it is due to this performance of the *mitzvot* that the light and life of the worlds issues forth from the Divine Will, to be clothed in them —

I.e., since G-d desires the worlds only as a vehicle for the performance of the *mitzvot*, as explained above, and it is only for this reason that He animates the worlds.

ולכן נקראות אברי דמלכא, דרך משל, כמו שאברי גוף האדם הם לבוש הנפשו, ובטלים לגמרי אליה מכל וכל

Hence the *mitzvot* are figuratively described as “organs of the King.” For just as the organs of the human body are a garment for its soul, and are completely and utterly surrendered to it,

כי מיד שעולה ברצונו של אדם לפשוט ידו או רגלו הן נשמעות לרצונו תכף ומיד, בלי שום צווי ואמירה להן, ובלי שום שהייה כלל

as is evident from the fact that as soon as a person desires to stretch out his hand or foot, they obey his will immediately, without any command or instruction to them and with no delay whatever,

אלא כרגע ממש כשעלה ברצונו

but at the very instant that it entered his will.

The response of his organs is automatic; one need not consciously occupy himself with activating his hand. As to the phrase, “without any command or instruction”: When one must exert effort in activating his faculties (e.g., when one dislikes a particular task, but forces himself to do it on the strength of logic) this effort is spoken of as an internal command from one faculty to another. However, when one's will activates the organs of his body, there is no such command involved.

כך דרך משל החיות של מעשה המצות וקיומן הוא בטל לגמרי לגבי רצון העליון המלוכב בו, ונעשה לו ממש כגוף לנשמה

Just as the organs of the human body are completely united with one's soul and are surrendered to it, so too is the life-force animating the performance and fulfillment of the commandments completely surrendered to the Divine Will which is clothed therein, and this life-force becomes, in relation to the Divine Will, like a body to a soul.

וכן הלבוש החיצון של נפש האלקית שבאדם המקיים ועושה המצוה, שהוא כח ובחינת המעשה שלה

Likewise the external garment of the divine soul, i.e., its faculty of action which is external compared to the faculties of speech and thought, since it functions outside oneself, of the person fulfilling and practicing the commandment,

הוא מתלבש בחיות של מעשה המצוה, ונעשה גם כן כגוף לנשמה לרצון העליון, ובטל אליו לגמרי

clothes itself in the vitality of the performance of the *mitzvah*, and thus it, too, becomes like a body to a soul in relation to the Divine Will; i.e., the soul's power of action becomes united with the Divine Will in the same way as one's body is united with his soul, and is completely surrendered to the Divine Will.

ועל כן גם אברי גוף האדם המקיימים המצוה, שכח ובחינת המעשה של נפש האלקית מלוכש בהם בשעת מעשה וקיום המצוה, הם נעשו מרכבה ממש לרצון העליון

In this way, those organs of the human body which perform the *mitzvah* — i.e., those organs in which the divine soul's faculty of action is clothed during the performance and fulfillment of the *mitzvah* — they, too, become a veritable vehicle (lit., *merkavah* — a “chariot”) for the Divine Will.

כגון היד המחלקת צדקה לעניים או עושה מצוה אחרת

For example, the hand which distributes charity to the poor, or performs another commandment becomes, in the act of performing the *mitzvah*, a “chariot” for the Divine Will.

ורגלים המהלכות לדבר מצוה, וכן הפה ולשון שמדברים דברי תורה, והמוח שמהרהר בדברי תורה ויראת שמים ובגדולת ה' ברוך הוא

Similarly the feet which walk for the purpose of fulfilling a *mitzvah*, or the mouth and tongue which speak words of Torah, or the brain reflecting on the Torah or on the fear of heaven, or on the greatness of G-d, blessed be He.

When these organs are occupied with the *mitzvot* they are totally surrendered, like a chariot, to the Divine Will clothed in these *mitzvot*.

Note that a physical organ becomes merely a *chariot* for the Divine Will. It does not become surrendered to and unified with the Divine Will to the same extent as the divine soul's faculty of action, whose unity the Alter Rebbe previously compared to the unity of body and soul. The unity of body and soul surpasses that of the chariot with its rider. Body and soul, although originally two separate, disparate entities, one physical and the other spiritual, become one entity when united. No part of the body is devoid of the soul; conversely, the soul completely adapts itself to the body, becoming transformed into a corporeal life-force. The divine soul's faculty of action, being a G-dly power, can achieve this level of unity with G-d when it is employed in the performance of a *mitzvah*.

The organs of the body, on the other hand, although they too are involved in fulfilling the *mitzvah*, can reach no higher than the level illustrated in the analogy of the chariot. A chariot, having no will of its own, is indeed completely subservient to its rider — yet it is not united with him.

וזהו שאמרו רז"ל: האבות הן הן המרכבה

This is what the Sages meant when they said that<sup>3</sup> “The Patriarchs are truly the [Divine] chariot,”

שכל אבריהם כולם היו קדושים ומובדלים מענייני עולם הזה, ולא נעשו מרכבה רק לרצון העליון לבדו כל ימיהם

for *all* their organs were completely holy and detached from mundane matters, and throughout their lives they served as a vehicle for nothing but the Divine Will.

The reason for the Sages’ designating specifically the Patriarchs as G-d’s chariot, although every Jew’s body becomes a “chariot” when he performs a *mitzvah*, is that the Patriarchs’ submission to the Divine Will was unique in its power, its scope, and its consistency. *All* their organs were *totally* surrendered to the Divine Will *throughout* their lives — whereas with other Jews, only those organs which perform a *mitzvah* are a “chariot”, and then only during the act. In fact, the same organ which today served as a “chariot” to G-d’s Will might conceivably serve the opposite purpose tomorrow.

\* \* \*

The Alter Rebbe has thus far discussed two levels of union with the Divine Will, one analogous to the chariot and its rider, and the second, to the unity of body and soul. Both these levels of unity are achieved by performing the *mitzvot*. He now goes on to describe a third and higher level of unity, that is achieved through the study of the Torah.

אך המחשבה וההרהור בדברי תורה שבמוח, וכח הדבור בדברי תורה שבפה, שהם לבושים הפנימים של נפש האלקית

But the thought and meditation on the words of Torah, which is accomplished in the brain, and the power of speech engaged in the words of Torah, which is in the mouth — these being the innermost garments of the divine soul, and thus closer to the soul itself than the faculty of action, the “external” garment,

וכל שכן נפש האלקית עצמה המלובשת בהם

and surely the divine soul itself which is clothed in them i.e., in the thought and speech engaged in Torah study,

כולם מיוחדים ממש ביחוד גמור ברצון העליון, ולא מרכבה לבד

all of them are fused in perfect unity with the Divine Will, and are not merely a vehicle, a “chariot” for it<sup>4</sup>, as are the mouth and brain in which the thought and speech of Torah study take place.

The term “perfect unity” indicates that the two become one and the same; unlike, for example, the unity of body and soul, which retain their separate identities even when they are joined together and form one unit. An example of a “perfect” unity can be found in the unity of the soul with its faculties, which are a part of it, and are thus completely united with it. In the same way the divine soul and its faculties of speech and thought are united with the Divine Will, when one thinks or speaks of matters of Torah.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain how Torah study is able to effect this level of unity.

כי רצון העליון הוא הוא הדבר הלכה עצמה שמהרהר ומדבר בה, שכל ההלכות הן פרטי המשכות פנימיות  
רצון העליון עצמו

For the Divine Will is identical with the halachic subject of which one thinks and speaks, inasmuch as all the laws of the *Halachah* are particular expressions of the innermost Divine Will itself;

שכך עלה ברצונו יתברך, שדבר זה מותר או כשר, או פטור או זכאי, או להפך

for G-d willed it thus — that a particular thing be deemed permissible or kosher, or that this person be found exempt and another innocent, or the reverse.

Since every *halachah* expresses the Divine Will, the unity which the study of the *Halachah* effects between the soul and the Divine Will surpasses even the unity of body and soul.

וכן כל צרופי אותיות תנ"ך הן המשכת רצונו וחכמתו המיוחדות באין סוף ברוך הוא בתכלית היחוד, שהוא היודע והוא המדע כו'

Similarly, all the letter combinations of the Pentateuch, Prophets and the Holy Writings (*Ketuvim*), are also expressions of G-d's Will and wisdom which are united with the blessed *Ein Sof* in a perfect unity — since He is the Knower, the Knowledge, and the [subject] Known.

Thus, when one studies the Torah, Prophets, and the Writings, he becomes united with the Divine Will and wisdom, which are absolutely one with G-d Himself.

\* \* \*

The difference between the two levels of unity with G-d achieved through Torah and *mitzvot* respectively, may be clarified by the following analogy:

A king orders his servants to build a palace for him, and draws up a detailed blueprint for it. When they carry out his wishes, they are united with his desire as expressed in the palace. However, the palace walls themselves do not represent the king's will and wisdom. But the blueprint does, and the architects who study it are actually involved in the study of the king's will and wisdom.

So too in our case. The actual performance of the *mitzvot*, although dictated by G-d's Will, does not actually constitute this Will. Not so the wisdom of Torah, which is itself G-d's wisdom, and the halachic rulings are actually expressions of His Will; and thus, when one speaks or thinks words of Torah, he attains the greatest possible level of union with G-d, Who is one with His Will and wisdom.

וזהו שכתוב דאורייתא וקודשא בריך הוא כולא חד, ולא אברין דמלכא לחוד כפיקודין

This is what is meant by the statement that “The Torah and G-d are absolutely one” — they are not merely “organs” of the King, as are the *mitzvot*.

For, as explained above, the unity of the *mitzvot* with G-d is like that of body and soul, where two *separate* entities are joined, whereas Torah is entirely one with G-d.

ומאחר שרצון העליון המיוחד באין סוף ברוך הוא בתכלית היחוד, הוא בגילוי לגמרי ולא בהסתר פנים כלל וכלל בנפש האלקית ולבושיה הפנימים, שהם מחשבתה ודבורה, באותה שעה שהאדם עוסק בדברי תורה

Now, since the Divine Will, which is in perfect unity with G-d Himself, stands completely revealed in the divine soul and in its inner garments — i.e., its thought and speech — while a person occupies himself with words of Torah, and there is nothing obscuring the Divine Will at that time, for when one studies Torah, the Divine Will and wisdom contained in it come into full expression in one's soul and its faculties of thought and speech,

הרי גם הנפש ולבושיה אלו מיוחדים ממש באין סוף ברוך הוא באותה שעה בתכלית היחוד

it follows that at that time, the soul and these garments of thought and speech are also truly united with G-d,

כיחוד דבורו ומחשבתו של הקב"ה במהותו ועצמותו כנ"ל

with a unity comparable to that of G-d's speech and thought with His essence and being as explained above. [5](#)

כי אין שום דבר נפרד כי אם בהסתר פנים כנ"ל

For nothing is separate from G-d, except insofar as His Countenance is concealed.

Only then can created beings perceive themselves as distinct entities (as explained in ch. 22). Since there is no such concealment when one studies the Torah, one attains thereby a



perfect unity with G-d — a unity comparable to that of G-d's speech and thought with Himself prior to their revelation as “speech” and “thought”, but as they are contained within Himself.

ולא עוד אלא שיחודם הוא ביתר שאת ויתר עז מיחוד אור אין סוף ברוך הוא בעולמות עליונים

Moreover, their unity i.e., the unity of the divine soul and its faculties with G-d, that is attained through Torah study is even more exalted and more powerful than the unity of G-d's infinite light with the upper (spiritual) worlds.

מאחר שרצון העליון הוא בגילוי ממש בנפש ולבושיה העוסקים בתורה, שהרי הוא הוא התורה עצמה

For the Divine Will is actually manifest in the soul and its garments that are engaged in Torah study, since it is identical with the Torah being studied.

וכל העולמות העליונים מקבלים חיותם מאור וחיות הנמשך מהתורה שהיא רצונו וחכמתו יתברך, כדכתיב:  
כולם בחכמה עשית

All the worlds receive their vitality by way of the light and life derived from the Torah which is G-d's Will and wisdom; as it is written, [6](#) “Through wisdom You have made them all.”

G-d's wisdom is thus the source of vitality for all the worlds.

ואם כן החכמה, שהיא התורה, למעלה מכולם

Thus it follows that G-d's wisdom, i.e., the Torah, transcends them all.

It must be above all the worlds, since it is their source.

והיא היא רצונו יתברך הנקרא סובב כל עלמין, שהיא בחינת מה שאינו יכול להתלבש בתוך עלמין, רק מחיה ומאיר למעלה בבחינת מקיף

In fact the Torah, G-d's Will, is described as “encompassing” all the worlds, meaning that it is at a level that cannot become clothed *within* the worlds, but rather animates and illuminates them as if from a distance, from above, in a transcending and “encompassing” manner, [7](#)

והיא היא המתלבשת בנפש ולבושיה בבחינת גילוי ממש כשעוסקים בדברי תורה

and it is this level which transcends all the worlds that is clothed in a truly revealed form in one's soul and his soul-garments, when he studies Torah,

ואף על גב דאיהו לא חזי כו' ומשום הכי יכול לסבול משום דלא חזי, מה שאין כן בעליונים

even although he does not see it. [8](#) I.e., when one studies Torah he is unable to consciously experience the unity of his soul with G-d which is attained thereby, yet his soul feels it. [9](#) In fact, this is precisely why he can endure such a unity with G-d, precisely *because* he cannot feel it — unlike the supernal worlds where G-dliness is not obscured as it is in this world, and they cannot therefore endure such a unity with G-d without becoming completely nullified and losing their identities entirely.)

ובזה יובן למה גדלה מאד מעלת העסק בתורה יותר מכל המצות, ואפילו מתפלה שהיא יחוד עולמות עליונים

This discussion of the exalted unity with G-d attained through Torah study, which is even greater than that accomplished by performing the *mitzvot*, explains why Torah study is so much loftier than all the other commandments, including even prayer, which effects unity within the supernal worlds.

והא דמי שאין תורתו אומנתו צריך להפסיק, היינו מאחר דמפסיק ומבטל בלאו הכי

([10](#) Although the law requires of anyone whose Torah study is not his entire occupation that he interrupt his study for prayer, [11](#) which would seem to indicate that prayer surpasses Torah study, this is so only because he would in any case pause and interrupt his studies.)

Thus it is not the *law* which causes him to interrupt. The law merely states that the interruption which he would have made regardless, be made at the time designated for prayer; and as soon as he interrupts his studies, he is automatically obliged to pray. [12](#)

ומזה יוכל המשכיל להמשיך עליו יראה גדולה בעסקו בתורה

From this explanation of the lofty stature of Torah study the wise man will be able to draw upon himself a sense of great awe as he engages in the study of the Torah, [13](#)

כשיתבונן איך שנפשו ולבושיה שבמוחו ובפיו הם מיוחדים ממש בתכלית היחוד ברצון העליון ואור אין סוף  
ברוך הוא ממש המתגלה בהם

when he considers how his soul and its “garments” of thought and speech that are found in his brain and mouth are truly fused in perfect unity with the Divine Will and the infinite light of *Ein Sof* that is manifest in them i.e., in the soul and its garments when he studies Torah.

מה שכל העולמות עליונים ותחתונים כלא חשיבי קמיה וכאין ואפס ממש, עד שאינו מתלבש בתוכם ממש,  
אלא סובב כל עלמין בבחינת מקיף להחיותם עיקר חיותם, רק איזו הארה מתלבשת בתוכם מה שיכולים לסבול  
שלא יתבטלו במציאות לגמרי

This infinite light manifest in one’s Torah study is of such a lofty level that all the upper and lower worlds are truly as naught in comparison with it; are in fact as absolutely nothing at all, so much so that they can only bear to have a minute glow of it clothed in them without their reverting to nothingness altogether. Their main life-force which they

receive from it, however, is not clothed within them, but animates them from the outside, so to speak, in a transcendent, encompassing manner.

When he considers that the very same Divine light that is completely beyond the capacity of all the worlds manifests itself openly in his Torah study, the thinking man will naturally experience a sense of awe when he studies Torah.

וזהו שכתוב: ויצונו ה' את כל החוקים האלה ליראה את ה' וגו'

This is the meaning of the verse, [14](#) “And G-d commanded us [to fulfill] all these statutes, in order to fear G-d.”

According to this verse, observing the *mitzvot* would appear to be the first step, and this leads to the fear of G-d. Logically, however, the performance of G-d's commandments would seem to be a *result* of one's fear of Him, and not *vice versa*. The Alter Rebbe therefore explains that the above verse speaks of a higher level of awe than that which is a prerequisite for performing the commandments. This level can only be attained as a *result* of one's observance of the commandments.

Now if the commandments lead one to a higher level in the fear of G-d, surely the study of the Torah leads one to a still higher level. This the Alter Rebbe now discusses.

ועל יראה גדולה זו אמרו: אם אין חכמה אין יראה, והתורה נקראת אצלה תרעא לדרתא, כמו שכתוב במקום אחר

(Regarding this great fear our Sages said, [15](#) “If there is no wisdom there is no fear.” In this context, “wisdom” represents Torah study, and “fear” — the higher level of the awe of G-d which can be reached only by way of the Torah. By contrast, the statement, “If there is no fear, there is no wisdom,” refers to the lower level of fear which is a prerequisite for Torah study, as stated above. In relation to this level of fear, the Torah is called [16](#) “a gateway to the dwelling,” i.e., the sole means of entering the dwelling, viz., the higher level of fear, as is explained elsewhere.)

אלא דלאו כל מוחא סביל דא יראה כזו. אך גם מאן דלא סביל מוחו כלל יראה זו, לא מינה ולא מקצתה, מפני פחיתות ערך נפשו בשרשה ומקורה במדרגות תחתונות דעשר ספירות דעשיה, אין יראה זו מעכבת בו למעשה, כמו שכתוב לקמן

Not every mind, however, can sustain such a fear. Yet even he whose mind cannot bear such a fear, nor even a minute part of it, because the root and source of his soul derives from an inferior level — the lower gradations of the Ten *Sefirot* of the World of *Asiyah*, — even he should not be deterred from the actual performance of the Torah and the *mitzvot* for want of this fear, as will be explained further. [17](#)

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) Cf. I, 24a; II, 60a; Tikkunei Zohar 21b. [2.](#) Tikkun 30. [3.](#) Bereishit Rabbah 47:6. [4.](#) In saying "and not merely a `chariot' for it," the Alter Rebbe contrasts the thought and the power of speech engaged in Torah with the brain and mouth which do the

thinking and speaking. The latter become (merely) a "chariot" for G-d's Will, while the former are "fused in perfect unity" with it. If we were to contrast the faculty of speech engaged in Torah study with that same faculty as it engages in observing a mitzvah (reciting the grace after meals, for example), we would say that in the act of Torah study the faculty of speech is fused in perfect unity with the Divine Will; it is not merely as an organ of the body is to the soul in relation to this Will, as the Alter Rebbe indeed states shortly. ( - Based on a comment by the Rebbe.) [5.](#) Ch. 21. [6.](#) Tehillim 104:24. [7.](#) See below, chs. 41, 46, 48 and 51. [8.](#) Cf. Megillah 3a. [9.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [10.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [11.](#) Shabbat 11a; Rambam, Hilchot Tefillah 6:8; R. Shneur Zalman, Shulchan Aruch 106:4. [12.](#) This interpretation is based on a note by the Rebbe. [13.](#) The point of the following discussion of the awe of G-d that Torah study engenders in the student, and its relevance here, are explained by the Rebbe as follows: The Alter Rebbe has pointed out that the level of union with G-d's Will found in the study of the Torah is greater than the union attained through other mitzvot. He now goes on to say that as a result of this superior quality, the study of the Torah is superior in yet another respect, viz., it creates in the student a greater awe of G-d than that which the mitzvot create in those who perform them. In fact, this latter quality is more important than the former. Since the goal of all the mitzvot (and their attendant union with G-d's Will) is to lead us to fear Him (as the Alter Rebbe will quote shortly), the superiority of Torah over mitzvot in the attainment of this goal is more important than its intrinsic superiority - in union with G-d's Will. The relevance of this subject here lies in the fact that the entire discussion of the qualities of Torah and mitzvot is intended to show how "it is very near to you .... in your mouth and heart ....." (see our introduction to chapter 18). Clearly, the greater one's awe of G-d, the more is it "very near to you." [14.](#) Cf. Devarim 6:24. [15.](#) Avot 3:17. [16.](#) Shabbat 31b; Yoma 72b. [17.](#) Ch. 41.



## Chapter 24

In ch. 18 the Alter Rebbe began to explain how it is very near and accessible to each of us to serve G-d out of a feeling of love and awe, by means of awakening the hidden love latent in us all. To clarify how this hidden love can lead to the observance of all the *mitzvot*, the Alter Rebbe proceeded to discuss the relationship of all the *mitzvot* to the precept of belief in G-d's unity and to the prohibition against idolatry. The unity of G-d, he explained, means not only that there is but one G-d; rather that G-d is the only existing being, and all else is contained within Him. Conversely, idolatry does not necessarily mean a denial of G-d's existence, or of His being unique. Any assertion that something exists beyond and separate from G-d also constitutes idolatry.

In ch. 23, the Alter Rebbe went on to state that through Torah and *mitzvot*, in which the Divine Will stands revealed, one reaches a perfect union with G-d. In this chapter he explains that a transgression has exactly the opposite effect of a *mitzvah*. Whereas a

*mitzvah* joins one to G-d, a transgression severs one from Him; whereas a *mitzvah* attests to G-d's unity, a transgression implies idolatry.

זוהי לעומת זה

Since everything in the realm of holiness has its counterpart in the unholy realms of the *sitra achra*, there is also an unholy counterpart to the observance of the *mitzvot* and to Torah study, which produce union with G-d. Their counterpart is:

הן שס"ה מצות לא תעשה דאורייתא, וכל איסורי דרבנן

the 365 prohibitions stated in the Torah, and all the Rabbinical prohibitions.

מאחר שהן נגד רצונו וחכמתו יתברך והפכם ממש, הם נפרדים מיחודו יתברך ואחדותו יתברך בתכלית הפירוד ממש

Since they are contrary to and the very opposite of G-d's Will and wisdom, they represent total and complete separation from His unity and oneness.

כמו הסטרא אחרא והקליפה הנקראת עבודה זרה ואלקים אחרים, מחמת הסתר פנים של רצון העליון כנ"ל

They are the same as the *sitra achra* and the *kelipah* which are called "idolatry" and "other gods," since the internal aspect of the Divine Will is concealed from them, as explained above<sup>1</sup> — that they receive their life-force from the "hinder-part" of the Divine Will, the level of, אחרים אלקים, and for this reason they are called "other gods."

וכן ג' לבושי הנפש שמקליפת נוגה שבישראל, שהם מחשבה דבור ומעשה המלוכשים בשס"ה לא תעשה דאורייתא ודרבנן

Just as the forbidden actions themselves represent separation from G-dliness so too the three garments of a Jew's animal soul, which stems from the *kelipah* of *nogah* — namely, the thought, speech and action that are clothed in i.e., that think, speak or act in violation of the 365 Torah-prohibitions, or any of the Rabbinic injunctions,

וכן מהות הנפש עצמה המלוכשת בלבושיה

and similarly the essence of the soul itself which is clothed in its garments, since it is the soul itself, after all, which thinks, speaks and acts through its "garments" — the faculties of thought, speech and action,

כולם מיוחדים ממש בסטרא אחרא וקליפה זו הנקראת עבודה זרה

— all of them become completely united with this *sitra achra* and *kelipah* called "*avodah zarah*," i.e., idolatry.

ולא עוד אלא שבטלים וטפלים אליה, וגרועים ופחותים ממנה מאד

Not only are they united with the *kelipah*, and thus equal to it, but furthermore they become secondary and subordinate to it, and much lower and more debased than it.

כי היא אינה מלובשת בגוף חומרי, ויודעת את רבונה ואינה מורדת בו לפעול פעולתה במשלחת מלאכי רעים שלה, שלא בשליחותו של מקום, ברוך הוא, חס ושלום

For the *kelipah* is not clothed in a corporeal body and hence is more exposed to the divine light; it knows its Master and does not rebel against Him (G-d forbid) by any independent act of sending its evil messengers, other than in the service of G-d.

Any evil act of the *sitra achra* is performed only in the service of G-d. Thus, the *kelipot* that are not clothed in a body cannot rebel against G-d's Will; only the animal soul clothed in the human body can do so. Hence, it is even lower than the *kelipah*.

וכמאמר בלעם: לא אוכל לעבור את פי ה' וגו'

So did Bilaam say: [2](#) "I cannot violate the Word of G-d"

Although Bilaam was a *kelipah* clothed in a body, yet when he spoke for the spiritual *kelipah* within him, viz., the unholy prophetic power with which he wished to curse the Jewish people, he said, "I cannot violate the Word of G-d."

ואף שנקרא עבודה זרה, הא קרו ליה אלקא דאליא

Although the *kelipot* are called *avodah zarah*, idolatry, which is a denial of G-d, yet they refer to Him as "the G-d of gods," indicating that they do not deny Him completely.

ואינם יכולים לעבור כלל על רצונו יתברך, כי יודעים ומשיגים שהוא חיותם וקיומם, שיונקים מבחינת אחריים דאחוריים של רצון העליון, ברוך הוא, המקיף עליהם

They *cannot* violate G-d's Will, for they know and perceive that He is their life and sustenance, since they derive their nurture from the "hindermost aspect" of the Divine Will which encompasses them.

אלא שיניקתם וחיותם היא בבחינת גלות בתוכם, להחשיב עצמן אלקות, והרי זו כפירה באחדותו

It is only the sustenance and life-force that is *within* them, i.e., the internal life-force which constitutes the identity of every created being, as explained in ch. 22, that is in a state of exile, so that they regard themselves as gods — which is a denial of G-d's unity.

אבל מכל מקום אינם כופרים וכחשו בה' לגמרי ולומר לא הוא, אלא דקרו ליה אלקא דאליא, דהיינו חיותם וקיומם הנמשך ויורד עליהם מרצונו יתברך

But they are not so completely heretical as to deny G-d and to assert that He does not exist. On the contrary, they regard Him as "the G-d of gods," recognizing that their life and existence ultimately derive from His Will.

ולכן אינן עוברין רצונו יתברך לעולם

Therefore they never rebel against G-d's Will.

ואם כן האדם העובר על רצונו יתברך הוא גרוע ופחות הרבה מאד מהסטרא אחרא וקליפה הנקראת עבודה זרה ואלקים אחרים

It follows, then, that the person who *does* violate G-d's Will is greatly inferior to and more debased than the *kelipah* and *sitra achra* which are called *avodah zarah* and "other gods."

והוא בתכלית הפירוד מיוחדו ואחדותו של הקב"ה יותר ממנה, וכאלו כופר באחדותו יותר ממנה, חס ושלום

He is separated completely from G-d's unity and oneness even more than they are, as though denying His unity even more radically than they, G-d forbid.

וכמו שכתוב בע' חיים שער מ"ב סוף פרק ד', שהרע שבעולם הזה החומרי הוא שמרי הקליפות הגסות כו', והוא תכלית הברור וכו'

This is similar to what is written in *Etz Chayim*, Portal 42, end of ch. 4, that the evil in this corporeal world is the dregs of the coarse *kelipot*; it is the sediment of the purifying process, and so on.

I.e., after whatever sparks of good that are found in the *kelipot* have been isolated and elevated, what remains is *kelipah* in its lowest, coarsest form. This *kelipah* is the evil found in this material world.

ולכן כל מעשה עולם הזה קשים ורעים, והרשעים גוברים בו וכו'

For this reason, all matters of this world are harsh and evil, and the wicked prevail in it, and so forth.

ולכן אמרו רז"ל על פסוק כי תשטה אשתו: אין אדם עובר עבירה כו'

This explains the commentary of our Sages on the verse, [3](#) "If a man's wife turns aside [and commits adultery]." [4](#) — "No man commits any transgression unless a spirit of folly has entered into him.

The Sages thus relate the root of תשטה — "turns aside," to שטות — "folly".

דאפילו אשה המנאפת, שדעתה קלה, היתה מושלת ברוח תאותה לולי רוח שטות שבה

For even an adulterous woman, with her frivolous nature, could have controlled her passionate drive were it not for the spirit of folly within her,

המכסה ומסתיר ומעלים את האהבה מסותרת שבנפשה האלקית, לדבקה באמונת ה' ויחודו ואחדותו, ולא ליפרד חס ושלום מאחדותו, אפילו נוטלים את נפשה ממנה, לעבוד עבודה זרה, חס ושלום

which covers and conceals the hidden love within her divine soul, that yearns to cleave to her faith in G-d, and to His unity and oneness, and that resists even on pain of death, any separation from His unity through idol-worship, i.e., even this adultress would willingly sacrifice her life, rather than submit to coercion to practice idolatry,

ואפילו בהשתחואה לבדה, בלי שום אמונה בלב כלל

even if this idol-worship would consist merely of an empty act of prostrating herself before the idolized object, without any belief in her heart in the validity of idol-worship.

וכל שכן לכבוש היצר ותאות הניאוף שהם יסורים קלים ממיתה, ה' ישמרנו

Now, if her hidden love of G-d has the power to enable her to face death rather than be separated from Him, surely then it is within its power to overcome the temptation and lust for adultery, which is lighter suffering than death (May G-d protect us!).

It is only the "spirit of folly," i.e., the notion that her sin will not tear her away from G-dliness, that leads her to commit adultery.

It might be argued, however, that she differentiates between idolatry and adultery; she regards the former as much more heinous (and thus more certain to tear her away from G-d) than the latter. Perhaps this differentiation (not the "spirit of folly") is why she would sacrifice her life rather than practice idolatry, yet at the same time she would not sacrifice her temptation for adultery. In answer, the Alter Rebbe states:

ההפרש שאצלה בין איסור ניאוף לאיסור השתחואה לעבודה זרה, הוא גם כן רוח שטות דקליפה

The distinction she makes between the prohibition against idolatry and that against adultery is also but a "spirit of folly" stemming from the *kelipah*.

It renders her insensitive to the enormous breach between herself and G-d that is created by *every* sin. If she were aware of this breach, she would certainly overcome desire and refrain from sin.

המלבשת לנפש האלקית עד בחינת חכמה שבה, ולא עד בכלל, מפני אור ה' המלוכש בחכמה כנ"ל

Yet the "spirit of folly" envelops the divine soul only up to, but not including, its faculty of *Chochmah* which, as explained in ch. 18, represents the power of faith in G-d; this faith is unaffected by the "spirit of folly," because of the Divine light that is clothed in the faculty of *Chochmah*, as explained above. [5](#)

Therefore, when confronted with a matter that directly bears on her faith in G-d, such as idolatry, where the "spirit of folly" is powerless, she would willingly sacrifice her life.



But when faced with the temptation for adultery, where the "spirit of folly" can — and does — conceal her faith in G-d and her hidden love for Him, she succumbs. As stated, the subjective distinction between the two stems from foolishness and insensitivity.

אבל באמת לאמיתו, אפילו עבירה קלה, הרי העוברה עובר על רצון העליון, ברוך הוא

In truth, however, even he who commits a minor sin transgresses the Divine Will,

והוא בתכלית הפירוד מיחודו ואחדותו יתברך, יותר מסטרא אחרא וקליפה הנקראת אלקים אחרים ועבודה זרה ממש, ויותר מכל הדברים הנשפעים ממנה בעולם הזה

and he is completely sundered from G-d's unity and oneness even more than the *sitra achra* and *kelipah*, which are called "strange gods" and "idolatry", since *kelipah* does not violate G-d's Will, whereas he does, and more than all things of this world that are derived from them,

שהם בהמות טמאות וחיות ועופות טמאים ושקצים ורמשים

namely, the unclean cattle, beasts, and birds, and the vermin and reptiles which all receive their life-force from the three completely unclean *kelipot*.

The person who transgresses even a minor sin, then, is worse and lower than the *kelipot* and all that derives from them.

וכמאמר: יתוש קדמך

As our Sages have said, [6](#) "When a man sins, he is told: 'The gnat preceded you.'

The simple meaning of this statement is: "You have no cause for pride! Even the lowly gnat was created before you!" But the deeper spiritual meaning is that the gnat takes precedence over the sinner in *rank* — as the Alter Rebbe goes on to explain:

פירוש: דאף יתוש שמכניס ואינו מוציא

This means that even the gnat which as the Talmud states consumes [food] but does not excrete, indicating a *kelipah* which is the height of selfishness — it does not give *anything* of itself,

היא קליפה היותר תחתונה ורחוקה מבחינת הקדושה, המשפעת בתכלית ריחוק, קודמת לאיש החוטא בהשתלשלות וירידת החיות מרצון העליון, ברוך הוא

which is the very lowest form of *kelipah*, and is far removed from holiness, which characteristically gives of itself even to those far from it — for holiness implies humility, which leads to kindness and to benevolence, while *kelipah* represents egocentricity and selfishness; now even the very lowest *kelipah*, symbolized by the gnat, takes precedence over the sinner in the order of descent of the Divine life-force from the Divine Will.

This means that the *kelipah* symbolized by the gnat derives its life-force from a higher level of G-dliness than that from which the sinner is sustained.

וכל שכן שאר בעלי חיים הטמאים ואפילו חיות רעות, שכולם אינם משנים תפקידם, ופקודתו יתברך שמרה רוחם, ואף על גב דאיהו לא חזי כו'

And surely the other unclean creatures and even the ferocious beasts [are higher than the sinner]. All of these do not deviate from their Divinely intended purpose, but obey G-d's command. Although they cannot perceive it, for the animal cannot perceive G-d's command, yet their "spirit" perceives it. [7](#)

I.e., the life-force animating them, which *is* aware of the Divine Will, does not permit them to act in violation of it.

וכמו שכתוב: ומוראכם וחתכם יהיה על כל חית הארץ, וכפירוש רז"ל, שאין חיה רעה מושלת באדם אלא אם כן נדמה לה כבהמה

As it is written: [8](#) "The fear and dread of you shall lie upon every beast of the earth," and as our Sages explain: [9](#) "A wild beast will never defy a human being unless he appears to it like an animal."

והצדיקים, שאין צלם אלקים מסתלק מעל פניהם, כל חיות רעות אתכפיין קמייהו, כמו שכתוב בזהר גבי דניאל בגוב אריות

In fact, when confronting *tzaddikim*, from whose face the Divine image never departs, the evil beasts are humbled before them, as is stated in the *Zohar* concerning Daniel in the lions' den.

Not only did the lions not harm him, but on the contrary they humbled themselves before him. [10](#) At any rate, what emerges from the above is that even the animals do not violate G-d's Will.

ואם כן החוטא ועובר רצונו יתברך אפילו בעבירה קלה, בשעת מעשה הוא בתכלית הריחוק מקדושה העליונה, שהיא יחודו ואחדותו יתברך

It is thus clear that he who sins and transgresses against G-d's Will even in a minor offense, is, at the time he commits it, completely removed from the Divine Holiness, meaning G-d's unity and oneness,

יותר מכל בעלי חיים הטמאים ושקצים ורמשים המושפעים מסטרא אחרא וקליפת עבודה זרה

even more so than all the unclean creatures, the vermin and the reptiles which derive their sustenance from the *sitra achra* and the *kelipah* of *avodah zarah*.

All the aforesaid demonstrates how one's hidden love for G-d can enable him to overcome his desire to transgress *any* sin. When he considers that thereby he becomes

separated from G-d even more than the unclean creatures, he will recoil from every sin just as he recoils from the thought of idolatry — because of his awareness that it represents an attack on his love of G-d and his faith in Him.

ומה שפיקוח נפש דוחה שאר עבירות וגם יעבור ואל יהרג

True, we find a principle that saving a life overrides other prohibitions though not the prohibition of idolatry; so too the law sometimes calls for one to commit a transgression rather than be killed, whereas with idolatry, incest and murder, the law requires that he submit to death rather than commit any one of the three.

This would seem to indicate that the Torah itself distinguishes between idolatry and most other commandments — while the Alter Rebbe previously stated that the adultress who makes such a distinction has been blinded by a "spirit of folly," for in reality every sin tears one away from G-d in the same way as idolatry.

In the following paragraph the Alter Rebbe states that there is no contradiction here. The requirement or non-requirement to sacrifice one's life for a prohibition does not reflect its intrinsic worth.

היינו כפירוש חז"ל: אמרה תורה, חלל עליו שבת אחת כדי שישמור שבתות הרבה

This fact that saving a life overrides other prohibitions is because, as the Sages explain; [11](#) "The Torah declares: 'Desecrate one *Shabbat* for his sake so that he may live to observe other *Shabbatot*.'"

When the medical treatment of a patient involves an activity normally forbidden on *Shabbat*, the Torah requires that we desecrate the *Shabbat* to cure him so that he may live to observe *Shabbat* in the future. Thus the precept of *Shabbat* has not been waived in the face of an *external* consideration. It is in the interests of the *Shabbat* itself (i.e., the patient's future observance of *Shabbat*) that we desecrate this one *Shabbat*,

ולא משום קלות העבירות וחומרן

and it is not because of the relative leniency (of the *Shabbat*) or gravity of the sins (such as idolatry), that one is waived while the other is not.

תדע, שהרי שבת חמורה ושקולה כעבודה זרה לענין שחיטת מומר לדבר אחד, ביורה דעה סימן ב'

[12](#)This contention is supported by the following fact: Violation of the *Shabbat* is a grave offense, and comparable to idolatry with regard to the law of *Shechitah* by anyone who habitually violates a particular precept, as codified in *Yoreh Deah*, Section 2.

There the *Shulchan Aruch* states that one who regularly desecrates the *Shabbat* is unfit for *Shechitah*, as though he habitually practiced idolatry.

מה שאין כן במומר לגילוי עריות

A habitual sexual offender on the other hand does not have the same law applied to him as a habitual idolator, indicating that the violation of *Shabbat* is graver than sexual offenses.

ואפילו הכי פיקוח נפש דוחה שבת ולא גילוי עריות

Yet the consideration of life overrides *Shabbat*, but not the sexual prohibitions.

Thus it cannot be argued that the requirement to sacrifice oneself for the sexual prohibitions is due to their gravity, for we see that the desecration of *Shabbat* is even graver than them with regard to *Shechitah*. Hence we must conclude that the laws governing self-sacrifice are no measure of the relative gravity of the *mitzvot*,

אלא דגזירת הכתוב הוא

but they are simply a matter of Scriptural decree. [13](#)

The sinner, however, who does distinguish between the gravity of the various transgressions, sacrificing his life for the prohibition of idolatry but not even restraining his desire for others, surely has his thinking clouded by the "spirit of folly" of the *kelipah*, which obscures his hidden love of G-d. For in reality, *every* transgression creates the *ultimate* separation between the sinner and G-d.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to say that if a difference is indeed to be drawn between the various sins, it is only with regard to their effect *after* they have taken place.

אלא שלאחר מעשה החטא, אם היא מעבירות שאין בהן כרת ומיתה בידי שמים

After the sinful act, however, if the sin is of the type that carries neither the penalty of *karet* (spiritual extinction of the soul), or death at the hands of heaven,

שאינן נפשו האלקית מתה לגמרי ונכרתת משרשה באלקים חיים

in which case the divine soul does not completely perish and is not entirely cut off from its source in the living G-d;

רק שנפגם קצת דביקותה ואחיזתה בשרשה בחטא זה

except that through this sin its attachment to its source and its connection with it has been weakened somewhat, in the case of such a sin, the Alter Rebbe concludes (after a parenthetical note), the animal soul and the body can rise out of the *kelipah* and unite with the holiness of the divine soul.

The difference between — on the one hand — the sins carrying the penalty of *karet* or death at the hands of heaven, and other sins, is explained elsewhere<sup>14</sup> as follows: The connection of the divine soul with its G-dly source is comparable to a rope woven of 613 strands, each strand representing one of the commandments. Every sin severs a corresponding strand. When one strand is broken, the entire rope is weakened, but not severed entirely. The penalties of *karet* or death at the hands of heaven, however, cut the rope entirely, so to speak.

\* \* \*

In the following note, the Alter Rebbe states that the varying degrees of severity in the punishments imposed for various sins correspond to the blemish caused by each sin. The purpose of punishment is not the punishment *per se*, but purification of the soul from the blemish which the sin brought about. Thus, the greater the blemish, the more severe the punishment.

הגהה

ולפי ערך וחלוקי בחינת הפגם בנפש ובשרשה בעליונים

#### NOTE

*Corresponding to the extent and specific nature of the blemish caused by the sin in the soul and in its source in the supernal worlds,*

כך הם חלוקי בחינות המירוק והעונש בגיהנם או בעולם הזה

are the various purifying processes and punishments in purgatory or in this world (i.e., the suffering of the soul in purgatory, or one's suffering in this world - whose purpose is to purify the soul),

לכל עון וחטא עונש מיוחד, למרק ולהעביר הלכלוך והפגם

*for each transgression and sin its appropriate punishment, for the purpose of cleansing and removing the stain and the blemish caused by that specific sin.*

וכן בחייבי מיתה וקרת אין פוגמין כולם בשוה

*Similarly, the blemish caused by the sins carrying the penalty of death at the hands of heaven or karet varies from one sin to another.*

#### END OF NOTE

הרי גם נפשו החיונית הבהמית המלובשת בגופו, וכן גופו

(To return to our original point:) *After* the sinful act, in the case of those sins which do not carry the punishment of *karet* or death at the hands of heaven, the sinner's animal soul, which animates the body and is clothed in it, as well as his body itself,

חוזרים ועולים מהסטרא אחרא וקליפה זו ומתקרבים לקדושת נפש האלקית המלובשת בהם

return and rise from the *sitra achra* and *kelipah* whereto they descended when the sin was committed, and they draw closer to the holiness of the divine soul that pervades them.

המאמינה בה' אחד, וגם בשעת החטא היתה באמנה אתו יתברך

The divine soul always believes in the One G-d, and remains faithful to Him even while the sin is being committed.

For it is only the animal soul, via the body, that performs the sinful act.

רק שהיתה בבחינת גלות ממש תוך נפש הבהמית מסטרא אחרא, המחטיאה את הגוף ומורידתו עמה בעמקי שאול

But at that time, [the divine soul] was in a state of veritable exile in the animal soul — which derives from the *sitra achra* — which causes the body to sin, and drags it down with itself to the lowest depths;

למטה מטה תחת טומאת הסטרא אחרא וקליפת עבודה זרה, ה' ישמרנו

so low, in fact, that it is even lower than the impurity of the *sitra achra* and the *kelipah* of idolatry (May G-d preserve us!).

An exile's foreign surroundings restrict him from expressing his abilities and ideas. Similarly the divine soul (which is in exile within the animal soul when one sins) is unable to express itself in mastery of the body and in harnessing it for the service of G-d, by reason of the foreign environment of the *kelipah*.

ואין לך גלות גדול מזה, מאיגרא רמה כו'

There is no greater exile than this exile of the divine soul within the animal soul, that is brought on through sin. It is a plunge "from a lofty roof [to a deep pit]."

וכמו שכתוב לעיל, דשרש ומקור נפשות כל בית ישראל הוא מחכמה עילאה, והוא יתברך וחכמתו אחד וכו'

For, as explained earlier, [15](#) the source and root of all Jewish souls is in the Divine Wisdom, and G-d and His wisdom are one and the same... and sin plunges the soul from this lofty plane to the depths of exile within the *sitra achra*.

והוא כמשל האוחז בראשו של מלך ומורידו למטה וטומן פניו בתוך בית הכסא מלא צואה, שאין לך עלבון גדול מזה, אפילו עושה כן לפי שעה

It is comparable to one who seizes the king's head, drags it down, and dips his face in a privy full of filth — the ultimate in humiliation, even if he does it only for a moment.

שהקליפות וסטרא אחרא נקראות קיא צואה, כנודע

For the *kelipot* and *sitra achra* are called "vomit and filth," as is known.

Similarly, when one seizes the divine soul, which stems from Divine wisdom ("the king's head"), and through his sins forces it into the *kelipah* ("a privy full of filth"), he brings upon his soul the most unspeakable humiliation — even if he does so only for a moment (for afterwards the soul rises out of its exile).

We thus see that the differences between the various sins apply only after the sin has been committed. During the act, however, every sin tears one away from G-d. Since every Jew is endowed with a hidden love of G-d, by virtue of which he wishes to be constantly united with Him, and never to be separated from Him, not even for a moment, he can employ this hidden love in fulfilling all the *mitzvot* and in avoiding every sin — as the Alter Rebbe concludes in the following chapter.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) Ch. 22. [2.](#) Bamidbar 22:18. [3.](#) Bamidbar 5:12. [4.](#) Sotah 3a. [5.](#) Ch. 19. [6.](#) Sanhedrin 38a. [7.](#) Cf. Megillah 3a. [8.](#) Bereishit 9:2. [9.](#) Sanhedrin 38:b. [10.](#) Each of these two quotations is cited in support of one part of the Alter Rebbe's contention concerning the creatures' submission to G-d's Will: The first, relating to "the fear and dread of man," proves that the creatures do not deviate from their mission in that they dare not defy any human being, not even a child (see Shabbat 151b: A day-old child need not be guarded from weasels and mice; not so the corpse of Og, the mighty king of Bashan). The second, relating to Daniel in the lions' den, demonstrates that "their spirit sees," to the extent that they can discern whether the G-dly image rests upon one's face - in which case they actually humble themselves before him, or whether this image is absent - in which case they will merely not defy him, but will also not humble themselves before him. (- Based on a note by the Rebbe.) [11.](#) Shabbat 151b; Yoma 85b. [12.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [13.](#) Shabbat 151b; Yoma 85b. [14.](#) Iggeret HaTeshuvah, ch. 5. [15.](#) Ch. 2.



## Chapter 25

In this chapter the Alter Rebbe concludes the discussion begun in ch. 18. There, he began to explain the verse, "For this thing is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it," meaning that to serve G-d out of a feeling of love and awe for Him, is a very easy matter for everyone. This assertion seems contrary to our experience, for it is no easy matter (as the Alter Rebbe pointed out in ch. 17) to turn one's heart from worldly matters to a love and fear of G-d. In answer he stated that it is indeed an easy

matter, for we need not *create* these feelings: we already have them. All that is required of us is to arouse our innate love and fear of G-d from their latent state, and to employ them in the service of G-d.

He then went on to explain (in chs. 18 and 19) the nature and essence of this love and fear. The soul, with its power of faith in G-d by which it is attached to Him, intrinsically desires to cleave to its Divine source. This desire also contains an element of fear — the fear of anything that constitutes separation from G-d. So powerful are these feelings that, by his very nature, a Jew will sacrifice his life rather than practice idolatry, which is a repudiation of G-d's unity.

In the following chapters, the Alter Rebbe explained that *all* the *mitzvot* are an affirmation of G-d's unity, which means that everything exists within G-d and is one with Him. For in the *mitzvot* G-d's Will is revealed, and he who performs them becomes perfectly united with Him. Conversely all sins constitute idolatry, for idolatry implies that there is something — anything — that exists outside of G-d, and separate from Him. Through any transgression, one separates himself from G-d's Will as expressed in the commandments, and thus from G-d Himself, placing himself in the domain of the *kelipot* who deny G-d's unity.

By his very nature, then, a Jew would always observe the *mitzvot* and would never sin — were it not for a “spirit of folly” that obscures his innate hidden love for G-d, and does not permit him to feel the diverse effects of *mitzvot* and sins on his connection with G-d.

In this chapter the Alter Rebbe concludes the discussion, stating that every Jew, at any time, is able to dispel the “spirit of folly” and to arouse his hidden love for G-d. Thus when he is tempted to sin, he will actually *feel* how the sin would tear him away from G-d, and he will therefore resist the impulse. Similarly, when he is required to perform a *mitzvah*, he will *feel* his love for G-d dictating that he do so, so as to be united with Him.

וזהו שכתוב: כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד וגו'

This, then, is the meaning of the verse, [1](#) “For this thing is very near to you...” — to observe the Torah and its commandments out of love and fear of G-d.

שבכל עת ובכל שעה בידו של אדם וברשותו הוא להעביר רוח שטות והשכחה מקרבו

For at any time and moment a person is capable and free to rid himself of the spirit of folly which renders him insensitive to the separation between himself and G-d caused by sin, and the forgetfulness that he has a love of G-d by virtue of which he desires to unite with Him, through the fulfillment of the *mitzvot*.

ולזכור ולעורר אהבתו לה' אחד המסותרת בודאי בלבבו בלי שום ספק



He is always able to remember and arouse his love of the One G-d, that is certainly, undoubtedly, latent in his heart — since everyone, even the most hardened sinner, is endowed with this inborn love.

וזהו שכתוב: ובלבך

This is the meaning of “in your heart” i.e., that everyone can serve G-d out of love, which is an emotion of the heart.

Yet love of G-d, by itself, is insufficient. One needs also a fear of G-d, to guard against violating the prohibitive commandments. Therefore the Alter Rebbe continues:

ונכלל בה גם דחילו, דהיינו שלא ליפרד בשום אופן מיחודו ואחדותו יתברך, אפילו במסירת נפש ממש

This love carries with it also fear; that is, the dread of being separated on any account from G-d’s unity and oneness. Even if it means sacrificing his life so as not to be separated from Him, he will do so,

בלי שום טעם ושכל מושג, אלא בטבע אלקי

without any reason or logic, but purely out of one’s divine nature.

As illustrated in ch. 19 by the analogy of the flame of a candle, which intrinsically seeks to unite with its source, the soul instinctively seeks to unite with its Divine source. Because of this nature, it recoils in fear from anything that may sever its connection with G-d, even at the cost of life itself.

וכל שכן בשבירת התאוות, הקלה מיסורי מיתה, שקרוב אליו הדבר יותר לכבוש היצר

Surely, then, it is far easier to subdue one’s appetites, since this entails much lighter suffering than death which he would willingly endure so as not to be torn away from G-d. Mastering his evil inclination is easier,

הן בבחינת סור מרע

both in the category of [2](#) “turning away from evil” and the category of [3](#) “doing good” — i.e., refraining from sin, and observing the positive commandments, respectively.

אפילו מעבירה קלה של דברי סופרים שלא לעבור על רצונו יתברך, מאחר שנפרד בה מיחודו ואחדותו כמו בעבודה זרה ממש בשעת מעשה

To be specific: Even when it concerns a minor Rabbinic prohibition one can easily master his evil inclination so as not to transgress G-d’s Will, since at the time that he does the forbidden act, he thereby becomes separated from G-d’s unity just as much as through actual idolatry, as explained in the previous chapter.

It follows therefore, that he ought to display the same strength in resisting the temptation for such a sin as he would display (even to the point of sacrificing his life) in rejecting idolatry, since this sin too separates him from G-d.

There would appear to be a difference, however, between idolatry and the minor sin with which we are dealing. With idolatry, the sinner remains separated from G-d even *after* the idolatrous act (as explained in the previous chapter), whereas with a minor sin the separation lasts only as long as the sinful act itself.

The Alter Rebbe refutes this argument in the next paragraph by stating that in the case of idolatry, too, there is a means of ensuring that the separation from G-d brought on thereby end immediately after the act. That method is *teshuvah* — repentance. Yet, despite the fact that this resource is available to him, a Jew would rather be killed than practice idolatry, for he cannot accept even a *momentary* separation from G-d. He may now apply the same consideration to refraining from even a minor sin, since it too imposes upon him a separation from G-d, albeit a momentary one.

והרי גם בעבודה זרה יכול לעשות תשובה אחר כך

Now, even with regard to idolatry, he can repent afterwards and thus assure himself of unity with G-d *after* the idol-worship. Nevertheless, a Jew would give up his life rather than exercise this option.

Yet one may argue that in reality this is no option at all. The *Talmud* states that when one sins because he relies on subsequent *teshuvah*, G-d does not allow him to practice *teshuvah*. Since he cannot rely on this, he *must* sacrifice his life so as not to remain *permanently* separated from G-d through idolatry. With a minor sin, however, the separation from G-d that it causes is in any case temporary, even without recourse to *teshuvah*.

We are thus once again left with our original question: How can it be said that the same fear of separation from G-d that motivates a Jew to sacrifice his life with regard to idolatry, can also motivate him to refrain from even a minor sin? The two cases are altogether different: the former causes a lasting separation, and the latter, a momentary one.

The Alter Rebbe answers this objection by clarifying the Talmudic statement on which it is based. The *Talmud* does not imply, he explains, that the sinner who relies on *teshuvah* utterly loses his ability to repent, but rather that the Divine assistance usually granted to a penitent sinner is withheld from him.

Thus one could, after all, submit to coercion and practice idolatry, and rely on *teshuvah* to save him from a lasting separation from G-d. Yet no Jew would take advantage of this resource; the love of G-d innate in every Jew dictates that he sacrifice his life rather than bear the *temporary* separation caused by idolatry.

This discussion is contained in the following paragraphs.

ואף שהאומר אחטא ואשוב, אין מספיקין כו'

(4) Although the *Talmud* states that [5](#) “He who says, ‘I will sin and repent, sin and repent,’ is not given an opportunity to do so,”

היינו שאין מחזיקים ידו להיות לו שעת הכושר לעשות תשובה

yet this means merely that G-d does not aid such a sinner, granting him the auspicious occasion to repent.

Generally, G-d grants one who wishes to repent the necessary power and the opportune moment to realize his good intentions. However, where one’s reliance on *teshuvah* formed the basis for his sin, he is lent neither the strength nor the opportunity.

אבל אם דחק השעה ועשה תשובה, אין לך דבר שעומד בפני התשובה

If, however, he seizes the opportunity himself and he repents, [6](#) “Nothing can stand in the way of repentance.”

Thus, even in the case of idolatry one could conceivably rely on *teshuvah* to prevent a lasting separation from G-d.

ואף על פי כן, כל איש ישראל מוכן ומזומן למסור נפשו על קדושת ה'

Nevertheless, every Jew is prepared and ready to suffer martyrdom for the sanctification of G-d’s Name,

שלא להשתחוות לעבודה זרה אפילו לפי שעה ולעשות תשובה אחר כך

and will not perform an idolatrous act lit., “to bow down before an idol” even temporarily, with the intention of repenting afterwards — indicating that the fear of even a temporary separation from G-d is sufficient motivation for self-sacrifice.

והיינו מפני אור ה' המלוּבש בנפשם כנ"ל, שאינו בבחינת זמן ושעה כלל אלא למעלה מהזמן, ושליט ומושל עליו כנודע

This is because of the Divine light which is clothed in his soul, as explained above, which does not come within the realm of time at all, but transcends time, and therefore in relation to this light every action is eternal; furthermore, as is known this Divine light rules and dominates time — not only is it not governed by the laws of time, but on the contrary it governs them.

Thus, an action which took but a moment (and, judged by temporal standards, has no value) can become more momentous than one which takes much longer. [7](#)

Since the Divine light clothed in the soul transcends and dominates time, it does not permit *any* separation from G-d, no matter how short its duration.

The discussion until now centered on the category of “turning away from evil.” The Alter Rebbe showed how one could utilize his hidden love of G-d in refraining from sin. He now goes on to the category of “doing good,” discussing the use of the hidden love in leading one to perform all the positive commandments.

והן בבחינת ועשה טוב, להתגבר כארי בגבורה ואומץ הלב

Likewise in the category of “doing good” one can employ the power of his “hidden love,” to strengthen himself like a lion with might and determination of heart,

נגד היצר המכביד את גופו ומפיל עליו עצלה, מבחינת יסוד העפר שבנפש הבהמית

against the evil nature which weighs down his body and casts over him a sloth, which stems from the element of Earth that is in his animal soul. [8](#)

מלהטריח גופו בזריזות בכל מיני טורה ועבודת משא בעבודת ה' שיש בה טורה ועמל

This laziness prevents him from exerting his body energetically with every type of effort and strain, in the service of G-d that entails effort and toil.

כגון לעמול בתורה בעיון, ובפה: לא פסיק פומיה מגירסא

For example, to labor in the Torah with deep concentration, and also orally, so that “his mouth will never cease from Torah study”;

וכמאמר רז"ל: לעולם ישים אדם עצמו על דברי תורה כשור לעול וכחמור למשאוי

as our Sages have said: [9](#) “A man should always submit to the words of Torah like the ox to the yoke, and the ass to the load.”

וכן לתפלה בכונה, בכל כחו ממש

Similarly with regard to devout prayer, he should exert himself with all the strength he can muster.

וכן בעבודת ה' שהיא בדבר שבממון, כמו עבודת הצדקה

So too with regard to serving G-d in monetary matters, such as the duty of charity, [10](#)

וכיוצא באלו ממלחמות היצר ותחבולותיו, לקרר נפש האדם, שלא להפקיר ממנו ובריאות גופו

and in similar matters that entail great effort where one must struggle with the evil inclination and its wiles which seek to cool the ardor of a man's soul, claiming that he

ought not dissipate his money in the case of charity or his health in matters requiring physical exertion.

שלעמוד נגדו ולכבשו קרוב מאד אל האדם, כשישים אל לבו שלנצח היצר בכל זה ויותר מזה, ולעשות הפכו ממש, קל מאד מיסורי מיתה, ה' ישמרנו

It is very easy for a person to resist and subjugate his nature when he considers deeply that to conquer his nature in all the above and more, and in fact to do the very opposite, i.e., to exert himself strenuously, both bodily and financially, is much lighter suffering than death (May G-d preserve us!).

ויסורי מיתה, ה' ישמרנו, היה מקבל באהבה וברצון, שלא ליפרד מיחודו ואחדותו יתברך אפילו לפי שעה, להשתחוות לעבודה זרה, חס ושלום

Yet he would lovingly and willingly have accepted the pain of death (G-d preserve us!) so as not to be separated from G-d's unity and oneness even for a moment by an act of idolatry, G-d forbid.

For, as mentioned earlier, every Jew would sacrifice his life rather than practice idolatry, since he knows that it represents separation from G-d.

וכל שכן שיש לו לקבל באהבה וברצון כדי לדבקה בו לעולם ועד

Certainly, then, he ought to accept lovingly and willingly the comparatively minor pain of exerting himself in the performance of the *mitzvot* in order to bind himself to G-d with an eternal bond.

There is a twofold *a fortiori* argument here. Firstly, performing a *mitzvah* actively binds man to G-d, as opposed to refraining from idolatry, which merely prevents separation from Him. Secondly, the bond effected by the *mitzvah* is an eternal one, as opposed to the temporary separation from G-d caused by idolatry. Now if one would sacrifice his life to refrain from idolatry, how much more so ought he accept whatever hardships are entailed by fulfilling the *mitzvot*, since their performance has both these gains that are not found in the rejection of idolatry.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain how *mitzvot* effect an eternal bond with G-d.

דהיינו כשיעשה רצונו יתברך בעבודה זו, יתגלה בה פנימית רצון העליון בבחינת פנים וגילוי רב, ולא בהסתר כלל

For by fulfilling G-d's Will through this service despite the exertion involved, the innermost Divine Will will be revealed in it — internally as opposed to “surrounding” it or “hovering” over it from above, and very manifestly, without any obscurity whatever.

As explained in ch. 23, the *mitzvot* represent G-d's innermost Will, and when one performs them, this Will stands completely revealed.

וכשאין שום הסתר פנים ברצון העליון, אזי אין דבר נפרד כלל וכלל, להיות יש ודבר בפני עצמו

Now, when there is no “concealment of the Countenance” of the Divine Will, nothing is at all separate from G-dliness, having an independent and separate identity of its own.

For, as explained in chs. 22 and 24, no created being can possibly consider itself separate from G-d unless the Divine Will is concealed from it. Since the inner aspect of this Will stands revealed in one’s performance of a *mitzvah*, it does not permit any sense of separation.

ולזאת תהיינה נפשו האלקית והחיונית ולבושיהן כולן מיוחדות בתכלית היחוד ברצון העליון ואור אין סוף ברוך הוא כנ"ל

Thus his soul i.e., the soul of the person performing the *mitzvah*, both the divine and the animating souls, and their “garments” of thought, speech, and action, will be united in perfect unity with the Divine Will and with the infinite light of G-d, blessed be He, as explained above.

This details how the *mitzvot* effect a bond between man and G-d. The Alter Rebbe will now go on to explain why this bond is eternal.

ויחוד זה למעלה הוא נצחי לעולם ועד, כי הוא יתברך ורצונו למעלה מהזמן

In the upper spheres, this union between the soul and G-d is eternal. For G-d, blessed be He, and His Will transcend time, and thus the union with G-d and His Will also transcends time and is eternal.

וכן גילוי רצונו שבדבורו שהיא התורה הוא נצחי

So too even in this world His revealed Will, as expressed in His Word — the Torah, is also eternal,

וכמו שכתוב: ודבר אלקינו יקום לעולם, ודבריו חיים וקיימים כו', ולא יחליף ולא ימיר דתו לעולמים כו'

as it is written: [11](#) “But the Word of our G-d shall stand forever”; and [12](#) “His words live and endure (eternally)”; and [13](#) “He will never alter or exchange His law.”

Since the revelation of G-d’s Will as expressed in the Torah is beyond time, the union of the soul with G-d that Torah and *mitzvot* effect is likewise eternal.

אלא שלמטה הוא תחת הזמן, ובאותה שעה לבדה שעוסק בה בתורה או במצוה

Here below, however, this union is within the limits of time, for in this world the soul is under the dominion of time, and the soul is united with G-d only while it is engaged in Torah study or in the performance of a *mitzvah*.

כי אחר כך אם עוסק בדבר אחר, נפרד מהיחוד העליון למטה והיינו כשעוסק בדברים בטלים לגמרי שאין בהם צורך כלל לעבודת ה'

For if he engages afterwards in anything else he becomes separated, here below, from this Supernal union (— that is, if he occupies himself with absolutely unnecessary matters that are in no way useful in the service of G-d).

ואף על פי כן, כשחוזר ושב לעבודת ה' אחר כך, לתורה ולתפלה, ומבקש מחילה מה' על שהיה אפשר לו לעסוק אז בתורה ולא עסק, ה' יסלח לו

Nevertheless, when he repents and resumes his service of G-d through Torah study or prayer, and he asks forgiveness of G-d for not having studied Torah at the time of his occupation in vain matters when he could have done so, G-d forgives him.

כמאמר רז"ל: עבר על מצות עשה ושב, לא זו משם עד שמוחלין לו

As our Sages have said, [14](#) “If one neglected to perform a positive precept and repented, he is pardoned forthwith,” and is thus reunited even here below, with G-d and His Will.

ולזה תקנו ברכת סלה לנו שלש פעמים בכל יום על עון ביטול תורה, שאין אדם ניצול ממנו בכל יום

For this reason i.e., because such a request for forgiveness is immediately effective in reuniting the soul to G-d, so that it will not be parted from Him even momentarily, the Sages ordained that the blessing beginning “Forgive us...,” in which we beg forgiveness for the sin of neglecting the study of the Torah, be recited as often as three times daily, since no one escapes this sin even a single day.

וכמו התמיד שהיה מכפר על מצות עשה

This [blessing] is like the daily burnt-offering sacrificed in the Holy Temple, that atoned for neglect of the positive precepts.

Yet it may be argued: Since this sin is repeated constantly, begging forgiveness for it is similar to saying, “I will sin and repent, sin and repent.” Our Sages have said [15](#) that in such a case, G-d does not grant the sinner the opportunity to repent; why then should the request beginning “Forgive us...” be effective in the case of neglecting Torah study? The Alter Rebbe now differentiates between the two cases.

ואין זה אחטא ואשוב, אלא אם כן שבשעת החטא ממש הוא סומך על התשובה ולכך חוטא, כמו שכתוב במקום אחר

This is not the same as saying, “I will sin and repent, sin and repent,” unless at the very time when one commits the sin he relies on subsequent repentance, and sins because of it, as explained elsewhere.

Since he perverted the idea of repentance by using it as an excuse for sinning, he is not given the opportunity to practice it. However, in our case of the oft-repeated sin of neglecting to study Torah, the offender does not rely on *teshuvah* at the time of his sin, and he is therefore granted the opportunity to ask for forgiveness thrice daily in the blessing of "Forgive us."

\* \* \*

At any rate, we see that the union of the soul with G-d that is effected through the *mitzvot* is eternal. When one considers that he would gladly give up his life so as not to be (even momentarily) parted from G-d by practicing idolatry, he will realize that he surely ought to exert himself in performing the *mitzvot* which bind him to G-d forever.

The Alter Rebbe has thus demonstrated how being aware of one's willingness to sacrifice his life for G-d, affects both the areas of "turning away from evil" and "doing good," i.e., the observance of the negative and positive commandments respectively. It follows that this awareness should constantly be on one's mind, so that he will always be ready to apply it to his performance of the *mitzvot*.

ובזה יובן למה צוה משה רבינו עליו השלום במשנה תורה לדור שנכנסו לארץ, לקרות קריאת שמע פעמים בכל יום, לקבל עליו מלכות שמים במסירת נפש

In light of the above, it will be understood why Moshe Rabbeinu, peace be upon him, commanded in the Book of *Devarim* (— not in the earlier Books of the Bible addressed to the generation of Jews who wandered in the desert, [16](#) but) to the generation that entered the Holy Land that they (too, and not only the subsequent generations [17](#)) recite the *Shema* twice daily, the intention in the *Shema* being to acknowledge the Kingdom of Heaven with self-sacrifice; i.e., the *Shema* teaches us to accept martyrdom for the sanctification of G-d's Name.

והלא הבטיח להם: פחדכם ומוראכם יתן ה' וגו'

Now one may ask: Why was it necessary for our forefathers to prepare themselves for martyrdom? Had they not been promised that [18](#) "G-d will lay the fear and dread of you [upon all the inhabitants of the land]"?

They had no reason to fear that anyone would attempt to force them to deny the Kingdom of Heaven, necessitating self-sacrifice to resist such efforts. In this sense, they were as well protected as the Jews who traveled the desert with Moses (who were *not* commanded to recite the *Shema*.) [19](#) We must therefore conclude that preparation for martyrdom is necessary not only to ensure that it will be put into practice if and when necessary,

אלא משום שקיום התורה ומצותיה תלוי בזה שיזכור תמיד ענין מסירת נפשו לה' על יחודו, שיהיה קבוע בלבו תמיד ממש יומם ולילה לא ימיש מזכרונו



but because the fulfillment of the Torah and its commandments is contingent on one's being constantly aware of his readiness to surrender his life to G-d for the sake of His unity, i.e., that a person remember that he would be willing to sacrifice his life for the sake of G-d's unity, *if* the situation would warrant it — which is the message contained in the *Shema*; he must therefore recite it twice daily, morning and evening, so that this awareness will be fixed permanently in his heart, and will not depart from his memory night and day.

כי בזה יוכל לעמוד נגד יצרו לנצחו תמיד בכל עת ובכל שעה

In this way, one is able to withstand his Evil Inclination and to vanquish it at every time and every moment, even after Moses' passing, whenever Jews are engaged in an intense struggle with the Evil Inclination, as it is written: [20](#) "G-d said to Moses, 'Behold, you are about to sleep with your fathers, and this people will rise up and stray,'" [21](#)

כנ"ל

as explained above — that when one remembers that he would be prepared to suffer martyrdom for his love of G-d and his belief in G-d's unity, he will surely be able to overcome his Evil Inclination and perform all the *mitzvot*.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) Devarim 30:14. [2.](#) Cf. Tehillim 34:15. [3.](#) Cf. Tehillim 34:15. [4.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [5.](#) Yoma 85b. [6.](#) Cf. Talmud Yerushalmi, Pe'ah 1:1. [7.](#) Based on a comment by the Rebbe. [8.](#) See ch. 1. [9.](#) Avodah Zarah 5b. [10.](#) The three examples given here correspond to the three "pillars" of Torah, avodah, and gemilut chassadim. [11.](#) Yeshayahu 40:8. [12.](#) From the prayer following the morning Shema. [13.](#) From the medieval hymn Yigdal, based on the Thirteen Principles of Faith formulated by Rambam. [14.](#) Yoma 86a. [15.](#) Ibid. 85b. [16.](#) Based on a comment by the Rebbe. [17.](#) Based on a comment by the Rebbe. [18.](#) Devarim 11:25. [19.](#) Based on a comment by the Rebbe. [20.](#) Ibid. 31:16. [21.](#) Based on a comment by the Rebbe.



## Chapter 26

In the previous chapters, the Alter Rebbe explained how it is “very near to you,” i.e., how it is very easy and accessible to every Jew to serve G-d with love and awe. He stated that this can be accomplished either by creating a love and fear of G-d through meditation on G-d's greatness, or by arousing the “hidden love” (which also comprises a fear of G-d) inherent in every Jew.

In the coming chapters, the Alter Rebbe will discuss means of overcoming possible obstacles in the path of one's service to G-d. In the first instance, he shows how one may

overcome the sadness, and dullness of heart, whereby the heart becomes insensitive to feelings of love and fear of G-d.

ברם כגון דא צריך לאודועי כלל גדול

But this must be made known as a cardinal principle:

כי כמו שנצחון לנצח דבר גשמי, כגון שני אנשים המתאבקים זה עם זה להפיל זה את זה

It is with the service of G-d just as it is with a victory over a physical opponent; for instance, two people who wrestle with each other, each striving to fell the other.

הנה אם האחד הוא בעצלות וכבודות ינוצה בקל ויפול, גם אם הוא גבור יותר מחבירו

If one of them is lazy and sluggish he will easily be defeated and will fall, even if he be stronger than the other, since his laziness and sluggishness prevent him from revealing his strength.

ככה ממש בנצחון היצר

Similarly with the conquest of one's evil nature.

Despite the fact that the good nature is stronger than the evil, for as explained in previous chapters, "Even a little of the light of holiness dispels much darkness of the *kelipah*," yet here too the previous rule applies; and thus:

אי אפשר לנצלו בעצלות וכבודות, הנמשכות מעצבות וטמטום הלב כאבן

It is impossible to conquer the evil nature with laziness and sluggishness, which stem from sadness and a stone-like dullness of the heart,

כי אם בזריזות, הנמשכת משמחה ופתיחת הלב, וטהרתו מכל נדנדוד דאגה ועצב בעולם

but rather with alacrity, which derives from joy and an open i.e., responsive heart that is unblemished by any trace of worry and sadness in the world.

ומה שכתוב: בכל עצב יהיה מותר, פירושו: שיהיה איזה יתרון ומעלה מזה

As for the verse,<sup>1</sup> "In every sadness there will be profit," which means that some profit and advantage would be derived from it,

הנה אדרבה, מלשון זה משמע שהעצב מצד עצמו אין בו מעלה, רק שיגיע ויבא ממנו איזה יתרון

the wording ("there *will* be profit") implies that, on the contrary, the sadness itself has no virtue, except that some profit will ultimately be derived from it.

והיינו השמחה האמיתית בה' אלקינו הבאה אחר העצב האמיתי, לעתים מזומנים, על עונותיו במר נפשו ולב נשבר

This profit is the true joy in G-d which follows the true i.e., justified sadness over one's sins, with bitterness of soul and a broken heart, which must come at specific, suitable times.

Hence the "profit" of sadness is the joy that follows it.

שעל ידי זה נשברה רוח הטומאה וסטרא אחרא ומחיצה של ברזל המפסקת בינו לאביו שבשמים

Why should this sadness lead the worshiper to joy? For thereby (through one's sadness) the spirit of impurity and of the *sitra achra* is broken, and so too the "iron wall" that separates him from his Father in heaven,

כמו שכתוב בזהר על פסוק: רוח נשברה לב נשבר וגו'

as the *Zohar* comments<sup>2</sup> on the verse, <sup>3</sup> "A broken spirit, a broken heart, [You will not despise]."

The *Zohar* interprets the verse as follows: "A broken spirit of the *sitra achra* is accomplished by means of a broken heart" Since sadness over one's sins causes the *sitra achra* to be broken, and the "iron wall" to vanish, it leads one to rejoice — as the Alter Rebbe now goes on to say:

ואזי יקוים בו רישיה דקרא: תשמיעניי ששון ושמחה וגו', השיבה לי ששון ישעך ורוח נדיבה וגו'

Then the preceding verses will be fulfilled for him: <sup>4</sup> "Make me hear joy and gladness";... <sup>5</sup> "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and support me with Your generous spirit."

This joy is the "profit" of sadness, whereas sadness itself is neither "profitable" nor advantageous.

וזהו טעם הפשוט לתיקון האר"י ז"ל לומר מזמור זה אחר תיקון חצות קודם הלימוד

This is the simple reason i.e., apart from the deeper, mystical ones for the practice instituted by the *AriZal* (Rabbi Isaac Luria) of reciting this Psalm containing the verses quoted above after *Tikkun Chatzot* (the midnight prayer) before resuming one's Torah study —

כדי ללמוד בשמחה אמיתית בה' הבאה אחר העצב

in order that one should study with the true joy in G-d, that succeeds the remorse of *Tikkun Chatzot*.

שיש לשמחה זו יתרון כיתרון האור הבא מן החשך דוקא

Such joy is of a greater quality than joy which is not preceded by sadness, similar to the distinctive quality of light which follows darkness.

כמו שכתוב בזהר על פסוק: ראיתי שיש יתרון לחכמה מן הסכלות כיתרון האור כו', עיין שם, ודי למבין

As the *Zohar*<sup>6</sup> comments on the verse, <sup>7</sup> “And I (King Solomon) saw that wisdom surpasses foolishness as light surpasses darkness.” Note there, and this will suffice for him who understands.

The *Zohar* asks: Does it take a Solomon to see this? And it answers that the intention of the verse is that just as darkness contributes to light, for we cannot truly appreciate light unless we have experienced darkness, so too does foolishness contribute to the appreciation of wisdom. Similarly in our case, one’s earlier sadness adds strength to the joy which follows it, and *this* is the “profit” of sadness. Sadness itself, however, is a hindrance in one’s service of G-d.

ומקרא מלא דבר הכתוב: תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה וגו', ונודע לכל פירוש האר"י ז"ל על פסוק זה

Furthermore, the verse states explicitly: <sup>8</sup> “Because you did not serve G-d your L-rd with joy...[therefore you will serve your enemies]” — and everyone is familiar with the explanation of the *AriZal* on this verse. <sup>9</sup>

The verse reads: “Because you did not serve G-d your L-rd with joy and gladness of heart, from an abundance of everything [good]” The simple meaning is: “When you had an abundance of everything you did not serve G-d with joy” (This meaning is borne out by the context of the following verse: “You will serve your enemies *in hunger, thirst, and nakedness, and in want of everything.*”) But the *AriZal* interprets it thus: “You did not serve G-d with a joy *greater than* that caused by an abundance of everything.”

We see from all the above the importance of serving G-d joyfully. Yet, many things in one’s life, both physical and spiritual, may cause him sadness. The Alter Rebbe now goes on to propose means of combating this sadness, so that one may always be joyful.

והנה עצה היעוצה לטהר לבו מכל עצב ונדנדוד דאגה ממילי דעלמא, ואפילו בני חיי ומזוני

Sound advice has been offered by our Sages on cleansing one’s heart of all sadness and any trace of worry about mundane matters, even a sadness or worry caused by the lack of such essentials as children, health, or livelihood.

מודעת זאת לכל מאמר רז"ל: כשם שמברך על הטובה כו'

The advice is contained in the well-known saying of our Sages: [10](#) “Just as one recites a blessing for his good fortune (‘Blessed are You, G-d, Who is good and does good’), so must he also recite a blessing for misfortune.”

ופירשו בגמרא: לקבולי בשמחה כמו שמחת הטובה הנגלית והנראית

The *Gemara* explains [11](#) that this does not mean that he recite the same blessing (for the blessing in a case of misfortune, G-d forbid, is “Blessed are You, G-d, *the true Judge*”); rather, the implication is that one should accept misfortune with joy, like the joy in a visible and obvious good.

כי גם זו לטובה, רק שאינה נגלית ונראית לעיני בשר, כי הוא מעלמא דאתכסיא, שלמעלה מעלמא דאתגליא

For it, too, is for the good, except that it is not apparent and visible to mortal eyes, for it stems from the “hidden (spiritual) world,” which is higher than the “revealed (spiritual) world,” whence derives an apparent and revealed good.

שהוא ו"ה משם הוי"ה ברוך הוא, ועלמא דאתכסיא הוא י"ה

The latter emanates from the letters *vav* and *hei* of the Tetragrammaton (*the Four-Letter Divine Name, composed of the letters yud hei vav hei*), while the former derives from the letters *yud hei*. [12](#)

וזה שכתוב: אשרי הגבר אשר תיסרנו י"ה וגו'

This is also the meaning of the verse, [13](#) “Happy is the man whom You, G-d (spelled *yud hei*), chasten.” Since the verse speaks of man’s suffering, only the letters *yud* and *hei* are mentioned.

Man sees misfortune only because he cannot perceive that which derives from a higher, hidden level of G-dliness. In truth, however, the “misfortunes” are actually blessings in disguise. On the contrary, they represent an even higher level of good than the revealed good, since they originate in a higher world.

ולכן אמרו רז"ל כי השמחים ביסורים, עליהם הכתוב אומר: ואוהביו כצאת השמש בגבורתו

For this reason, our Sages of blessed memory stated [14](#) that the verse, [15](#) “Those who love Him shall be as the sun when it comes out in its might,” refers to the reward of those who rejoice in their afflictions.

G-d always rewards man “measure for measure.” What is the connection, then, between rejoicing in affliction and “the sun”? Also, why are those who rejoice in affliction described as “those who love G-d”? The Alter Rebbe now explains that since misfortune is really nothing but a disguise for the higher form of good that derives from the “hidden world,” the option as to whether it will bring man either joy or misery depends on his priorities. If he deems his physical life all-important, he will indeed be miserable, while if

nearness to G-d is his primary concern he will rejoice, since nearness to G-d is found in greater measure in the “hidden world,” whence derives the good that is hidden in misfortune.

Those who rejoice in suffering are therefore called “lovers of G-d,” and are rewarded by being granted the vision of “the sun emerging in its might.” Since in this world they disregarded externals and ignored the veil of misfortune hiding the good within, choosing instead to concern themselves with the deeper aspect of good and G-dliness lying behind the veil, G-d rewards them in the World to Come “measure for measure,” by casting off the veils that surround Him, and revealing Himself in His full glory to those who love Him.

For the Four-Letter Divine Name, signifying G-d in His Essence, is compared to a sun, and the Name *Elokim*, signifying G-d as He is clothed and concealed in the created universe, is compared to a veil shielding the created beings from the intensity of its rays; as it is written, [16](#) “A sun and a shield (respectively) are *Hashem* (i.e., the Four-Letter Name) *Elokim*.” In the World to Come, the “sun” will emerge from its “shield”, i.e., the Four-Letter Name will no longer be veiled by *Elokim*, and it will shine forth “in its might” as a reward for those who love Him.

This, in summary, is the explanation contained in the following paragraphs.

כי השמחה היא מאהבתו קרבת ה' יותר מכל חיי העולם הזה

For one’s joy in affliction stems from the fact that being near to G-d is dearer to him than anything of the life of this world,

כדכתיב: כי טוב חסדך מחיים וגו'

as it is written: [17](#) “For Your lovingkindness is better than life”

וקרבת ה' היא ביתר שאת ומעלה לאין ק' בעלמא דאתכסיא, כי שם חביון עוזו, ויושב בסתר עליון

Now, the nearness to G-d is infinitely greater and more sublime in the “hidden world,” for [18](#) “there the concealment of His power is lodged”; and it is also written, [19](#) “The Most High abides in secrecy.”

Both these verses indicate that the “hidden world” contains a higher aspect of G-dliness than the “revealed world.” Since the “hidden world” is the source of seeming affliction, he who loves G-d rejoices in it, for it represents a greater nearness to G-d than revealed good, which derives from the “revealed world.”

ועל כן זוכה לצאת השמש בגבורתו לעתיד לבא, שהיא יציאת חמה מנרתקה שהיא מכוסה בו בעולם הזה, ולעתיד תתגלה מכסויה

Therefore he is found worthy of seeing “the sun emerging in its might” in the World to Come, when the “sun” will emerge from the “sheath” in which it is hidden in this world, and will then be revealed.

דהיינו שאז יתגלה עלמא דאתכסיא, ויזרח ויאיר בגילוי רב ועצום לכל החוסים בו בעולם הזה, ומסתופפים בצלו, צל החכמה, שהוא בחינת צל ולא אורה וטובה נראית, ודי למבין

This means that what is presently the “hidden world” will then be revealed, and it will shine forth and glow in a great and intense revelation upon all who seek refuge in Him in This World, taking shelter in his “shadow”, the “shadow of wisdom,” which is presently in a state of “shade” as opposed to revealed light and goodness. I.e., they find shelter and refuge even in that which presents an external appearance of “shade” and darkness, whereas the light and goodness contained in it is concealed. This is sufficient explanation for the understanding.

To return to our original point: When one considers that whatever appears as suffering is actually a higher form of good, he will no longer be saddened or worried by it.

\* \* \*

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to discuss a different type of sadness, that caused by one’s failings in matters of the spirit.

אך העצבות ממילי דשמיא, צריך לשית עצות בנפשו ליפטר ממנה

As for sadness connected with heavenly matters, one must seek ways and means of freeing oneself from it.

אין צריך לומר בשעת עבודה, שצריך לעבוד ה' בשמחה ובטוב לבב

That this applies to the time of one’s divine service, is self-evident, for one must serve G-d with joy and gladness of heart.

אלא אפילו מי שהוא בעל עסקים ודרך אר', אם נופל לו עצב ודאגה ממילי דשמיא בשעת עסקיו

But even one who is occupied in business and worldly affairs, should there descend upon him any sadness or anxiety about heavenly matters during his business affairs,

בידוע שהוא תחבולת היצר, כדי להפילו אחר כך בתאוות, חס ושלום, כנודע

it is certainly a trick of the Evil Inclination which saddens him, ostensibly for spiritual reasons, in order to lure him afterwards into lusts, G-d forbid, as is well known.

It is man’s nature to seek pleasure and not to remain depressed. If his feeling of spiritual failure distresses him, he will seek his pleasure in physical gratification. The Evil

Inclination therefore wishes that one be depressed, be it even over spiritual matters, so that he will later succumb to temptation.

שאם לא כן, מאין באה לו עצבות אמיתית, מחמת אהבת ה' או יראתו, באמצע עסקיו

For if it were not so, that this depression is the doing of the *Yetzer Hara*, whence would a genuine sadness, one that is derived from love or fear of G-d, come to him in the midst of his business affairs?

Since a genuine sadness is an expression of love or fear of G-d, it should express itself at a time when these emotions are active — during prayer, Torah study and the like, but not during one's business. Clearly, then, the sadness is artificial, created by the *Yetzer Hara* for its own purposes, and one must therefore rid himself of it. The next paragraph provides the means:

והנה, בין שנפלה לו העצבות בשעת עבודה בתלמוד תורה או בתפלה, ובין שנפלה לו שלא בשעת עבודה, זאת ישים אל לבו

Whether the depression settles upon him during his service of G-d in Torah study or prayer, or when he is not engaged thus, but with his material affairs, this is what he should consider:

כי אין הזמן גרמא כעת לעצבות אמיתית, אפילו לדאגת עונות חמורים, חס ושלום

“Now is not the proper time for genuine sadness, nor even for worry over grave sins, G-d forbid.

רק לזאת צריך קביעות עתים ושעת הכושר בישוב הדעת, להתבונן בגדולת ה' אשר חטא לו

For this one must set aside opportune times, when the mind is calm, to reflect on the greatness of G-d against Whom he has sinned,

כדי שעל ידי זה יהיה לבו נשבר באמת במרירות אמיתית, וכמבואר עת זו במקום אחר

so that thereby his heart will truly be rent with genuine bitterness i.e., bitterness — remorse — as opposed to depression; the former is alive and active, while the latter is resigned and “dead“. It is explained elsewhere when this time should be [20](#)

ושם נתבאר גם כן כי מיד אחר שנשבר לבו בעתים קבועים ההם, אז יסיר העצב מלבו לגמרי

There it is also explained that immediately after his heart has been broken during those appointed times, he should completely remove the sorrow from his heart,

ויאמין אמונה שלימה כי ה' העביר חטאתו, ורב לסלוח



and he should believe with perfect faith that G-d has erased his sin, and that "He pardons abundantly."

Thus, even if one has sinned repeatedly against Him, G-d will readily forgive him as though he had sinned for the first time; unlike man, who easily forgives a first offense but finds it difficult to do so when the offense is oft repeated.

וְזוֹ הִיא הַשְּׂמֵחָה הָאֲמִיתִית בְּה' הַבָּאָה אַחַר הַעֲצֵב, כִּנ"ל

This knowledge that G-d has surely cleansed him of his sins is the true joy in G-d which follows the sadness, as explained above —that the advantage of sadness lies in the joy to which it gives rise.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Mishlei* 14:23. [2.](#) See ch. 17. [3.](#) *Tehillim* 51:19. [4.](#) *Ibid.* 51:10. [5.](#) *Ibid.* 51:14. [6.](#) III, 47b. [7.](#) *Kohelet* 2:13. [8.](#) *Devarim* 28:47. [9.](#) Quoted in *Shelah, Asarah Maamarot, Maamar* 3:4. [10.](#) *Berachot* 9:5. [11.](#) *Berachot* 60a. [12.](#) See *Iggeret HaTeshuvah*, ch. 4, where the relation of the various Worlds to the letters of the Tetragrammaton is discussed at length. [13.](#) *Tehillim* 94:12. [14.](#) *Yoma* 23a. [15.](#) *Shoftim* 5:31. [16.](#) *Tehillim* 84:12; cf. *Shaar HaYichud VahaEmunah*, ch. 4. [17.](#) *Tehillim* 63:4. [18.](#) *Chavakuk* 3:4. [19.](#) *Tehillim* 91:1. [20.](#) See *Iggeret HaTeshuvah*, chs. 7, 11.



## Chapter 27

In the previous chapter the Alter Rebbe stated that sadness hinders one's service of G-d in general, and his battle with the *Yetzer Hara* in particular. He therefore discussed means of overcoming sadness caused by material concerns, and by anxiety over one's sins.

In this chapter and the next, he will discuss another type of melancholy, that caused by concern over one's sinful thoughts and desires. This category itself may be further subdivided into two: (1) Where these thoughts occur while one is occupied with his material affairs, and (2) Where these thoughts disturb his service of G-d in Torah study, prayer and the like.

In this chapter the Alter Rebbe discusses the first situation. He states that not only are these thoughts no cause for sadness, but on the contrary, they ought to give rise to joy.

וְאִם הָעֲצֵבוֹת אֵינָהּ מְדַאֲגָת עוֹנוֹת, אֲלֵא מֵהִרְהוּרִים רַעִים וְתַאוּוֹת רַעוֹת שְׁנוּפְלוֹת בְּמַחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ

If, however, his sadness does not stem from anxiety over sins that he has committed, but from the fact that sinful thoughts and desires enter his mind, then:

הנה אם נופלות לו שלא בשעת העבודה, אלא בעת עסקו בעסקיו ודרך ארץ וכהאי גוונא

If these thoughts occur to him not during his service of G-d, but while he is occupied with his own affairs and with mundane matters and the like,

אדרבה יש לו לשמוח בחלקו, שאף שנופלות לו במחשבתו הוא מסיח דעתו מהם

he should, on the contrary, be happy in his lot; for although these sinful thoughts enter his mind, he averts his attention from them.

It is clear that here we are speaking of one who does not wilfully dwell on sinful thoughts, for if he does so he is a sinner, and the previous chapter has already dealt with sadness arising from sins.

לקיים מה שנאמר: ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם אשר אתם זונים אחריהם

By averting his mind from sinful thoughts he fulfills the injunction, <sup>1</sup> “You shall not follow after your heart and after your eyes, by which you go astray.”

Only when sinful thoughts enter one’s mind can he fulfill this command. For the intention of the verse is not that one be at a level where such thoughts would not occur to him: this is the level of *tzaddikim*, who have eradicated all evil from their hearts. Surely, then this verse is not addressed to *tzaddikim*. The verse refers rather to one who does have such thoughts, and he is commanded to banish them — as the Alter Rebbe continues:

ואין הכתוב מדבר בצדיקים לקראם זונים, חס ושלום

The above verse surely does not speak of *tzaddikim*, referring to them (G-d forbid) as “going astray,”

אלא בבינונים כיוצא בו שנופלים לו הרהורי ניאוף במחשבתו, בין בהיתר כו'

but of *Beinonim* like himself, in whose mind there do enter erotic thoughts, whether of an innocent nature [or otherwise],

וכשמסיח דעתו, מקיים לאו זה

and when he averts his mind from them, he fulfills this injunction.

ואמרו רז"ל: ישב ולא עבר עבירה, נותנים לו שכר כאילו עשה מצוה

Our Sages have said: <sup>2</sup> “When one passively abstains from sin, he is rewarded as though he had actively performed a *mitzvah*.”

ועל כן צריך לשמוח בקיום הלאו כמו בקיום מצות עשה ממש

Consequently, he should rejoice in his compliance with the injunction just as he does when performing an actual positive precept.

Thus not only should the occurrence of these thoughts not grieve him, but it ought to bring him joy, for only thereby is he able to fulfill this commandment.

ואדרבה, העצבות היא מגסות הרוח

On the contrary, such sadness is due to conceit.

שאינו מכיר מקומו, ועל כן ירע לבבו על שאינו במדרגת צדיק

For he does not know his place, and that is why he is distressed because he has not attained the level of a *tzaddik*,

שלצדיקים בודאי אין נופלים להם הרהורי שטות כאלו

to whom such foolish thoughts surely do not occur.

כי אילו הי' מכיר מקומו, שהוא רחוק מאד ממדרגת צדיק

For were he to recognize his station, that he is very far from the rank of *tzaddik*,

והלואי היה בינוני ולא רשע כל ימיו אפילו שעה אחת

and would that he be a *Beinoni* and not a *rasha* for even a single moment throughout his life (i.e., *this* is what he should be striving for at present, rather than vainly desiring to be a *tzaddik*),

הרי זאת היא מדת הבינונים ועבודתם

then surely, this is the due measure of the *Beinonim* and their task:

לכבוש היצר וההרהור העולה מהלב למוח, ולהסיח דעתו לגמרי ממנו ולדחותו בשתי ידים, כנ"ל

To subdue the evil impulse and the thought that rises from the heart to the mind, and to completely avert his mind from it, repulsing it as it were with both hands, as explained above in ch. 12.

The Alter Rebbe explained there that the evil in the soul of the *Beinoni* remains vigorous; his task is to prevent it from expressing itself in thought, speech, and action. Thus, he has no control over the occurrence of evil thoughts in his mind, but only over his acceptance or rejection of these thoughts.

ובכל דחיה ודחיה שמדחהו ממחשבתו, אתכפיא סטרא אחרא לתתא

With every repulsion of this thought from his mind, the *sitra achra* is suppressed here below in This World,

ובאתערותא דלתתא אתערותא דלעילא

and, since “the arousal from below (in our case, the initiative of the *Beinoni* in suppressing the *sitra achra*) produces a corresponding arousal above,”

ואתכפיא סטרא אחרא דלעילא המגביה עצמה כנשר

the *sitra achra* above in the supernal worlds (the root of the *sitra achra* of this world) which soars like an eagle, is also suppressed,

לקיים מה שכתוב: אם תגביה כנשר וגו' משם אורידך נאם ה'

thus realizing the verse, [3](#) “Though you soar aloft like the eagle...I will yet bring you down from there, says G-d.”

וכמו שהפליג בזהר פרשת תרומה דף קכח בגודל נחת רוח לפניו יתברך כד אתכפיא סטרא אחרא לתתא

Indeed the *Zohar*, in *Parshat Terumah* (p. 128), extolls the Divine satisfaction that occurs when the *sitra achra* is subdued here below,

דאסתלק יקרא דקודשא בריך הוא לעילא על כולא יתיר משבחה אחרא, ואסתלקותא דא יתיר מכולא וכו'

for “thereby G-d’s glory rises above all, more than by any other praise, and this ascent its greater than all else, etc.”

Thus, it is the evil thoughts which enter the mind of the *Beinoni* that enable him to fulfill G-d’s command in averting his attention from them, thereby subduing the *sitra achra*.

ולכן אל יפול לב אדם עליו ולא ירע לבבו מאד

Therefore one should not feel depressed or very troubled at heart (— he ought to be *somewhat* troubled by the occurrence of these thoughts, otherwise he may become indifferent to them and will cease to wage war against them; but he ought not to be *sorely* troubled by them),

גם אם יהיה כן כל ימיו במלחמה זו

even if he be engaged all his days in this conflict with the thoughts which will always enter his mind.

Though he may never rise to the level which precludes their occurrence, yet he should not be depressed.

כי אולי לכך נברא, וזאת עבודתו: לאכפיא לסטרא אחרא תמיד

For perhaps this is what he was created for, and this is the service demanded of him — to subdue the *sitra achra* constantly.

ועל זה אמר איוב: בראת רשעים

Concerning this Job said to G-d: [4](#) “You have created wicked men,” as though it were preordained that one man be wicked, and another righteous.

In the first chapter, the Alter Rebbe pointed out that this is contradicted by the statement in the *Gemara* that before a child is born, G-d decrees whether he shall be wise or foolish, strong or weak, and so on, but does not determine whether he will be righteous or wicked — this is left to one’s own choice. The meaning of Job’s statement becomes clear, however, in light of the above discussion. True, G-d does not ordain whether man will act wickedly, but He does “create wicked men,” in the sense that their minds work like the mind of the *rasha*, with evil thoughts constantly occurring to them. G-d created them in this way so that they will engage in battle with these thoughts, and thereby subjugate the *sitra achra* — as the Alter Rebbe now goes on to say.

ולא שיהיו רשעים באמת, חס ושלום

The implication of Job’s statement is not that they were created to actually be wicked, G-d forbid, i.e., sinful in thought, speech and action,

אלא שיגיע אליהם כמעשה הרשעים במחשבתם והרהורם בלבד

but that there should occur to them, in their thoughts and musings alone, that which occurs to the wicked, [5](#) i.e., that evil thoughts should enter their mind, as they do in the mind of the wicked,

והם יהיו נלחמים תמיד להסיח דעתם מהם כדי לאכפיא לסטרא אחרא

and they shall eternally wage war to avert their minds from them in order to subjugate the *sitra achra*,

ולא יוכלו לבטלה מכל וכל, כי זה נעשה על ידי הצדיקים

yet they will never be able to annihilate the *sitra achra in their souls* completely, for this is accomplished by *tzaddikim*.

A *tzaddik* subjugates his animal soul to such a degree that it is unable to arouse temptation in his heart. His mind is therefore untroubled by evil thoughts. Those, however, of whom Job said that they were “created wicked,” cannot rise to this level. It is *always* possible for evil thoughts to enter their minds; their task is not to give them free rein.

ושני מיני נחת רוח לפניו יתברך למעלה

For there are two kinds of Divine pleasure:

אחת, מביטול הסטרא אחרא לגמרי, ואתהפכא ממרירו למתקא ומחשוכא לנהורא, על ידי הצדיקים

one, from the complete annihilation of the *sitra achra*, and the conversion of bitter to sweet and of darkness to light (— the former referring to the emotional faculties of the animal soul, and the latter to its mental faculties), which is accomplished by *tzaddikim*;

והשנית, כד אתכפיא הסטרא אחרא בעודה בתקפה וגבורתה, ומגביה עצמה כנשר

and the second: when the *sitra achra* is subdued while it is still at its strongest and most powerful, soaring like an eagle,

ומשם מורידה ה' באתערותא דלתתא על ידי הבינונים

and from this height G-d topples it in response to human initiative i.e., as a result of one's efforts at subduing the *sitra achra* in his soul. This is accomplished by *Beinonim*.

Each of the two aforementioned categories — those who were “created righteous” and who were “created wicked” — brings about one of these two kinds of Divine gratification.

וזהו שאמר הכתוב: ועשה לי מטעמים כאשר אהבתי

This is alluded to in the verse, [6](#) “And make me delicacies, such as I love,”

מטעמים לשון רבים, שני מיני נחת רוח

where the word *matamim* (“delicacies”) is written in the plural, indicating two kinds of pleasure.

והוא מאמר השכינה לבניה כללות ישראל, כדפירש בתיקונים

These words are the charge of the *Shechinah* to its children, the community of Israel, as explained in *Tikkunei Zohar* — that with these words G-d asks of the Jewish people to please Him with their divine service.

וכמו שבמטעמים גשמיים, דרך משל, יש שני מיני מעדנים

Just as with material food, there are two kinds of delicacies—

אחד, ממאכלים ערבים ומתוקים, והשני מדברים חריפים או חמוצים

one of sweet and luscious foods, and the other of sharp or sour articles which are unpleasant to eat in their natural state,

רק שהם מתובלים ומתוקנים היטב עד שנעשו מעדנים להשיב הנפש

but have been well spiced and prepared so that they become delicacies which revive the soul — so too are there two kinds of spiritual delicacies.

One is provided by *tzaddikim*, who are occupied solely with matters that are “good” and “sweet” — holy matters. Having conquered the evil of their animal soul, they no longer need grapple with the *sitra achra*. Their divine service consists of increasing the light of holiness. The second kind of delicacy is provided by *Beinonim*, who are occupied with “bitter” matters, with battling against the *sitra achra* in their soul, and with the evil thoughts that it spawns.

וזהו שאמר הכתוב: כל פעל ה' למענהו, וגם רשע ליום רעה

This is indicated in the verse, [7](#) “The L-rd has made everything for His sake; even the wicked for the day of evil.”

How can it be said that the *rasha* was created for G-d’s sake?

פירוש: שישוב מרשעו ויעשה הרע שלו יום ואור למעלה

This means, however, that he should repent of his evil, and turn his evil into “day” and light above,

כד אתכפיא סטרא אחרא ואסתלק יקרא דקודשא בריך הוא לעילא

when the *sitra achra* is subdued, and the glory of G-d is uplifted on high.

Thus, the meaning of the words “even the wicked for the day of evil” is that the purpose of the wicked is to transform the “evil” into “day”.

\* \* \*

The central point of the above discussion was that through the occurrence of evil thoughts in one’s mind, and through one’s battle against them, the *sitra achra* is subdued, causing great pleasure above.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to say that this subjugation of the *sitra achra* and the consequent Divine pleasure are brought about not only by one’s struggle against the *sitra achra* when it attempts to lead one to sin (as in our case, where the lack of a struggle against evil thoughts, and the continued meditation on them would constitute a sin). Rather, one produces the same effect by struggling with one’s nature in abstaining from permitted matters. For as explained in ch. 6, any permitted action done without the specific intention of leading one to the serving of G-d (as, for example, eating in order to obtain strength for Torah study or performing the *mitzvot*) derives its vitality from the *sitra achra*. (This term simply means “the other side,” i.e., the absence of holiness.) Only

an action so directed can draw its vitality from the realm of holiness. Therefore, whenever one refrains from doing even a permissible act (in which this intention is lacking) in order to subdue the *sitra achra*, he gives rise to Divine pleasure.

ולא עוד, אלא אפילו בדברים המותרים לגמרי

Furthermore, not only by fighting his evil thoughts does one subdue the *sitra achra*, but even in matters that are fully permissible,

כל מה שהאדם זוכה יצרו אפילו שעה קלה, ומתכוין לאכפיה לסטרא אחרא שבחלל השמאלי

every act of sacrificing one's impulse, even if only for a short while i.e., if he delays partaking of even the permissible and essential, with the intention of subduing the *sitra achra* in the left part of his heart, achieves this end.

כגון שחפץ לאכול, ומאחר סעודתו עד לאחר שעה או פחות

For example: when he wants to eat but delays his meal for an hour or less,

ועוסק בתורה באותה שעה

and during that time he studies Torah.

For if he occupies himself with other physical matters, he does not subdue the *sitra achra* by postponing his meal, since he is in any case indulging his animal soul; but if he studies Torah during that time then even when the delay of his meal does not gain him any time for Torah study, for he would have studied Torah regardless (as will soon be stated), and despite the fact that he eventually does eat, yet he subdues the *sitra achra* by the mere effort of postponing his meal, and thereby he brings about the Divine pleasure caused by every subjugation of the *sitra achra*.

כדאיתא בגמרא: שעה רביעית מאכל כל אדם, שעה ששית מאכל תלמידי חכמים

As the *Gemara* states: [8](#) “The fourth hour [of the day] is when all men eat, but the sixth hour is the mealtime for scholars,”

והיו מרעיבים עצמם שתי שעות לכוונה זו

because they would go hungry for two hours with this intention,

אף שגם אחר הסעודה היו לומדים כל היום

although even after the meal they would study all day.

וכן אם בולם פיו מלדבר דברים שלבו מתאוה מאד לדבר מענייני העולם



So too if one restrains his mouth from saying things which he greatly desires to say, concerning mundane matters — even where is nothing wrong with the words *per se*, yet he refrains from speaking them precisely because he feels a desire to do so;

וכן בהרהורי מחשבתו

and likewise regarding the thoughts of his mind he suppresses an urge to think about some mundane matter.

אפילו במעט מזעיר דאתכפיא סטרא אחרא לתתא

Even by the slightest subjugation of the *sitra achra* here below,

אסתלק יקרא דקודשא בריך הוא וקדושתו לעילא הרבה

the glory of G-d and His holiness is greatly elevated on high.

ומקדושה זו נמשכת קדושה עליונה על האדם למטה לסייעו סיוע רב ועצום לעבודתו יתברך

From this holiness, a sublime holiness issues forth upon man below, to assist him with a great and powerful aid in his service of G-d.

וזוהו שאמרו רז"ל: אדם מקדש עצמו מעט למטה, מקדשין אותו הרבה מלמעלה

This is what our Sages meant when they said: [9](#) “If a man consecrates himself in a small measure here below, he is sanctified greatly from above.”

לבד מה שמקיים מצות עשה של תורה: והתקדשתם וכו', כשמקדש עצמו במותר לו

This is apart from the fact that when one sanctifies himself in permissible matters, he thereby fulfills the positive commandment of the Torah: [10](#) “Sanctify yourselves, and be holy.”

Hence, apart from the consolation previously offered the *Beinoni* — that through “turning away from evil” by combating evil thoughts and desires, he affords G-d a pleasure that *tzaddikim* cannot — his battle with the *sitra achra* also contains a positive quality in the category of “doing good,” that is likewise not present in the divine service of *tzaddikim*. [11](#) This positive quality is the fulfillment of the *mitzvah*: “Sanctify yourselves...,” which applies only to *Beinonim*, not to *tzaddikim*. For the intention of the commandment is that even one’s personal, permissible, and mundane matters should not be attended to out of the desire of one’s animal soul, but for the sake of G-d. This directive cannot apply to *tzaddikim*, who are unencumbered by desires of the animal soul, as the Alter Rebbe continues:

ופירוש והתקדשתם: שתעשו עצמכם קדושים

The meaning of “Sanctify yourselves” is: “You shall *make* yourselves holy.”

כלומר: אף שבאמת אינו קדוש ומובדל מסטרא אחרא

That is to say, although in truth one is not holy and separated from the *sitra achra*,

כי היא בתקפה ובגבורתה כתולדתה בחלל השמאלי

for the *sitra achra* of his animal soul is still, as at birth, at its full strength and might, in the left part of his heart — the seat of the animal soul and evil inclination,

The word *kedushah* (“holiness”) means “setting apart,” i.e., separation from the unholy. [12](#) The verse thus means: One should sanctify himself even if he must yet *make* himself holy and separate from the *sitra achra*, for at his present level his heart still desires those things that derive from it,

רק שכוּבש יצרו ומקדש עצמו

yet if even while at this level he subdues and masters his evil impulse and makes himself “holy”, separate from the *sitra achra*, *then, continues the verse:*

והייתם קדושים

“You *will* be holy.”

The words “be holy” which, in their simple sense, voice a command, can also be understood as conveying a promise,

כלומר: סופו להיות קדוש ומובדל באמת מהסטרא אחרא

meaning that ultimately he will be truly “holy” and removed from the *sitra achra*,

על ידי שמקדשים אותו הרבה מלמעלה

through his being “greatly sanctified from above,” as quoted earlier from the *Gemara*,

ומסייעים אותו לגרשה מלבו, מעט מעט

and through his being aided from above to expel [the *sitra achra*] from his heart, little by little, so that even in his *heart* he will no longer have any desire for anything originating in the realm of the *sitra achra*.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Bamidbar* 15:39. [2.](#) Cf. *Kiddushin* 39b. [3.](#) *Ovadia* 1:4. [4.](#) *Bava Batra* 16a. [5.](#) Cf. *Kohelet* 8:14. [6.](#) *Bereishit* 27:4. [7.](#) *Mishlei* 16:4. [8.](#) *Shabbat* 10a. [9.](#) Cf. *Yoma* 39a. [10.](#) *Vayikra* 20:7. [11.](#) Based on a comment by the Rebbe. [12.](#) Cf. *Rashi* on *Vayikra* 19:2.

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## Chapter 28

In the previous chapter the Alter Rebbe taught that the *Beinoni* should not be distressed by the occurrence of sinful thoughts in his mind. On the contrary, he ought to rejoice, for by repulsing these thoughts and promptly averting his mind from them, he fulfills the commandment of “not going astray after one’s heart,” and thereby crushes the spirit of the *sitra achra*, consequently causing intense Divine pleasure.

However, this reasoning can only be applied when such thoughts occur to the *Beinoni* while engaged in his material pursuits. If, however, they occur to him while occupied in the service of G-d (e.g., while praying or studying the Torah), they are certainly no cause for rejoicing, since they distract him from his divine service. How is he to deal with them in this case? — This is the subject of ch. 28.

ואפילו אם נופלים לו הרהורי תאוות ושאר מחשבות זרות בשעת העבודה בתורה או בתפלה בכוונה

Even if lustful imaginings or other extraneous thoughts occur to him during his service of G-d — in Torah or in prayer with *kavanah*,

אל ישית לב אליהן, אלא יסיה דעתו מהן כרגע

he should pay them no attention, but avert his mind from them immediately.

וגם אל יהי שוטה, לעסוק בהעלאת המדות של המחשבה זרה

Nor should he be so foolish as to engage in “sublimation of the *middot*” of the extraneous thought,

כבודע

as is known — that one can overcome extraneous thoughts by elevating their source.

For every such thought stems from one of the *middot* of the animal soul. For example, the *middah* of love in the animal soul gives rise to one’s lustful thoughts; the *middah* of fear gives rise to hatred, and to fears inappropriate to him; and so on. It is therefore written<sup>1</sup> that when one is disturbed by such a thought, he should determine which *middah* is its source, and should then refocus that *middah* on the spiritual aspects of the object of his thoughts. For example, if the extraneous thought is a desire for some physical object, one should contemplate that the desirability of the object which he craves is actually a manifestation of the Divine power that made it desirable — beautiful, tasty, or whatever. Therefore, rather than applying his desire (i.e., his *middah* of love) to the object’s

physical sheath, he should direct it to the G-dliness that underlies it. He will thereby elevate the corresponding *middah* of his animal soul to its Divine source, and thus destroy the evil in the thoughts caused by the *middah*, leaving only the good — the “sparks” of holiness embedded in them. This is what is meant by “sublimating the *middot*” in order to overcome extraneous thoughts.

For the *Beinoni*, however, such an exercise would be sheer foolishness, as the Alter Rebbe explains presently.

כי לא נאמרו דברים ההם אלא לצדיקים

For such things were intended only for *tzaddikim*,

שאין נופלים להם מחשבות זרות שלהם כי אם משל אחרים

in whom there do not occur any evil thoughts of their own evil *middot*, but only from the *middot* of others.

Since the *tzaddik* has transformed the *middot* of his animal soul to good, no evil thoughts can arise from them. Any evil thought that may arise in his mind stems from the *middot* of others. For another individual, whose soul-root is connected with this *tzaddik*, finds himself in difficulty combating his own evil *middot*, and requires his assistance. This person’s evil thought is therefore planted in the mind of the *tzaddik*, though in the form of mere abstract “letters of thought,” without any feeling of evil attached to it. The *tzaddik*, recognizing the source of this thought, redirects it towards the spiritual realm (as explained above), and thereby elevates the *middah* whence it stems, thus enabling his fellow-Jew to overcome his own evil *middot*. But only the *tzaddik* can accomplish this, since he himself possesses no evil *middot*.

אבל מי שנופל לו משלו מבחינת הרע שבלבו בחלל השמאלי

But as for one, i.e., a *Beinoni*, to whom there occurs an evil thought of his own, from the evil that is lodged in the left part of his heart i.e., the evil *middot* of his animal soul,

איך יעלהו למעלה והוא עצמו מקושר למטה

how can he raise it up to the spiritual realm when he himself is bound below by his desire for the material?

It would therefore be foolish for the *Beinoni* to attempt to rid himself of extraneous thoughts by engaging in the sublimation of his *middot*.

אך אף על פי כן אל יפול לבו בקרבו להיות מזה עצב נבזה בשעת העבודה, שצריך להיות בשמחה רבה

Nevertheless, he must not be downhearted, nor feel dejected and despicable because of this occurrence of extraneous thoughts during his service of G-d, when he ought to be most joyous.

אלא אדרבה, יתחזק יותר ויוסיף אומץ בכל כחו בכוונת התפלה בחדוה ושמחה יתירה

On the contrary, he should draw fresh strength, and intensify his determination with all his power, to pray with concentration, with even greater joy and gladness,

בשומו אל לבו כי נפילת המחשבה זרה היא מהקליפה שבחלל השמאלי, העושה מלחמה בבינוני עם נפש אלקית שבו

in the realization that the foreign thought which occurred to him derives from the *kelipah* of the left part of the heart, which wages war within the *Beinoni* against the divine soul within him.

ונודע דרך הנלחמים וכן הנאבקים יחד

It is known, that it is the way of combatants who seek to destroy one another and similarly of wrestlers who aim merely to topple one another,

כשהאחד מתגבר אזי השני מתאמץ להתגבר גם כן בכל מאמצי כחו

that when one is gaining the upper hand, the other likewise exerts himself with all the resources of his strength in order to prevail.

ולכן כשנפש האלקית מתאמצת ומתגברת להתפלל

Therefore, in the battle between the divine soul and the animal soul, when the divine soul exerts itself and musters all its strength in prayer, thereby to weaken or even vanquish the animal soul,

אזי גם הקליפה מתגברת כנגדה, לבלבלה ולהפילה במחשבה זרה שלה

the *kelipah of the animal soul* too gathers strength to counter it, aiming to confuse and topple the divine soul by means of a foreign thought of its own.

The animal soul, sensing danger in the divine soul's increased efforts in prayer with devotion, contrives to jar one's concentration by conjuring up assorted foreign thoughts in his mind. Thus, the appearance of an extraneous thought during prayer indicates that one's devotion was of sufficient quality to give the animal soul cause for concern; and this realization itself should gladden one and encourage him to continue his efforts.

ולא כטעות העולם שטועים להוכיח מנפילת המחשבה זרה, מכלל שאין תפלתם כלום

This refutes a common error. When a foreign thought occurs to some people during prayer, they mistakenly conclude that their prayer is worthless,

שאילו התפלל כראוי ונכון לא היו נופלים לו מחשבות זרות

for if one prayed properly and correctly, so they mistakenly believe, no foreign thoughts would arise in his mind.

והאמת היה כדבריהם אם היתה נפש אחת לבדה, היא המתפללת והיא המחשבת ומהרהרת המחשבות זרות

They would be correct if there would be but one soul within a person, the same soul that prays being also the one that thinks and ponders on the foreign thoughts.

For in this case, if the G-dly soul were truly immersed in the prayers, there would be no room within it for foreign thoughts.

אבל באמת לאמיתו הן שתי נפשות, הנלחמות זו עם זו במוחו של אדם

but in fact there are *two* souls, each waging war against the other in the person's mind.

The mind is thus not only the battleground, but also the prize, the object of the battle between the two souls, for:

כל אחת חפצה ורצונה למשול בו ולהיות המוח ממולא ממנה לבדה

Each of them wishes and desires to rule and pervade the mind exclusively.

וכל הרהורי תורה ויראת שמים מנפש האלקית, וכל מילי דעלמא מנפש הבהמית

All thoughts of Torah and the fear of G-d come from the G-dly soul, while all thoughts of worldly matters derive from the animal soul.

Similarly in our case, thoughts of prayer are from the divine soul, while foreign thoughts stem from the animal soul. Thus, the occurrence of a foreign thought during prayer is no indication of a fault in the prayer. In fact the opposite may be true, as the Alter Rebbe explained earlier with the analogy of two combatants.

But if there are indeed two separate souls, why should the extraneous thoughts of one interfere with the devotions of the other? — They would not interfere, answers the Alter Rebbe,

רק שהאלקית מלובשת בה

except that the G-dly soul is clothed within it — within the animal soul.

Therefore the G-dly soul cannot ignore foreign thoughts rising from the animal soul; and thus foreign thoughts disturb one's devotion in prayer.

והוא כמשל אדם המתפלל בכוונה, ועומד לנגדו ערל רשע, ומשיח ומדבר עמו כדי לבלבלו

This is, to use an example, like a person who is praying with devotion, while facing him there stands a wicked heathen who chats and speaks to him in order to confuse him.

If the other's intention were not to disturb him but merely, say, to ask him a question, then he could rid himself of the disturbance simply by responding to the questioner. But when the intention is to disturb his prayers, he will gain nothing by responding; if he answers one question, he will promptly be asked another.

שזאת עצתו בודאי שלא להשיב לו משוב ועד רע, ולעשות עצמו כחרש לא ישמע

Surely the best advice in this case would be to answer him neither good nor evil, but rather to act as though he were deaf, without hearing.

ולקיים מה שכתוב: אל תען כסיל כאולתו, פן תשוה לו גם אתה

and to comply with the verse, [2](#) "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you too become like him."

כך אל ישיב מאומה ושום טענה ומענה נגד המחשבה זרה

Just as in the analogy of the heathen who disturbs one during prayer, so too when foreign thoughts enter one's mind while praying he should answer nothing at all, nor should he engage in argument against the foreign thought, i.e., he should not occupy himself with mental discussions on the best strategy for countering the foreign thought,

כי המתאבק עם מנוול מתנוול גם כן

for he who wrestles with a filthy person is bound to become soiled himself.

Similarly, in the process of fighting the foreign thought, one's mind becomes filled and tainted by it. He should therefore not seek to grapple with it.

רק יעשה עצמו כלא יודע ולא שומע ההרהורים שנפלו לו, ויסירם מדעתו

Instead he should pretend not to know nor hear the foreign thoughts that occurred to him, should dismiss them from his mind,

ויוסיף אומץ בכח כוונתו

and strengthen still more the power of his concentration.

ואם יקשה לו להסירם מדעתו מפני שטורדים דעתו מאד בחזקה

If, however, he finds it difficult to dismiss them because they distract his mind with great intensity,

אזי ישפיל נפשו לה', ויתחנן לו יתברך במחשבתו לרחם עליו ברחמיו הרובים

then he should humble his soul before G-d, and supplicate Him in his thought to have compassion upon him in His abundant mercies,

כרחם אב על בנים הנמשכים ממוחו, וככה ירחם ה' על נפשו הנמשכת מאתו יתברך

like a father who takes pity on his children who stem from his brain — and so too should G-d be compassionate on his soul, which derives from G-d's "mind" — the attribute of *Chochmah*, as explained in ch. 2,

להצילה ממים הזדונים, ולמענו יעשה, כי חלק ה' ממש עמו

to rescue it from the<sup>3</sup> "turbulent waters," i.e., the thoughts which disturb the soul. This He should do for His own sake, since truly<sup>4</sup> "His people is a part of the L-rd."

In order that one should not incur Divine judgement as to whether he is worthy of G-d's compassion, the Alter Rebbe advises that one should beseech G-d's mercies for His own sake. Since the soul is "a part of G-d," in aiding the soul he actually helps Himself, so to speak. The question of whether one is deserving of such aid thus becomes irrelevant.

Another interpretation sees the words, "This He should do for His own sake..." not as part of the worshiper's plea, but as a guarantee: G-d will certainly come to the aid of one who entreats Him, and certainly will "rescue his soul from the turbulent waters"; this is for His own sake, for the soul is veritably a part of G-d.

FOOTNOTES <sup>1</sup>. *Keter Shem Tov* (collected teachings of the Baal Shem Tov) Sec. 171. <sup>2</sup>. *Mishlei* 26:4 <sup>3</sup>. *Tehillim* 124:5 <sup>4</sup>. *Devarim* 32:9



## Chapter 29

In ch. 26 the Alter Rebbe stated that both depression and dullness of heart produce a state of sluggishness which prevents a person from overcoming the evil inclination of the animal soul. He therefore outlined in chs. 26-28 methods of overcoming depression arising from various causes. In this chapter the Alter Rebbe will discuss means of dealing with "dullness of heart" (*timtum halev*), after describing this state more clearly.



אך עוד זאת, צריך לשית עצות בנפשות הבינונים

Those whose souls are of the level of *Beinonim* must seek means of contending with yet another difficulty.

אשר לפעמים ועתים רבים יש להם טמטום הלב שנעשה כאבן, ולא יכול לפתוח לבו בשום אופן לעבודה שבלב, זו תפלה

Occasionally, and even frequently, they experience a dullness of the heart, as though it had turned to stone, and, try as they might, they cannot open their heart in prayer, which is by definition the 1 “service of the heart.”

*Chassidut* explains that prayer is the “service of the heart” in a two-fold sense: (a) It takes place in the heart, for in prayer one strives to extend his intellectual apprehension of G-dliness into the realm of emotions experienced in the heart — the love and fear of G-d; (b) The object of prayer is the heart, for in prayer one tries to transform the nature of his heart — to steer it away from the mundane desires to which it naturally inclines, and to direct it instead towards a yearning for the spiritual and the G-dly. To accomplish both these objectives of prayer, the heart must of course be open and receptive, and thus *tintum halev* is a major hindrance.

וגם לפעמים לא יוכל להלחם עם היצר לקדש עצמו במותר לו, מפני כבודות שבלבו

Also, the heaviness in his heart prevents him at times from waging war against the evil impulse, in sanctifying himself in permitted matters.

As the Alter Rebbe explained in ch. 27, it is the task of the *Beinoni* to suppress the desires of his heart, e.g., by not eating as soon as he has the urge to do so. This requires a battle with one’s evil impulse, which demands that he gratify all of his desires. When his heart is dull, heavy and insensitive he cannot fight the evil impulse.

וזאת היא עצה היעוצה בזהר הקדוש, דאמר רב מתיבתא בגן עדן: אעא דלא סליק ביה נהורא, מבטשין ליה כו', גופא דלא סליק ביה נהורא דנשמתא, מבטשין ליה כו'

In this case, the advice given in the holy *Zohar*2 is, as the president of the academy of *Gan Eden* said: “A wooden beam which does not catch fire should be splintered, and similarly a body into which the light of the soul does not penetrate should be crushed,” and thereby the body becomes receptive to the soul’s light, as the *Zohar* concludes.

In the analogy quoted from the *Zohar* we see that the wood is made receptive to the flame, rather than the flame being increased or improved to the point where it overwhelms the wood. Similarly with the insensitive heart. *Tintum halev* must be eradicated (by removing its underlying cause, as the Alter Rebbe will soon conclude), rather than overwhelmed (by increasing the intellectual light of contemplation on the greatness of G-d).

פירוש נהורא דנשמתא: שאור הנשמה והשכל אינו מאיר כל כך למשול על חומריות שבגוף

The reference to the “light of the soul” which, in this case, does not penetrate the body means that the light of the soul and of the intellect does not illuminate to such an extent as to prevail over the coarseness of the body.

ואף שמבין ומתבונן בשכלו בגדולת ה', אינו נתפס ונדבק במוחו כל כך שיוכל למשול על חומריות הלב, מחמת חומריותו וגסותו

Thus, although he understands and meditates in his mind on the greatness of G-d, yet that which he understands is not apprehended and implanted in his mind to the point where it enables him to prevail over the coarseness of the heart — because of the degree of their (the mind and heart's) coarseness and crassness. [3](#)

והסיבה היא גסות הקליפה, שמגביה עצמה על אור קדושת נפש האלקית, ומסתרת ומחשיכה אורה

The cause of this deficiency is the arrogance of the *kelipah of the animal soul*, which exalts itself above the holiness of the light of the divine soul, so that it obscures and darkens its light.

ולזאת צריך לבטשה ולהשפילה לעפר

Therefore, one must crush it and cast it down to the ground, just as in the previously quoted analogy the beam is splintered so that it will catch fire.

The Alter Rebbe now proceeds to explain how this is accomplished. He points out that the personality of the *Beinoni* is his animal soul. (When a *Beinoni* says “I,” he is referring to his animal soul.) Thus, by crushing his own spirit, he crushes the *sitra achra*, and thereby enables the light of the soul and intellect to penetrate himself.

דהיינו לקבוע עתים להשפיל עצמו, להיות נבזה בעיניו נמאס, ככתוב

This means that one must crush the *sitra achra* and cast it to the ground by setting aside appointed times for humbling oneself and considering himself [4](#) “despicable and contemptible,” as it is written.

ולב נשבר רוח נשברה היא הסטרא אחרא, שהיא היא האדם עצמו בבינונים

Now [5](#) “A broken heart [leads to] a broken spirit,” the “spirit” being the *sitra achra* which, in the case of *Beinonim*, is the very man himself.

שנפש החיונית המחיה הגוף היא בתקפה כתולדתה בלבו, נמצא היא היא האדם עצמו

For in his heart the vital soul which animates the body is in its full strength as it was at birth; hence it is indeed the very man himself.

ועל נפש האלקית שבו, נאמר: נשמה שנתת בי טהורה היא, שנתת בי דייקא, מכלל שהאדם עצמו איננו הנשמה הטהורה, כי אם בצדיקים

With regard to the divine soul within him it is said: [6](#) “The soul which You gave within me is pure.” The word “(within) me” cannot be understood as referring to the body alone: the body cannot speak for itself as a complete man. Thus, it must refer also to the (animating) soul. Therefore, the words “(which You gave) *within me*” imply that the man himself who is saying these words is not identified with the “pure soul”; i.e., the divine soul is a thing apart, which has been “placed *within*” this “me” — the body and animal soul — except in the case of *tzaddikim*.

שבהם הוא להפך: שנשמה הטהורה שהיא נפש האלקית הוא האדם, וגופם נקרא בשר אדם

With them the contrary is true: the man himself is the “pure soul,” i.e., the divine soul, while their body is called “the flesh of man” i.e., secondary to the man himself — the divine soul.

וכמאמר הלל הזקן לתלמידיו, כשהיה הולך לאכול היה אומר שהוא הולך לגמול חסד עם העלובה ועניה, הוא גופו, כי כמו זר נחשב אצלו, ולכן אמר שהוא גומל חסד עמו במה שמאכילו, כי הוא עצמו אינו רק נפש האלקית לבד, כי היא לבדה מחיה גופו ובשרו, שהרע שהיה בנפש החיונית המלובשת בדמו ובשרו נתהפך לטוב, ונכלל בקדושת נפש האלקית ממש בצדיקים

It was in this sense that Hillel the Elder would say to his disciples when he went to eat that he was going to do a favor to the [7](#) “lowly and poor creature,” meaning his body. He regarded his body as a foreign thing, and therefore used this expression — that he was doing it a favor by giving it food. For he himself was nothing other than the divine soul. It alone animated his body and flesh, inasmuch as in *tzaddikim* the evil that was in the vital soul pervading their blood and flesh has been transformed into good and completely absorbed into the holiness of the divine soul, and thus, the divine soul *is* the man himself.

אבל בבינוני, מאחר שמהותה ועצמותה של נפש החיונית הבהמית שמסטרא אחרא המלובשת בדמו ובשרו לא נהפך לטוב, הרי היא היא האדם עצמו

With a *Beinoni*, however, since the substance and essence of the vitalizing, animal soul (stemming from the *sitra achra*) which pervades his blood and flesh has not been transformed into good, it indeed constitutes the man himself, and therefore, by crushing his own spirit the *Beinoni* actually crushes the *sitra achra*.

The Alter Rebbe now proceeds to suggest various lines of reasoning that the *Beinoni* may use in order to humble and crush his spirit — and thereby the *sitra achra* of his animal soul. The first of these follows from the point just concluded, that the personality of the *Beinoni* is, in fact, an expression of the *sitra achra* — the animal soul.

ואם כן הוא רחוק מה' בתכלית הריחוק, שהרי כח המתאוה שבנפשו הבהמית יכול גם כן להתאוות לדברים האסורים, שהם נגד רצונו יתברך

If so, that he *is* actually the animal soul, he is removed from G-d with the utmost remoteness. For the lusting drive in his animal soul is capable of lusting also after forbidden things, which are contrary to G-d's Will.

אף שאינו מתאוה לעשותם בפועל ממש, חס ושלום, רק שאינם מאוסים אצלו באמת כבצדיקים, כמו שכתוב לעיל פרק י"ב

While he does not desire to do them (these forbidden things) in actual practice, G-d forbid, yet they are not truly repulsive to him, as they are to *tzaddikim*, as explained above (in ch. 12).

There the Alter Rebbe explains that after his prayers, when the love of G-d is no longer revealed in his heart, a *Beinoni* can feel a craving for material pleasures, whether they be permitted or forbidden — except that in the case of forbidden matters, he does not actually wish to implement his desires in forbidden actions; they remain instead in the category of “sinful thoughts.”

ובזה הוא גרוע ומשוקץ ומתועב יותר מבעלי חיים הטמאים ושקצים ורמשים, כנ"ל

In this he is inferior to and more loathsome and abominable than unclean animals and insects and reptiles, as mentioned above — for even they do not transgress against G-d's Will (see ch. 24), and since he does do so (in his mind, at least) he is worse than they;

וכמו שכתוב: ואנכי תולעת ולא איש וגו'

and as it is written: [8](#) “But I am a worm, and not a man...”

As a human being who chooses to lower himself to the level of a worm, I am worse than a worm, for *it* is a worm by creation rather than by choice.

But what of the times when the divine soul of the *Beinoni* dominates him, such as during prayer, when he experiences a revealed love of G-d and there is no room in his heart for any mundane desires? To this the Alter Rebbe answers:

וגם כשמתגברת בו נפשו האלקית לעורר האהבה לה' בשעת התפלה, אינה באמת לאמיתו לגמרי, מאחר שחולפת ועוברת אחר התפלה כנ"ל, סוף פרק י"ג

([9](#)Even when his divine soul gathers strength within him to arouse his love of G-d during prayer, this predominance of the divine soul is not altogether genuine, since it is transient and vanishes after prayer, as mentioned earlier, end of ch. 13.)

The Alter Rebbe explains there that only that which is permanent and unchanging can be described as “true”. Relative to the rank of *Beinoni*, this arousal of the divine soul during prayer may be considered “truthful”, since the *Beinoni* is capable of generating it *always* — whenever he prays. It cannot, however, be described as “absolutely truthful” (*emet la'amito*) since it is not constant, occurring *only* during prayer.

ובפרט כשיזכור טומאת נפשו בחטאת נעורים, והפגם שעשה בעליונים, ושם הוא למעלה מהזמן, וכאלו פגם ונטמא היום, חס ושלום, ממש

Especially so, if he calls to mind the contamination of his soul with the sin of youth, and the blemish he has wrought thereby in the supernal worlds —the source of his soul. The fact that they were sins of “youth”, belonging to a time and to a spiritual level from which he may presently be far removed, is irrelevant in these supernal worlds — where everything is timeless, and it is as if he had caused the blemish and defiled himself this very day, G-d forbid.

ואף שכבר עשה תשובה נכונה, הרי עיקר התשובה בלב, והלב יש בו בחינות ומדרגות רבות, והכל לפי מה שהוא אדם, ולפי הזמן והמקום, כידוע ליודעים

True, he may already have repented sincerely and thereby removed the blemish and cleansed himself. But the essence of repentance is in the heart, and in the heart there are many distinctions and levels. Moreover, everything depends on what kind of a man he is (— the greater his stature, the higher the level of repentance required of him), and on the time and place in which he now stands, as is known to the knowing.

Whenever and wherever one is less tempted by a particular sin, a deeper and loftier level of repentance is expected of him for having committed that sin, than at a time when he is more strongly tempted, and must fight more insistently to resist that temptation. Similarly time and place create other differences with respect to repentance. Therefore, judging by one’s present situation, his earlier repentance may be inadequate in erasing his past sins. Perhaps, then, the absence of a higher form of repentance required of him now causes his sins to interpose between himself and G-d, preventing the light of his soul from penetrating his heart — as the Alter Rebbe continues:

ולכן עכשיו בשעה זו, שרואה בעצמו דלא סליק ביה נהורא דנשמתא, מכלל שהיום לא נתקבלה תשובתו, ועונותיו מבדילים, או שרוצים להעלותו לתשובה עילאה יותר, מעומקא דלבא יותר

Consequently, now, at this time, when observing himself he sees that “the light of the soul does not penetrate into him,” it is evident that either, (a) his repentance has not been accepted, and his sins still separate him from G-dliness; or (b) it is desired that he be raised to a more sublime level of repentance, coming from a point yet deeper in his heart than his earlier repentance.

Far from indicating Divine displeasure, the rejection of his repentance in this latter case points to Divine favor: a desire to raise this person to yet greater heights of repentance. Hence the difficulties in his divine service and the *timtum halev* — so that he will call forth greater resources from within himself, and repent more deeply.

ולכן אמר דוד: וחטאתי נגדי תמיד

For this reason, King David said, despite the fact that he was a *tzaddik*, who was also able to say of himself: [10](#) “My heart is a void within me,” which means (as *Rashi* comments,

[11](#) “The evil impulse is as if dead within me,” — despite this he would still say:) [12](#) “My sin is constantly before me.”

Why was it necessary for a man of David’s caliber to constantly bear in mind his past sins? Surely he had repented for them adequately! Obviously, then, the memory is necessary in order to spur one on to greater heights *within* the ranks of holiness, to deeper levels of repentance, as said earlier. [13](#)

וגם מי שהוא נקי מחטאות נעורים החמורים ישים אל לבו לקיים מאמר זהר הקדוש: להיות ממארי דחושבנא

Even he who is innocent of the grievous sins of youth, but yet wants to attain a broken spirit, should set his heart to fulfill the counsel of the holy *Zohar* [14](#) — to be “a master of accounts.”

This means that he should do the spiritual accounting described below as a “master”, a proprietor, to whom each set of figures represents either a profit or a loss that directly affects *him* — rather than as a “servant”, a hired accountant, who can view whatever bottom line eventuates with academic detachment.

דהיינו לעשות חשבון עם נפשו מכל המחשבות והדיבורים והמעשים שחלפו ועברו מיום היותו עד היום הזה, אם היו כולם מצד הקדושה, או מצד הטומאה, רחמנא לצלן, דהיינו כל המחשבות והדיבורים והמעשים אשר לא לה' המה, ולרצונו ולעבודתו, שזהו פירוש לשון סטרא אחרא כנ"ל פרק ו'

This means that he should take stock with his soul of all his thoughts, utterances and actions that have come and gone since the day he came into being and until the present day. Were they all of the realm of holiness, or of the realm of impurity (G-d forbid)? This latter realm includes also any thought, utterance or action not directed toward G-d, His Will and His service even when they are not actually sinful, since this is the meaning of the term *sitra achra*: *not necessarily “evil”, but simply “the other side” — the “side” (realm) that is not holy; thus anything that does not contain holiness belongs to the realm of impurity, as explained earlier, in ch. 6.*

ומודעת זאת כי כל עת שהאדם מחשב מחשבות קדושות נעשה מרכבה בעת זו להיכלות הקדושה, שמהן מושפעות מחשבות הללו

Now, it is known that whenever a person thinks holy thoughts he becomes, during that time, a “chariot” for the “chambers” (*heichalot*) of holiness whence these thoughts originate, or, more precisely, whence their vitality originates.

Becoming a “chariot” means that he becomes completely subservient to these *heichalot*, to the same degree that a vehicle, having no will of its own, is completely subservient to its driver’s will. [15](#) When he meditates on the love of G-d, for example, he becomes a “vehicle” for the supernal “chamber of love,” and so on.

וכן להפך, נעשה מרכבה טמאה בעת זו להיכלות הטומאה שמהן מושפעות כל מחשבות רעות, וכן בדבור ומעשה

Conversely, when he thinks impure thoughts he becomes an unclean “vehicle” for the *heichalot* of impurity, whence all impure thoughts originate. So, too, with speech and action.

Thus, even one who cannot call to mind any past sins can humble his spirit by contemplating how often he has become a vehicle for impurity through his thoughts, words and actions which, though not sinful, were still of the realm of the *sitra achra* — since they were not directed toward G-dliness.

עוד ישים אל לבו רוב חלומותיו שהם הבל ורעות רוח, משום שאין נפשו עולה למעלה, וכמו שכתוב: מי יעלה  
בהר ה'... נקי כפים וגו'

Let him further consider his dreams in order to humble his spirit; for one may learn more about himself from his dreams than from his waking, conscious thoughts. For the most part, they are “vanity, and an affliction of the spirit,” [16](#) for his soul does not ascend heavenward during his sleep; since it is written: [17](#) “Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord?” — meaning, in our context, “Whose soul shall rise heavenward while he sleeps, to see and absorb matters of Torah and holiness, which will in turn be reflected in his dreams?” And the next verse gives the answer: “He that has clean hands and a pure heart” — implying that the soul of one whose hands and heart are not pure, does not ascend, and that is why his dreams are a patchwork of vanity and foolishness.

ואינון סטריין בישין אתיין ומתדבקן ביה, ומודעין ליה בחלמא מילין דעלמא וכו', ולזמנין דחייכן ביה ואחזיאו  
ליה מילי שקר, וצעריין ליה בחלמיה כו', כמו שכתוב בזהר ויקרא דף כ"ה עמוד א' ועמוד ב', עיין שם  
באריכות

Furthermore, “those originating from the ‘evil side’ come and attach themselves to him and inform him in his dreams of mundane affairs... and sometimes mock him and show him false things and torment him in his dreams,” and so on, as stated in the *Zohar* on *Vayikra* (p. 25a,b). See it there discussed at length.

We thus see from the *Zohar* that one may evaluate himself by studying the content of his dreams. Thereby, he can humble his spirit even if he finds himself free of sin, and in this way he may crush the *sitra achra* within him, as explained above.

והנה כל מה שיאריך בעניינים אלו במחשבתו, וגם בעיונו בספרים, להיות לבו נשבר בקרבו, ונבזה בעיניו  
נמאס ככתוב, בתכלית המיאוס, ולמאס חיו ממש, הרי בזה ממאס ומבזה הסטרא אחרא ומשפילה לעפר  
ומורידה מגדולתה וגסות רוחה וגבהותה, שמגביה את עצמה על אור קדושת נפש האלקית להחשיך אורה

The longer he reflects on these matters, both in his own thoughts and by delving deeply into books which speak of these matters, in order to break down his heart within him and render himself shamed and despised in his own eyes, as is written in the Scriptures, so utterly despised that he despises his very life, — the more he despises and degrades thereby the *sitra achra*, casting it down to the ground and humbling it from its haughtiness and pride and self-exaltation, wherewith it exalts itself over the light of the divine soul’s holiness, obscuring its radiance.

Up to now, the Alter Rebbe has proposed means of crushing the *sitra achra* within one's animal soul by humbling his own spirit through intellectual contemplation. He now turns to another method, that of "raging" against one's evil impulse, without entering into an analysis of his spiritual level.

וגם ירעים עליה בקול רעש ורוגז להשפילה, כמאמר רז"ל: לעולם ירגיז אדם יצר טוב על יצר הרע, שנאמר: רגזו וגו'

He should also thunder against it (the *sitra achra*) with a strong and raging voice in order to humble it, as our Sages state, [18](#) "A person should always rouse the good impulse against the evil impulse, as it is written, [19](#) 'Rage, and sin not.'"

דהיינו לרגז על נפש הבהמית, שהיא יצרו הרע, בקול רעש ורוגז במחשבתו, לומר לו: אתה רע ורשע ומשוק' ומתועב ומנוול וכו', ככל השמות שקראו לו חכמינו ז"ל, באמת

This means that one should rage — in his mind — against the animal soul, which is his evil impulse, with a voice of stormy indignation, saying to it: "Indeed, you are truly evil and wicked, abominable, loathsome and disgraceful," and so forth, using all the epithets by which our Sages have called it. [20](#)

עד מתי תסתיר לפני אור אין סוף ברוך הוא הממלא כל עלמין, היה הוה ויהיה בשוה, גם במקום זה שאני עליו כמו שהיה אור אין סוף ברוך הוא לבדו קודם שנברא העולם, בלי שום שינוי

"How long will you obscure the light of the blessed *Ein Sof*, which pervades all the worlds; which was, is, and will be the same, even in the very place where I stand, just as the light of the blessed *Ein Sof* was alone before the world was created — utterly unchanged;

כמו שכתוב: אני ה' לא שניתי, כי הוא למעלה מהזמן וכו'

as it is written: [21](#) 'I, the L-rd, have not changed,' i.e., the fact of creation has wrought no change in Him, for He transcends time, and so on? And therefore, the fact that it is now 'after' creation, cannot affect Him.

ואתה מנוול וכו' מכחיש האמת הנראה לעינים, דכולא קמיה כלא ממש באמת, בבחינת ראייה חושיית

But you, repulsive one (and so forth) deny the truth which is so plainly visible — that all is truly as nothing in His presence — a truth which is so apparent as to be '*visible to the eye*'!"

והנה על ידי זה יועיל לנפשו האלקית להאיר עיניה באמת יחוד אור אין סוף בראייה חושיית, ולא בחינת שמיעה והבנה לבדה

In this way he will help his divine soul, enlightening its eyes to perceive the truth of the unity of the infinite light of *Ein Sof* as though with physical sight, and not merely through the lesser perception of "hearing" and understanding.



כמו שכתוב במקום אחר, שזהו שרש כל העבודה

For, as explained elsewhere, this is the core of the whole [divine] service.

Intellectual comprehension — i.e., the “hearing” — of G-dliness can lead only to a desire and longing for G-d; the level of perception described as “sight” leads far higher — to one’s self-nullification before Him.

והטעם: לפי שבאמת אין שום ממשות כלל בסטרא אחרא, שלכן נמשלה לחשך שאין בו שום ממשות כלל, וממילא נדחה מפני האור

The reason that humbling the spirit of the *sitra achra* is effective in crushing it is that in truth there is no substance whatever in the *sitra achra*. That is why it is compared to darkness, which has no substance whatsoever, and is automatically banished by the presence of light.

וכך הסטרא אחרא, אף שיש בה חיות הרבה, להחיות כל בעלי חיים הטמאים, ונפשות אומות העולם, וגם נפש הבהמית שבישראל, כנ"ל, מכל מקום הרי כל חיותה אינה מצד עצמה, חס ושלום, אלא מצד הקדושה, כנ"ל, ולכן היא בטלה לגמרי מפני הקדושה, כביטול החשך מפני האור הגשמי, רק שלגבי קדושת נפש האלקית שבאדם, נתן לה הקב"ה רשות ויכולת להגביה עצמה כנגדה, כדי שהאדם יתעורר להתגבר עליה להשפילה על ידי שפלות ונמיכת רוחו, ונבזה בעיניו נמאס

Similarly with the *sitra achra*. Indeed, it possesses abundant vitality with which to animate all the impure animals and the souls of the nations of the world, and also the animal soul of the Jew, as has been explained. [22](#) Yet this vitality is not its own, G-d forbid, but stems from the realm of holiness, for the realm of holiness is the source of *all* life, including even the life-force of the *sitra achra*, as has been explained above. [23](#) Therefore it is completely nullified in the presence of holiness, as darkness is nullified in the presence of physical light. Its power lies only in the fact that in regard to the holiness of man’s divine soul, G-d has given it (— the *sitra achra*) permission and ability to raise itself against it (— the divine soul), in order that man should be roused to overpower it and to humble it by means of the humility and submission of his spirit, and by being abhorrent and despised in his own eyes — for through this he humbles the *sitra achra* and abhors it.

ובאתערותא דלתתא: אתערותא דלעילא, לקיים מה שכתוב: משם אורידך, נאם ה'

The arousal of man below to crush the *sitra achra* causes an arousal above, to fulfill what is written: [24](#) “From there will I bring you down, says G-d” to the *sitra achra*, which seeks to rise against G-dliness and to obscure it.

דהיינו שמסירה מממשלתה ויכלתה, ומסלק ממנה הכח ורשות שנתן לה להגביה עצמה נגד אור קדושת נפש האלקית

This means that He deprives it of its dominion and power, and withdraws from it the strength and authority which had been given it to rise up against the light of the holiness of the divine soul.

ואזי ממילא בטילה ונדחית, כביטול החשך מפני אור הגשמי

Thereupon it automatically becomes nullified and is banished, just as darkness is nullified before physical light.

וכמו שמצינו דבר זה מפורש בתורה גבי מרגלים, שמתחלה אמרו: כי חזק הוא ממנו, אל תקרי ממנו כו', שלא האמינו ביכולת ה', ואחר כך חזרו ואמרו: הננו ועלינו וגו'

Indeed, we find this explicitly stated in the Torah in connection with the Spies sent by Moses to scout out the Holy Land. At the outset they declared: [25](#) “For he (the enemy) is stronger than we,” and, interpreting the word ממנו, the Sages say: [26](#)

“Read not 'than we,' but 'than He,'” meaning that they had no faith in G-d’s ability to lead them into the Holy Land. But afterwards they reversed themselves and announced: [27](#) “We will readily go up [to conquer the Land].”

ומאין חזרה ובאה אליהם האמונה ביכולת ה', הרי לא הראה להם משה רבנו עליו השלום שום אות ומופת על זה בנתיים, רק שאמר להם איך שקצף ה' עליהם ונשבע שלא להביאם אל האר'

Whence did their faith in G-d’s ability return to them? Our teacher Moses, peace unto him, had not shown them in the interim any sign or miracle concerning this, which would restore their faith. He had merely told them that G-d was angry with them and had sworn not to allow them to enter the Land. [28](#)

ומה הועיל זה להם אם לא היו מאמינים ביכולת ה', חס ושלום, לכבוש ל"א מלכים, ומפני זה לא רצו כלל ליכנס לאר'

What value did this Divine anger and oath have to them, if in any case they did not believe in G-d’s ability to subdue the thirty-one kings [29](#) who reigned in the Land at that time, for which reason they had had no desire whatever to enter the Land?

אלא ודאי מפני שישראל עצמן הם מאמינים בני מאמינים, רק שהסטרא אחרא המלוכשת בגופם הגביה עצמה על אור קדושת נפשם האלקית, בגסות רוחה וגבהותה בחוצפה בלי טעם ודעת

Surely, then, the explanation is as follows: Israelites themselves are [30](#) “believers, [being] the descendants of believers.” Even while they stated, “The enemy is stronger than He,” their divine soul still believed in G-d. They professed a lack of faith in His ability only because the *sitra achra* clothed in their body in the person of their animal soul had risen against the light of the holiness of the divine soul, with its characteristic impudent arrogance and haughtiness, without sense or reason.

ולכן מיד שקצף ה' עליהם והרעים בקול רעש ורוגז: עד מתי לעדה הרעה הזאת וגו' במדבר הזה יפלו פגריכם וגו' אני ה' דברתי אם לא זאת אעשה לכל העדה הרעה הזאת וגו', וכששמעו דברים קשים אלו, נכנע ונשבר לבם בקרבם, כדכתיב: ויתאבלו העם מאד, וממילא נפלה הסטרא אחרא מממשלתה וגבהותה וגסות רוחה

Therefore as soon as G-d became angry with them, and thundered angrily: [31](#) “How long shall I bear with this evil congregation...Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness...I, G-d, have spoken: I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation...,” — their heart was humbled and broken within them when they heard these stern words, as it is written, [32](#) “And the people mourned greatly.” Consequently, the *sitra achra* toppled from its dominion, from its haughtiness and arrogance.

וישראל עצמן הם מאמינים

But the Israelites themselves i.e., as far as their divine soul was concerned had believed in G-d all along.

Therefore, as soon as they were released from the dominion of the *sitra achra*, they proclaimed, “We will readily go up...” There was no need of a miracle to convince them of G-d’s ability. All that was necessary was to divest the *sitra achra* of its arrogance, and this was accomplished by G-d’s “raging” at them.

Similarly with every Jew: When the light of his soul does not penetrate his heart, it is merely due to the arrogance of the *sitra achra*, which will vanish as soon as he rages at it.

ומזה יכול ללמוד כל אדם שנופלים לו במחשבתו ספיקות על אמונה כי הם דברי רוח הסטרא אחרא לבדה, המגביה עצמה על נפשו, אבל ישראל עצמן הם מאמינים כו'

Every person in whose mind there occur doubts concerning faith in G-d can deduce from this episode of the Spies that these doubts are nothing but the empty words of the *sitra achra* which raises itself against his divine soul. But Israelites themselves are believers...

וגם הסטרא אחרא עצמה אין לה ספיקות כלל באמונה, רק שניתן לה רשות לבלבל האדם בדברי שקר ומרמה להרבות שכרו

Furthermore, the *sitra achra* itself entertains no doubts at all concerning faith. As explained in ch. 22, the *kelipah* in its spiritual state (i.e., when not clothed in the human body) does not deny G-d’s sovereignty. It has merely been granted permission to confuse man with false and deceitful words, in order that he may be more richly rewarded for mastering it.

כפיתויי הזונה לבן המלך בשקר ומרמה ברשות המלך, כמו שכתוב בזהר הקדוש

In this it is similar to the harlot who attempts to seduce the king’s son through falsehood and deceit, with the king’s approval, as in the parable narrated in the holy *Zohar*.[33](#)

The parable: A king hires a harlot to seduce his son, so that the prince will reveal his wisdom in resisting her wiles. The harlot herself, knowing the king's intention, does not want the prince to submit to temptation. Similarly with the *sitra achra*: it is merely fulfilling its G-d-given task in attempting to lure man away from G-d, but actually desires that man resist it, thereby earning a greater reward.

However, this is true only of the spiritual *kelipah* which is the source of the animal soul. The animal soul and evil impulse as clothed *within* man, on the other hand, are truly evil, and their unequivocal aim is to entice man to do evil.

In the context of the parable, this may be described as follows: The harlot originally commissioned by the king subcontracts a second harlot, and the second a third, and so on. As the actual executor of the mission becomes successively further removed from the king, the original intention is lost, and finally the prince is approached by a harlot who has her own intentions in mind, not those of the king, as she attempts to seduce the prince.

In any event, we see that any doubts one may have concerning faith in G-d, are merely the empty words of the *sitra achra*. The soul within every Jew, however, believes in G-d with a perfect faith.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Taanit* 2a. [2.](#) III, 168a. [3.](#)

Note the discrepancy: The Alter Rebbe began the chapter speaking of "dullness of heart"; here, the problem is identified as the crassness of mind and heart. It has accordingly been suggested - in light of the well-known doctrine that mind and heart have a cause-and-effect relationship, so that the emotions ought naturally to respond to any idea that the intellect apprehends - that any emotional insensitivity is indicative of a flaw in one's intellectual apprehension.

The Rebbe rejects this suggestion, arguing that if this were the case, the Alter Rebbe would have mentioned the problem of this species of "mental block" at the beginning of the chapter.

The Rebbe resolves the problem as follows: The Alter Rebbe, who addresses himself to the Beinoni, speaks of that type of insensitivity which can trouble the Beinoni. As explained earlier (in chapter 17), the Beinoni is always in control of his mind, and the Alter Rebbe therefore speaks only of "dullness of heart." When the Alter Rebbe mentions "the crassness of mind and heart" he is explaining the citation from the Zohar. The statement of the Zohar, while applicable to the Beinoni as well (which is why the Alter Rebbe cites it), does not address the Beinoni exclusively; it obviously deals with the rasha, too, who is not master over his mind; he indeed has a dual problem - the crassness of his mind as well as of his heart.

[4.](#) A play [on words] in *Tehillim* 15:4. [5.](#) Cf. *Tehillim* 51:19. [6.](#) Morning liturgy; *Berachot* 60b. [7.](#) *Vayikra Rabbah* 34:3. [8.](#) *Tehillim* 22:7. [9.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [10.](#) *Tehillim* 109:22. [11.](#) *Berachot* 61b. [12.](#) *Tehillim* 51:5. [13.](#) Based on a comment by the

Rebbe. The Rebbe adds: The Alter Rebbe finds it necessary to cite Scriptural proof to support his seemingly strange contention - that the soul's light might be prevented from irradiating one's body (even where no sins interpose between himself and G-d) merely as a divine device for elevating him to a higher level of *teshuvah*. [14](#). See *Zohar* III, 178a. [15](#). See ch. 23. [16](#). See ch. 6. [17](#). *Tehillim* 24:3,4. [18](#). *Berachot* 5a. [19](#). *Tehillim* 4:5. [20](#). *Sukkah* 52a. [21](#). *Malachi* 3:6. [22](#). Chs. 6, 7. [23](#). Chs. 6, 22. [24](#). *Ovadia* 1:4. [25](#). *Bamidbar* 13:31. [26](#). *Sotah* 35a; *Menachot* 53b. [27](#). *Bamidbar* 14:40. [28](#). *Ibid.*, v. 39. [29](#). Enumerated in Yehoshua 12. [30](#). *Bamidbar Rabbah* 7:5. [31](#). *Bamidbar* 14:27, 29, 35. [32](#). *Ibid.*, v. 39. [33](#). II, 163a. See above, end of ch. 9



## Chapter 30

In ch. 29 the Alter Rebbe discussed various means of overcoming *timtum halev* — the state of insensitivity in which one's heart is dull, and unresponsive to his contemplation of G-d's greatness. All these methods are aimed at crushing one's spirit, whereby one crushes the cause of the *timtum halev* — the arrogance of the *sitra achra* of the animal soul.

In ch. 30, the Alter Rebbe continues this discussion by outlining another method of dealing with this problem.

עוד זאת ישים אל לבו לקיים מאמר רז"ל: והוי שפל רוח בפני כל האדם

One who suffers from *timtum halev* must also set his heart to fulfill the instruction of our Sages:<sup>1</sup> “Be lowly of spirit before every man.”

Now a number of commentators have noted a difficulty in this Mishnaic dictum. For the Hebrew language distinguishes between two types of humility: the first is a feeling of inferiority in comparison with others; the second is the absence of self-glorification even while recognizing one's superiority — the thought that his superior qualities are a G-d-given gift, and that another man similarly endowed might in fact have invested them to better advantage.

The former type of humility is called שפלות — literally, “lowliness”, and the latter — עניוּת.

Since the *Mishnah* employs the adjective שפל רוח, it is explicitly advocating the former type of humility, and here the difficulty arises: Why should one regard himself as being lowlier than *every man*, lowlier even than the lowliest sinner?

Because of this difficulty, some commentators interpret the *Mishnah* as saying: “Conduct yourself self-effacingly toward every man,” i.e., “Treat every man with deference, as though he were superior to you.”

The Alter Rebbe, however, objects to this interpretation, as follows:

והוי באמת לאמיתו

The wording implies: “*Be* thus,” and do not merely *act* thus, in all sincerity,

בפני כל האדם ממש, אפילו בפני קל שבקלים

in the presence of *every* man, even in the presence of the most worthless of worthless men (*kal shebekalim*).

Having rejected this interpretation, however, we remain with the original difficulty: How is one expected to regard himself as being lowlier than the lowliest sinner?

In answer, the Alter Rebbe states that the introspective *Beinoni* will find that he often fails to wage war against his evil inclination to the same extent as the sinner is required to wage war against *his* desires. Although the lapses of the *Beinoni* may be in seemingly inconsequential matters, they are more reprehensible than the lowly sinner’s transgressions. Thus, even the *Beinoni*, whose observance of the Torah and *mitzvot* is impeccable, can indeed regard himself as being lowlier than literally *every man*, as the Alter Rebbe goes on to say:

והיינו על פי מאמר רז"ל: אל תדין את חבריך עד שתגיע למקומו

This can be accomplished by following the instruction of our Sages:<sup>2</sup> “Judge not your fellow man until you have stood i.e., placed yourself in his place.”

כי מקומו גורם לו לחטוא

For it is literally his “place” i.e., his physical environment that causes him to sin,

להיות פרנסתו לילך בשוק כל היום ולהיות מיושבי קרנות, ועיניו רואות כל התאוות, והעין רואה והלב חומד

since his livelihood requires him to go about the market-place all day, and whenever he is not thus engaged he is of those who sit at the street-corners. Thus his eyes see all sorts of temptation; and “what the eyes see, the heart desires.”

ויצרו בוער כתנור בוערה מאופה, כמו שכתוב בהושע: הוא בוער כאש להבה וגו'

Additionally it may be his spiritual “place”, the nature of his evil impulse, that leads him to sin: his evil nature burns like a baker’s fiery oven, which is heated with greater

frequency and intensity than a domestic oven, as it is written in *Hoshea*:[3](#) “It burns like a flaming fire.”

מה שאין כן מי שהולך בשוק מעט, ורוב היום יושב בביתו

It is different, however, with him who goes about but little in the market-place, and most of the day he is at home rather than at the street-corners, and he therefore encounters less temptation.

וגם אם הולך כל היום בשוק, יכול להיות שאינו מחומם כל כך בטבעו

Even if he does go about the market-place all day, so that his physical “place” is the same as that of the *kal shebekalim*, yet it may be that his spiritual “place” is different, in that he is not so passionate by nature, and is therefore not as greatly tempted by the sights of the market-place.

כי אין היצר שוה בכל נפש: יש שיצרו כו', כמו שכתוב במקום אחר

For the evil impulse is not the same in everyone. One person’s nature may be more passionate, and the other’s less so, as explained elsewhere.[4](#)

But if the misdeeds of the *kal shebekalim* are indeed attributable to his environment and to his passionate nature, why does he deserve his derogatory appellation? To this the Alter Rebbe replies:

והנה באמת, גם מי שהוא מחומם מאד בטבעו, ופרנסתו היא להיות מיושבי קרנות כל היום

In truth, even he who is extremely passionate by nature, and whose livelihood obliges him to sit all day at the street-corners,

אין לו שום התנצלות על חטאיו, ומיקרי רשע גמור על אשר אין פחד אלקים לנגד עיניו

has no excuse whatsoever for his sins, and he is termed a *rasha gamur* (“an utter evildoer”) for not having the dread of G-d before his eyes.

כי היה לו להתאפק ולמשול על רוח תאוותו שבלבו, מפני פחד ה' הרואה כל מעשיו

For he should have controlled himself and restrained the feeling of desire in his heart because of the fear of G-d Who sees all his actions,

כמו שכתוב לעיל: כי המוח שליט על הלב בתולדתו

This fear of G-d would have enabled him to overcome his desires, despite the difficulties imposed by his surroundings and his nature for, as explained above,[5](#) the mind has supremacy over the heart by nature of one’s birth, i.e., it is man’s inborn characteristic that his mind is able to master and restrain his heart’s desires.

והנה באמת היא מלחמה גדולה ועצומה לשבור היצר הבוער כאש להבה, מפני פחד ה', וכמו נסיון ממש

Truly, it is a great, fierce struggle to break one's [evil] nature which burns like a fiery flame, for the fear of G-d; indeed, it is like a veritable test.

והלכך צריך כל אדם לפי מה שהוא מקומו ומדרגתו בעבודת ה' לשקול ולבחון בעצמו

Therefore, every man ought to weigh and examine his own position, according to the standards of *his* place and rank in divine service,

אם הוא עובד ה' בערך ובחינת מלחמה עצומה כזו ונסיון כזה

as to whether *he* serves G-d in a situation requiring a comparable struggle in a manner commensurate with the dimensions of such a fierce battle and test as the *kal shebekalim* faces.

For even the most dispassionate and cloistered of men must often engage in battle with his evil inclination, both in the area of [6](#) “doing good” and in that of “turning away from evil,” as the Alter Rebbe goes on to illustrate.

בבחינת ועשה טוב, כגון בעבודת התפלה בכוונה, לשפוך נפשו לפני ה' בכל כחו ממש

In the realm of “do good” — in the service of prayer with *kavanah* (devotion), for example, he must battle his evil inclination *daily*, in order to pour out his soul before G-d with his entire strength,

עד מיצוי הנפש

to the extent of “wringing out” his soul, [7](#) i.e., exhausting all of his intellectual and emotional power in his devotion.

ולהלחם עם גופו ונפש הבהמית שבו המונעים הכוונה במלחמה עצומה, ולבטשם ולכתתם כעפר קודם התפלה שחרית וערבית מדי יום ביום

This battle must be waged both before (i.e., preparatory to) and also during prayer, as follows: He must wage a great and intense war against his body and the animal soul within it which impede his devotion, crushing and grinding them like dust every single day, before the morning and evening prayers.

וגם בשעת התפלה, לייגע עצמו ביגיעת נפש ויגיעת בשר, כמו שכתוב לקמן באריכות

Also during prayer he must exert himself with an exertion of the spirit, so that his spirit should not grow weary of lengthy contemplation on the greatness of G-d, and an exertion of the body to remove the hindrances to devotion imposed by the body, as will be explained further at length.[8](#)



וכל שלא הגיע לידי מדה זו להלחם עם גופו מלחמה עצומה כזו

Anyone who has not attained this standard of waging such a strenuous war against his body,

עדיין לא הגיע לבחינת וערך מלחמת היצר הבוער כאש להבה

has not yet measured up to the quality and dimension of the war waged daily within the *kal shebekalim* against the evil nature which burns like a fiery flame,

להיות נכנע ונשבר מפני פחד ה'

so that it (this powerful evil impulse) be humbled and broken through the fear of G-d.

This, then, is the standard by which everyone must judge himself: Does he battle against his evil impulse (during prayer, and similarly in the other areas of divine service that the Alter Rebbe will soon discuss), as intensely as the *kal shebekalim* must battle against *his*?

וכן בענין ברכת המזון וכל ברכות הנהנין והמצות בכונה

So, too, with one's *kavanah* in the Grace after Meals and in the benedictions, whether those said prior to eating, or those recited before performing a *mitzvah*, *all of which requires a battle with one's evil impulse*;

ואין צורך לומר כונת המצות לשמן

not to mention one's intention in performing a *mitzvah* — that it be done (solely) for the sake of a *mitzvah*, *i.e., for G-d's sake; this requires a still greater effort, and in this one will surely find himself wanting.*

וכן בענין עסק לימוד התורה, ללמוד הרבה יותר מחפצו ורצונו לפי טבעו ורגילותו על ידי מלחמה עצומה עם גופו

Similarly with regard to the battle required in the matter of one's occupation in Torah study, one must struggle to study far more than what is demanded by his innate or accustomed desire, by means of a mighty battle with his body.

When one studies Torah only as much as his natural inclination or habituated diligence dictates, he requires no effort or struggle at all. But in order to match the struggle of the *kal shebekalim* one must study far, far more than he would by nature or habit, as the Alter Rebbe continues:

כי הלומד מעט יותר מטבעו הרי זו מלחמה קטנה, ואין לה ערך ודמיון עם מלחמת היצר הבוער כאש

For to study a fraction more than is one's wont entails but a minor tussle. It neither parallels nor bears comparison with the war of the *kal shebekalim* against his evil impulse which burns like fire,

דמקרי רשע גמור אם אינו מנצח יצרו, להיות נכנע ונשבר מפני ה'

for which he is nonetheless called utterly wicked (*rasha gamur*), if he does not conquer his impulse so that it be subdued and crushed before G-d.

Similarly, unless one struggles with his evil impulse to study much more than his nature or habit demands, he is no less wicked than the *kal shebekalim*.

But one may object to this reasoning. How, one may say, can I in all honesty compare my shortcomings to those of the *kal shebekalim*? I am lacking merely in the quality of the good that I do, whilst he actually and actively violates prohibitions enumerated in the Torah. To this the Alter Rebbe counters:

ומה לי בחינת סור מרע ומה לי בחינת ועשה טוב

What difference is there between the category of “turn away from evil” — in which the *kal shebekalim* fails, by active violation, and the category of “do good” — in which *he* fails, by neglecting to exert himself in prayer, Torah study and the like?

To be sure, there are differences between the two categories. Each has its own unique spiritual effects, its own specific intentions. But these differences pertain only to the person performing the *mitzvah*. The essential point in a *mitzvah*, however, is that it is an expression of the Will of the Only and Unique G-d, and in this there is no difference whatsoever between the two categories, as the Alter Rebbe continues.

הכל היא מצות המלך הקדוש, יחיד ומיוחד, ברוך הוא

Both are the commandments of the Holy King, the Only and Unique One, blessed be He.

The failings of the observant individual in the quality of his prayer, Torah study, and so on, are therefore comparable to the transgressions of the *kal shebekalim*.

וכן בשאר מצות, ובפרט בדבר שבממון

So, too, with other commandments requiring a struggle, one may find that he does not wage war adequately against his evil impulse, especially in matters involving money,

כמו עבודת הצדקה, וכהאי גוונא

such as the service (“labor”) of charity, i.e., giving charity in a manner involving “labor” — far more than in his wont, and the like.

ואפילו בבחינת סור מרע, יכול כל איש משכיל למצוא בנפשו שאינו סר לגמרי מהרע בכל מכל כל

Even in the category of “turn away from evil,” every thinking man can discover within himself that he does not turn completely and totally away from evil,

במקום שצריך למלחמה עצומה כערך הנ"ל, ואפילו פחות מערך הנ"ל

in a situation requiring a battle of the level i.e., magnitude described above, i.e., the battle required of the *kal shebekalim*, or even in a situation requiring a battle of a lesser magnitude.

כגון להפסיק באמצע שיחה נאה, או סיפור בגנות חברו

For example, he may find that he does not summon up the strength to stop in the middle of a pleasant gossip, or in the middle of relating a tale discrediting his fellow,

ואפילו גנאי קטן וקל מאד, אף שהוא אמת, ואפילו כדי לנקות עצמו

as he ought to do even if it is a very slight slur, and even if it be true, and even though his purpose in relating it is to exonerate himself —

כנודע מהא דאמר רבי שמעון לאביו רבינו הקדוש: לאו אנא כתביה אלא יהודא חייטא כתביה, ואמר לו: כלך מלשון הרע עיין שם בגמרא, ריש פרק י' דבבא בתרא

as is known from what Rabbi Shimon said to his father Rabbeinu HaKadosh concerning a problematic bill of divorce that was improperly written: “I did not write it, Yehudah the tailor wrote it,” where the slur was a minor one, and the purpose was self-vindication — and yet his father replied: “Keep away from slander.” (Note there in the *Gemara*, Tractate *Bava Batra*, [2](#) beginning of ch. 10.)

וכהאי גוונא כמה מילי דשכיחי טובא

The same applies to very many similar things which occur frequently.

There, too, one will find that he does not resist his evil impulse as he ought to, even in the category of “turn away from evil.”

ובפרט בענין לקדש עצמו במותר לו, שהוא מדאורייתא, כמו שכתוב: קדושים תהיו וגו', והתקדשתם וגו'

This is especially true with regard to sanctifying oneself by refraining from indulgence in permitted matters — and this is a Biblical commandment, [10](#) derived from the verses: [11](#) “You shall be holy,” and “Sanctify yourselves,” etc.

וגם דברי סופרים חמורים מדברי תורה וכו'

Moreover, even according to the opinion that this commandment is not of Biblical origin, yet<sup>12</sup> “Rabbinic enactments are even stricter than Biblical laws,” etc. — and yet one will often find himself succumbing to self-indulgence when the temptation is strong and requires a battle to overcome it.

אלא שכל אלו וכיוצא בהן הן מעוונות שהאדם דש בעקביו

But all these and similar matters are among<sup>13</sup> “the sins which people trample underfoot,” insensitive to their importance,

וגם נעשו כהיתר מחמת שעבר ושנה וכו'

and which have come to be regarded as permissible because they are committed repeatedly. <sup>14</sup>

All the above-mentioned calculations, then, can lead one to conclude that he is no better than the *kal shebekalim*. Like the *kal shebekalim*, he too fails to wage war against his evil impulse when it is required of him. Yet this still does not explain the requirement that one consider oneself *lower* than every man. In what way is he *worse* than the *kal shebekalim*? In answer, the Alter Rebbe continues:

אבל באמת אם הוא יודע ספר, ומחזיק בתורת ה', וקרבת אלקים יחפ'

In truth, however, if he is a scholar and upholds G-d's Torah, and wishes to be close to G-d,

גדול עונו מנשוא, ואשמתו גדלה בכפלי כפליים במה שאינו נלחם ומתגבר על יצרו בערך ובחינת מלחמה  
עצומה הנ"ל

his sin is unbearably great and his guilt is increased manifold for his not waging war and not overcoming his impulse in a manner commensurate with the quality and nature of the war mentioned above that the *kal shebekalim* must face.

מאשמת קל שבקלים מיושבי קרנות הרחוקים מה' ותורתו

His guilt is far greater than the guilt of the *kal shebekalim*, the most worthless of the street-corner squatters, who are remote from G-d and His Torah.

ואין אשמתם גדולה כל כך במה שאינם כובשים יצרם הבווער כאש להבה מפני פחד ה' המבין ומביט אל כל מעשיהם

Their guilt for not summoning up the fear of G-d Who knows and sees all their actions, in order to restrain their impulse which burns like a fiery flame, is not as heinous

כאשמת כל הקרב הקרב אל ה' ואל תורתו ועבודתו

as the guilt of one who draws ever nearer to G-d, His Torah and His service.

וכמו שאמרו רז"ל גבי אחר: שידע בכבודי וכו'

As our Sages of blessed memory said of the apostate “Acher”, Elisha ben Avuyah: [15](#) “Because he knew My glory...,” said G-d; if despite this he still sinned, his guilt is far greater.

ולכן אמרו רז"ל על עמי האר' שזדונות נעשו להם כשגגות

Therefore our Sages declared in regard to the illiterate that [16](#) “Deliberate sins are regarded in their case as inadvertent acts,” since they are unaware of the gravity of their sins.

With a scholar, the reverse is true: an oversight due to lack of study is adjudged as being as grave as a deliberate sin. [17](#) Thus, his failure to restrain his evil impulse is indeed worse than the failure of the *kal shebekalim*.

By contemplating this, the observant scholar will now be able to fulfill the instruction of the *Mishnah* (quoted at the beginning of this chapter): “Be lowly of spirit before every man.” Thereby he will crush his own spirit and the spirit of the *sitra achra* in his animal soul, enabling the light of his soul to permeate and irradiate his body, as explained in ch. 29.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Avot* 4:10. [2.](#) *Ibid.* 2:4. [3.](#) See *Hoshea* 7:4, 6. [4.](#) See *Likkutei Torah*, *Vayikra* 2b. [5.](#) Ch. 12. [6.](#) *Tehillim* 34:15. [7.](#) *Sifrei* on *Devarim* 6:5. [8.](#) Ch. 42. [9.](#) 164b. [10.](#) See ch. 27. [11.](#) *Vayikra* 19:2; 20:7. [12.](#) *Sanhedrin* 88b. [13.](#) *Avodah Zarah* 18a. [14.](#) *Yoma* 86b. [15.](#) *Chaghigah* 15a (in fourth marginal gloss by the *Bach*). [16.](#) *Bava Metzia* 33b. [17.](#) *Avot* 4:13.



## Chapter 31

In ch. 29 the Alter Rebbe began to deal with the problem of *timtum halev*, insensitivity of the heart. He quoted the statement of the *Zohar* that a body impervious to the light of the soul needs to be crushed. By crushing one’s spirit, one crushes the *sitra achra* of his animal soul, whose arrogance is the cause of *timtum halev*.

In chs. 29-30, the Alter Rebbe described various means of arriving at a feeling of contrition (lit., “brokenheartedness”); e.g., reflecting on one’s spiritual failings in not waging an adequately strenuous battle against his evil impulse, and realizing that one’s

failure in this area places him on a level lower than that of the lowliest of his fellow Jews (as explained at length in ch. 30).

But while these methods may effectively dispel *timtum halev*, they would seem to have an undesirable side-effect — depression. Ch. 31 deals with this problem.

והנה אף אם כשיאריך הרבה להעמיק בעניינים הנ"ל כשעה ושתיים להיות בנמיכת רוח ולב נשבר, יבא לידי עצבות גדולה, לא יהוש

Even if dwelling long and deeply into the above-mentioned matters for an hour or two, to be lowly of spirit and contrite of heart, leads one to profound depression, let him not be perturbed.

ואף שעצבות היא מצד קליפת נוגה ולא מצד הקדושה

True, *atzvut* (depression) derives from the realm of *kelipat nogah*, not of holiness.

כי בצד הקדושה כתיב: עוז וחדוה במקומו, ואין השכינה שורה אלא מתוך שמחה, וכן לדבר הלכה וכו'

For concerning the realm of holiness it is written: [1](#) “Strength and gladness are in His place”; and likewise, [2](#) “The Divine Presence abides... only in [man’s] joy,... and the same joy is required for the study of the *Halachah*.”

אלא שאם העצבות היא ממילי דשמיא היא מבחינת טוב שבנוגה

Any depression, then, comes from the realm of *kelipat nogah*, except that if the depression is due to spiritual matters arising from one’s realization of his spiritual failings, it stems from the good contained in *kelipat nogah*; for, as mentioned in ch. 1, *kelipat nogah* contains both good and evil — the evil in *nogah* is the source of ordinary depression, and the positive element in *nogah* gives rise to spiritually motivated depression. Yet, even the element of good contained in *nogah* is, after all, *kelipah*.

ולכן כתב האר"י ז"ל שאפילו דאגת העונות אינה ראויה כי אם בשעת הוידוי

([3](#)For this reason the *AriZal* writes that even worry over one’s sins is appropriate only during confession,

ולא בשעת התפלה ותלמוד תורה, שצריכים להיות בשמחה שמצד הקדושה דווקא

but not during prayer and Torah study. These must be conducted with a joy deriving exclusively from the realm of holiness, as opposed to frivolity and the like.)

Why then should one strive to crush the spirit of *sitra achra* with methods that lead to depression, which itself stems from the *sitra achra* of *nogah*

אף על פי כן, הרי כך היא המדה, לאכפיא לסטרא אחרא במינה ודוגמתה

Yet, this is precisely the method of humbling the *sitra achra* — through something of its own species and kind; i.e., the *sitra achra* is most effectively attacked by utilizing the good contained within it as a weapon against itself.

כמאמר רז"ל: מיניה וביה אבא לשדיה ביה נרגא, ופגע בו כיוצא בו

As our Sages expressed it: [4](#) “From the forest itself comes [the handle for] the ax [which fells the forest]”; and in a similar vein, [5](#) “He encountered one of his own kind.”

ועל זה נאמר: בכל עצב יהיה מותר, והיתרון היא השמחה הבאה אחרי העצב, כדלקמן

Of this sadness resulting from contemplation of one’s spiritual state it is written, [6](#) “In every sadness there will be profit.” The profit lies in the joy which follows the sadness, as will be explained later — i.e., in what way the sadness itself leads to joy.

אך באמת אין לב נשבר ומרירות הנפש על ריחוקה מאור פני ה' והתלבשותה בסטרא אחרא נקראים בשם עצבות כלל בלשון הקודש

In truth, however, the state of being contrite of heart and bitter of soul i.e., remorseful over one’s remoteness from G-d, and over the fact that one’s soul is clothed in the *sitra achra*, — this state can by no means be described in the Holy Tongue (Hebrew) by the term “*atzvut*”.

The word *atzvut*, meaning “melancholy”, stems from a root which means “constricted”. In this context, it refers to a numbing depression that constricts one’s heart, blocking out all feeling, as the Alter Rebbe continues:

כי עצבות היא שלבו מטומטם כאבן ואין חיות בלבו

For “*atzvut*” means that one’s heart is as dull as a stone, and that there is no vitality — arousal of feeling — in his heart.

אבל מרירות ולב נשבר, אדרבה, הרי יש חיות בלבו להתפעל ולהתמרמר

But “bitterness” (*merirut*) and contrition are just the opposite, since the very fact that one is moved to be embittered is itself a sign of life,

רק שהיא חיות מבחינת גבורות קדושות, והשמחה מבחינת חסדים, כי הלב כלול משתיהן,

except that this vitality derives from the holy attributes of severity (*gevurot*) and it therefore expresses itself as bitterness, whereas joy derives from the holy attributes of kindness (*chasadim*), for the heart contains both these attributes — kindness and severity.

At any rate, we see that the dejection accompanying one’s disappointment with his spiritual situation stems from the realm of holiness, unlike *atzvut*, which derives from *kelipat nogah*. [7](#)

והנה לעתים צריך לעורר בחינת גבורות הקדושות כדי להמתיק הדינים, שהם בחינת נפש הבהמית ויצר הרע כששולט חס ושלוה על האדם,

At times one must arouse the holy attributes of severity (*gevurot*) in order to temper (lit., “sweeten”) stern judgements, which in this context denote the animal soul and the evil inclination, whenever it (the latter) dominates a man, G-d forbid,

כי אין הדינים נמתקין אלא בשרשן

for stern judgements i.e., restraints on one’s spiritual wellbeing can only be “sweetened” by means of their source.

All evil is simply a degenerate form of the attribute of severity (*gevurot*) that derives from the realm of holiness. Myriad “contractions” (*tzimtzumim*) and descents of this attribute transform it to evil, the evil of *kelipah*. Naturally, this includes also the *sitra achra* of one’s animal soul and his evil impulse. In order to elevate or “sweeten” evil, to return evil to the realm of holiness, it is necessary to bring its source to bear on it. In terms of one’s divine service, this means crushing one’s evil impulse by *merirut*, bitter remorse, which derives its vitality from the holy attribute of severity — the source of the evil impulse.

ולכן אמרו רז"ל: לעולם ירגיז אדם יצר הרע הטוב

For this reason our Sages said: [8](#) “One should always incite the good inclination to anger [against the evil inclination].”

Since anger stems from the attribute of severity, it is capable of “sweetening” the evil inclination.

והיינו בכל עת שרואה בנפשו שצריך לכך

The word “always” (“one should *always* incite...”) is, however, to be understood in a qualified sense. Joy, not severity, is usually the proper setting for divine service. Thus, when our Sages state that one should *always* incite the good inclination, this means — whenever he finds it necessary for himself; as, for example, when one sees that the arrogance of his animal soul does not permit the light of his divine soul to penetrate his heart, causing *timtum halev*.

אך שעת הכושר שהיא שעה המיוחדת וראויה לכך לרוב בני אדם

However, the appropriate time for this “anger” of the divine soul at the animal soul, meaning, the time which is opportune and fitting for most people,

היא בשעה שהוא עצב בלאו הכי ממילי דעלמא, או כך בלי שום סבה



is when one is in any case depressed over mundane matters, or just so, without any discernible cause. [9](#)

אזי היא שעת הכושר להפך העצב, להיות ממרי דחושבנא הנ"ל

This is an opportune time for redirecting the depression toward spiritual matters, to be among the “masters of accounts” mentioned above, i.e., to engage in soul-searching and spiritual stocktaking,

ולקיים מאמר רז"ל: לעולם ירגיז וכו' כנ"ל

and to fulfill the previously mentioned teaching of our Sages, that one should always incite his good inclination against his evil inclination, since both of these paths harness the attribute of severity.

ובזה יפטר מהעצבות שממילי דעלמא

He will thus also be rid of the depression brought on by mundane matters.

I.e., redirecting his depression into soul-searching, and into anger at his evil inclination, will dispel the mundane depression.

ואחר כך יבא לידי שמחה אמיתית, דהיינו, שזאת ישיב אל לבו לנחמו בכפליים אחר הדברים והאמת האלה הנ"ל

He will then arrive at a true joy, as follows: In order to comfort his heart in double measure, let him — in the wake of the above words of truth concerning his lowly spiritual stature — tell himself the following.

The comfort is dual: not only is his depression eliminated, but he will also attain a joy which he would never experience were it not for his earlier depression.

לאמר ללבו: אמת הוא כן בלי ספק שאני רחוק מאד מה' בתכלית, ומשוקץ ומתועב כו',

Let him say to his heart: “Indeed, without a doubt, I am far removed, utterly remote from G-d, and am despicable, contemptible, and so on.

אך כל זה הוא אני לבדי, הוא הגוף עם נפש החיונית שבו

But all this is true only of *me* — that is, my body and the animating soul within it.

אבל מכל מקום יש בקרבי חלק ה' ממש, שישנו אפילו בקל שבקלים, שהיא נפש האלקית עם ניצוץ אלקות ממש המלוכב בה להחיותה,

Yet within me there is a veritable ‘part’ of G-d, which is present even in the most worthless of my fellows, so that even if I am no better than he, I still have this ‘part’ of

G-d within me, namely, the divine soul and the spark of G-dliness itself clothed in it, animating it.

רק שהיא בבחינת גלות

It is only that when the body and animating soul are in such a lowly state, the divine soul is in exile within them.

ואם כן, אדרבה, כל מה שאני בתכלית הריחוק מה', והתיעוב ושיקוץ

“If so, then, on the contrary, the further I am removed from G-d, and the more despicable and contemptible,

הרי נפש האלקית שבי בגלות גדול יותר, והרחמנות עליה גדולה מאד

the deeper in exile is my divine soul, and all the more is it to be pitied.

ולזה אשים כל מגמתי וחפצי להוציאה ולהעלותה מגלות זה, להשיבה אל בית אביה כנעוריה,

“Therefore, I will make it my entire aim and desire to extricate it from this exile, and to ‘return her to her father’s house i.e., to restore it to its source and its original state as in her youth,’

קודם שנתלבשה בגופי, שהיתה נכללת באורו יתברך ומיוחדת עמו בתכליתו

i.e., as it was before being clothed in my body, when it was completely absorbed in G-d’s light and united with Him.

וגם עתה כן תהא כלולה ומיוחדת בו יתברך, כשאשים כל מגמתי בתורה ומצות, להלביש בהן כל עשר בחינותיה כנ"ל

“Now too will it likewise be absorbed and united with Him once again, when I concentrate all my aspirations on the Torah and the *mitzvot*, in an effort to clothe therein all [of the soul’s] ten faculties; i.e., by applying my mental faculties to Torah study, and my emotive faculties to the performance of the *mitzvot* with the vitality lent them by the love and fear of G-d, as explained above in ch. 4. Thus will my divine soul be reunited with G-d.

ובפרט במצות תפלה, לצעוק אל ה' בצר לה מגלותה בגופי המשוקץ, להוציאה ממסגר, ולדבקה בו יתברך

“Especially in fulfilling the *mitzvah* of prayer will I try to release my divine soul, by crying out to G-d because of the distress of its exile in my loathsome body, so that He release it from captivity and bind it to Himself.”

וזו היא בחינת תשובה ומעשים טובים

This service of G-d, in which one seeks to restore the soul to its source, is referred to as [10](#) “*teshuvah* with good deeds.”

This is an oft-used Talmudic expression denoting the *mitzvot* (as in the statement, “One hour of *teshuvah* with good deeds in this world is better than all the life of the World to Come”). At first glance, the juxtaposition of the two seems incongruous; *teshuvah* deals with atoning for one’s past imperfections, while “good deeds” are performed in the present and would seem to bear no relation to one’s past. According to the Alter Rebbe’s statement, however, that one’s performance of the *mitzvot* should be motivated by a desire to return his soul to its source within G-d, the connection between the two is clear: the “good deeds” themselves actually constitute *teshuvah*, which means “return”. As the Alter Rebbe continues:

שהן מעשים טובים שעושה כדי להשיב חלק ה' למקורא ושרשא דכל עלמין

This denotes the “good deeds” which one does with the intention of returning the soul which is part of G-d, to the [Divine] source and root of all the worlds.

וזאת תהיה עבודתו כל ימיו בשמחה רבה, היא שמחת הנפש בצאתה מהגוף המתועב, ושבה אל בית אביה  
כנעוריה בשעת התורה והעבודה

This, then, should be one’s lifelong aim in the service of G-d with great joy — the joy of the soul upon leaving the loathsome body, and returning, during one’s study of the Torah and service of G-d through prayer, to “her father’s house as in her youth,” i.e., to the unity with G-d that it enjoyed before it descended into the body.

וכמאמר רז"ל: להיות כל ימיו בתשובה

This corresponds to the statement of our Sages [11](#) that one ought to engage in *teshuvah* throughout his life.

If the word *teshuvah* is understood only in the sense of repentance for sin, why the need for further repentance once one has already repented

However, *teshuvah* as explained here, returning the soul to its source, is something in which one may well engage throughout his life — whenever he studies Torah or performs a *mitzvah*.

ואין לך שמחה גדולה כצאת מהגלות והשביה, כמשל בן מלך שהיה בשביה וטוהן בבית האסורים ומנוול  
באשפה

Surely, there is no joy as great as that of being released from exile and captivity. It is comparable to the joy of a prince who was taken captive, and was subjected to the hard labor of turning the millstone in prison, [12](#) while covered with filth,

ויצא לחפשי אל בית אביו המלך

and who then goes free to the house of his father, the king.

Such a prince, descended from the Supreme King, is the soul — and by means of the Torah and the *mitzvot* it is redeemed from the captivity and degradation imposed on it by the body.

ואף שהגוף עומד בשיקוצו ותיעובו, וכמו שכתוב בזהר, דנקרא משכא דחויא

True, the body remains abominable and loathsome, and as the *Zohar* says, it is called “a serpent’s skin,” [13](#)

כי מהותה ועצמותה של הנפש הבהמית לא נהפך לטוב, ליכלל בקדושה

since the essential character of the animal soul has not been transformed to good, so that it might be absorbed into the realm of holiness.

For, as explained above, the *Beinoni* may indeed elevate the “*garments*” of the animal soul — the thought, speech and action through which it expresses itself — by performing the *mitzvot* by means of his thought, speech and action; but the *essential character* of the animal soul — its intellectual and emotional faculties — remains subject to the realm of *kelipat nogah*. How, then, can one be expected to rejoice, knowing that his body and animal soul are still in such an undesirable state

מכל מקום תיקר נפשו בעיניו לשמוח בשמחתה יותר מהגוף הנבזה, שלא לערבב ולבלבל שמחת הנפש בעצבון הגוף,

Yet, let his divine soul be more precious to him than his loathsome body, so that he rejoices in the soul’s joy at its liberation, through the observance of the Torah and the *mitzvot*, from the exile of the body, without letting the sadness on account of the lowly state of his body interfere with or disturb the joy of the soul.

והנה בחינה זו היא בחינת יציאת מצרים, שנאמר בה: כי ברח העם

This form of divine service — in which the divine soul breaks free of its exile within the body, while the body and animal soul remain in their lowly state — is analogous to the Exodus from Egypt, of which it is written that [14](#) “the people escaped.”

The Jews told Pharaoh that they would leave Egypt for only three days, but upon being released from his land they escaped.

דלכאורה הוא תמוה למה היתה כזאת, וכי אילו אמרו לפרעה לשלחם חפשי לעולם, לא היה מוכרח לשלחם

At first glance it seems strange: Why should it have been so, in a manner of flight? Had they demanded of Pharaoh that he set them free forever, would he not have been forced to do so, having been stricken by the Plagues?

The explanation, the Alter Rebbe goes on to say, lies in the spiritual aspect of the Exodus, and this was reflected in its physical counterpart just as every event in Jewish history reflects a parallel spiritual process.

The corporeal enslavement of the Jewish people in Egypt reflected the enslavement of their souls by the *kelipah* of Egyptian impurity. Their Exodus from Egypt likewise represented a spiritual liberation from this *kelipah*. Since the spiritual Exodus was an act of escape — i.e., their soul broke away and “escaped” from the impurity of Egypt, while the body and animal soul were still in exile within the *kelipah* — therefore the physical Exodus likewise assumed the manner of an escape.

In the Alter Rebbe’s words:

אלא מפני שהרע שבנפשות ישראל עדיין היה בתקפו בחלל השמאלי

But escape was necessary because the evil in the [animal] souls of Israel was still strong in the left part of the heart, the seat of the animal soul,

כי לא פסקה זוהמתם עד מתן תורה

for their impurity (the impurity of *kelipah*) did not cease until the Giving of the Torah. [15](#)

רק מגמתם וחפצם היתה לצאת נפשם האלקית מגלות הסטרא אחרא, היא טומאת מצרים, ולדבקה בו יתברך

Yet their aim and desire was that their divine soul leave the exile of the *sitra achra* — the impurity of Egypt, and that it cleave to G-d. [16](#)

וכדכתיב: ה' עוזי ומעוזי ומנוסי ביום צרה וגו', משגבי ומנוסי וגו', והוא מנוס לי וגו',

So it is written [17](#) — that there is a divine service which consists of the divine soul’s “escape” from the impurity of the body and animal soul: “G-d is my strength and my fortress, my *refuge* in the day of affliction”; [18](#) “[He is] my high tower and my refuge”; and [19](#) “He is my *escape*...”

And the Exodus from Egypt exemplified this idea of “escape”.

ולכן לעתיד, כשיעביר ה' רוח הטומאה מן הארץ, כתיב: ובמנוסה לא תלכון כי הולך לפניכם ה' וגו'

Hence it is written of the Redemption which will take place in the time to come, when G-d will remove the spirit of impurity from the earth and there will therefore be no evil necessitating spiritual escape: [20](#) “[You will not go out in haste,] nor go in flight, for G-d will go before you.”

The Exodus from Egypt, however, took place in a manner of flight, for the evil was still strong in the people’s animal soul. Similarly, whenever one disregards the lowliness of his body and animal soul and engages in the Torah and the *mitzvot* in order to free the

divine soul from its corporeal exile, he effects the spiritual equivalent of the Exodus from Egypt.

ולהיות בחינת תשובה זו ביתר שאת ויתר עז מעומקא דלבא, וגם שמחת הנפש תהיה בתוספת אורה ושמחה

One may lend this *teshuvah* — the restoration of his soul to its source — additional strength from the depths of his heart, and likewise add a greater measure of light and joy to the joy of his soul brought on by the *teshuvah*,

כאשר ישיב אל לבו דעת ותבונה לנחמו מעצבונו ויגונו, לאמר כנ"ל

by comforting his heart from its distress and sorrow, through reflecting (lit., “speaking to his heart”) with knowledge and understanding, as follows:

הן אמת כו', אך אני לא עשיתי את עצמי

“Certainly it is true, as said above, that I am utterly remote from G-d, etc.; but it was not I who created myself in a manner that permits the divine soul to be exiled within the impurity of the body and animal soul. It was G-d Who created me thus.

ולמה עשה ה' כזאת, להוריד חלק מאורו יתברך, הממלא וסובב כל עלמין, וכולא קמיה כלא חשיב, והלבישו במשכא דחויא וטפה סרוחה

“Why then has G-d done such a thing — to cause [the divine soul,] a part of His light which fills and encompasses all worlds and before which all is as naught, to descend into [the body], and be clothed in a 'serpent's skin' and a 'fetid drop'”

אין זה כי אם ירידה זו היא צורך עליה

“Surely this descent must be for the sake of a subsequent ascent.

להעלות לה' כל נפש החיונית הבהמית שמקליפת נוגה, וכל לבושיה, הן בחינות מחשבה דבור ומעשה שלה

“That is, to elevate to G-d the entire animating, animal soul, which derives from *kelipat nogah*, and also its 'garments' of thought, speech and action,

על ידי התלבשותן במעשה דבור ומחשבת התורה

by means of clothing them in the action, speech and thought of the Torah.

For by performing the *mitzvot*, and by speaking and thinking words of Torah, the animal soul and its 'garments' are elevated toward G-dliness.

וכמו שכתוב לקמן ענין העלאה זו באריכות, איך שהיא תכלית בריאת העולם

([21](#)The subject of this ascent will be discussed further on at length; [22](#) it will be shown how this is the purpose for which the world was created.)

ואם כן איפוא זאת אעשה, וזאת תהיה כל מגמתי כל ימי חלדי

“If this be so, there is one thing for me to do, and this shall be my sole aim throughout my life:

לכל בהן חיי רוחי ונפשי, וכמו שכתוב: אליך ה' נפשי אשא

To immerse therein — in the thought, speech and action of the Torah and the *mitzvot* — the life of my spirit and soul, as it is written, [23](#) “To You, G-d, I raise my soul.

דהיינו, לקשר מחשבתי ודבורי במחשבתו ודבורו יתברך, והן הן גופי הלכות הערוכות לפנינו, וכן מעשה במעשה המצות

“In practical terms, this means: To bind my thought and speech with G-d’s thought and speech — which are, in fact, the very laws which have been set out before us. For the laws of the Torah are G-d’s “thought” and “speech”, and by studying them one binds his own faculties of thought and speech with their Divine counterparts. Similarly with action: I will bind my faculty of action with G-d’s faculty of action, through performing the commandments.”

שלא כן נקראת התורה משיבת נפש, פירוש, למקורה ושרשה

For this reason, the Torah is described as [24](#) “that which restores the soul,” i.e., it restores the soul to its source and root.

ועל זה נאמר: פקודי ה' ישרים משמחי לב

Moreover, concerning this occupation in the Torah and the *mitzvot* which brings joy to the soul by restoring it to its source, and which banishes the sadness of its exile in the body and animal soul, it is written: [25](#) “G-d’s commandments are just; they gladden the heart.”

When one considers that one’s study of the Torah and observance of the *mitzvot* elevate not only his divine soul, but also his animal soul, his *teshuvah* will gain in depth, and the joy of his soul will gain in intensity.

For although the soul’s “escape” from exile within the body and animal soul (spoken of earlier) would in itself be sufficient cause for great joy, yet this is a joy tempered by sadness over the lowly state in which one’s body and animal soul remain. When one realizes, however, that Torah and the *mitzvot* elevate the body and animal soul as well, his joy will be untarnished.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Divrei HaYamim* 16:27. [2.](#) *Shabbat* 30b. [3.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [4.](#) Cf. *Sanhedrin* 39b. [5.](#) *Shabbat* 121b. [6.](#) *Mishlei* 14:23. [7.](#)

Now that the Alter Rebbe has established that sadness arising from one's spiritual stocktaking is not *atzvut* (depression) but *merirut* (bitterness), several difficulties arise: (1) Earlier, the Alter Rebbe stated that one ought not be perturbed by such sadness, even though it is in fact *atzvut* (which stems from the *sitra achra*), because "this is precisely the method for humbling the *sitra achra* - through something of its own kind..." Why the need to justify *atzvut* if this sadness is not *atzvut* at all, but *merirut*." (2) Several lines further, the Alter Rebbe states that the opportune time for dwelling on one's failings is when one is in any case depressed over some material concern; the depression that such contemplation arouses will rid him of his materially-inspired depression. But the Alter Rebbe has just pointed out that this is not depression at all; how, then, does this dispel any other depression?

A possible explanation:

When one dwells on his spiritual failings, and concludes that he is indeed worse than the *kal shebekalim*, his first reaction will be despondency; he will feel utterly worthless and disgraced in his own eyes. In this state, there is no stirring of feeling, no vitality; it is, indeed, classic *atzvut*. But if this stocktaking was undertaken in its proper spirit, the despondency will last only momentarily. Immediately after sinking into depression the individual will feel the stirrings of bitterness, of anger at his having allowed himself to fall so low; he will begin to seek means of extricating himself from this sorry state. It is with regard to the momentary *atzvut* that the Alter Rebbe advises one not to be perturbed, since his *atzvut* is an effective weapon against the *sitra achra*. Regarding the bitterness and anger that follow it, the Alter Rebbe states that they are not *atzvut* at all, inasmuch as they are alive and active. Likewise, when the Alter Rebbe states that depression over one's spiritual failings is effective in ridding one of depression due to other causes, he again refers to the aforementioned temporary depression which immediately follows one's spiritual stocktaking. (- From a comment by the Rebbe.)

[8.](#) *Berachot* 5a. [9.](#)

From a superficial reading, it would appear that the Alter Rebbe advocates spiritual accounting at such a time when one is in any case depressed simply so that the depression resulting from this accounting will not hinder one from joyful service of G-d. However, the expression, "the time which is opportune and fitting for spiritual stocktaking..." clearly indicates that one's depressed state actually aids him in some way in this self-evaluation. For when one is in a joyful frame of mind on account of his physical well-being, it is difficult for him to shift to a reflective, introspective one, and to feel truly saddened by his spiritual failures; being in a state of depression simplifies the process.

We find a similar correlation between one's physical circumstances and his spiritual objectives in the following statement of the Sages: "When the Temple stood, the joy `of the festivals' consisted of eating `the sacrificial' meat; now that the Temple is no longer,



the joy lies in drinking wine." (*Pesachim* 109a) Although the festivals were given for our souls to rejoice in holiness ("...And Your people Israel will rejoice in *You*"), yet meat and wine are prescribed, so as to harmonize the moods of body and soul.

[10.](#) *Avot* 4:17. [11.](#) Cf. *Shabbat* 153a. [12.](#) Cf. *Shoftim* 16:21; *Rashbam* on *Shemot* 11:5. [13.](#) The term "serpent" refers to the three utterly impure *kelipot*. The body of a Jew, which derives its vitality from *kelipat nogah*, is thus the "skin" - the "outer shell," so to speak, of the "serpent." The subject is explained at length by R. Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (author of *Tzemach Tzedek*) in his *Sefer HaChakirah*, p. 136. [14.](#) *Shemot* 14:5. [15.](#) *Shabbat* 146a. [16.](#) This explains why "[when the hour of Redemption arrived G-d did not detain them [in Egypt] even for a moment" (*Mechilta* on *Shemot* 12:41) - lest the evil within them drag them back to the impurity of Egypt. (- Based on a comment by the Rebbe.) [17.](#) *Yirmeyahu* 16:19. [18.](#) *II Shmuel* 22:3. [19.](#) From the hymn that begins "Adon Olam." [20.](#) *Yeshayahu* 52:12. [21.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [22.](#) Chapters 35, 36, and 37. [23.](#) *Tehillim* 25:1. [24.](#) *Ibid.*, 19:8. [25.](#) *Ibid.*, 19:9.



## Chapter 32

In the previous chapter the Alter Rebbe taught that when one is bitterly remorseful over his sorry spiritual state, he must strive for joy by considering the following. True, on account of his body and his animal soul he is utterly remote from G-dliness. Yet he has within him a divine soul, veritably a part of G-d. This soul, in exile within the body and the animal soul, is to be greatly pitied. One should therefore strive constantly to release it from this exile and to return it to its divine source, through engaging in the Torah and the *mitzvot*. Such a return will bring one great joy, the joy of freedom. The knowledge that the body and the animal soul remain in their unfortunate state should not disturb one's joy on account of his divine soul, for the soul should be infinitely more precious in one's eyes.

והנה על ידי קיום הדברים הנ"ל, להיות גופו נבזה ונמאס בעיניו, רק שמחתו תהיה שמחת הנפש לבדה

Acting on the advice mentioned above — to view one's body with scorn and contempt, and to find joy in the joy of the soul alone —

הרי זו דרך ישרה וקלה לבא לידי קיום מצות ואהבת לרעך כמוך, לכל נפש מישראל למגדול ועד קטן

is a direct and easy path toward fulfilling the *mitzvah*,<sup>1</sup> "You shall love your fellow as yourself," with regard to every Jew both great and small — in spiritual stature.

כי מאחר שגופו נמאס ומתועב אצלו, והנפש והרוח, מי יודע גדולתן ומעלתן בשרשן ומקורן באלקים חיים

Since his body is despised and loathsome he will not love himself on account of his body more than he loves his fellow; and as for the soul and spirit, the differences between his own soul and that of his fellow surely will not diminish the love between them, for who can know their (the soul and spirit's) greatness and excellence in their source and root — the living G-d?

How, then, can one claim that his soul is superior to his fellow's?

בשגם שכולן מתאימות, ואב אחד לכולנה

Furthermore, they are actually all equal; [2](#) and not only equal yet separate, but, furthermore, they all have one father — one source, and within their source they all comprise *one* entity.

ולכן נקראו כל ישראל אחים ממש מצד שורש נפשם בה' אחד

It is on account of this common root in the One G-d that all of Israel are called “brothers” — in the full sense of the word, and not only figuratively, in the sense of “relatives” or “similar in appearance” and the like; [3](#)

רק שהגופים מחולקים

only the bodies are distinct from each other.

This explains how it is at all possible to demand that one love his fellow as he loves himself. Self-love is innate, natural to man; love for one's fellow is not. How can a generated love match a natural one

According to the principle stated here, this is readily understood. One Jew need not create a love for another. The love is an inborn characteristic of his soul, on account of its root in G-dliness which is common to all souls; it is as natural as the love between brothers.

ולכן העושים גופם עיקר ונפשם טפלה אי אפשר להיות אהבה ואהבה אמיתית ביניהם אלא התלויה בדבר לבדה

Therefore, there can be no true love and fraternity between those who regard their bodies as primary and their souls secondary, but only a love based on an external factor.

Since the body separates us from each other, whereas the soul is that which binds us together, the greater value one places on his body at the expense of his soul, the more conscious he is of the differences between himself and his fellow. These differences require that he *create* a love for his fellow, and as said above, a created love can never equal a natural, innate love. Therefore, love between people who consider their bodies as primarily important, must be only a love based on some external factor, in which case the love is (a) limited to the importance of the motivating factor, and (b) destined to endure only as long as that factor is valid.

\* \* \*

Up to now the Alter Rebbe has discussed the *mitzvah* of loving one's fellow, on its own merits. He now proceeds to discuss the value of this *mitzvah* as the basis for *all* the commandments, thereby elucidating yet further the importance of "rejoicing with the joy of the soul alone."

The *Talmud* relates that it was Hillel the Elder who authored the well-known statement that *ahavat Yisrael* (the love of one's fellow Jew) is the basis of the entire Torah. For Hillel had been approached by a gentile who declared that he wished to convert to Judaism, but only if Hillel would teach him the entire Torah while he stood on one foot. Hillel replied, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole Torah; the rest is but commentary..."

An obvious difficulty presents itself. All *mitzvot* fall into either of two categories: (a) *bein adam lachaveiro* — "between man and man," and (b) *bein adam laMakom* — "between man and G-d."

It is readily understood how all the *mitzvot* of the former category may be motivated by one's love of his fellow. But how can this love motivate one to fulfill any of the *mitzvot* belonging to the latter category — to observe the Sabbath, for example

The Alter Rebbe's answer follows from his previously stated principle that the essence of *ahavat Yisrael* lies in giving priority to one's soul rather than to his body. This indeed is the basis of the entire Torah — as the Alter Rebbe continues:

וזהו שאמר הלל הזקן על קיום מצוה זו: זהו כל התורה כולה, ואידך פירושא הוא וכו'

This explains Hillel the Elder's statement concerning the fulfillment of this *mitzvah*:<sup>4</sup> "This is the entire Torah, the rest is but commentary."

כי יסוד ושורש כל התורה הוא להגביה ולהעלות הנפש על הגוף מעלה מעלה עד עיקרא ושרשא דכל עלמין

For the basis and root purpose of the entire Torah is to elevate and exalt the soul high above the body, to [G-d], the root and source of all worlds,

וגם להמשיך אור אין סוף ברוך הוא בכנסת ישראל, כמו שכתוב לקמן, דהיינו, במקור נשמות כל ישראל, למהוי אחד באחד דוקא

and also to draw down the infinite light of *Ein Sof* into the Community of Israel — as will be explained further, <sup>5</sup> meaning into the fountainhead of the souls of all Israel, so that "the One [G-d] will reside within [Israel — but only insofar as they are] one," i.e., united.

ולא כשיש פירוד חס ושלום בנשמות, דקודשא בריך הוא לא שריא באתר פגים

But this indwelling of the light of *Ein Sof* in the Community of Israel is impossible if there is disunity between the souls, G-d forbid, for “G-d does not dwell in an imperfect, fragmented, place.” [6](#)

וכמו שכתוב: ברכנו אבינו כולנו כאחד באור פניך, וכמו שכתוב במקום אחר באריכות

So do we say in our prayers: [7](#) “Bless us, our Father, all as one with the light of Your Countenance,” indicating that “the light of G-d’s Countenance” can be revealed only when we are united “all as one,” as explained elsewhere at length.

Since every Jew has a divine soul, and since the commandment to love one’s fellow is based on the essential unity of the souls, it follows that this commandment applies to every Jew without exception. In fact, however, we find the *Talmud* exhorting us to hate certain fellow Jews. How do we reconcile these apparently contradictory requirements

The Alter Rebbe proceeds to clarify:

ומה שכתוב בגמרא שמי שרואה בהבירו שחטא, מצוה לשנאותו, וגם לומר לרבו שישנאהו

As for the Talmudic statement [8](#) that if one sees his friend sinning, he should hate him, and should also relate the fact to his teacher so that he too will hate him, — how does this conform with what was said above?

היינו בהבירו בתורה ומצות

This applies only to one’s companion — one’s equal— in the study of Torah and the observance of the *mitzvot*.

The sinner in question is a Torah-observant scholar, but has lapsed in this one instance. In this case his sin is much more severe than usual, since it is written that even the inadvertent misdeeds of a scholar are as grave as deliberate sins. [9](#) But even this general assumption of the gravity of his conduct is not sufficient cause to hate him, as the Alter Rebbe continues. Yet another condition must first be satisfied:

וכבר קיים בו מצות הוכח תוכיח את עמיתך, עם שאתך בתורה ובמצות, ואף על פי כן לא שב מחטאו, כמו שכתוב בספר חרדים

He has also fulfilled with him — with the sinner — the injunction, [10](#) “You shall repeatedly rebuke your friend.” The word used here for “your friend” (עמיתך) also indicates, as the *Talmud* points out [11](#) - שאתך עם - “him who is on a par with you in the Torah and the *mitzvot*,” as it is written in *Sefer Charedim*.

At this point there is no need to exaggerate the gravity of his sin: it is clearly a deliberate transgression.

אבל מי שאינו הבירו, ואינו מקורב אצלו

But as to one who is not his companion — his equal — in the Torah and the *mitzvot*, so that (as our Sages say concerning the ignorant in general) even his deliberate transgressions are regarded as inadvertent acts, since he is unaware of the gravity of sin; nor is he on intimate terms with him; — not only is one not enjoined to hate him: on the contrary, he must in fact, strive to become closer to him, as the Alter Rebbe states shortly.

To hate such a sinner is surely unjustifiable, since no sin that he commits is considered deliberate. There is also no reason to keep one's distance from him out of fear that he will learn from his evil ways (in fulfillment of the exhortation of the *Mishnah*, "Do not fraternize with a wicked man"), since he is not on close personal terms with him in any case.

הנה על זה אמר הלל הזקן: הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן, אוהב שלום וכו', אוהב את הבריות ומקרבן לתורה

Therefore, on the contrary: Of this situation Hillel said, [12](#) "Be one of the disciples of Aharon, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving creatures and drawing them near to the Torah."

לומר שאף הרחוקים מתורת ה' ועבודתו, ולכן נקראים בשם בריות בעלמא, צריך למשכן בהבלי עבודות  
אהבה

This usage of the term "creatures" in reference to human beings means that even those who are far from G-d's Torah and His service, for which reason they are classified simply as "creatures" — indicating that the fact that they are G-d's creations is their sole virtue — even those one must attract with strong cords of love.

וכולי האי ואולי יוכל לקרבן לתורה ועבודת ה'

Perhaps thereby one will be able, after all, to draw them close to the Torah and the service of G-d.

והן לא, לא הפסיד שכר מצות אהבת ריעים

And even if one fails in this, he has not forfeited the merit of the *mitzvah* of neighborly love which he has fulfilled by his efforts in this direction.

וגם המקורבים אליו, והוכיחם ולא שבו מעונותיהם, שמצוה לשנאותם, מצוה לאהבם גם כן

Furthermore, even those whom one is enjoined to hate — for they are close to him, and he has rebuked them but they still have not repented of their sins — one is obliged to love them too.

But is it possible to love a person and hate him at the same time?

The Alter Rebbe explains that since the love and the hatred stem from two different causes, they do not conflict.

ושתיהן הן אמת: שנאה מצד הרע שבהם, ואהבה מצד בחינת הטוב שגנוז שבהם, שהוא ניצוץ אלקות שבתוכם, המחיה נפשם האלקית

And both the love and the hatred are truthful emotions in this case, [since] the hatred is on account of the evil within them, while the love is on account of the good hidden in them, which is the divine spark within them that animates their divine soul. For this spark of G-dliness is present even in the most wicked of one's fellow Jews; it is merely hidden.

One may now be faced with the anomaly of a fellow-Jew whom he must both love and hate. But what attitude should he adopt toward the person as a whole who possesses both these aspects of good and evil?

When, for example, the sinner requests a favor of him, should his hatred dictate his response, or his love?

The Alter Rebbe goes on to say that one's relationship with the sinner as a whole should be guided by love. By arousing one's compassion for him, one restricts one's own hatred so that it is directed solely at the evil within the sinner, not at the person himself.

וגם לעורר רחמים בלבו עליה, כי היא בבחינת גלות בתוך הרע מסטרא אחרא הגובר עליה ברשעים

One must also arouse compassion on [the divine soul of the sinner], for in the case of the wicked it is in exile within the evil of the *sitra achra* which dominates it.

והרחמנות מבטלת השנאה ומעוררת האהבה, כנודע ממה שכתוב: ליעקב אשר פדה את אברהם

Compassion banishes hatred and arouses love — as is known from the verse, [13](#) “Jacob, who redeemed Abraham.”

“Jacob” represents compassion, and “Abraham”, love. When “Abraham”, love, must be “redeemed”, i.e., brought out of concealment, it is “Jacob”, compassion, that accomplishes this redemption; for as said, compassion banishes hatred and arouses love.

ולא אמר דוד המלך עליו השלום: תכלית שנאה שנאתים וגוי, אלא על המינים והאפיקורסים שאין להם חלק באלקי ישראל

([14](#)As for the statement by King David, peace upon him: [15](#) “I hate them with a consummate hatred,” reserving no love for them whatsoever, this refers only to [Jewish] heretics and atheists who have no part in the G-d of Israel,

כדאיתא בגמרא, ריש פרק ט"ז דשבת

as stated in the *Talmud*, beginning of ch. 16 of Tractate *Shabbat*.)

Any sinner who is not, however, a heretic, must not be hated with “a consummate hatred,” for the *mitzvah* of *ahavat Yisrael* embraces him as well.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Vayikra* 19:18. [2.](#)

Note the discrepancy: In speaking of the souls of Israel in general, the Alter Rebbe first writes, "Who can know '[can distinguish]' their greatness and excellence?", implying that there are in fact differences between one soul and another; here he writes, "They actually are all equal."

The explanation: As discussed in chapter 2, the original source of all souls is the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah* in the World of *Atzilut*. On this level, all the souls are indeed one entity. This is indicated in the words, "They all have one *father*" - "father" (*Abba*) being the kabbalistic term for *Chochmah*. From this source, the souls progress downward through the various *Sefirot* and Worlds. It is this descent that creates differences between souls; one soul is more strongly affected by the descent, and another less so. The first stage in this descent is the *Sefirah* of *Binah* in the World of *Atzilut*; thus, it is at the level of *Binah* that the differences between souls first appear. This is alluded to in the words, "Who can know their greatness and excellence in their source and root - *the living G-d*?"; in kabbalistic terminology, "the living G-d" is a reference to the level of *Binah* in the World of *Atzilut*. Speaking of the souls at this level, the Alter Rebbe therefore says that feeling superior to one's fellow is unjustified, because "who can know their greatness and excellence...?" There are indeed differences between souls - but who knows them? When speaking of the souls having "one father," however, he writes that "they are all *equal*."

[3.](#) From a note by the Rebbe. (The two alternative meanings of "brothers" appear in the commentary of *Rashi* on *Bereishit* 13:8.) [4.](#) *Shabbat* 31a. [5.](#) Ch. 41. [6.](#) Cf. *Zohar* I, 216b. [7.](#) Liturgy, final blessing in the *Amidah*. [8.](#) Cf. *Pesachim* 113b. [9.](#)

From a note by the Rebbe. Apparently, the Rebbe is addressing the difficulty inherent in the requirement to hate a pious and scholarly Jew who lapses on occasion, but to love one who is far removed from study and observance of the Torah.

The reason for this differentiation cannot be, says the Rebbe, that one might learn from the lapses of the pious Jew, who is on a level similar to one's own, but is less likely to learn from the behavior of the non-observant Jew, who in any case lives differently in general.

The Rebbe rejects this on several grounds: (1) If the requirement to hate the sinner were based in the fear that one might come to learn from him, then this hatred should be directed at a sinner who is in contact with oneself at any level, not necessarily one's peer in Torah observance or scholarship. (2) To avoid imitation of the sinner, it would be enough to keep one's distance from him; why the need to hate him? (3) The whole concept that someone is to be hated, not because of something hateful about him, but to protect the hater, is most difficult to accept. *Chassidut* requires one to actually suffer harm himself if failure to do so might lead to the remote possibility of his harming his fellow. Such a doctrine would certainly not countenance the suggestion of *definitely* harming one's fellow (by hating him) in order to forestall *possible* harm to oneself; and,

at that, to forestall a harm that could befall one only if he failed to resist his own evil inclination!

Clearly, then, the requirement to hate the sinner is not intended to solve one's own problem of learning from his sinful ways. This problem is in any event solved by the exhortation of the *Mishnah*, "Do not consort with a *rasha*" Avot 1:7. The Alter Rebbe's differentiation between one's peer in Torah and *Mitzvot* and others is thus grounded in the reason given in the text.

[10.](#) *Vayikra* 19:17. [11.](#) *Shevuot* 30a. [12.](#) *Avot* 1:12. [13.](#) *Yeshayahu* 29:22. [14.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [15.](#) *Tehillim* 139:22.



## Chapter 33

In ch. 31, the Alter Rebbe discussed various means of arousing joy to counteract the sadness brought on by contemplation of one's spiritual failings. Ch. 33 resumes this discussion.

עוד זאת תהיה שמחת הנפש האמיתית, ובפרט כשרואה בנפשו בעתים מזומנים שצריך לזככה ולהאירה  
בשמחת לבב

Yet another means of leading one's soul to true joy, especially at those specific times when one finds it necessary to purify his soul and illuminate it with a gladness of heart:

אזי יעמיק מחשבתו ויצויר בשכלו ובינתו ענין יחודו יתברך האמיתי

Let him then think deeply and picture in his intellect and understanding the subject of G-d's true unity.

True unity means not only that there is but one G-d, one Creator, but that furthermore, G-d is the only existing being — nothing truly exists outside of Him, as will be explained further.

איך הוא ממלא כל עלמין עליונים ותחתונים

Let him consider how He permeates all worlds, both upper and lower.

Just as the soul pervades the body, thereby animating it, so does G-d permeate all the worlds. This indwelling refers to the divine life-force which adapts itself to each individual creation's capacity to receive it, and for this reason the Alter Rebbe



distinguishes here between the “upper worlds” and “lower worlds”: in the “upper (more spiritual) worlds” the revelation of this life-force is greater, since their capacity is greater.

ואפילו מלא כל הארץ הלזו הוא כבודו יתברך

Let him further consider how even this world is filled with His glory —

This refers to the divine life-force which “encompasses” all worlds, and which animates them as if “from above,” without adapting itself to the particular nature of each created being, so that even this physical world is “filled with His glory”<sup>1</sup> —

וכולא קמיה כלא חשיב ממש

and how everything is of no reality whatever in His presence.

והוא לבדו הוא בעליונים ותחתונים ממש כמו שהיה לבדו קודם ששת ימי בראשית, וגם במקום הזה שנברא בו עולם הזה, השמים והארץ וכל צבאם, היה הוא לבדו ממלא המקום הזה

He is One alone in the upper and lower realms, just as He was alone prior to the six days of Creation, when nothing existed apart from G-d; so too now, when all the worlds have come into being, He is still One alone since all of creation is naught before Him, as will be explained further. Even in the very place where this world — the heaven, the earth and all their host — was created, He alone then filled this space.

וגם עתה כן הוא לבדו בלי שום שינוי כלל, מפני שכל הנבראים בטלים אצלו במציאות ממש

The same is true now; He is One alone, without any change whatever. For in relation to Him, the very existence of all created beings is utterly nullified — so that from His perspective, as it were, everything remains just as it was prior to creation.

The Alter Rebbe here introduces an analogy which traces the early evolution of an idea or a desire from the moment that it first occurs in one’s mind and heart. At that stage the idea or desire is formless, not yet having the shape or form of words. It is pure desire, pure idea. The desire of an English-speaking person, for example, feels no different from that of a Hebrew speaker.

It is only when it reaches the stage of applied, or practical thought, that the idea or desire takes on the form of what are called “letters of thought,” which may later be expressed in speech.

Now, the “letters” of thought and speech are, of course, seminally contained in the original idea or desire — it is only that at that point their existence is completely nullified; it is as though these “letters” were non-existent; only the idea or desire is felt.

Stated in the terms which the Alter Rebbe employs, the idea and desire are described as part of the “ten soul-powers,” of which three (*ChaBaD*) belong to the intellect, and seven

(the *middot*) comprise one's emotional range. These ten faculties are the "source and root" of thought and speech, for one thinks and speaks of that which he understands or feels. These faculties are called the "substance and essence of the soul," in comparison with thought and speech which are merely the soul's "garments," i.e., its modes of external expression.

To relate the analogy to the point under discussion: Every created being derives its existence and life from Divine "speech", i.e., the "letters" of G-d's command that created it. Since nothing is "outside" G-d, this creative "speech" and the beings created thereby are contained within G-d, in the same way as the words one speaks were previously contained within the desire of the heart. All of creation is therefore nullified before G-d, just as the "letters" of speech are nullified within the idea or desire which is their source, where only the desire is felt, not the "letters."

In the Alter Rebbe's words:

כביטול אותיות הדבור והמחשבה במקורן ושרשן, הוא מהות הנפש ועצמותה, שהן עשר בחינותיה, חכמה בינה ודעת וכו' (שם)

[All created beings are nullified before G-d] just as the letters of speech and thought are nullified within their source and root, i.e., the soul's substance and essence, meaning its ten faculties — *Chochmah, Binah, Daat...* and the *middot*,

שאין בהם בחינת אותיות עדיין קודם שמתלבשות בלבוש המחשבה (כמו שנתבאר בפרק כ' וכא באריכות, עיין שם) (שם)

in which there are no letters as yet, prior to their being clothed in the garment of thought (as has been explained at length in chs. 20 and 21).

וכמו שכתוב גם כן במקום אחר משל גשמי לזה, מענין ביטול זיו ואור השמש במקורו, הוא גוף כדור השמש שברקיע (שם)

Elsewhere, this idea is further illustrated by an analogy from a physical phenomenon — the nullification of the sun's radiance and light within its source, the celestial orb of the sun.

שגם שם מאיר ומתפשט ודאי זיו ואורו, וביתר שאת מהתפשטותו והארתו בחלל העולם, אלא ששם הוא בטל במציאות במקורו, וכאילו אינו במציאות כלל (שם)

For surely its radiance and light glow and spread forth there too; more strongly, in fact, than they spread forth and glow in the space of the universe. Being close to its source, the light is more intense. But there — within the sun — its very existence is nullified within that of its source; it is as though [the light] were absolutely non-existent. All that is seen within the sun is the sun itself, not the light which is merely a product, an offshoot of the sun.

This will be better understood in terms of the saying,<sup>2</sup> “Of what good is a candle in the daylight” Naturally, the candle is no less luminous by day than by night. But because its light is overwhelmed by the far greater brightness of daylight, it no longer fulfills its function of illumination. At this point it *ceases to exist* as a luminary. The same is true of the sun’s rays as they are within the sun.

וככה ממש דרך משל הוא ביטול העולם ומלואו במציאות לגבי מקורו, שהוא אור אין סוף ברוך הוא, וכמו שכתוב שם באריכות

Exactly so, figuratively speaking, is the very existence of the world and everything in it nullified in relation to its source, which is the light of *Ein Sof*, as is explained there at length.

This, then, is the true meaning of G-d’s unity — that He alone exists, and there is nothing besides Him.

והנה כשיעמיק בזה הרבה, ישמח לבו ותגל נפשו אף גילת ורגן בכל לב ונפש ומאד באמונה זו

Now when one contemplates deeply and at length on this matter of G-d’s true unity, his heart will rejoice with this faith;<sup>3</sup> his soul will be gladdened by it to the point of rejoicing and singing with all his heart, soul and might.

כי רבה היא, כי היא קרבת אלקים ממש

For this faith is tremendous — when it fills one’s mind it actually constitutes [an experience of] the closeness of G-d.

וזה כל האדם ותכלית בריאתו ובריאת כל העולמות עליונים ותחתונים

This in fact is the whole [purpose] of man, and the purpose for which he, and all the worlds, both upper and lower, were created:

להיות לו דירה זו בתחתונים, כמו שכתוב לקמן באריכות

that G-d should have such a dwelling-place here below, as will be explained further at length<sup>4</sup> — how this earthly abode for G-d is the purpose of all creation.

Man’s faith in the unity of G-d fulfills this goal. For when G-d’s unity is revealed in the mind and heart of men, this world becomes an abode for G-d; He is revealed there just as one reveals himself completely in his own home.

והנה כמה גדולה שמחת הדיוט ושפל אנשים בהתקרבותו למלך בשר ודם המתאכסן ודר אתו עמו בביתו

How great is the joy of a common and lowly person when he is brought close to a king of flesh and blood who furthermore lodges and greater still dwells together with him — not in the king’s palace, but in his (the commoner’s) home.

וקל וחומר לאין קץ, לקרבת ודירת מלך מלכי המלכים, הקדוש ברוך הוא

How much more, infinitely more, [ought one to rejoice] in the nearness of the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, and in His dwelling together with man in this physical world, man's "home."

וכדכתיב: כי מי הוא זה אשר ערב לבו לגשת אלי, נאם ה'

So it is written:<sup>5</sup> "For who is the man who dares to approach me?" says G-d."

Yet in one's awareness of G-d's unity and through self-nullification before Him, one does come near to G-d. Furthermore, G-d thereby dwells with him and within him.

ועל זה תיקנו ליתן שבח והודיה לשמו יתברך בכל בקר, ולומר

For this ability to experience and to be absorbed in G-d's unity, it was instituted [by the Sages] that one should render praise and thanks to G-d's Name each morning, saying:

אשרינו מה טוב חלקנו וכו' ומה יפה ירושתנו

"How fortunate are we! How good is our portion, [how pleasant our lot,] and how beautiful our heritage!"

כלומר: כמו שהאדם שש ושמה בירושה שנפלה לו, הון עתק שלא עמל בו

In other words, just as a person rejoices and is glad when an immense fortune falls into his possession — by inheritance, through no toil of his own,

כן ויותר מכן לאין קץ יש לנו לשמוח על ירושתנו שהנחילונו אבותינו

similarly, and infinitely more so, ought we to rejoice over the inheritance which our forefathers bequeathed to us.

הוא יחוד ה' האמיתי, אשר אפילו בארץ מתחת אין עוד מלבדו, וזו היא דירתו בתחתונים

This [inheritance] is the true unity of G-d — that even here below on earth there is nothing else besides Him alone, and this is His abode amongst the lowly beings of this physical world — when they are pervaded by the awareness of G-d's unity and nullify themselves before it.

Our own unaided efforts would never win for us the ability to experience G-d's unity; it is our inheritance from our forefathers.

וזהו שאמרו רז"ל: תרי"ג מצות ניתנו לישראל, בא חבוקק והעמידן על אחת, שנאמר: וצדיק באמונתו יחיה

This is [the meaning of] what our Rabbis, of blessed memory, said:<sup>6</sup> “Six hundred and thirteen *mitzvot* were given to Israel;... came Habakkuk and based them all on a single one - faith as it is written:<sup>7</sup> 'a *tzaddik* lives by his faith.”

כלומר: כאלו אינם רק מצוה אחת, היא האמונה לבדה, כי על ידי האמונה לבדה יבא לקיום כל התרי"ג מצות

This means, it is as if they — all the *mitzvot* — consisted of this one *mitzvah* of faith alone, for through faith alone one will come to fulfill all the 613 *mitzvot*.

דהיינו, כשיהיה לבו שש ושמה באמונתו ביחוד ה' בתכלית השמחה, כאילו לא היתה עליו רק מצוה זו לבדה, והיא לבדה תכלית בריאתו ובריאת כל העולמות

That is, when his heart will rejoice and be glad with his faith in G-d's unity, in perfect joy, as though he were obligated by just this one *mitzvah*, and it alone were the purpose for which he and all the worlds were created — surely, if there were but one such *mitzvah for him to do, he would fulfill it with utmost joy.*

הרי בכח וחיות נפשו בשמחה רבה זו תתעלה נפשו למעלה מעלה “על כל המונעים קיום כל התריג מצות, מבית ומחוץ

Let him thus rejoice in the *mitzvah* of faith, and by the power and vitality of his soul [generated] from this great joy, his soul will soar far above all obstacles hindering his fulfillment of all the 613 *mitzvot*; both [obstacles] from within — from one's animal soul, and from without — arising from one's environment.

Being thus imbued with the awareness of G-d's true unity, he will be able to overcome any obstacle hindering him from carrying out the *mitzvot*. For how can anything stand in the path of G-d's Will — the *mitzvot*, when there is nothing in the world apart from G-d

וזהו שאמר: באמונתו יחיה, יחיה דייקא, כתחיית המתים דרך משל, כך תחיה נפשו בשמחה רבה זו

Thus, the expression יחיה (“will live”) in the verse “a *tzaddik* will live by his faith” is meant in the sense of “will be revived”; as though resurrected from the dead, so will his soul be revived by this great joy.

והיא שמחה כפולה ומכופלת, כי מלבד שמחת הנפש המשכלת בקרבת ה', ודירתו אתו עמו

This is a double and redoubled joy. Apart from the soul's joy upon apprehending how near G-d is to him, and how He dwells together with him,

עוד זאת ישמה בכפליים בשמחת ה' וגודל נחת רוח לפניו יתברך באמונה זו

he will also rejoice doubly in the joy and pleasure which his faith brings to G-d.

דאתכפיא סטרא אחרא ממש, ואתהפך חשוכא לנהורא

For thereby, through one's faith in G-d's unity, the *sitra achra* is truly subdued, and darkness is transformed to light —

שהוא חשך הקליפות שבעולם הזה החומרי, המחשיכים ומכסים על אורו יתברך

meaning the darkness of the *kelipot* of this corporeal world — which obscure and conceal G-d's light

עד עת קץ, כמו שכתוב: קץ שם לחשך

until the End of Days, as it is written,<sup>8</sup> “He sets an end to darkness.”

דהיינו קץ הימין, שיעביר רוח הטומאה מן הארץ, ונגלה כבוד ה', וראו כל בשר יחדיו, וכמו שכתוב לקמן

(The Biblical phrase, “the End of Days,” is written קץ הימין ; ; since ימין (Aram.) means “days” and ימין (Heb.) means “right”, the phrase thus intimates that “in the End of Days G-d will reveal His right hand” — a reference to His attribute of revelation, when He will banish the spirit of impurity from the earth, and<sup>9</sup> “G-d's glory, the G-dliness within every created being, will be revealed, and all flesh together will behold [it].” That is to say, not only the mind, but even the very flesh of man will perceive G-dliness, as will be explained further.<sup>10</sup>)

This banishment of the *sitra achra* will take place only at “the End of Days,” during the Messianic era. Until then, however, while the darkness of *kelipah* still reigns over the earth, one affords G-d gratification by crushing the *sitra achra* and transforming its darkness into light, by means of his faith. And man's realization of this fact intensifies his own joy in his faith.

ובפרט בחוץ לארץ, שאויר ארץ העמים טמא, ומלא קליפות וסטרא אחרא

This is especially so in the diaspora, where the atmosphere is unclean and is filled with *kelipot* and *sitra achra*.

ואין שמחה לפניו יתברך כאורה ושמחה ביתרון האור הבא מן החשך דייקא

There is no greater joy for G-d than the light and joy caused by transforming darkness into light, when the light has the superior quality acquired by coming out of the very darkness.

Thus, when a Jew in the diaspora is pervaded with an awareness of G-d's unity, His joy is all the greater. It follows too that the more lowly is one's spiritual position, the greater the Divine joy when he acquires an awareness of G-d's unity.

We have seen so far, then, that one's faith in G-d's unity leads him to a twofold joy: joy in his closeness to G-d, and joy in the knowledge that his faith brings joy to G-d.

וזהו שכתוב: ישמח ישראל בעשיו

This is the meaning of the verse,<sup>11</sup> “Let Israel rejoice in its Maker” (note the expression: “Maker”, not “Creator” or the like):

פירוש: שכל מי שהוא מזרע ישראל יש לו לשמוח בשמחת ה' אשר שש ושמה בדירתו בתחתונים, שהם בחינת עשיה גשמיית ממש

Whoever is of the seed of Israel ought to rejoice in the joy of G-d, Who is happy and joyous with His abode amongst the creatures of the lower spheres, who are on the level of actual physical *Asiyah*.

The word translated “in its Maker” (בעשיו) shares a common root with עשיה, the lowest level of creation. With this abode in particular ought Israel rejoice, knowing that G-d’s joy is especially great when the creations in *Asiyah*, the very lowest world, become an abode for Him.

וזה שכתוב: בעשיו, לשון רבים

For this reason the plural form — בעשיו — is used.

The literal meaning of the verse is: “Let Israel rejoice in its *Makers*.” Why the use of a plural expression in reference to G-d

The Alter Rebbe explains that since G-d is spoken of here as the “Maker” of the world of *Asiyah*, the domain of *kelipot* whose nature is arrogance and therefore separation and self-centeredness, the Divine creative power is referred to in the plural — for it is fragmented, so to speak. There is a multitude of created beings, each separate from the other, each animated by the Divine creative power; hence, a plurality of “Makers”, so to speak.

But this fault becomes a cause for still greater Divine joy, when these separate beings at the level of *Asiyah* unite in G-d’s unity. This unification of creation is another achievement of man’s faith in G-d’s unity, for this faith subdues the *sitra achra* which causes disunity.

As stated above, it is the earlier darkness which enhances the light that replaces it. Thus, the greater the darkness, the more superior the subsequent light.

In the Alter Rebbe’s words:

שהוא עולם הזה הגשמי, המלא קליפות וסטרא אחרא, שנקרא רשות הרבים וטורי דפרודא

This plural expression — “Makers” — refers to our physical world that is filled with *kelipot* and *sitra achra*, which are called “a public domain,” i.e., a domain of multiplicity, and “mountains of separation,” in that they are arrogant and separate from one another.

ואתהפכן לנהורא, ונעשים רשות היחיד ליחודו יתברך, באמונה זו

G-d's joy in the fusion of this plurality is aroused when through this faith in G-d's unity they (the *kelipot*) are transformed into light, and they become a “private domain”— i.e., a unified realm — for G-d's unity.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) This interpretation follows *Kitzur Tanya* by Rabbi M.M. Schneerson of Lubavitch (author of *Tzemach Tzedek*). [2.](#) *Chullin* 60b; cf. *Zohar* I, 20a. [3.](#) The Alter Rebbe introduced the subject of G-d's unity as an idea that can and should be apprehended intellectually (“Let him think deeply... in his intellect and understanding... G-d's true unity...”). Yet here he refers to it as an article of faith. Commenting on this inconsistency, the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of righteous memory, proposes several suggestions: (1) The analogies of speech or of sunlight are valid only after one accepts, as a matter of faith, the verse, “By the *word* of G-d the heavens were made.” (2) Furthermore, although the Alter Rebbe provides here the means of understanding the concept intellectually, in fact recognition of G-d as the only existing being is a matter of implicit, inherent faith in every Jew, as the Alter Rebbe points out further (e.g., mid. ch. 42). (3) It may also be suggested that the matter of G-d's unity indeed transcends intellect, and thus belongs to the realm of faith. One cannot actually understand *how* G-d is a unity, and unique. The intellectual approach provided, serves only to lead one to a rational conclusion that he is indeed a unity, and unique. [4.](#) Ch. 36. [5.](#) Cf. *Yirmeyahu* 30:21. [6.](#) *Makkot* 24a. [7.](#) *Chavakuk* 2:4. [8.](#) *Iyov* 28:3. [9.](#) *Yeshayahu* 40:5. [10.](#) End of ch. 36. [11.](#) *Tehillim* 149:2.



## Chapter 34

והנה מודעת זאת שהאבות הן הן המרכבה

It is known that “the Patriarchs constitute the Divine Chariot.”[1](#)

שכל ימיהם לעולם לא הפסיקו אפילו שעה אחת מלקשר דעתם ונשמתם לרבון העולמים

Throughout their lives, they did not cease even momentarily from binding their mind and soul to the Master of the universe,

בביטול הנ"ל ליחודו יתברך

with the aforementioned absolute surrender to His unity.



I.e., their constant awareness of G-d's unity led them to be continuously in a state of self-nullification before G-d; and, as explained more fully in ch. 23, this self-nullification is what is meant by the term "chariot", a vehicle submissive to the will of its pilot.

ואחריהם כל הנביאים, כל אחד לפי מדרגת נשמתו והשגתו

After them came all the prophets who similarly nullified themselves before G-d's unity in varying degrees, each according to the level of his soul and his understanding.

ומדרגת משה רבנו עליו השלום היא העולה על כולנה, שאמרו עליו: שכינה מדברת מתוך גרונו של משה

The rank of our teacher Moses, peace be upon him, surpassed them all; of him our Sages said:<sup>2</sup> "The *Shechinah* (the Divine Presence) spoke out of Moses' throat."

His was such a total surrender to G-dliness, that the very words he uttered were Divine speech; the relation of Moses' throat to Divine speech was that of one's throat to his own speech.

ומעין זה זכו ישראל במעמד הר סיני

At Mount Sinai, Israel were privileged to experience a glimmer of this level of self-nullification.

רק שלא יכלו לסבול, כמאמר רז"ל: שעל כל דיבור פרהה נשמתן כו', שהוא ענין ביטול במציאות הנ"ל

But they could not endure it; as our Sages have said,<sup>3</sup> "At every Divine utterance their souls took flight," and G-d resurrected them each time. This flight of their soul actually represents the self-nullification spoken of previously.<sup>4</sup>

לכן מיד אמר להם לעשות לו משכן ובו קדשי הקדשים להשראת שכינתו, שהוא גילוי יחודו יתברך, כמו שכתוב לקמן

Therefore, because they were unable to live with this feeling of self-surrender before G-d, He commanded them immediately to erect for Him a Sanctuary, in which would be the Holy of Holies, wherein His presence would dwell; i.e., there His unity would be revealed, as will be explained further.<sup>5</sup>

The Alter Rebbe points out below that when one specific place is singled out as an abode for G-d's presence, despite the fact that "his glory fills the *entire* earth," the uniqueness of this site lies in the *revelation* of G-dliness which occurs there. In contrast to the rest of the world, where G-d's unity as the sole existing being stands concealed, in "the abode of G-d's presence" it is clearly apparent that "there is naught besides Him." We thus see that the revelation of G-d's unity which the Jewish people experienced at Mount Sinai, but which they could not endure, was continued by means of the Sanctuary.

ומשחרב בית המקדש אין להקב"ה בעולמו משכן ומכון לשבתו, הוא יחודו יתברך, אלא ארבע אמות של הלכה

Ever since the Temple was destroyed, “the four cubits of the *Halachah*” — i.e., Torah study — is the only sanctuary and abode which the Holy One, blessed be He, has in His world; i.e., Torah is the only abode for the revelation of His unity.

שהוא רצונו יתברך וחכמתו, המלובשים בהלכות הערוכות לפנינו

For the *halachot* set out before us are the actual embodiment of G-d’s Will and wisdom, which are one with G-d; the halachic ruling represents the Divine Will, and what underlies it is Divine wisdom. Hence in the Torah, G-d’s unity stands revealed.

ולכן אחר שיעמיק האדם מחשבתו בענין ביטול הנ”ל כפי יכולתו, זאת ישיב אל לבו

Therefore, after one meditates deeply, according to his ability, on the subject of this above-mentioned self-nullification, let him reflect in his heart as follows:

כי מהיות קטן שכלי ושרש נשמתי מהכיל להיות מרכבה ומשכן ליחודו יתברך באמת לאמיתו

“The capacity of my intelligence and of my soul’s root is too limited to constitute a chariot and an abode for G-d’s unity in perfect truth.

מאחר דלית מחשבה דילי תפיסא ומשגת בו יתברך כלל וכלל שום השגה בעולם

“For my thought cannot grasp or apprehend His unity at all with any degree of comprehension in the world;

ולא שמץ מנהו מהשגת האבות והנביאים

not an iota, in fact, of that which was grasped by the Patriarchs and Prophets, who were G-d’s chariot and abode by virtue of their awareness of G-d’s unity, as they grasped it.

אי לזאת אעשה לו משכן ומכון לשבתו, הוא העסק בתלמוד תורה כפי הפנאי שלי בקביעות עתים ביום ובלילה

“This being so, I will make Him a sanctuary and an abode by studying Torah at fixed times by day and by night, to the extent of my free time,

כדת הניתנה לכל אחד ואחד בהלכות תלמוד תורה

as stipulated by the law governing each individual’s situation, set forth in the Laws of Torah Study.

וכמאמר רז”ל: אפילו פרק אחד שחרית כו’

”As our Sages say,<sup>6</sup> ‘Even one chapter in the morning and one at night...’ suffice, for one who can manage no more, for him to be regarded as ‘engaging in Torah study day and night.’ Therefore, by fulfilling this minimal quota, I too will become an abode for G-dliness.”

ובזה ישמח לבו ויגיל, ויתן הודאה על חלקו בשמחה ובטוב לבב

Thereby, his heart shall rejoice; he shall be glad and offer joyous thanks for his fortune

על שזכה להיות אושפזיכן לגבורה פעמים בכל יום כפי העת והפנאי שלו, כמסת ידו אשר הרחיב ה' לו

in meriting to be the Almighty's "host"<sup>7</sup> through his study of Torah, which causes him to be a "sanctuary" for G-d twice each day, according to the extent of his available time, and according to the capacity which G-d has granted him.

ואם ירחיב ה' לו עוד, אזי: טהור ידיים יוסיף אומץ, ומחשבה טובה כו'

If G-d grants him a greater abundance of time for Torah study, then<sup>8</sup> "He whose hands are pure will increase his effort"; i.e., he should resolve that as more time becomes available to him, he will devote it to Torah study. Moreover,<sup>9</sup> "[G-d reckons] a good intention [as an actual deed]."

Therefore, even while his time for Torah study is limited to a small part of the day and night, he is regarded as if he had studied the entire day, since he would have devoted all this time to Torah study had it been available. By virtue of his good intention, he thus is, in a sense, an abode for G-dliness not only during the time actually spent in Torah study, but also throughout the day.<sup>10</sup>

וגם שאר היום כולו שעוסק במשא ומתן, יהיה מכון לשבתו יתברך בנתינת צדקה שיתן מיגיעו

Even during the remainder of the day, when he is engaged in business, he will be an abode for G-d by giving charity out of the proceeds of his labor.

שהיא ממדותיו של הקב"ה: מה הוא רחום וכו', וכמו שכתוב בתיקונים: חסד דרועא ימינא

Charity is one of G-d's attributes which we are enjoined to emulate, as our Sages say,<sup>11</sup> "As He is compassionate... [so must you be]"; and as it is written in *Tikkunei Zohar*,<sup>12</sup> "Kindness is the right arm of G-d," so to speak, and therefore human kindness constitutes an abode for the Divine attribute of kindness.

ואף שאינו נותן אלא חומש

Even though one distributes as charity no more than one fifth of his earnings — the maximum requirement for charity; how then is he an abode for G-dliness while he is engaged in earning the other four fifths

הרי החומש מעלה עמו כל הארבע ידות לה' להיות מכון לשבתו יתברך

Yet that fifth elevates with it all the other four parts to G-d, so that they too become an abode for Him.

כנודע מאמר רז"ל, שמצות צדקה שקולה כנגד כל הקרבנות

In a well-known statement, our Sages have declared<sup>13</sup> that the *mitzvah* of charity is equivalent to offering all the sacrifices.

ובקרבת, היה כל החי עולה לה' על ידי בהמה אחת, וכל הצומח על ידי עשרון סלת אחד בלול בשמן כו'

Now, in the case of sacrifices, all living creatures were elevated to G-d through the offering of one animal, all plants through the "meal offering" which consisted of merely "one tenth of a measure of fine meal mixed with oil," and so on.

Similarly, all of one's earnings are elevated when he gives one fifth to charity.

ומלבד זה, הרי בשעת התורה והתפלה עולה לה' כל מה שאכל ושתה ונהנה מארבע הידות לבריאות גופו, כמו שכתוב לקמן

Apart from this, as is explained below, all that one has eaten and drunk and generally enjoyed for his bodily health, from the other four fifths of his earnings, is elevated toward G-d during his Torah study and prayer.

Thus, even the time spent on earning those profits which he does not distribute in charity, also becomes an abode for G-dliness through Torah study and prayer.

\* \* \*

From the end of Ch. 30 up to this point, the Alter Rebbe discussed various forms of joy which one ought to strive to attain when saddened over his spiritual shortcomings: the joy of one's soul on its being released from exile within one's body and animal soul; the joy of being close to G-d through awareness of His unity; the joy occasioned by contemplating G-d's joy in the crushing of the *sitra achra*; and so on. The Alter Rebbe now goes on to state that all these forms of joy do not conflict with the bitter remorse and sadness that one experiences over one's spiritual failings. For, although joy and sadness are opposites, they can nonetheless coexist when each has its own, distinct cause.

והנה בכל פרטי מיני שמחות הנפש הנ"ל, אין מהן מניעה להיות נבזה בעיניו נמאס ולב נשבר ורוח נמוכה בשעת השמחה ממש

All the specific types of joy enumerated above do not preclude one from being shamed and despised in his own eyes, or from having a broken heart and a humble spirit, even at the very time of his joy.

כי היותו נבזה בעיניו וכו', הוא מצד הגוף ונפש הבהמית

For the shame and so on is prompted by [one's awareness of the lowliness of] his body and animal soul,

והיותו בשמחה הוא מצד נפש האלקית וניצוץ אלקות המלוכש בה להחיותה, כנ"ל בפרק ל"א

while his joy is felt on account of his divine soul, and the animating spark of G-dliness clothed within it, as mentioned above (in ch. 31).

וכהאי גוונא איתא בזהר: בכיה תקיעא בלבאי מסטרא דא, וחדוה תקיעא בלבאי מסטרא דא

We find a similar statement in the *Zohar*:[14](#) “Weeping is lodged in one side of my heart, and joy is lodged in the other.”

Rabbi Elazar exclaimed these words upon hearing from his father, Rabbi Shimon, an esoteric exposition on the destruction of the Temple. On the one hand, he now felt even more keenly the enormity of the tragedy; on the other hand he was filled with joy over the secrets of Torah being revealed to him.

We thus see from the *Zohar* that two opposite emotions, stemming from separate causes, can exist in one's heart side by side.

FOOTNOTES [1](#). See above, ch. 23. [2](#). Cf. *Zohar* III, 232a; commentary of Rabbi David Luria on *Shemot Rabbah*, end of ch. 3. [3](#). *Shabbat* 88b. [4](#). See also below, end of ch. 36. [5](#). Ch. 53. [6](#). *Menachot* 99b. [7](#). *Yoma* 12a. [8](#). *Iyov* 17:9. [9](#). *Kiddushin* 40a. [10](#).

This interpretation is based on a talk delivered by the Rebbe on Purim 5723 (1963). The Rebbe added that this interpretation sheds light on an unusual technical point in this chapter. In the original text, one finds a paragraph marking, (relatively infrequent in the Tanya, and indicative of a new train of thought), appearing just before the words ("If G-d grants him..."). It would seem, however, that these words merely continue the point made earlier: one ought to rejoice in the knowledge that he becomes a sanctuary for G-dliness during the time he devotes each day to Torah study, and should resolve to increase that time if the opportunity arises. Why the break between the two sentences?

In light of the above, that one's resolve to increase the extent of his Torah study as the time becomes available, confers upon him the status of "sanctuary" for all the time he \*would\* devote to Torah study (which means in fact the entire day), this may be explained as follows:

After discussing how one can become a sanctuary for G-dliness in the time he allocates for Torah study, the Alter Rebbe goes on to say that one can be a sanctuary for G-d \*the entire day\* -by giving charity from his earnings. Since the effect of one's resolve to increase his study of Torah is akin to the effect of charity, the Alter Rebbe inserts the paragraph marking before this section, indicating that it is more closely related to the subject which follows it - charity, than to the one that precedes it -actual Torah study during fixed times of the day.

[11](#). *Shabbat* 133b. [12](#). Introduction, 17a. [13](#). *Sukkah* 49b. [14](#). II, 255a; III, 75a.

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## Chapter 35

Before beginning ch. 35, it will be worthwhile to note once again that the *Tanya* is based on the verse, “For the matter (of observing Torah and *mitzvot*) is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.”

This verse asserts that the Torah is easily fulfilled through all of man’s three forms of expression (also called the “garments of the soul”): thought (“in your heart”), speech (“in your mouth”) and action (“that you may do it”). In a deeper sense, the phrase “in your heart” refers also to the emotions of love and fear of G-d; they, too, are “very near to you,” i.e., easily attainable.

Concerning this latter statement, the Alter Rebbe points out (in ch. 17) that this claim appears contrary to our experience; in fact, it is by no means an easy matter for us to acquire the love and fear of G-d.

In answer, he explains that the phrase “that you may do it” qualifies and describes the emotions intended in the words “in your heart,” thus: What sort of love and fear of G-d is “very near to you... in your heart?” — The love and fear which serve to motivate one’s practical observance of the *mitzvot* (even though such love and fear are not experienced in the heart as fiery spiritual emotions). Intellectual contemplation of G-d’s greatness will lead one to an intellectual appreciation (“love”) of G-d, and an awe (“fear”) of Him, which will in turn affect the heart (since, by nature, the mind rules the heart). The heart will then be motivated and will resolve to observe all the *mitzvot* in the spirit of this “love” or “fear”.

The Alter Rebbe then went on to say that even he who is not suited to such intellectual contemplation may also attain a love and fear of G-d by revealing the natural love hidden in the heart of every Jew. This love also contains an element of fear, the fear of separation from G-dliness. Thus, it is indeed “very near” and easy to serve G-d “in one’s heart,” i.e., out of both the love and fear of G-d.

Yet, from the wording of the verse (“It is very near to you... in your mouth, and... heart, *that you may do it*”) it is evident that however necessary the love and fear of G-d may be, the actual, practical observance of the *mitzvot* is paramount. In the following chapters the Alter Rebbe explains the superiority of the practical aspect of *mitzvot* over this seemingly more “spiritual” aspect.

It is also important to bear in mind the Alter Rebbe’s definition of the rank of *Beinoni*: The *Beinoni* is he who is not guilty of any sin, whether in action, in speech, or even in thought.

The inner evil of his animal soul, however, retains its native strength, and is capable of arousing forbidden desires in his heart; only by constant vigilance does the *Beinoni* prevent these desires from finding expression in his actions, words and (conscious) thoughts.

והנה, לתוספת ביאור תיבת לעשותו

Let us elucidate still further the term “that you may do it,” in the verse, “For the matter is very near to you in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it,” where, as mentioned, the climax of the verse is its emphasis on action.

וגם להבין מעט מזעיר תכלית בריאת הבינונים

Let us also understand [at least] in a very small measure, the purpose in creating *Beinonim* — to be, and remain forever on the level of *Beinonim*; for as explained in ch. 14, the souls of the *Beinonim* are usually incapable of rising to the level of *tzaddik* through their own will and effort: they were *created* to be *Beinonim*;

וירידת נשמותיהם לעולם הזה, להתלבש בנפש הבהמית שמהקליפה וסטרא אחרא

also, [the purpose of] their souls’ descent to this world, being clothed within an animal soul deriving from the *kelipah* and *sitra achra*, the very antithesis of the (divine) soul.

מאחר שלא יוכלו לשלחה כל ימיהם, ולדחותה ממקומה מחלל השמאלי שבלב

Since they will not be able to banish [the animal soul] throughout their lives, nor [even] dislodge it from its place in the left part of the heart,

שלא יעלו ממנה הרהורים אל המוח

so that no [evil] imaginings rise from it to the brain,

כי מהותה ועצמותה של נפש הבהמית שמהקליפה היא בתקפה ובגבורתה אצלם כתולדתה

inasmuch as in the *Beinonim*, the essence of the animal soul derived from the *kelipah* remains in its full strength and potency as at birth,

רק שלבושיה אינם מתלבשים בגופם כנ"ל

except that its “garments”, i.e., its forms of expression as evil thought, speech and action, do not clothe themselves in their body, as mentioned above — in ch. 12, where the Alter Rebbe explains that by means of constant battle with his animal soul, the *Beinoni* prevents the budding evil of this soul from expressing itself in his thought, speech and action.

However, since the *Beinoni* succeeds only in suppressing the “garments” of the animal soul, but can never, despite all his efforts, effect any change in the essential, evil nature of the animal soul itself, the question arises:

ואם כן, למה זה ירדו נשמותיהם לעולם הזה ליגע לריק, חס ושלום, להלחם כל ימיהם עם היצר, ולא יכלו לו

Why then did their souls descend to this world, to strive in vain, G-d forbid; waging war all their lives against their evil inclination, yet never being able to vanquish it?

It was explained in the previous chapter that the ongoing battle waged by the *Beinoni* in preventing his evil inclination from asserting itself in thought, speech and action causes prodigious pleasure Above. How then can we complain that the battle is in vain? Yet, were this divine pleasure the sole object of the battle, there would be no reason for having the divine soul clothed *within* the animal soul; on the contrary, the two souls ought then be separate and distinct from each other, so that whenever the divine soul emerges victorious from a particular struggle (against the desire of the animal soul to act or speak evilly), it would then act alone, without the participation of the animal soul. Since the divine soul *is* clothed within the animal soul, the objective obviously lies in perfecting the animal soul itself. From this perspective, the battle of the *Beinoni* does indeed seem futile, since all his efforts have no effect on the evil nature of the animal soul.

ותהי זאת נחמתם לנחמם בכפליים לתושיה, ולשמח לבם בה' השוכן אתם בתוך תורתם ועבודתם

Let this forthcoming explanation be their solace, to comfort them in a double measure of aid, and to gladden their hearts in G-d Who dwells amongst them in their Torah and [divine] service. I.e., the explanation will show them how to find comfort and joy in the G-dly light that abides within them when they study the Torah and when they engage in the service of G-d.

והוא בהקדים לשון הינוקא בזהר פרשת בלק על פסוק: החכם עיניו בראשו

[The above-mentioned difficulties will be resolved] by clarifying first the comment of the *Yenuka* (quoted in the *Zohar, Parshat Balak*<sup>1</sup>) on the verse:<sup>2</sup> “The wise man’s eyes are in his head.”

וכי באן אתר עינוי דבר נש כו', אלא קרא הכי הוא ודאי

The *Zohar* comments: “Where else are a man’s eyes?... Surely, then, the meaning of the verse is as follows:

דתנן: לא יהך בר נש בגילויא דרישא ארבע אמות. מאי טעמא, דשכינתא שריא על רישיה

We have learned that a man must not go four cubits while bareheaded. Why? Because the *Shechinah* (the Divine Presence) rests upon his head.

וכל חכם עינוהי ומילוי ברישיה אינון, בההוא דשריא וקיימא על רישיה



[Therefore,] every wise man has his eyes i.e., his interest and concern and hence also his speech [concentrated] "in his head," i.e., in that light of the *Shechinah* which rests and abides above his head.

וכד עינוי תמן, לנדע דההוא נהורא דאדליק על רישיה אצטריך למשחא

Now, when his "eyes" i.e. his interest and his concern are there, he must know that this light kindled above his head i.e., the light that shines upon his soul requires oil.

בגין דגופא דבר נש איהו פתילה, ונהורא אדליק לעילא

For man's body is the wick that retains the luminous flame and the light is kindled above it;

ושלמה מלכא צוח ואמר: ושמן על ראשך אל יחסר

and [thus] King Solomon cried out, saying,<sup>3</sup> "Let there be no lack of oil above your head."

דהא נהורא דבראשו אצטריך למשחא, ואינון עובדאן טבאן

For the light over his head requires oil, meaning good deeds — the good deeds that man performs are the oil which supplies the light illuminating his soul,

ועל דא החכם עינוי בראשו

and for this reason "The wise man's eyes are in his head." — to ensure that he never lacks oil (good deeds) for this light.

עד כאן לשונו

The quotation from the *Zohar* ends here.

והנה ביאור משל זה שהמשיל אור השכינה לאור הנר

The meaning of this analogy comparing the light of the *Shechinah* to the light of a candle, "is clear... to every intelligent person," as the Alter Rebbe will conclude shortly, after a closer examination of its details. Just as it is true of the candle's flame

שאינו מאיר ונאחז בפתילה בלי שמן

that it does not shed light nor is it retained by the wick, without oil,

By nature, fire strains upward; it will not remain below unless restrained by a wick or wood, for example. But a wick alone is rapidly consumed, and the fire vanishes quickly. Moreover, the burning wick produces a dim and smoky light, for it consists of material

insufficiently refined to be completely absorbed by the flame. Oil, on the other hand, is completely transformed into the flame and absorbed by it; burning steadily, it produced a pure and clear light.

This is what is meant by the Alter Rebbe's statement that without oil "the flame of the candle (a) does not shed light, (b) nor is it retained by the wick."

Returning now to the point of the analogy:

וכך אין השכינה שורה על גוף האדם שנמשל לפתילה, אלא על ידי מעשים טובים דווקא

similarly, the *Shechinah* does not rest upon man's body, which is compared to a wick, except through man's performing good deeds.

The body can only act as a wick, not as oil. It is a coarse physical being which will not be absorbed within the light of the *Shechinah*, but will always remain separate from it. The good deeds that man performs provide the oil.

ו-לא די לו בנשמתו, שהיא חלק אלוה ממעל, להיות היא כשמן לפתילה

It is evident from the *Zohar*, however, that one's soul, although a part of G-d above, is insufficient to serve as oil for the wick.

A question is implied here. Why should the soul, itself divine, and thus certainly suited to being absorbed within the light of the *Shechinah*, require anything external (such as good deeds) to serve as oil for that light? Surely the soul itself should constitute the oil!

מבואר ומובן לכל משכיל

But the reason for this — the Alter Rebbe now concludes the sentence begun earlier with the words "The meaning of this analogy" — is clear and understandable to every intelligent person.

The Alter Rebbe will now proceed to explain why good deeds can serve as oil for the light of the *Shechinah*, whereas the divine soul cannot. The explanation in brief:

Man's soul is not, after all, completely nullified before G-d and one with Him to the extent that it is capable of becoming absorbed within the G-dly light. This is true even of the soul of the *tzaddik*, who serves G-d with the loftiest forms of love and fear. Indeed, it is the soul's very love of G-d that emphasizes its separateness; for love entails two separate entities, the lover and the beloved. Similarly with fear: there is one who fears, and another who is feared.

Only "good deeds" — *mitzvot*, which (as the Alter Rebbe will explain further on) are completely one with G-d — can therefore serve as the oil which is absorbed within the flame of the light of the *Shechinah* that is kindled over man.

In the Alter Rebbe's words:

כי הנה, נשמת האדם, אפילו הוא צדיק גמור, עובד ה' ביראה ואהבה בתענוגים

For the soul of man, even if he be a perfect *tzaddik* who serves G-d with fear and "love of delights" i.e., his love consists of delighting in the experience of G-dliness — a most lofty form of love,

אף על פי כן אינה בטילה במציאות לגמרי ליבטל וליכלל באור ה' ממש, להיות לאחדים ומיוחדים ביחוד גמור

is nevertheless not utterly nullified out of existence, so that it might be dissolved into, and absorbed within G-d's light, to be merged with it in perfect unity.

רק הוא דבר בפני עצמו, ירא ה' ואוהבו

It is, rather, a separate entity, which fears G-d and loves Him. Since it is not absorbed within G-dliness as oil is absorbed within a flame, the soul cannot serve as oil for the light of the *Shechinah*.

מה שאין כן המצות ומעשים טובים, שהן רצונו ית'

Not so with *mitzvot* and good deeds, which are G-d's Will — each commandment representing G-d's desire that a particular act be performed.

ורצונו יתברך הוא מקור החיים לכל העולמות והברואים

Now, G-d's Will is the source of life for all the worlds and the creatures — they live only because G-d so desired.

שיורד אליהם על ידי צמצומים רבים והסתר פנים של רצון העליון ברוך הוא, וירידת המדרגות

The difference between the Divine Will expressed in *mitzvot* and that same Will as expressed in creation lies in the latter's descending to them by means of many contractions (*tzimtzumim*), and by concealment of the "Countenance" i.e., the internal aspect of the Supernal Will, with only the external, superficial, aspect of G-d's Will expressing itself in creation, and through a descent from level to level.

עד שיוכלו להתהוות ולהבראות יש מאין ודבר נפרד בפני עצמו, ולא יבטלו במציאות, כנ"ל

All these steps were necessary so that it would be possible for [the worlds and creatures] to come into being and to be created *ex nihilo* as separate entities, without becoming nullified out of existence, as mentioned above.<sup>4</sup> Without the previously enumerated forms of concealment of G-dliness, all created beings would be so completely nullified before the Divine Will that created them, that they would have no independent identity. Thus the Divine Will expressed in creation can come about only through its seeming contraction, occultation and descent.

מה שאין כן המצות, שהן פנימית רצונו יתברך, ואין שם הסתר פנים כלל

The *mitzvot*, on the other hand, are the internal aspect of the Divine Will. There the “Countenance” is not hidden at all, for, on the contrary, *mitzvot* are the underlying purpose (the “inner aspect of will”) of creation in its entirety.

To illustrate by way of example:

One engages in business so that he will realize a profit, and thereby support his family. In all, he wants the business to prosper, wants the profits, and wants to provide for his family. Yet his true, inner will lies only in supporting his family. His desire for profit is merely incidental, “external” to this will, and his desire for business even more so.

So, too, with the Divine Will as expressed in creation and as expressed in the *mitzvot*. The desire for creation is an external will. It is generated by the inner (i.e., ultimate) desire that Jews observe the *mitzvot* — obviously an impossibility without a created world.

אין החיות שבהם דבר נפרד בפני עצמו כלל

Because the *mitzvot* represent G-d’s true, inner Will, and because in them there is no concealment of this Will (unlike the case in creation), therefore the [G-dly] life-force within them is by no means a separate entity,

אלא הוא מיוחד ונכלל ברצונו יתברך, והיו לאחדים ממש ביחוד גמור

but is united with and contained within G-d’s Will, and they (the *mitzvot*) are truly joined in perfect unity with G-d’s Will.

It is thus clear why (in the above-mentioned metaphor) the *mitzvot* can serve as oil for the light of the *Shechinah*: for they are truly absorbed within and transformed into the light of the Divine Will just as oil is absorbed within a flame. (The Alter Rebbe will arrive at this conclusion, after a preliminary discussion on what the *Zohar* means when it says that the light of the *Shechinah* “rests” on man. This exposition now follows:)

והנה ענין השראת השכינה

The “resting” of the *Shechinah* means i.e., when we single out a specific object from a world filled with the *Shechinah*, by saying that the Divine Presence “rests” upon that object, its uniqueness lies in

הוא גילוי אלקותו יתברך ואור אין סוף ברוך הוא באיזה דבר

the *revelation* of G-dliness and the *Ein Sof*-light in that particular object.

והיינו לומר, שאותו דבר נכלל באור ה', ובטל לו במציאות לגמרי

This means to say that this object is comprised within G-d's light and is nullified out of existence toward Him (i.e., it has no separate identity);

שאז הוא ששורה ומתגלה בו ה' אחד

for [only] then can the One G-d rest upon it (upon that object) and reveal Himself in it.

אבל כל מה שלא בטל אליו במציאות לגמרי, אין אור ה' שורה ומתגלה בו

But anything not completely nullified out of existence toward [the G-dly light] cannot have G-d's light rest and reveal itself within it.

ואף צדיק גמור שמתדבק בו באהבה רבה, הרי לית מחשבה תפיסא ביה כלל באמת

Even a perfect *tzaddik*, who cleaves to Him with “abundant love” — a most lofty level of love and attachment to G-d; yet even in the case of such a *tzaddik* “no thought can truly grasp Him at all.”

כי אמיתת ה' אלקים אמת הוא יחודו ואחדותו, שהוא לבדו הוא, ואפס בלעדו ממש

For the true implication of the phrase “G-d is the true L-rd,” is His Unity and Oneness, that He alone exists and there is absolutely nothing besides Him.

As explained in ch. 20, the statement “G-d is one” means (not only that He is the sole G-d, but also) that He is the only being that truly exists. All else is totally nullified before Him.

ואם כן, זה האוהב, שהוא יש ולא אפס, לית מחשבה דיליה תפיסא ביה כלל

If so, this person i.e., the above-mentioned *tzaddik* who loves [G-d] and who is a [separate] “being” in his own self-perception (as is evident from the very fact that *he* loves *G-d*), rather than a “nonentity”, no thought of his can grasp Him at all.

ואין אור ה' שורה ומתגלה בו, אלא על ידי קיום המצות שהן רצונו וחכמתו יתברך ממש, בלי שום הסתר פנים

Even the *tzaddik* cannot grasp G-d and thereby become one with Him through the faculties of his own soul; therefore G-d's light does not abide or manifest itself in him except through the fulfillment of the *mitzvot*, which constitute His actual Will and Wisdom, without any “concealment of Countenance.”\* Since the inner aspect of the Divine Will stands revealed only in the *mitzvot*, it is only by means of them that the light of the *Shechinah* rests upon man; not through spiritual devotion alone.

הגהה

וכאשר שמעתי ממורי עליו השלום, פירוש וטעם למה שכתוב בעץ חיים שאור אין סוף אינו מתייחד אפילו בעולם האצילות, אלא על ידי התלבשותו תחלה בספירת חכמה

\*NOTE

Concerning his aforementioned statement that the *Ein Sof*-light reveals itself only within that which is totally nullified before G-d and absorbed within Him, the Alter Rebbe notes:

This accords with what I heard from my teacher (*the Maggid of Mezritch*), peace upon him, on the meaning of and the reason behind the statement of the *Etz Chayim* that the *Ein Sof*-light does not unite itself even with the World of *Atzilut* (Emanation) except by first vesting itself in the attribute of *Chochmah* (Wisdom).

The Maggid (a) *explained* the meaning of the *Ein Sof's* vesting itself in *Chochmah*; (b) provided the *reason* that it does not unite with *Atzilut* except by way of *Chochmah*.

והיינו משום שאין סוף ברוך הוא, הוא אחד האמת, שהוא לבדו הוא, ואין זולתו, וזו היא מדרגת החכמה וכו'

This is because the *Ein Sof* is “the true *One*”; which means that He alone exists, and there is naught besides Him; and this, in fact, is the level of *Chochmah*.

The attribute of *Chochmah* represents the perception of G-dliness as the sole existing being. This, then, is the meaning of the *Ein Sof's* “clothing” itself in the attribute of *Chochmah*: The revelation of *Ein Sof* as “One alone, with naught besides Him.” And for this reason the *Ein Sof* does not unite with any world or level except by way of *Chochmah*; for, as stated above, G-d abides (“may be united with”) only where there is no sense of self or separation from Him, only in that which is pervaded with the spirit of “He alone... and naught besides him”; and this spirit constitutes the attribute of *Chochmah*, as stated.

(This note expresses a profound chassidic concept; after further study of the *Tanya*, we will understand it more clearly.)

END OF NOTE

The Alter Rebbe now returns to our subject of the light of the *Shechinah* which rests upon man only through the *mitzvot* (which alone can serve as oil for this light). He points out that the effect of this light upon the person performing a *mitzvah*, varies from one category of *mitzvot* to another.

Those *mitzvot* performed in one's thought and speech, cause the light of the *Shechinah* to rest upon the divine soul alone. Drawing this light upon the body and upon the animal soul requires the performance of *mitzvot* which involve action, where one harnesses the power of the animal, life-giving soul.<sup>5</sup> In the Alter Rebbe's words:

והנה, כשהאדם עוסק בתורה, אזי נשמתו שהיא נפשו האלהית, עם שני לבושיה הפנימים לבדם, שהם כה הדבור ומחשבה

When a person studies Torah, using his powers of thought and speech, his *Neshamah*, his divine soul with its two inner “garments” only, *viz.*, the faculties of speech and thought\*—

Thought is obviously an internal “garment”, as it is connected to the soul itself. This is why thought functions ceaselessly; it is closely bound to the soul, and the soul’s presence is constant. Speech too is internal, when compared with action, which acts upon objects outside the soul.

נכללות באור ה' אין סוף ברוך הוא, ומיוחדות בו ביחוד גמור

are absorbed within the light of G-d the *Ein Sof*, blessed be He, and are merged within it in perfect unity.

והיא השראת השכינה על נפשו האלקית, כמאמר רז"ל שאפילו אחד שיושב ועוסק בתורה שכינה עמו

This constitutes the “resting of the *Shechinah*” on his divine soul; as our Sages have said:<sup>6</sup> “When even one person applies himself diligently to Torah study, the *Shechinah* is with him,” meaning, in this case, that the *Shechinah* rests upon his divine soul, and upon its faculties of thought and speech which are engaged in the mental and oral study of the Torah.

אך כדי להמשיך אור והארת השכינה גם על גופו ונפשו הבהמית, שהיא החיונית המלוכשת בגופו ממש

However, in order to draw the light and radiation of the *Shechinah* upon his body and animal soul as well, i.e., upon the vitalizing soul actually clothed in the body and providing for it a corporeal life-force,

צריך לקיים מצות מעשיות הנעשות על ידי הגוף ממש

one must fulfill the practical *mitzvot* (i.e., commandments involving the faculty of action), which are performed with the body itself.

שאז כח הגוף ממש שבעשיה זו נכלל באור ה' ורצונו, ומיוחד בו ביחוד גמור

In this way the actual power of the body engaged in this act e.g., when one dons *Tefillin*, it is the physical strength in his arm that impels the motions that constitute the fulfillment of the *mitzvah*; and therefore this bodily power is absorbed in the Divine light and Will, and merges with it in perfect unity.

והוא לבוש השלישי של נפש האלקית

This (power of the body) constitutes the third garment of the divine soul. As mentioned in ch.4, the divine soul expresses itself in the faculty of action through performing the *mitzvot*.

ואזי גם כח נפש החיונית שבגופו ממש, שמקליפת נוגה

When the faculty of action is absorbed within the Divine Will then in addition the power of the vitalizing soul actually clothed within the body, the power of that soul derived from *kelipat nogah*,

נתהפך מרע לטוב, ונכלל ממש בקדושה כנפש האלקית ממש

is transformed from evil to good, and is actually absorbed into holiness exactly like the divine soul.

מאחר שהוא הוא הפועל ועושה מעשה המצוה

For it is the [power of the animal soul] that implements and performs the act that constitutes the *mitzvah*.

True, the divine soul is the force motivating one's observance of a *mitzvah*, yet the divine soul cannot directly activate the body to perform a physical action; to don the *Tefillin*, for example. It can accomplish this only through the agency of the animal soul, which serves as a medium between the divine soul and the body. In the Alter Rebbe's words:

שבלעדו לא היתה נפש האלקית פועלת בגוף כלל, כי היא רוחניית והגוף גשמי וחומרי

For without this power of the animal soul the divine soul would not affect the body at all, since it is spiritual and the body physical and corporeal, so that body and divine soul are antithetical, as are the spiritual and material dimensions generally.

והממוצע ביניהם היא נפש החיונית הבהמית, המלוכשת בדם האדם שבלבו וכל הגוף

The intermediary between them is the vitalizing animal soul clothed in man's blood, which is in his heart and throughout his body.

For the nature of the animal soul is such that the coarsest, most material-like level of its spiritual substance is capable of clothing itself within the blood.

Since the animal soul is the divine soul's medium of affecting the body, its active power is also absorbed into holiness when one performs a *mitzvah*.

ואף שמהותה ועצמותה של נפש הבהמית שבלבו, שהן מדותיה הרעות, עדיין לא נכללו בקדושה

Although the substance and essence of the animal soul, in his heart, i.e., its evil *middot* (its evil emotional character), have still not been absorbed into holiness,

As explained in ch. 12, only in the case of *tzaddikim* are the evil *middot* themselves transformed into holiness. In others, only the animal soul's *garments* — its faculties of expression by means of which a *mitzvah* is accomplished — are absorbed into holiness;



not the *middot* which constitute the animal soul's essence. Nevertheless, this fact does not prevent the light of the *Shechinah* from suffusing the entire body, as the Alter Rebbe concludes shortly.

מכל מקום, מאחר דאתכפין לקדושה, ובעל כרחן עונין אמן, ומסכימין ומתרצין לעשיית המצוה

yet, because they (the evil *middot*) are subjugated to holiness and “against their will they say Amen,” agreeing and acceding to the performance of the *mitzvah*,

על ידי התגברות נפשו האלהית שבמוח ששליט על הלב

through the strengthening of the divine soul in the brain which masters the heart,

As discussed in ch. 12, although the emotions of the *Beinoni* have not been transformed into good, he nevertheless has the power to control them by means of his mind, through contemplating G-d's greatness. In this way the *Beinoni* can direct his heart as he chooses, insofar as the actual performance of the *mitzvot* is concerned.

והן בשעה זו בבחינת גלות ושינה, כנ"ל

and [the evil *middot*] are, at such time when one exercises the natural mastery of brain over heart by contemplating G-d's greatness, in a state of “exile” and “sleep” i.e., impotent as mentioned above in ch. 12,

ולכך אין זו מניעה מהשראת השכינה על גוף האדם בשעה זו

therefore this incorrigible nature of the animal soul's evil *middot* does not prevent the *Shechinah* from resting on one's body at this time.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain how it is possible for one *mitzvah* to draw the *Shechinah* upon one's entire body.

דהיינו שכח נפש החיונית המלוכש בעשיית המצוה

This “resting of the *Shechinah*” means that the power of the animal soul clothed in the act that constitutes the *mitzvah* e.g., the power in the hand donning *Tefillin*

הוא נכלל ממש באור ה', ומיוחד בו ביחוד גמור

is actually absorbed into the divine light, and merges with it in perfect unity.

ועל ידי זה ממשיך הארה לכללות נפש החיונית שבכל הגוף, וגם על הגוף הגשמי

Thereby one draws down a “ray” of the light wherein the particular power has been absorbed upon the totality of the animal soul throughout the body, and [upon] the entire body as well.

בבחינת מקיף מלמעלה, מראשו ועד רגליו

This “ray” of divine light illuminates one’s animal soul and his body in a manner of “encompassing from above,” surrounding them from head to foot.

וזהו שכתוב דשכינתא שריא על רישיה, על דייקא

This explains the expression (appearing in the passage from the *Zohar* quoted at the beginning of this chapter): “The *Shechinah* rests *upon* his head,”<sup>7</sup> specifically “upon” i.e., encompassing him “from above”;

וכן: אכל בי עשרה שכינתא שריא

and in a similar vein, the expression “*upon* every [assembly of] ten [Jews] the Divine Presence rests” means that the light of the Divine Presence does not permeate them, but illuminates them “from above.”<sup>8</sup>

Heretofore, various levels in the “resting of the *Shechinah*” have been discussed: As it rests upon the divine soul; upon the specific faculty of the animal soul that performs a *mitzvah*;<sup>9</sup> upon the animal soul as a whole and upon the body — the latter two only encompassed by, but not permeated with, the light of the *Shechinah*. As to the light of the *Shechinah* encompassing the body, within this level we find further subdivisions: that level which is the effect of a *mitzvah*; that which encompasses any gathering of ten Jews, even when not engaged in a *mitzvah*; and perhaps we may distinguish yet another level — that which rests upon even one individual Jew, even when he is not occupied with a *mitzvah*.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to state that this variety of levels at which the *Shechinah* becomes manifest does not indicate any change or plurality in its light (G-d forbid). The variety means merely that the different objects of the light (the divine soul, the animal soul, the body, and so on) receive it in different ways.

In the Alter Rebbe’s words:

והנה כל בחינת המשכת אור השכינה, שהיא בחינת גילוי אור אין סוף ברוך הוא

None of these various forms in which the light of the *Shechinah* is manifested, meaning the ways in which the *Ein Sof*-light is revealed,

G-d the *Ein Sof* is everywhere; it is only that He is concealed from His creatures. Thus, the uniqueness of the manifestation of the *Shechinah* lies in the *revelation* of the *Ein Sof*.

אינו נקרא שינוי, חס ושלום, בו יתברך, ולא ריבוי

can be construed as a change in Himself, or as a plurality.

The fact that the *Shechinah* manifests itself at some point (e.g., in one's soul, through the performance of a *mitzvah*), whereas it had previously not been manifest, does not point to any change in G-d; nor do the various forms of manifestation indicate plurality within Him.

כדאיתא בסנהדרין דאמר ליה ההוא מינא לרבן גמליאל: אמריתו כל בי עשרה שכינתא שריא, כמה שכינתא אית לכו

As we find in the Tractate Sanhedrin<sup>10</sup> where it is recorded that a certain heretic said to Rabban Gamliel: “You say that the *Shechinah* rests on every assembly of ten. How many *Shechinahs* have you?”

והשיב לו משל מאור השמש הנכנס בחלונות רבים כו'

And Rabban Gamliel replied with an analogy of the sun's light which enters through many windows, etc.

Despite the multitude of windows, there is but one light. The same holds true even where the light appears differently from place to place: sunlight shining through stained-glass windows of various hues remains nonetheless unchanged, though it takes on the multicolored appearance of the windows; as does also water in a colored glass — once removed from the glass, it appears in its pristine clarity.

So too with the various modes in which the light of the *Shechinah* is manifested: The light remains the same, without change or division; any differences in manifestation are attributable only to the way the light is received by the object in which it is manifest.

והמשכיל יבין

And the intelligent will understand — and, as chassidim would add, “The devout will *perceive*.”

FOOTNOTES <sup>1.</sup> *Zohar III*, 187a. <sup>2.</sup> *Kohelet* 2:14. <sup>3.</sup> *Ibid.* 9:8. <sup>4.</sup> Chs. 21, 22. <sup>5.</sup> The Rebbe notes: “See below, ch. 37; cf. commentary of Rabbi Korf.” <sup>6.</sup> *Berachot* 6a. <sup>7.</sup> The Rebbe notes: “From the fact that the prohibition of walking bareheaded (mentioned in the *Zohar*) is constant, applying even when one is not engaged in the performance of a *mitzvah*, it is evident that the reason for the prohibition — that the *Shechinah* rests on his head — is also constant. Since the *Shechinah* rests upon the individual constantly, independently of his performance of a *mitzvah*, the meaning of the *Tanya* here requires further study.” <sup>8.</sup>

The Rebbe notes: “This, too, is unrelated to the performance of a *mitzvah*. (Accordingly, we can begin to understand how this [quotation] is relevant here.)”

The explanation of the Rebbe's comment is as follows: At first glance, the statement, “On every [assembly of] ten [Jews] the Divine Presence rests,” seems to be totally unrelated

to the subject under discussion. Our text is speaking of the light that encompasses the person from above, and descends upon him through the performance of a *mitzvah*. How is this related to the *Shechinah*'s resting upon any assembly of ten Jews, even when they are not performing a *mitzvah*?

Quite the contrary, answers the Rebbe; this question in itself begins to provide an answer:

The Alter Rebbe seeks to emphasize that an illumination of the *Shechinah* encompasses the *entire* vivifying soul and the *entire* body (“from head to foot”), not only that organ of the body or the particular faculty of the animal soul that actually performs the *mitzvah*. He therefore quotes the saying of our Sages which speaks of “*every* assembly”: even when the assembled are at that moment not performing a commandment, the *Shechinah* nevertheless rests *upon* them — in an encompassing fashion at least.

[9](#). The Rebbe takes issue with this statement, because the Alter Rebbe states that “[the vital spirit as garbed in the physical body] is *absorbed* in the Divine light, and furthermore ‘it is *truly* absorbed.’” [10](#). 39a.



## Chapter 36

In the previous chapter, the Alter Rebbe began to explain why the observance of the practical *mitzvot* is the ultimate purpose of Torah and of one's spiritual service to G-d. (This practical aspect is underscored by the conclusion of the verse, “For the thing is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart *that you may do it*.”) He explained that only *mitzvot* observed through action draw down the light of the *Shechinah* upon one's animal soul and body (rather than upon the divine soul alone, as do the *mitzvot* performed only in thought and speech).

Yet this does not answer one question satisfactorily: Why is the illumination of the body and animal soul so important that those (practical) *mitzvot* which accomplish this illumination should be considered one's primary objective?

The Alter Rebbe addresses this question in ch. 36. He explains that G-d's purpose in Creation is that he might have a dwelling place “in the lower realms”; specifically, in this physical world. In this world of doubled and redoubled spiritual darkness, His *Ein Sof*-light would radiate even more powerfully than it does in the higher, spiritual realms, through man's transforming the darkness into light.

In man, the microcosm, the animal soul and the body are “the lower realms.” Therefore, the practical *mitzvot* which draw the light of the *Shechinah* upon them constitute man's ultimate purpose.

Furthermore, through the practical *mitzvot*, and through their elevating effect on the body and animal soul, the material world in its entirety becomes a “dwelling place” for G-d. (This, however, properly belongs to the discussion in ch. 37.)

והנה מודעת זאת מאמר רז"ל שתכלית בריאת עולם הזה הוא שנתאוה הקדוש ברוך הוא להיות לו דירה בתחתונים

In a well-known statement, our Rabbis declare<sup>1</sup> that the purpose for which this world was created is that the Holy One, blessed be He, desired to have an abode in the lower realms.

He desired that the essence of His *Ein Sof*-light be revealed as it is, without veil or concealment, amidst the lower creations. Our Sages use the word “abode”, or “dwelling place,” to describe such revelation. Just as a man’s home serves as an abode for his essence, so too, is this world intended to be an “abode” for G-d’s Essence.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain the phrase “the lower realms” mentioned above. He shows that this refers specifically to our physical world.

The explanation in brief:

The terms “higher” and “lower” realms do not denote degrees of respective importance in the sight of G-d, or of closeness to Him. In G-d’s eyes all the worlds, from the highest to the lowest, are equally insignificant; all are equally remote from Him. On the other hand, He fills the lowest world just as He fills the highest.

Thus, the terms “higher” and “lower” must be understood as a standard of comparison *within* the numerous worlds. They indicate to what degree G-dliness is *revealed* in each individual world: the more revelation, the “higher” the world; the more obscurity and concealment, the “lower”. From this standpoint, our physical world is the very lowest, for here G-dliness is most veiled and concealed.

In the Alter Rebbe’s words:

והנה לא שייך לפניו יתברך בחינת מעלה ומטה, כי הוא יתברך ממלא כל עלמין בשוה

But surely, before G-d (i.e., in His sight) the distinction of “higher” and “lower” is not valid, one world is no higher than another, for he pervades all worlds equally. What, then, do our Sages mean by saying that “G-d desired an abode in the ‘lower’ realms?”

אלא ביאור הענין

The explanation of the matter, however, is that G-d desired an abode in that realm considered “lower” within the ranks of the worlds as follows:

כי קודם שנברא העולם היה הוא לבדו יתברך יחיד ומיוחד, וממלא כל כל המקום הזה שברא בו העולם

Before the world (*any* world) was created, there was only He alone, one and unique, filling all the space in which He created the world. Anything that could be conceived of as a “space” or possibility for creation, was filled with the *Ein Sof*-light.

וגם עתה כן הוא לפניו יתברך

In His view, indeed, it is still the same now. Creation wrought no change in His unity; He is One alone now just as He was prior to creation.

רק שהשינוי הוא אל המקבלים חיותו ואורו יתברך

The change applies only to the recipients of His vivifying force and His light — before creation there was none to receive the Divine life-force and light; Creation brought into being these recipients,

שמקבלים על ידי לבושים רבים המכסים ומסתירים אורו יתברך

who receive [this life-force and light- by way of numerous “garments” which veil and conceal G-d’s light for without such garments they could not bear its intensity, and would cease to exist.

כדכתיב, כי לא יראני האדם וחי

So it is written:<sup>2</sup> “For no man can see Me and live.”

Furthermore, not only man, a physical being, but even spiritual beings such as angels are unable to receive the divine light and life-force without concealing garments.

וכדפירשו רז”ל, שאפילו מלאכים הנקראים חיות אין רואין כו’

And as our Rabbis, of blessed memory, interpret the word וחי (“...and live”) in this verse, as referring to angels; thus<sup>3</sup>: “Even angels, called חיות (“[holy- *chayyot*”) cannot see...” G-dliness, except by way of garments which conceal Him, thereby enabling them to receive His light.

The degree of concealment varies, however, from world to world and from level to level. Here the distinction between “higher” and “lower” realms becomes valid, as the Alter Rebbe continues:

וזהו ענין השתלשלות העולמות וירידתם ממדרגה למדרגה

This concealment is the subject of the *Hishtalshelut* (the chain-like, graded and downward succession) of the worlds, and their descent from level to level,

על ידי ריבוי הלבושים המסתירים האור והחיות שממנו יתברך

through the many “garments” that conceal the light and the life-force emanating from Him (— the more concealment, the lower the descent);

עד שנברא עולם הזה הגשמי והחומרי ממש

culminating in the creation of this physical, gross world.

This world is not only physical — so that the truth of G-d’s creative power is not in evidence; it is also gross, in that the lie is held up as a truth.

והוא התחתון במדרגה, שאין תחתון למטה ממנו בענין הסתר אורו יתברך, וחושך כפול ומכופל

[This world] is the lowest in degree; there is none lower than it in terms of concealment of His light and no world compares with it for doubled and redoubled darkness; nowhere is G-d’s light hidden as in this world.

עד שהוא מלא קליפות וסטרא אחרא שהן נגד ה' ממש, לומר אני ואפסי עוד

So much so, that it is filled with *kelipot* and *sitra achra* which actually oppose G-d, saying: “I am, and there is nothing else besides me.”

It is thus clear that the term “lower realms” refers to this physical world, the very lowest in degree of divine revelation.

Since there is but one “order of *Hishtalshelut*,” a question arises: Does its ultimate purpose lie in the higher worlds, where G-dliness is revealed to a greater degree, while the lower worlds serve only to emphasize the revelation found in those higher than them (since light is distinguishable only where darkness exists)? Or, on the contrary, does its purpose lie in the lower realms (but in order to create them an order of *Hishtalshelut* is necessary, entailing the creation of the higher realms)?

Obviously, concealment of G-dliness is not an end in itself; thus, if we assume the second position, it follows that these lower realms were created so that the darkness pervading them be transformed to light.

The statement that “G-d desired an abode in the *lower* realms” shows the latter position to be the true one; and the “abode” is built by the revelation of His Presence in this lowest of worlds to a degree surpassing even that in the highest. This, in brief, is the subject of the following paragraphs in the text.

והנה תכלית השתלשלות העולמות וירידתם ממדרגה למדרגה אינו בשביל עולמות העליונים

The purpose of the *Hishtalshelut* of the worlds, and of their descent from level to level, is not for the sake of the higher worlds,

הואיל ולהם ירידה מאור פניו יתברך

since for them this constitutes a descent from the light of His Countenance.

The very word “world” (עולם) in Hebrew denotes concealment. Thus, even the highest worlds constitute, by their very existence, a descent from the pervading level of G-dliness that preceded their creation. It is illogical, then, to say that the revelation which these higher worlds represent is the purpose of the *Hishtalshelut*, since their revelation is actually concealment — and the ultimate purpose of creation lies in revelation, not concealment.

אלא התכלית הוא עולם הזה התחתון

Rather, the purpose of *Hishtalshelut* is this lowest world.

All the higher worlds are merely steps in the descent of the divine creative power; in each of them the light is veiled yet further, until it is finally reduced to the minute degree of revelation that this physical world is capable of receiving.

שכך עלה ברצונו יתברך, להיות נחת רוח לפניו יתברך כד אתכפיא סטרא אחרא ואתהפך השוכא לנהורא

Thus, the purpose of the *Hishtalshelut* is this world, for such was His will — that He find it pleasurable when the *sitra achra* is subjugated to holiness, and the darkness of *kelipah* is transformed into holy light,

שיאיר אור ה' אין סוף ברוך הוא במקום החשך והסטרא אחרא של כל עולם הזה כולו

so that in the place of the darkness and *sitra achra* prevailing throughout this world, the *Ein Sof*-light of G-d will shine forth

ביתר שאת ויתר עז, ויתרון אור מן החשך, מהארתו בעולמות עליונים

with greater strength and intensity, and with the superior quality of light that emerges from the darkness i.e., when darkness is transformed into light, the resulting light is superior to ordinary light; it will thus shine with greater intensity than its radiance in the higher worlds.<sup>4</sup>

שמאיר שם על ידי לבושים והסתר פנים, המסתירים ומעלימים אור אין סוף ברוך הוא

There, in the higher worlds, it shines through garments and [through] concealment of the Countenance (a concealment of the *pnimiyut* — i.e., the internal aspect — of the light) which conceal and screen the *Ein Sof*-light,

שלא יבטלו במציאות

so that [the worlds] do not dissolve out of existence.



For were the *Ein Sof*-light not screened by garments, the worlds could not bear it, and would dissolve. Thus, the revelation wrought by subjugation of the *kelipot* in this world, is greater than that of the higher worlds; there the *Ein Sof*-light is hidden, whereas here in this world it is revealed in all its strength.

A question arises, however. How is it possible (even upon subjugating the *kelipot* and transforming them into holiness) that we in this world should experience a revelation of the *Ein Sof*-light without veil or concealment, when even the higher worlds cannot receive such revelation without dissolving into nothingness?

In answer, the Alter Rebbe writes:

ולזה נתן הקדוש ברוך הוא לישראל את התורה, שנקראת עוז וכח

For this purpose the Holy One, blessed be He, gave Israel the Torah which is called “might” and “strength” for it gives us strength to receive such revelation, without being overwhelmed by it,

וכמאמר רז"ל, שהקדוש ברוך הוא נותן כח בצדיקים לקבל שכרם לעתיד לבא

and as our Rabbis say,<sup>5</sup> that G-d gives *tzaddikim* the strength to receive their reward in the World to Come,

Why is this “strength” necessary?

שלא יתבטלו במציאות ממש באור ה' הנגלה לעתיד בלי שום לבוש

so that their existence should not dissolve within the divine light that will reveal itself in the hereafter without any garment,

כדכתיב: ולא יכנף עוד מוריך פירוש: שלא יתכסה ממך בכנף ולבוש, והיו עיניך רואות את מוריך

as it is written:<sup>6</sup> “And your Teacher will no longer hide (יכנף) from you (<sup>7</sup>meaning — not as some interpret the verse: “He will no longer withhold (כנף) your rains (מוריך),” but, following *Rashi*: “He will no longer conceal Himself from you with the edge of a robe or garment (כנף), and your eyes will behold Your Teacher”;

וכתיב: כי עין בעין יראו וגו'

and it is also written:<sup>8</sup> “For they shall see eye to eye...,” meaning that the human eye will see as the divine “eye” sees, i.e., we will clearly see the revelation of G-d’s light;

וכתיב: לא יהיה לך עוד השמש לאור יומם וגו', כי ה' יהיה לך לאור עולם וגו'

and it is further written:<sup>9</sup> “The sun shall no longer be your light by day,... for G-d will be your eternal light.”

The strength to receive this light, which will shine forth in the World to Come without “garment” or concealment, we derive from our present study of the Torah.

The Alter Rebbe stated earlier that the purpose of the entire *Hishtalshelut* is the revelation of *Ein Sof*-light in this world, which occurs when the darkness of the *kelipot* of this world is transformed into the light of holiness.

But, one may ask, this revelation will take place only in the hereafter; at present the *Ein Sof*-light is completely hidden! The Alter Rebbe replies that, indeed, the Messianic era constitutes the purpose for which this world was created.

ונודע שימות המשיח, ובפרט כשיחיו המתים

It is known that the Messianic era, especially the period after the resurrection of the dead,

הם תכלית ושלמות בריאת עולם הזה, שלכך נברא מתחילתו

is indeed the ultimate purpose and the fulfillment of this world. It is for this [purpose] that [this world] was originally created.\*

\*NOTE

At first glance this statement appears strange: One would have thought that the Messianic era represents, not the purpose of creation, but the reward for man’s efforts toward fulfilling that purpose.

The Alter Rebbe therefore clarifies:

הגהה

וקבלת שכר עיקרו באלף השביעי, כמו שכתוב בלקוטי תורה מהאר"י ז"ל

The [time of] receiving the reward is essentially in the seventh millennium, as is stated in *Likkutei Torah* of the *AriZal* (Rabbi Isaac Luria, of blessed memory), whereas the period until then constitutes the fulfillment of the world’s purpose.

END OF NOTE

וגם כבר היה לעולמים מעין זה, בשעת מתן תורה

A glimmer of this revelation which will take place in the future has already been experienced — at the time of the Giving of the Torah at Sinai,

כדכתיב: אתה הראת לדעת כי ה' הוא האלקים, אין עוד מלבדו

as it is written: [10](#) “You (G-d) revealed Yourself, that we may know that G-d is the L-rd; there is nothing else besides Him.”

הראת ממש, בראיה הושיית

“You actually ‘revealed Yourself’” (literally: “made Yourself seen”), indicating that the revelation was in a manner [perceptible to] physical sight.

כדכתיב: וכל העם רואים את הקולות, רואים את הנשמע

So it is written: [11](#) “And all the people saw the thunder” — “They saw what is [normally] heard”; i.e., the Children of Israel perceived the revelation at Sinai with actual sight.

ופירשו רז"ל: מסתכלים למזרח ושומעין את הדבור יוצא: אנכי כו'

As our Rabbis explain: [12](#) “They looked eastward and heard the [divine] speech issuing forth, saying: ‘I am [G-d your L-rd-,’

וכן לארבע רוחות ולמעלה ולמטה

and so, too, turning toward the four points of the compass and above and below,“ they heard the words coming from every direction.

וכדפירש בתיקונים, דלית אתר דלא מילל מיניה עמהון כו'

As explained also in *Tikkunei Zohar*: “There was no place from which He did not speak to them.”

והיינו מפני גילוי רצונו יתברך בעשרת הדברות

This was so because in the Ten Commandments His blessed Will was revealed,

שהן כללות התורה, שהיא פנימית רצונו יתברך וחכמתו, ואין שם הסתר פנים כלל

since they the Ten Commandments comprise the entire Torah which represents the inner aspect of His Will and Wisdom, where there is no “concealment of the Countenance” whatsoever,

כמו שאומרים: כי באור פניך נתת לנו... תורת חיים

as we say in our prayers: [13](#) “For in the light of Your Countenance You gave us a Torah of life.”

The Torah thus represents the “light of His Countenance,” i.e., the inner light of G-dliness. When this light was revealed through the uttering of the Ten Commandments, the entire world experienced a revelation of G-dliness.

ולכן היו בטלים במציאות ממש, כמאמר רז"ל, שעל כל דיבור פרוצה נשמתן כו'

Therefore, they the Jews who stood at Sinai were nullified out of existence, as our Rabbis have said:[14](#) "At every [divine] utterance their soul took flight from their body,

אלא שהחזירה הקדוש ברוך להן בטל שעתיד להחיות בו את המתים

but G-d restored it to them with the dew with which He will revive the dead in the World to Come."

והוא טל תורה שנקרא עוז

This is the "dew" of Torah which is called "might"; i.e., the Torah provides the strength that enables us to receive divine revelation without dissolving out of existence, as explained above in reference to the reward of *tzaddikim* in the World to Come.

כמאמר רז"ל: כל העוסק בתורה טל תורה מחייהו כו'

Similarly, our Sages remark:[15](#) "Whoever engages in the study of the Torah, the dew of Torah will revive him."

The Torah is variously described as dew, rain, and so on, each figure denoting a different level within it. From the statement just paraphrased, we learn that "dew" refers to the Torah's restorative power, and it was this "dew" by which G-d restored the souls of the Jews which had taken flight upon experiencing a degree of divine revelation foreshadowing that of the Messianic era.

רק שאחר כך גרם החטא, ונתגשמו הם והעולם, עד עת קץ הימין

But afterwards after the Torah was given their sin caused both them and the world to become gross [again] — until the End of Days when G-d's "right hand" (ימין) meaning both "days and "right"), i.e., His power, will be revealed.

שאו יזדכך גשמיות הגוף והעולם, ויוכלו לקבל גילוי אור ה' שיאיר לישראל על ידי התורה שנקראת עוז

Then, the dross of the body and of the world will become purified, and they will be able to receive the revelation of G-d's light that will shine forth over Israel, by means of the Torah, which is called "might".

ומיתרון ההארה לישראל, יגיה חשך האומות גם כן

Through the superabundance of light which will shine upon the Jewish people, the darkness of the nations will also be lit up,

כדכתיב: והלכו גוים לאורך וגו'

as it is written:[16](#) “And nations will walk by your (the Jewish people’s) light”;

וכתיב: בית יעקב לכו ונלכה באור ה'

and it is also written[17](#) that the nations will say to the Jewish people: “House of Jacob, go and we will walk along by the light of G-d”;

וכתיב: ונגלה כבוד ה', וראו כל בשר יחדיו וגו'

and again:[18](#) “And the glory of G-d shall be revealed, and *all* flesh will see...”;

וכתיב: לבוא בנקרות הצורים ובסעיפי הסלעים מפני פחד ה' ומהדר גאונו וגו'

and:[19](#) “to enter the holes of the rocks and the clefts of boulders, for fear of G-d and of His majestic glory.”

This refers to the nations, who will be filled with the dread of G-d; for it cannot be said of Israel, who will be one with G-d, that they will seek refuge from Him.

וכמו שאומרים: והופע בהדר גאון עוזך על כל יושבי תבל ארצך וגו'

So also do we pray:[20](#) “Appear in the majestic splendor of Your might to *all* the inhabitants of the world,” including the other nations.

Thus we see that in the Messianic era G-dliness will be revealed to all the nations of the world — and in this state lies the fulfillment of the purpose for which this world was created.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Midrash Tanchuma, Nasso* 7:1. [2.](#) *Shmot* 33:20. [3.](#) *Sifrei*, end of *Parshat Behaalotecha; Bamidbar Rabbah*, end of *Parshat Nasso*. [4.](#)

The Rebbe explains why the Alter Rebbe adds the words, “than its radiance in the higher worlds,” and is not satisfied with simply stating that the ultimate purpose of creation is this world, “for such was His will — that He find it pleasurable...”

In doing so the Alter Rebbe answers a well-known question. How can we possibly say that the higher worlds, which are illuminated with such a revelation of G-dliness, exist for the purpose of this world, where G-dliness is so concealed? One does not create a significant thing to serve something insignificant. The Alter Rebbe therefore explains that through the transformation of darkness into light — a form of divine service which can be achieved only in this world — the world becomes so holy that it is illuminated with a degree of G-dliness far superior to that which is manifest in the higher worlds.

[5.](#) *Sanhedrin* 100b. [6.](#) *Yeshayahu* 30:20. [7.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [8.](#) *Yeshayahu* 52:8. [9.](#) *Ibid.* 60:19. [10.](#) *Devarim* 4:35. [11.](#) *Shmot* 20:15; and *Mechilta* (quoted in *Rashi*) on the verse. [12.](#) See *Shmot Rabbah* 5:9. [13.](#) Liturgy, *Amidah* prayer. [14.](#)

*Shabbat* 88b. [15](#). See *Ketubbot* 111b; see also *Likkutei Sichot*, Vol. II, p. 193 (footnote).  
[16](#). *Yeshayahu* 60:3. [17](#). *Ibid.* 2:5. [18](#). *Ibid.* 40:5. [19](#). *Ibid.* 2:21. [20](#). Liturgy, *Amidah*,  
High Holidays.

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## Chapter 37

In the previous chapter, the Alter Rebbe explained that the statement of the Sages that “G-d desired an abode in the lower realms” refers to our physical world. This is the lowest of worlds in terms of the degree of revelation of the divine creative power: it is hidden in this world as it is in no other world. G-d desired precisely this world, pervaded as it is with “doubled and redoubled darkness,” as His “abode”, where His presence would ultimately be revealed to a greater degree than it is revealed in the higher worlds, without any concealing “garments” whatever.

This will come to pass in the Messianic era, the period for which the world was originally created, when G-dliness will be manifest throughout the world, so that *all* the nations on earth will experience divine revelation.

והנה תכלית השלימות הזוה של ימות המשיח ותחיית המתים, שהוא גילוי אור אין סוף ברוך הוא בעולם הזה  
הגשמי

Now this ultimate perfection of the Messianic era and [the time of] the resurrection of the dead, meaning the revelation of *Ein Sof*-light in this physical world,

תלוי במעשינו ועבודתנו כל זמן משך הגלות

is dependent on our actions and [divine] service throughout the period of exile (unlike the aforementioned revelation at Sinai, which was initiated by G-d).

כי הגורם שכר המצוה היא המצוה בעצמה

For it is the *mitzvah* itself that causes i.e., creates its reward.

The Rebbe notes: Unlike, for example, the wages paid by the owner of a field to the laborer who plows and plants in it, where the laborer does not create the money he is paid, a *mitzvah* actually *creates* its own reward.

כי בעשייתה ממשיך האדם גילוי אור אין סוף ברוך הוא מלמעלה למטה

For by performing [the *mitzvah*] man draws the revelation of the blessed *Ein Sof*-light from above downwards,

להתלבש בגשמיות עולם הזה, בדבר שהיה תחלה תחת ממשלת קליפת נוגה, ומקבל חיותה ממנה

to be clothed in the physicality of this world, i.e., in an object which had heretofore been under the dominion of *kelipat nogah* and had received its vitality from this *kelipah*;

שהם כל הדברים הטהורים ומותרים שנעשית בהם המצוה מעשיית

namely, all pure, permissible objects with which the act of the *mitzvah* is performed. By performing the *mitzvah*, man draws the *Ein Sof*-light upon the object with which it is performed.

The Alter Rebbe now illustrates his phrase — “pure, permissible objects with which the act of the *mitzvah* is performed,” citing as examples one object from each of the three categories: animal life, vegetative, and inanimate life.

כגון קלף התפילין ומזוזה וספר תורה

For example, the parchment of the *tefillin*, *mezuzah* and *Sefer Torah* which must be made of the skins of permissible, kosher animals.

וכמאמר רז"ל: לא הוכשר למלאכת שמים אלא טהורים ומותרים בפיך

As our Sages state:<sup>1</sup> “For the ‘work of heaven’ i.e., *mitzvah* objects only that which is pure and permissible to eat may be used.”

The parchment derived from such animals is, however, under the dominion of *kelipat nogah* until one uses it for *tefillin*, etc., when the *mitzvah* draws upon the parchment a revelation of *Ein Sof*-light.

וכן אתרג שאינו ערלה,

Similarly, an *etrog* which is not *orlah*\* (the forbidden fruit of a tree’s first three harvests),

\*NOTE

In reference to his earlier stipulation that an *etrog* not be *orlah*, and that charity be honestly acquired, the Alter Rebbe notes:

הגהה

שהערלה היא משלש קליפות הטמאות לגמרי שאין להם עליה לעולם, כמו שכתוב בע' חיים

For *orlah* is of the three completely unclean *kelipot* that can never ascend into holiness, as is written in *Etz Chayim*; thus fruit which is *orlah*, deriving its vitality from these *kelipot*, cannot be elevated by having a *mitzvah* performed with it.

וכן כל מצוה הבאה בעבירה, חס ושלום

Similarly any *mitzvah* whose performance involved a transgression (G-d forbid). *Since the sinful act receives its vitality from the three completely unclean kelipot, the resulting mitzvah cannot elevate it.*

END OF NOTE

When performed, however, with pure and permissible objects, the *mitzvah* elevates those objects from *kelipat nogah* to holiness, to be united with the *Ein Sof*-light, as the Alter Rebbe continues:

ומעות הצדקה שאינן גזל, וכיוצא בהם

or money given to charity that has not been acquired through theft, and their like i.e., other physical objects used in performing a *mitzvah*, all of which were previously in the realm of *kelipat nogah*, and (as the Alter Rebbe will conclude presently) are now merged into the Divine Will by serving the purpose of a *mitzvah*.

ועכשיו שמקיים בהם מצות ה' ורצונו

Now that one fulfills G-d's commandment and Will with these objects,

הרי החיות שבהם עולה ומתבטל ונכלל באור אין סוף ברוך הוא, שהוא רצונו יתברך המלוכש בהם

the vitality within them ascends and is dissolved and absorbed into the blessed *Ein Sof*-light, which is His Will that is clothed in the *mitzvot*, the Divine Will that each *mitzvah* represents.

מאחר שאין שם בחינת הסתר פנים כלל, להסתיר אורו יתברך

For [in a *mitzvah*] there is no “concealment of the Countenance” whatever to hide His light, preventing the object from being absorbed in this light. As stated earlier, wherever the *Ein Sof*-light stands revealed, there is no separation from G-d; everything is united with His light — in this case, the object with which the *mitzvah* (representing revelation of the Will and light of the *Ein Sof*) is performed.

\* \* \*

Thus far, the Alter Rebbe has discussed the effect of a *mitzvah* on the objects used in its performance (e.g., the *etrog*, the parchment used for *tefillin*, etc.). He now discusses its effect on the power of a Jew's animal soul that is applied to the *mitzvah*. This soul, like the aforementioned objects, derives its vitality from *kelipat nogah*; and like them it experiences a similar elevation to the realm of holiness whenever it is used in service of a *mitzvah*, being absorbed into the Divine Will represented by the *mitzvah*.



In the Alter Rebbe's words:

וכן כח נפש החיונית הבהמית שבאברי גוף האדם המקיים המצוה, הוא מתלבש גם כן בעשייה זו

Similarly the power of the vitalizing animal soul clothed in the bodily limbs of a person who performs a *mitzvah*, likewise clothes itself in the deed of the *mitzvah*.

ועולה מהקליפה, ונכלל בקדושת המצוה שהיא רצונו יתברך, ובטל באור אין סוף ברוך הוא

Thereby it ascends from the *kelipah* to be absorbed into the holiness of the *mitzvah* which is His Will, and is nullified within the blessed *Ein Sof*-light.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to say that those *mitzvot* involving speech alone likewise effect this elevation of the animal soul, even though here the animal soul's power is not brought to bear in the performance of any *mitzvah*.

וגם במצות תלמוד תורה וקריאת שמע ותפלה וכיוצא בהן

Even in the case of such *mitzvot* as Torah study, reciting the *Shema*, prayer and the like, the animal soul's power is elevated to holiness,

אף שאינן בעשייה גשמית ממש שתחת ממשלת קליפת נוגה

although they do not involve actual physical action which is under the dominion of *kelipat nogah*,

מכל מקום הא קיימא לן דהרהור לאו כדבור דמי, ואינו יוצא ידי חובתו עד שיוציא בשפתיו

yet it is an accepted principle that "thought is not a substitute for speech"; and one does not fulfill his duty of Torah study, prayer, etc. unless he actually utters [the words] with his lips.

וקיימא לן דעקימת שפתיו הוי מעשה

It is also accepted that "moving one's lips constitutes action," and such "action", as the Rebbe notes, likewise stems from the vitality of the *kelipat nogah* that is nourished by the animal soul, as does the actual bodily action spoken of earlier.

כי אי אפשר לנפש האלקית לבטא בשפתיים ופה ולשון ושיניים הגשמיים, כי אם על ידי נפש החיונית הבהמית, המלובשת באברי הגוף ממש

For the divine soul cannot express itself with the physical lips, mouth, tongue or teeth, the instruments of speech, except by way of the vitalizing animal soul actually clothed in the organs of the body.

The divine soul is entirely spiritual, the body, physical. Therefore (as explained in ch. 35), the divine soul cannot activate the body to perform a *mitzvah* except through an intermediary. This intermediary is the animal soul, which, on the one hand, is a *soul*, a spiritual life-force, yet on the other hand is actually clothed in the blood and the bodily organs.

This intermediary is necessary in *mitzvot* performed through speech, just as in the *mitzvot* performed through action. For articulating the words required for the *mitzvah* also constitutes physical “action”; so that this too cannot be accomplished by the divine soul except by way of the animal soul’s power.

וכל מה שמדבר בכח גדול יותר, הוא מכניס ומלביש יותר כחות מנפש החיונית בדבורים אלו

Hence, the more forcefully one speaks words of Torah or prayer, the more of the animal soul’s energy he introduces and clothes in these words. Thereby, he converts more of the energy of the *kelipah* to holiness.

וזה שאמר הכתוב: כל עצמותי תאמרנה וגו'

This is also the meaning of the verse,<sup>2</sup> “All my bones shall declare.... [‘G-d, who is like You?’],” which means that the words of Torah and prayer must be said “with all of one’s bones,” so that as much as possible of the body’s energy be utilized in performing the *mitzvot*.

וזה שאמרו רז"ל: אם ערוכה בכל רמ"ח אברים שלך משתמרת, ואם לאו אינה משתמרת

This is why our Sages have said:<sup>3</sup> “If the Torah abides in all of your 248 limbs it is preserved in your memory; otherwise it is not preserved.”

כי השכחה היא מקליפת הגוף ונפש החיונית הבהמית, שהן מקליפת נוגה הנכללת לפעמים בקדושה

For forgetfulness in matters of Torah stems from the *kelipah* of the body and vitalizing animal soul, derived from *kelipat nogah* which is sometimes absorbed into holiness; when it is absorbed into holiness, there is no longer any cause for forgetfulness.

והיינו כשמתיש כחן, ומכניס כל כחן בקדושת התורה או התפלה

This is accomplished when one weakens their power (the power of body and animal soul), applying all their strength to the holiness of Torah and prayer.

This, then, is the meaning of the aforementioned quotation: When one involves (the energy of) all his 248 limbs in Torah study, it is preserved in his memory, for the *kelipah* that causes one to forget has been weakened.

\* \* \*

Up till here, the Alter Rebbe has spoken of the effect of a *mitzvah* on the power of one's animal soul used in performing it. He now states that not only does one's animal soul ascend from *kelipat nogah* to holiness when he performs a *mitzvah*, but also all the food and drink that sustained one and gave him the strength to perform the *mitzvah*, are likewise elevated from the dominion of *kelipat nogah*.

Based on this idea, the Alter Rebbe explains how the vitality of *all* physical objects of this world — which currently draw their vitality from *kelipat nogah* — will be elevated to the realm of holiness.

Every Jewish soul is given the ability and responsibility to elevate a portion of this physical world which “belongs” to it. This elevation is accomplished by means of the 613 *mitzvot*, as mentioned. There are, however, two categories in *mitzvot*: the 248 positive commandments and the 365 prohibitive commandments. Similarly, the elevating effect of *mitzvot* on physical matter takes two forms: one positive and the other negative (i.e., restrictive).

To explain these two aspects of elevation accomplished by the two categories of *mitzvot*, the Alter Rebbe uses for each category an analogy drawn from the human body. The 248 positive commandments correspond to the body's 248 limbs; and, indeed, the function of these *mitzvot* resembles that of the limbs. Every organ of the body is a vehicle for a particular faculty of the soul, and brings that faculty into active expression. Similarly, every (positive) *mitzvah* is a vehicle for the expression of a particular aspect of Divine Will, and brings about a G-dly revelation.

The prohibitive commandments, numbering 365, correspond to the 365 blood vessels of the body; their function, too, is like that of the blood vessels. The blood vessel acts as a conduit, channeling blood in the right direction so that it will not be randomly, wastefully dispersed through the body. Similarly, the prohibitive commandments prevent the life-force of holiness from being funneled off into the *kelipot*, thereby increasing their power; they channel the life-force toward deserving recipients.

When all the souls of Israel, representing the vitality of all physical matter, fulfill all the commandments — drawing down G-d's light by performing the positive *mitzvot*, and confining it to the realm of holiness by observing the prohibitive *mitzvot* — they elevate the vitality of the entire world from *kelipat nogah* to holiness.

This, in summary, is the subject of the following discussion.

זאת ועוד אחרת

An additional [virtue] in *mitzvot* involving action (aside from their function in elevating one's animal soul, mentioned above):

שכח נפש החיונית המתלבש באותיות הדבור בתלמוד תורה או תפלה וכיוצא בהן או מצות מעשיות

the vitalizing soul's energy clothed in the utterance of letters of one's speech in Torah study, prayer or the like, or the energy clothed in the performance of *mitzvot* involving action

הרי כל גידולו וחיותו מהדם, שמקליפת נוגה ממש

derives its entire growth and vitality from the blood, which is of *kelipat nogah* itself,

שהן כל אוכלין ומשקין שאכל ושתה, ונעשו דם

meaning all the food and drink that one has eaten and drunk, and which have become blood.

שהיו תחת ממשלתה, וינקו חיותם ממנה

These were under the dominion of *kelipat nogah* and drew their vitality from it.

ועתה היא מתהפכת מרע לטוב ונכללת בקדושה, על ידי כח נפש החיונית הגדל ממנה, שנתלבש באותיות אלה או בעשיה זו, אשר הן הן פנימיות רצונו יתברך בלי שום הסתר פנים

Now that the person performs a *mitzvah* with the energy derived from this food and drink this *kelipah* is transformed from evil to good and is absorbed into holiness, by means of the energy of the animal soul that grows from it (i.e., the energy nourished by those objects that derive their vitality from this *kelipah*), which has now clothed itself in these letters of Torah and prayer or in the performance of this *mitzvah*, which actually constitute the unveiled expression of the inner aspect of G-d's Will.

וחיותן נכלל גם כן באור אין סוף ברוך הוא, שהוא רצונו יתברך

For their vitality (the vitality expended in performing *mitzvot*) is also absorbed (like the *mitzvot* themselves) into the blessed *Ein Sof*-light, which is His Will as expressed in *mitzvot*,

ובחיותן נכלל ועולה גם כן כח נפש החיונית

and with their vitality the energy of the animal soul is likewise elevated and absorbed into the *Ein Sof*-light; and since the energy necessary for performing *mitzvot* was supplied by food and drink, the vitality of the food and drink is likewise absorbed in the *Ein Sof*-light, together with the *mitzvah* whose performance it made possible.

ועל ידי זה תעלה גם כן כללות קליפת נוגה, שהיא כללות החיות של עולם הזה הגשמי והחומרי

Thereby, all of *kelipat nogah*, which constitutes the vitality of this physical and corporeal world as a whole, will ascend as well. When will this come about?

כאשר כל הנשמה ונפש האלקית שבכל ישראל, המתחלקת בפרטות לנשים רבוא, תקיים כל נפש פרטית כל תרי"ג מצות התורה

When the whole *neshamah*, the divine soul<sup>4</sup> in all of Israel, which is divided into 600,000 particular offshoots (the standard figure for the members of the Jewish nation, all individual souls being further subdivisions of these 600,000 “general” souls, as will be explained further) will fulfill, each individual soul thereof, the 613 *mitzvot* of the Torah:

שס"ה לא תעשה, להפריד שס"ה גידים של דם נפש החיונית שבגוף

when they will refrain from transgressing the 365 prohibitions, to restrain the 365 blood vessels of the animal soul in the body,

שלא יינקו ויקבלו חיות בעבירה זו מאת שלש קליפות הטמאות לגמרי, שמהן נשפעים שס"ה לא תעשה דאורייתא, וענפיהן שהן מדרבנן

so that they do not draw nurture or receive vitality by means of such transgression, from any one of the three completely unclean *kelipot* from which are derived the 365 Biblical prohibitions, and the Rabbinical prohibitions — their offshoots.

Since all that derives its vitality from the three wholly unclean *kelipot* cannot rise to holiness, were a Jew to transgress any prohibition, and thereby cause the particular blood-vessel associated with that prohibition to receive vitality from these *kelipot* —

ושוב לא תוכל נפש החיונית לעלות אל ה', אם נטמאה בטומאת השלש קליפות הטמאות

the vitalizing soul could not longer ascend to G-d, having been tainted by the impurity of the three impure *kelipot*.

שאין להן עליה לעולם, כי אם ביטול והעברה לגמרי

[For] these [*kelipot*] can never be elevated, but must be nullified and utterly destroyed,

כמו שכתוב: ואת רוח הטומאה אעביר מן האר'

as it is written,<sup>5</sup> “And I shall drive out the unclean spirit from the earth.”

Similarly, anything which derives its vitality from them can never ascend to holiness. Therefore, only the observance of *all* the 365 prohibitions allows the *entire* vital soul to ascend, without any part of it held back by the impurity of these *kelipot*.

ורמ"ה מצות עשה, להמשיך אור אין סוף ברוך הוא למטה

When, furthermore, every individual soul will fulfill also the 248 positive commandments, thereby drawing down the blessed *Ein Sof*-light below,

להעלות לו ולקשר ולייחד בו כללות הנפש החיונית שברמ"ח אברי הגוף ביחוד גמור, להיות לאחדים ממש

to elevate to Him and to bind and unite with Him the entire vital soul, which is in the 248 limbs of the body, in perfect unity, (such is the effect of a *mitzvah* in uniting the vital, animal soul with G-d), so that they become actually one [with Him],

כמו שעלה ברצונו יתברך להיות לו דירה בתחתונים, והם לו למרכבה כמו האבות

in accordance with His Will that there be an abode for Him in the lower realms, and so great is this unity that they (the limbs of the body with the vitality of the animal soul invested in them) become a “chariot” for G-d, as were the Patriarchs — whose every limb was in total submission to the Divine Will, wherefore they are designated as G-d’s “chariots” — and so will every Jew become a chariot by performing the *mitzvot*.

ומאחר שכללות נפש החיונית שבכללות ישראל תהיה מרכבה קדושה לה'

Once the totality of the vital soul of the community of Israel will become a holy chariot for G-d,

אזי גם כללות החיות של עולם הזה, שהיא קליפת נוגה עכשיו, תצא אז מטומאתה וחלאתה ותעלה לקדושה

then also the general vitality of this world, which now consists of *kelipat nogah*, will also emerge from its impurity and sickness (the term “impurity” refers to the evil of the *kelipah*; “sickness” refers to the element of good that *kelipat nogah* contains, which is nevertheless the good of *kelipah*, not holiness), and will ascend to holiness,

להיות מרכבה לה', בהתגלות כבודו

to become a chariot for G-d, upon the revelation of His glory (in the World to Come).

וראו כל בשר יחדיו, ויפיע עליהם בהדר גאון עוזו, וימלא כבוד ה' את כל הארץ

Then all flesh will behold [G-dliness] together, and He will appear upon them with the majestic beauty of His power, and “the glory of G-d will fill the whole world.”

וישראל יראו עין בעין, כבמתן תורה

Israel will see “eye to eye” — the human eye will see the truth of G-dliness just as the Supernal “eye” sees it — just as [they saw] at the giving of the Torah,

דכתיב: אתה הראת לדעת כי ה' הוא אלקים, אין עוד מלבדו

of which it is written,<sup>6</sup> “You showed Yourself, so that it be known that ‘G-d is the L-rd (lit.: the Four-Letter Divine Name is ELOKIM; i.e., despite the concealment of the Four-Letter Divine Name (which denotes G-d’s limitless power) by the name *Elokim* (which

signifies G-d's self-limitation), it is the former that still pervades all existence); there is nothing else besides Him."

But whereas the revelation at Sinai lasted only a short time, the revelation in the future will be permanent.

ועל ידי זה יתבלעו ויתבטלו לגמרי כל השלש קליפות הטמאות

Through this ascent of *kelipat nogah* to holiness, the three unclean *kelipot* will be utterly annihilated and nullified.

כי יניקתן וחיותן מהקדושה עכשיו, היא על ידי קליפת נוגה, הממוצעת ביניהן

For the nurture and vitality which they now receive from holiness, comes to them [only] by way of *kelipat nogah*, the intermediary between them.

*Kelipat nogah*, containing both good and evil, is the medium through which these *kelipot* which are completely evil receive their vitality from G-dliness, which is completely good. When *kelipat nogah* ascends to G-dliness, the impure *kelipot*, no longer having any access to G-dly vitality, cease to exist.

ונמצא כי כל תכלית של ימות המשיח ותחיית המתים, שהוא גילוי כבודו ואלקותו יתברך, ולהעביר רוח הטומאה מהארץ

It follows, therefore, that the purpose of the Messianic era and of the resurrection, namely, the revelation of His glory and Divinity, and the banishment of the spirit of impurity from the earth,

תלוי בהמשכת אלקותו ואור אין סוף ברוך הוא לנפש החיונית שבכללות ישראל בכל רמ"ח אבריה, על ידי קיומה כל רמ"ח מצות עשה

is entirely dependent on [our] drawing down His G-dliness and the blessed *Ein Sof*-light upon all the 248 limbs of the vital soul of all Israel (for by way of the vital soul, all the world will be suffused with G-dliness), and this is achieved by the vital soul's performance of all the 248 positive *mitzvot*;

ולהעביר רוח הטומאה ממנה, בשמירתה כל שס"ה מצות לא תעשה, שלא יינקו ממנה שס"ה גידיה

and this purpose is also dependent on [our] banishing the spirit of impurity, i.e., the three impure *kelipot*, from the vital soul of all Israel (for by being banished from the vital soul, the spirit of impurity is banished from the entire world); and this is accomplished by the vital soul's observance of all 365 prohibitive *mitzvot*, thus preventing its 365 blood vessels from drawing nurture from the spirit of impurity.

Why is it that suffusing the vital soul with *Ein Sof*-light and banishing the impure *kelipot* from the vital soul produces a parallel effect on the entire world?

כי כללות ישראל, שהם ששים רבוא נשמות פרטיות, הם כללות החיות של כללות העולם, כי בשבילם נברא

For the community of Israel, comprising 600,000 particular souls, is the general source of vitality for the world as a whole, since the world was created for the sake of these souls.

וכל פרט מהם הוא כולל ושייך לו החיות של חלק אחד מששים רבוא מכללות העולם

Each specific one of them contains and to each is related the vitality of one six-hundred-thousandth-part of the entire world.

התלוי בנפשו החיונית להעלותו לה' בעלייתה

This [part of the world] depends on his vital soul for its elevation to G-d through [the vital soul's] own elevation.

דהיינו במה שמשמש מעולם הזה לצורך גופו ונפשו החיונית לעבודת ה'

This means that one elevates “his” portion of the world by his partaking of this world for the requirements of his body and vital soul in the service of G-d. By using the objects of this world that one’s body and vital soul need for the sake of serving G-d, one elevates his portion of the world.

כגון אכילה ושתיה ודומיהם, ודירה וכל כלי תשמישיו

For example: eating, drinking, and the like; one’s dwelling and all his utensils.

But surely there are more than 600,000 souls; besides, it is quite impossible for one person to use a six-hundred-thousandth of the entire world.

אלא ששים רבוא נשמות פרטיות אלו הן שרשים, וכל שרש מתחלק לששים רבוא ניצוצות, שכל ניצוץ הוא נשמה אחת

These 600,000 particular souls, however, are “roots”; and, like a root from which grow numerous branches, each root-soul subdivides into 600,000 sparks, each spark being one *Neshamah*.

וכן בנפש ורוח, בכל עולם מארבע עולמות: אצילות, בריאה, יצירה, עשיה

Similarly with the *Nefesh* and *Ruach*, in each of the four Worlds — *Atzilut*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*. In each of these four Worlds are found all three soul-levels — *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah*.

וכל ניצוץ לא ירד לעולם הזה

Each spark did not descend into this world to perfect itself but to perfect the body and vital soul — as the Alter Rebbe will soon conclude.



Having touched upon the subject of the soul's descent, however, he adds a parenthetical comment emphasizing the magnitude of this descent. On entering this world, a soul may perhaps attain the loftiest heights of love and fear of G-d that are experienced by a perfect *tzaddik* — but even this cannot compare to the love and fear that it experienced while in the spiritual worlds, before its descent.

אף שהיא ירידה גדולה, ובחינת גלות ממש

Though it is indeed a great descent, a veritable exile for the soul;

כי גם שיהיה צדיק גמור, עובד ה' ביראה ואהבה רבה בתענוגים

for even if it become, in this world, a perfect *tzaddik*, serving G-d with fear and abundant love of delights,

לא יגיע למעלות דביקותו בה' בדחילו ורחימו בטרם ירידתו לעולם הזה החומרי, לא מינה ולא מקצתה

it will not attain to the quality of its attachment to G-d with fear and love that the soul experienced prior to its descent into this corporeal world, nor even [to] a fraction of [its earlier fear and love].

ואין ערך ודמיון ביניהם כלל, כנודע לכל משכיל, שהגוף אינו יכול לסבול כו'

In fact, there is no comparison or similarity whatever between them — between the love and fear of G-d experienced by a soul on earth, and that of the soul above; [for] as is obvious to every intelligent man, the body could not bear etc. a love and fear of such intensity as the soul experienced above, in the spiritual realms.

Having concluded his comment on the formidable nature of the soul's descent, the Alter Rebbe returns to his original point: The descent of the soul is thus undertaken not for its own sake —

אלא ירידתו לעולם הזה, להתלבש בגוף ונפש החיונית, הוא כדי לתקנם בלבד

but its descent into this world, to be clothed in a body and vital soul, is for the sole purpose of perfecting them;

ולהפרידם מהרע של שלש קליפות הטמאות על ידי שמירת שס"ה לא תעשה וענפיהן

to separate them from the evil of the three impure *kelipot*, by observing the 365 prohibitions and their “offshoots” i.e., by observing the Biblical and Rabbinic prohibitions,

ולהעלות נפשו החיונית, עם חלקה השייך לה מכללות עולם הזה

and to elevate his vital soul, together with the portion of the world at large that belongs to it,

ולקשרם ולייחדם באור אין סוף ברוך הוא אשר ימשיך בהם על ידי קיומו כל רמ"ח מצות עשה בנפשו החיונית

binding and uniting them with the *Ein Sof*-light which he draws into them by performing all the 248 positive *mitzvot* through the agency of the vital soul,

שהיא היא המקיימת כל מצות מעשיות כנ"ל

since [the vital soul] is the one that performs all *mitzvot* involving action, as explained above, in ch. 36 — that the divine soul can activate the body in performance of the *mitzvot* only by way of the vital soul.

וכמו שכתוב בע' חיים, שער כ"ו כי הנשמה עצמה אינה צריכה תיקון כלל כו'

It is likewise written (in *Etz Chayim*, Portal 26) that the [divine] soul itself does not need perfecting at all...;

ולא הוצרכה להתלבש בעולם הזה וכו' רק להמשיך אור לתקנם כו'

and there is no need for it to be embodied in this world, in a body and vital soul... except to draw down light to perfect them — the vital soul and the body...

והוא ממש דוגמת סוד גלות השכינה לברר ניצוצין וכו'

and this parallels exactly<sup>7</sup> the mystery of “the exile of the *Shechinah*,” whose purpose is to refine the sparks of holiness which fell into the *kelipot*; so too does the divine soul enter into exile within the body and vital soul in order to perfect them, and to extract from them the sparks of holiness which they contain.

The foregoing discussion enables us to understand the particular virtue of *mitzvot* performed through action:

Creation, and the soul's descent into the body, were both intended for the purpose of elevating the body and vital soul, and thereby the entire world; moreover, this objective is reached primarily through the *mitzvot* involving action, inasmuch as these *mitzvot* are performed by the body and vital soul; these *mitzvot* are therefore of primary importance.

ובזה יובן מה שהפליגו רז"ל במאד מאד במעלת הצדקה, ואמרו ששקולה כנגד כל המצות

In light of the above, where it was explained that the advantage of the “active” *mitzvot* lies in their elevating effect on the body and vital soul, we can understand why our Sages so greatly extolled the virtue of charity,<sup>8</sup> declaring it equal to all the other *mitzvot* together.

ובכל תלמוד ירושלמי היא נקראת בשם מצוה סתם, כי כך היה הרגל הלשון לקרוא צדקה בשם מצוה סתם

In all of the *Talmud Yerushalmi* charity is called simply “The Commandment,” for such was the idiomatic expression commonly used to refer to charity: “The Commandment,”

מפני שהיא עיקר המצות מעשיות, ועולה על כולנה

because charity is the core of all the *mitzvot* of action and surpasses them all.

שכולן הן רק להעלות נפש החיונית לה', שהיא היא המקיימת אותן ומתלבשת בהן

For the purpose of all these *mitzvot* is only to elevate one's animal soul to G-d, since it is this vital soul that performs them and clothes itself in them,

ליכלל באור אין סוף ברוך הוא המלוכש בהם

so as to be absorbed into the blessed *Ein Sof*-light clothed in them.

ואין לך מצוה שנפש החיונית מתלבשת בה כל כך כבמצות הצדקה

Now, you will find no other *mitzvah* in which the vital soul is clothed to the same extent as in the *mitzvah* of charity.

שבכל המצות אין מתלבש בהן רק כח אחד מנפש החיונית, בשעת מעשה המצוה לבד

For in all other *mitzvot* only one faculty of the vital soul is clothed (e.g., the faculty of action in the hand donning *Tefillin* or holding an *etrog*); and even this one faculty is clothed in the *mitzvah* only while the *mitzvah* is being performed.

אבל בצדקה, שאדם נותן מיגיע כפיו

In the case of charity, however, which one gives from the proceeds of the toil of his hands,

הרי כל כח נפשו החיונית מלוכש בעשיית מלאכתו, או עסק אחר שנשתכר בה מעות אלו

surely all the strength of his vital soul is clothed in (i.e., applied to) the effort of his labor, or in any other occupation by which he earned this money which he now distributes for charity.

וכשנותנן לצדקה, הרי כל נפשו החיונית עולה לה'

Thus when he gives to charity this money to which he applied all the strength of his vital soul, his entire vital soul ascends to G-d. Hence the superiority of charity over other *mitzvot*.

But this seems to imply that if one does not invest all his strength into earning his livelihood, his charity lacks this quality; to which the Alter Rebbe rejoins:

וגם מי שאינו נהנה מיגיעו, מכל מקום הואיל ובמעוהו אלו היה יכול לקנות חיי נפשו החיונית, הרי נותן חיי נפשו לה'

Even he who does not earn his livelihood from his labors, nevertheless, since he could have purchased with this money that he gave for charity, sustenance for the life of his vital soul, he is actually giving his soul's life to G-d in the form of charity. Thus, charity comprises and therefore elevates more energy of the vital soul than any other *mitzvah*.

ולכן אמרו רז"ל שמקרבת את הגאולה

This is why our Sages have said<sup>9</sup> that charity hastens the Messianic redemption:

לפי שבצדקה אחת מעלה הרבה מנפש החיונית, מה שלא היה יכול להעלות ממנה כל כך כחות ובחינות בכמה מצות מעשיות אחרות

For with one act of charity one elevates a great deal of the vital soul; more of its faculties and powers, in fact, than he might elevate through many other active *mitzvot* [combined]. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Messianic Era is a result of our efforts in purifying and elevating the vital soul; charity, which effects this elevation in such great measure, thus hastens the redemption.

We see, at any rate, that charity is superior to all other *mitzvot*, including Torah study. But here one may object:

ומה שאמרו רז"ל שתלמוד תורה כנגד כולם

As for the statement of our Rabbis<sup>10</sup> that Torah study outweighs all other *mitzvot* — including charity; how can this be reconciled with what was said above?

היינו מפני שתלמוד תורה היא בדבור ומחשבה, שהם לבושים הפנימיים של נפש החיונית

This is because the study of Torah employs speech and thought, which are the inner garments of the vital soul — unlike action, which is external. Thus, only Torah study, and not other *mitzvot*, can suffuse the inner garments of the soul with the light of Torah.

וגם מהותן ועצמותן של בחינות חב"ד מקליפת נוגה שבנפש החיונית נכללות בקדושה ממש, כשעוסק בתורה בעיון ושכל

Furthermore, the very substance and essence of the intellectual faculties of *ChaBaD* (*Chochmah, Binah, Daat*) of the *kelipat nogah* in the vital soul are actually absorbed into holiness when one studies Torah with concentration and intelligence.

The intellectual faculties applied to Torah study are absorbed in the holiness of the *mitzvah* of Torah study, and thereby ascend from the realm of *kelipat nogah* (to which they previously belonged, being a part of the vital soul) to the realm of holiness.

Although it was explained in ch. 12 that the *Beinoni* is capable of transforming to holiness only the *garments* of the animal soul, not the soul faculties themselves, there is no contradiction here: the latter statement applies only to the *middot* (the emotional attributes) of the animal soul. The *Beinoni* is indeed incapable of transforming the *middot* to holiness; *ChaBaD*, however, can be transformed even by the *Beinoni*. The Alter Rebbe now explains the difference between them.

ואף שמהותן ועצמותן של המדות חג"ת כו' לא יכלו להם הבינונים להפכם לקדושה

Although *Beinonim* are incapable of mastering the substance and essence of the *middot* — *Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferet*, and so on — so as to transform them into holiness,

היינו משום שהרע חזק יותר במדות מבהב"ד, מפני יניקתן שם מהקדושה יותר, כידוע ליודעי ח"ן

this is because the evil of *kelipah* is stronger in the *middot* than in [*ChaBaD*:] the intellectual faculties, since on that level (of *middot*) they [the *kelipot*] draw more vitality than they do on the level of *ChaBaD*, as is known to students of the Kabbalah.

The “shattering of the vessels,” which gave rise to the existence of *kelipah*, occurred primarily in the *middot*, and it is therefore more difficult to elevate the evil of *middot*. The evil of *ChaBaD*, however, can be transformed to good through intensive Torah study.

Thus we have two reasons for the superiority of the *mitzvah* of Torah study: (a) it is practiced with the innermost soul garment — thought; (b) it transforms the actual soul faculties of *ChaBaD* themselves to holiness.

זאת ועוד אחרת, והיא העולה על כולנה, במעלת עסק תלמוד תורה על כל המצות

Aside from this, there is another, far more important, aspect to the superiority of Torah study over all other *mitzvot*,

על פי מה שכתוב לעיל בשם התיקונים, דרמ"ח פיקודין הן רמ"ח אברים דמלכא

based on the statement quoted above (ch. 23) from *Tikkunei Zohar* that “the 248 positive commandments are the 248 ‘limbs’ of the King (G-d).”

Just as a limb of the human body is a receptacle for a corresponding soul faculty, so is each *mitzvah* a receptacle for a corresponding expression of the Divine Will.

Concerning Torah, however, it is written in *Tikkunei Zohar*: “Torah and the Holy One, blessed be He, are *entirely* one” (unlike *mitzvot* which are merely “limbs”). The Alter Rebbe now elucidates the difference:

וכמו באדם התחתון, דרך משל, אין ערוך ודמיון כלל בין החיות שברמ"ח אבריו לגבי החיות שבמוחין, שהוא השכל, המתחלק לג' בחינות חב"ד

Just as, for example in the case of a human being, the vitality in his 248 organs bears no comparison or similarity to the vitality in his brain — i.e., the intellect, which is divided into the three faculties of *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat*, —

Every limb of the body is of course bound to the soul which provides it with life — yet they are two separate entities which have been joined together. It is otherwise, however, in the relationship between one's intellect and his soul. The intellect is an extension and a part of the soul itself: thus its unity with the soul is not that of two separate entities which have been joined, but of two components of a whole.

This difference between the limbs and the intellect illustrates the difference between the other *mitzvot* and Torah study, as the Alter Rebbe continues:

ככה ממש, דרך משל, להבדיל ברבבות הבדלות לאין ק', בהארת אור אין סוף ברוך הוא המתלבשות במצות מעשיות, לגבי הארת אור אין סוף שבבחינת חב"ד שבחכמת התורה, איש איש כפי שכלו והשגתו

Just as it is in the case of a human being, so, too, by way of analogy — allowing for the qualification that any comparison between human and divine traits must be distant, however, by myriads of degrees — is it with regard to the illumination of *Ein Sof*-light clothed in *mitzvot* of action, compared to the illumination of *Ein Sof*-light [clothed] in the *ChaBaD* faculties [of one immersed] in the wisdom of Torah, an illumination commensurate with the level of each man's intellect and his grasp of Torah. To the extent that his intellect grasps the Torah which he studies, it is united with G-dliness with a unity comparable to that of one's intellect with his soul.

Herein, then, lies the superiority of Torah study over other *mitzvot*, even over charity: Torah study effects a much higher level of unity with G-dliness than do the *mitzvot* of action.

ואף שאינו משיג אלא בגשמיות

Although one grasps [Torah] only as it is clothed in physical terms (e.g., the law concerning “Two men who clutch a garment...,” or “One who trades a cow for an ass...”); how, then, can it be said that through study of such laws one attains this lofty level of unity with G-dliness? —

הרי התורה נמשלה למים שיורדים ממקום גבוה כו', כמו שכתוב לעיל

yet the Torah has been compared to “water descending from a high place....” The water on the lower level is exactly the same as it was on the higher level. Similarly, the laws of Torah, although they have “descended” to deal with ordinary physical situations, still consist of G-d's Will and Wisdom. Thus, in studying Torah, one is united with G-d's Will and Wisdom, and thereby with G-d Himself, as discussed above (ch. 4).

ואף על פי כן אמרו רז"ל: לא המדרש עיקר אלא המעשה

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the superior level of unity with G-dliness attained only by Torah, our Sages have said:<sup>11</sup> “The essential thing is not study, but deed.”

והיום לעשותם כתיב, ומבטלין תלמוד תורה לקיום מצוה מעשיית, כשאי אפשר לעשותה על ידי אחרים

It is also written:<sup>12</sup> “This day, i.e., during our life in this world, the all-important thing is to *do* them” (the *mitzvot*). And the *Halachah* rules that one must interrupt Torah study to perform a *mitzvah* of action when it cannot be fulfilled by others.

משום כי זה כל האדם, ותכלית בריאתו וירידתו לעולם הזה

For “this (the active performance of *mitzvot*) is man’s entire purpose,” the purpose for which he was created and for which [his soul] descended to this world,

להיות לו יתברך דירה בתחתונים דוקא, לאהפכא חשוכא לנהורא

so that G-d may have an abode precisely in the *lowest* realms, to turn the darkness of this world into light of holiness,

וימלא כבוד ה' את כל הארץ הגשמית דייקא, וראו כל בשר יחדיו, כנ"ל

so that G-d’s glory fill specifically the entire *physical* world, and “all *flesh* will behold [G-dliness] together,” as was discussed above (ch. 36).

Thus, the goal of making this world an abode for G-d is achieved primarily through *mitzvot* of action. Therefore, when presented with the opportunity of performing a *mitzvah* that others cannot fulfill, one must fulfill this *mitzvah* even at the cost of interrupting his Torah studies, so that G-d’s desire for “an abode in the lower realms” be realized.

If, however, the *mitzvah* that clashes with one’s Torah study can be fulfilled by others, the choice is no longer between respecting or ignoring G-d’s desire for “an abode...” — whether he suspends his Torah study to perform the *mitzvah*, or continues his studies and leaves the *mitzvah* to others, this objective will be realized regardless. The choice is now between studying Torah and actively performing a *mitzvah*; and here Torah study prevails because of the superior level of unity that it effects between the Torah student’s soul and G-d.

In the Alter Rebbe’s words:

מה שאין כן כשאפשר לעשותה על ידי אחרים, אין מבטלין תלמוד תורה, אף שכל התורה אינה אלא פירוש המצות מעשיות

On the other hand, if [the *mitzvah*] can be performed by others, one does not interrupt Torah study to perform it, even though the whole Torah is, after all, only an explanation of the *mitzvot* of action.

והיינו משום שהיא בחינת חב"ד של אין סוף ברוך הוא, ובעסקו בה ממשיך עליו אור אין סוף ברוך הוא ביתר שאת והארה גדולה לאין ק' מהארה והמשכה על ידי פקודין, שהן אברים דמלכא

This is because the Torah is the level of *ChaBaD* of the blessed *Ein Sof*, and hence, when one is engaged in [studying] it he draws upon himself an infinitely greater illumination of the blessed *Ein Sof*-light — greater both in its illuminative power and in its higher quality — than the illumination and influence that one draws upon his soul through *mitzvot*, which are [merely] “organs” of the King.

What emerges from this discussion is that the effect of *mitzvot* consists primarily of the elevation of one’s *body* and the physical world in general; the effect of Torah study on the other hand is to unite the *soul* with G-d. Accordingly, the Alter Rebbe explains the following Talmudic statement:

וזה שאמר רב ששת: חדאי נפשאי, לך קראי, לך תנאי

This is what Rav Sheshet meant when he said,<sup>13</sup> “Rejoice, my soul! For you do I study Scripture; for you do I study *Mishnah*,”

For the soul, the unity with G-d attained through Torah (Scripture and *Mishnah*) is greater than that attained through *mitzvot*; he therefore addressed these words to it: “For *your* sake I learn....”

כמו שכתוב במקום אחר באריכות

as the superiority of the soul’s unity with G-d through Torah is explained elsewhere at length.<sup>14</sup>

Until here the Alter Rebbe has discussed the superiority of Torah study over other *mitzvot* in terms of its greater influence on the soul. He now begins to describe a far greater quality found in Torah study. Of all the *mitzvot*, only Torah study is described as “calling to G-d, as one calls to his friend, and as a son calls his father,” as the Alter Rebbe will state shortly. Whereas *mitzvot* have the effect of drawing the *light* of G-d (i.e., of His Will) upon the soul, Torah study “calls” G-d’s *essence* to man, as is implied in the analogy of one who calls to his friend: the friend will turn with his entire “essence” to face his caller.

Furthermore: As a means of “calling” G-d, Torah study is superior even to prayer. For this reason, in the verse, “G-d is near to all who call Him, to all who call Him *in truth*,” the first part of the verse refers to prayer and the latter to Torah.



The difference between the two forms of “calling G-d” is that prayer effects a change in material matters: healing, prosperity, etc., whereas the effect of Torah is in the soul, on the spiritual plane.

In the Alter Rebbe’s words:

והנה המשכה והארה זו שאדם ממשיך ומאיר מהארת אור אין סוף ברוך הוא על נפשו ועל נפשות כל ישראל

This influence and illumination generated by one’s Torah study, which man draws from the radiance of the *Ein Sof*-light upon his soul and upon the souls of all Israel,

היא השכינה, כנסת ישראל, מקור כל נשמות ישראל, כמו שכתוב לקמן

(meaning, as will be explained later, that the light is drawn into the spiritual level known as “the *Shechinah, Knesset Yisrael*” — the source of all the souls of Israel — and thereby the *Ein Sof*-light reaches not only the soul of the person studying Torah, but also that of every Jew), —

על ידי עסק התורה, נקראת בלשון קריאה

This illumination which one draws through his Torah study is referred to as “calling” [as in the Talmudic expression] (concerning a Torah student) *קורא בתורה* (usually translated as “One who reads (studies) the Torah,” but reinterpreted here as “One who calls [G-d] through the Torah”).

Just as calling in its usual sense means that the caller causes the person being called to come to him, to turn to him with his entire being, similarly in the context of “calling through Torah”:

קורא בתורה, פירוש: שעל ידי עסק התורה קורא להקב"ה לבוא אליו, כביכול

This [phrase] means that in Torah study one calls G-d to come to him, so to speak,

כאדם הקורא לחבירו שיבא אליו, וכבן קטן הקורא לאביו לבא אליו להיות עמו בצוותא חדא ולא ליפרד ממנו ולישאר יחידי, חס ושלום

as a man calls to his friend to come to him, or as a child will call his father to come and join him and not to part from him, leaving him alone, G-d forbid.

The former analogy pertains to those Jews designated as “brethren and friends” of G-d; when they study Torah they call their “friend”. The latter analogy pertains to those designed “children of G-d”; when they study Torah they are calling their “father”.

וזה שכתוב: קרוב ה' לכל קוראיו, לכל אשר יקראוהו באמת, ואין אמת אלא תורה, דהיינו שקורא להקב"ה על ידי התורה דוקא

This is the meaning of the verse:<sup>15</sup> “G-d is near (a) to all who call Him, (b) to all who call Him in truth,”<sup>16</sup> and<sup>17</sup> “There is no truth but Torah,” indicating that [one “calls G-d with truth”] as opposed to simply “calling G-d,” only by calling G-d through Torah study,

לאפוקי מי שקורא אותו שלא על ידי עסק התורה, אלא צועק אבא אבא

in contrast to one who does not call Him through Torah study, but merely cries: “Father, Father!”

This refers to the service of prayer, in which one calls G-d, out of love for Him, saying “Father...!” Such a call is not considered “calling with truth,” and thus the illumination of G-dly light generated by this call cannot compare with that generated by Torah, as explained above.

וכמו שקובל עליו הנביא: ואין קורא בשמך כו', כמו שכתוב במקום אחר

Over him who thus calls G-d the prophet laments:<sup>18</sup> “There is none who calls by Your Name,” as is written elsewhere.

Since he does not say simply: “There is none who calls You,” his intention must be that although there are indeed those who “call” G-d, yet they do not do so “by His Name,” meaning through Torah, “whose words throughout are the Names of G-d” (*Ramban*, Introduction to his commentary on the Torah, based on the *Zohar*).

ומזה יתבונן המשכיל להמשיך עליו יראה גדולה בשעת עסק התורה, כמו שכתוב לעיל פרק כ"ג

By dwelling on this matter, the intelligent person will derive means of drawing upon himself a great awe [of G-d] when he engages in Torah study, as explained above (in ch. 23).<sup>19</sup>

There it is stated that one’s Torah study must be permeated with awe of G-d (despite the apparent incompatibility between the intellectual boldness that characterizes study, and the constraint engendered by awe); this awe, moreover, is the goal of Torah study, while study is merely the “gateway”.

The thought that in Torah study one “calls” G-d to himself, just as, for example, one calls his friend to come to him, will surely arouse in the student a feeling of intense awe of G-d.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1.</sup> See *Shabbat* 108a.

<sup>2.</sup> *Tehillim* 35:10.

<sup>3.</sup> *Eruvin* 54a.

<sup>4.</sup> The Rebbe asks the following question: We are speaking here of the vital soul’s energy which is clothed in the letters of Torah study, prayer, and the performance of divine commandments. This energy comes from the person’s food and drink, which is

under the dominion of *kelipat nogah*. And it is through the vitalizing soul that the life-force of *kelipat nogah* is transformed and absorbed into holiness. Moreover, the Alter Rebbe is now about to explain more specifically how the vitalizing soul (and through it the general vitality of this world) is united with G-d's Will and infinite light through the performance of both the positive and prohibitive commands of the Torah.

This being so, why does the Alter Rebbe interpolate the phrase, "When the whole *neshamah*, the divine soul in all of Israel," when we are in reality speaking of the vitalizing soul?

The Rebbe says that the answer may possibly lie in the fact that a certain number of the 613 commandments are carried out through a person's thought processes. The effect of the vitalizing soul, however, is felt mostly in those matters that relate to speech and action, inasmuch as the vitalizing soul is bound up with the corporeal limbs and organs. These are utilized for those commandments that are performed through action or speech. Conversely, the commandments performed through the person's thought are for the most part carried out by the divine soul without the intermediacy of the vitalizing soul. The term "divine soul" is therefore used here, for the ultimate source of power that enables a person to perform *all* the commandments is the divine soul.

[5.](#) *Zechariah* 13:2.

[6.](#) *Devarim* 4:35.

[7.](#) The Rebbe explains how "the mystery of 'the exile of the *Shechinah*'" relates to the subject at hand.

On the surface, the soul's descent into this world, and its concomitant suffering, is truly inexplicable. The soul is an entity which is truly a part of G-d Above, emanating, as it does, from Supernal Wisdom which is wholly at one with G-d Himself.

That such a holy being should descend into this world merely to rectify the vitalizing soul and the body whose source is in *kelipat nogah*, strains the bonds of credulity. For even after the divine soul completely rectifies them — as in the divine service of a consummate *tzaddik* — the body is still unable to harbor the same love of G-d which the soul felt prior to its descent. Why, then, *did* the soul descend into this world

The Alter Rebbe addresses this question, writes the Rebbe, by stating that the soul's descent parallels exactly the mystery of the exile of the *Shechinah*, whose purpose is to refine the sparks of holiness which fell into the *kelipot*. We shall soon learn that the *Shechinah* is the source of the divine soul. Furthermore, all things found within this world were created from the sparks of holiness, including the body and the vitalizing soul. Hence the parallel. The soul, whose source is the *Shechinah*, descends into this world to refine the body and vitalizing soul, whose source is the holy sparks. And just as the exile of the *Shechinah* is deemed a mystery, for its descent defies logic, so, too, is the soul's descent into the body and vitalizing soul a mystery: it defies mortal reason.

8. *Bava Batra* 9a.
9. *Ibid.* 10a.
10. *Peah* 1:1.
11. *Avot* 1:17.
12. *Devarim* 7:11.
13. *Pesachim* 68b.
14. The Rebbe notes: “Possibly this alludes to the discourse in *Torah Or*, beginning of *Parshat Mishpatim*.”
15. *Tehillim* 145:18.
16. The division into (a) and (b) is by the Rebbe, who notes that this accords with the explanation given in *Sanhedrin* 39b, and in the *Siddur* [with chassidic commentary] on this verse.
17. *Tanna devei Eliyahu Zuta*, ch. 21.
18. *Yeshayahu* 64:6.
19. The Rebbe asks the following question. What reason is there for the Alter Rebbe to refer the reader back to ch. 23, when arousal of great reverence is achieved only by meditating on that which is stated in this chapter, and not in ch. 23? For in this chapter the Alter Rebbe stresses that through his Torah study a person is able to draw down G-d Himself, as it were, like a person calling his friend to come to him. In ch. 23, however, we find only that Torah study enables the person to draw down the Supernal Will and Light; it mentions nothing of drawing down G-d Himself. Why, then, does the Alter Rebbe connect ch. 23 to that which is being discussed here?

We must say, writes the Rebbe, that the Alter Rebbe does so in order to stress that great reverence is *indispensable* during Torah study. Since fear is an emotion that leads to withdrawal and contraction it would seem to be inimical to Torah study, which requires openness and expansiveness. The Alter Rebbe therefore cites ch. 23, wherein he explained that great reverence must be felt *during* one’s study of Torah. Furthermore, by citing the above-mentioned chapter the Alter Rebbe indicates that one should ponder the statement there — that Torah study is “secondary” to reverence, and serves to arouse it.

This is the meaning of the verse, “And G-d commanded us [to obey] all these statutes, in order to fear G-d...” This, explains the Alter Rebbe at the end of ch. 23, implies that (a) the ultimate purpose of the Torah — “commanded us” — is “in order to fear G-d”; (b) that Torah is called “a gateway to the dwelling” of fear. Thus Torah in relation to fear is a matter of secondary importance, a mere gateway to the house itself.

All the above is discussed in ch. 23, and it is this that the Alter Rebbe intended to convey when he cited that chapter.

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## Chapter 38

In the previous chapters the Alter Rebbe discussed the distinctive merit of *mitzvot* performed by speech and action, for by means of them the vitalizing soul is elevated to holiness. The *mitzvot* have this ability for they are performed with the power of the vitalizing soul that vivifies the physical limbs that perform them, and with the physical tongue and lips etc. that utter the words of Torah and prayer.

Since the ultimate intent of the soul's descent is not for the sake of the soul alone but in order to elevate the vitalizing soul and the corporeal body, this is accomplished specifically through *mitzvot* that require physical action and speech.

והנה, עם כל הנ"ל יובן היטב פסק ההלכה הערוכה בתלמוד ופוסקים דהרהור לאו כדבור דמי

In light of all that has been said above concerning the particular virtue of *mitzvot* performed in action and speech, in their elevation of the vital soul to holiness, one will clearly understand the halachic decision expressly stated in the *Talmud* and the Codes<sup>1</sup> that meditation is not valid in lieu of verbal articulation.

ואם קרא קריאת שמע במחשבתו ובלבו לבד בכל כח כוונתו לא יצא ידי חובתו, וצריך לחזור ולקרוא

Thus, if one recited the *Shema* in his thought and heart alone, even if he did so with the full power of his concentration, he has not fulfilled his obligation of reciting the *Shema*, by merely meditating on the words that comprise it; he must repeat it [verbally].

וכן בברכת המזון דאורייתא

The same is true of the grace after meals,<sup>2</sup> ordained by the Torah,<sup>3</sup>

Although the Torah does not state with regard to grace, as it does of *Shema*: “And you shall *speak* these words,” yet one cannot fulfill this duty by mere thought.

ובשאר ברכות דרבנן, ובתפלה

and [similarly with] other blessings,<sup>4</sup> although they are merely Rabbinic in origin; and so too with prayer;<sup>5</sup> although prayer is “a service of the *heart*,” it cannot be confined to the heart but must be articulated orally.

The Rebbe comments that this *halachah* poses no intrinsic difficulty, since one can no more ask why G-d stipulated that a particular thought (*Shema*, prayer, and the like) must also be verbalized, than one can ask why the *mitzvah* was ordained at all. However, we

must understand why it is that when a *mitzvah* is composed of both speech and thought the law states that verbalization without intent does fulfill the obligation; intent without verbalization does not.

For this reason, the Alter Rebbe continues the question, as follows:

ואם הוציא בשפתיו ולא כיון לבו, יצא ידי חובתו בדיעבד, ואין צריך לחזור

If, on the other hand, one spoke the words (of *Shema*, prayer, etc.) but did not concentrate his thought, he has, *post facto*, fulfilled his obligation (although he was initially required to concentrate), and need not repeat them with concentration,

לבד מפסוק ראשון של קריאת שמע, וברכה ראשונה של תפלת שמונה עשרה

except for the first verse of *Shema*<sup>6</sup> and the first blessing in *Shemoneh-Esreh*<sup>7</sup> where the law requires one to repeat them if he did not concentrate on their meaning while reciting them.

וכדאיתא ברפ"ב דברכות : עד כאן מצות כוונה, מכאן ואילך מצות קריאה וכו'

It is thus written (Tractate *Berachot*, beginning of ch. 2):<sup>8</sup> “Until here i.e., until the end of the first verse of *Shema*, the *mitzvah* is one of concentration, from here on the *mitzvah* consists of recitation...,” and one has fulfilled his obligation even if he did not concentrate.

How, then, are we to reconcile both *halachot*? Why is thought without speech not as acceptable as speech without thought? The answer lies in the discussion of the unique status of *mitzvot* performed in action and speech, as explained in the previous chapter.

והיינו משום שהנשמה אינה צריכה תיקון לעצמה במצות

This is because the [divine] soul does not need to perfect itself through *mitzvot*;

רק להמשיך אור לתקן נפש החיונית והגוף

rather, the goal of *mitzvot* is to draw down [G-dly] light to perfect the vital soul and the body.

על ידי אותיות הדבור שהנפש מדברת בה' מוצאות הפה, וכן במצות מעשיות שהנפש עושה בשאר אברי הגוף

This is accomplished by means of the letters of speech, which the soul utters by means of the five organs of verbal articulation, and through the *mitzvot* of action which the soul performs by means of the body's other organs.

The *mitzvot* involving speech and action, which utilize the power of the vital soul and the organs of the body, serve to elevate them. Since the ultimate goal is the perfection of the vital soul and the body, thought alone, being the province of the divine soul, cannot

satisfy the demands of the *mitzvot* of speech; they require verbal articulation. Speech alone, however, without thought, is sufficient, since the vital soul and the body are elevated thereby.

\* \* \*

From the beginning of ch. 35 until here, the Alter Rebbe has expounded the phrase “to *do* it,” — the conclusion of the verse, “For the matter (of observing Torah and *mitzvot*) is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart that you may *do* it.” He explained that the *mitzvot* of action (and of speech, which is also deemed “action”) are of paramount importance, since it is through them that we achieve the goal of transforming this physical world into a “dwelling place for G-d in the lower realms,” i.e., a place where G-dliness will be revealed to an even greater degree than it is in the higher, spiritual worlds.

This goal will be realized when the energy of the vital soul and the body of every Jew will ascend from *kelipat nogah* to holiness. Thereby all of *kelipat nogah*, meaning the vitality of the entire world, will ascend to holiness, and automatically the three impure *kelipot* will cease to exist. Thus, there will be no obstruction of G-dliness in the world; G-dliness will radiate throughout; the world will be G-d’s “dwelling place.”

Since the entire process hinges on the elevation of a Jew’s body and his vital soul, and since their elevation is accomplished only by means of the *mitzvot* of action, which require their power in performance of the *mitzvot*, therefore the *mitzvot* of action are, as said, of paramount importance.

In the discussion that now follows, the Alter Rebbe will examine the other side of the coin. He will explain the importance of *kavanah* — “devout concentration,” or “intention” — in the performance of *mitzvot*. As used in this context, *kavanah* refers to the motivating intention that by performing a *mitzvah* one is united with G-d, Whose command and Will each *mitzvah* represents.

אך אף על פי כן אמרו: תפלה או שאר ברכה בלא כוונה הן כגוף בלא נשמה

Yet nevertheless, it has been said<sup>9</sup> that prayer, or any other blessing, said without *kavanah*, is like a body without a soul.

פירוש:

This comparison of the words of prayer to a body, and of *kavanah* to its soul, means [as follows]:

כי כמו שכל הברואים שבעולם הזה שיש להם גוף ונשמה

Just as all the creatures of this world possessing a body and a soul

שהם נפש כל חי, ורוח בשר איש, ונשמת כל אשר רוח חיים באפיו מכל בעלי חיים

— meaning the *Nefesh* of every living being, the *Ruach* of all human flesh, and the *Neshamah* of all that has the breath of life in its nostrils among all living creatures —

וה' מחיה את כולם, ומהוה אותם מאין ליש תמיד באור וחיות שמשפיע בהם

G-d animates them all, and creates them constantly out of nothingness by the light and vitality which He bestows upon them i.e., upon both the soul and the body; and in support of his contention that the body, too, has a G-dly life-force (aside from the soul), the Alter Rebbe adds parenthetically:

שגם הגוף החומרי, ואפילו אבנים ועפר הדומם ממש, יש בו אור וחיות ממנו יתברך, שלא יחזור להיות אין ואפס כשהיה

— for even the material body, and furthermore even the very stones and earth which are absolutely inanimate, lacking even that sign of life found in plant-life, i.e., growth,— even the totally inanimate being has within it light and vitality from G-d, so that it should not revert to naught and nothingness, as it was before it was created.

(Further in *Tanya*, the Alter Rebbe explains that every existing being would instantly revert to absolute nothingness, were it not for the G-dly life-force constantly creating it, and keeping it in existence. Thus, even the inanimate beings contain a life-force, and so surely, do the bodies of living creatures.)

ואף על פי כן אין ערך ודמיון כלל בין בחינת אור וחיות המאיר בגוף, לגבי בחינת אור וחיות המאיר בנשמה, שהיא נפש כל חי

(The Alter Rebbe now concludes the sentence begun earlier:) Just as in all the creatures of this world possessing a body and a soul, there is, nevertheless, i.e., despite the fact that body and soul are alike in that they both contain a divine life-force, there is nevertheless no comparison or similarity between the quality of the light and life-force radiating in the body, and the light and life-force radiating in the *Neshamah*, which is the soul of every living thing.

It is axiomatic that the physical is incomparable to the spiritual (so much so, that philosophers agree that the evolution of the material from the spiritual is the most radical form of creation *ex nihilo*). The body, being physical, is thus incomparable to the soul, which is spiritual.

This difference between them is obviously due to the difference between the respective divine life-forces creating them. The Alter Rebbe will now explain in what way these life-forces differ. The difference is surely not one of varying *degrees of revelation* of the divine life-force — that in the body this life-force is in concealment, while in the soul it stands revealed. In this respect body and soul are alike. The veil of *kelipat nogah*, which obscures G-dliness in this physical world as a whole, envelops both body and soul.



Therefore, just as the body does not attest to the fact that it is the product of divine creative power, so does the soul of living creatures belie the fact that its life-giving properties are G-dly. Thus, the divine life-force is concealed equally in body and soul. The difference between them lies, rather, in the intensity of G-dly life-force that each contains: in the body the life-force is contracted, so that the body is a physical being; in the soul the life-force is freely bestowed, and the soul is therefore a spiritual, life-giving being.

In the Alter Rebbe's words:

ואף שבשניהם אור אחד שוה בבחינת הסתר פנים

True, in terms of the “concealment of Countenance” i.e., the degree to which the “Countenance,” the *inner* aspect of the divine life-force, is concealed, the light i.e., the divine creative life-force is the same in both [body and soul] — it is concealed equally in both.

ולבושים שוים שהאור מסתתר ומתעלם ומתלבש בהם

The garments in which the light hides, conceals and clothes itself are identical [in body and soul].

כי שניהם הם מעולם הזה, שבכללותו מסתתר בשוה האור והחיות שמרוח פיו יתברך

For both [body and soul] are of this world where, throughout the world and all its creatures (spiritual as well as physical), the light and life-force issuing from “the breath of [G-d's] mouth” are equally concealed,

בבחינת הסתר פנים, וירידת המדרגות בהשתלשלות העולמות ממדרגה למדרגה בצמצומים רבים ועצומים

by “concealment of the Countenance,” and [by] the descent of the life-force from level to level, by means of numerous powerful *tzimtzumim* (contractions) through the various levels [constituting] the chain-like succession of worlds,

עד שנתלבש בקליפת נוגה, להחיות כללות עולם הזה החומרי

finally clothing itself in *kelipat nogah*, in order to give life to the totality of this material world.

The Alter Rebbe has here described the process whereby the divine life-force descends from its lofty, G-dly origin to the point where it creates and gives life to physical matter; i.e., from “the breath of G-d's mouth” — a reference to *Malchut* of the World of *Atzilut* — to the World of material *Asiyah*.

He defines various steps in this process: (1) “descent from level to level”; (2) “numerous *tzimtzumim*”; (3) “powerful *tzimtzumim*”; (4) “clothing itself in *kelipat nogah*.”

Let us examine them individually:

(1) “Descent from level to level:” To reach down to the level of *Asiyah*, the life-force must first descend from the World of *Atzilut* to *Beriah*, thence to *Yetzirah*, and finally to *Asiyah*. Within each of these Worlds there are many levels, and the life-force must descend through them all before reaching the next lowest World.

(2) “Numerous *tzimtzumim*.” Each descent of the life-force entails a “contraction” of the light and life-force, lessening its intensity.

But descent and *tzimtzumim* alone, no matter how numerous, will still not make possible the creation of a physical being; the divine life-force would still be at a level where anything created by it would be a spiritual being, albeit of a lower grade of spirituality. The creation of physical matter presupposes another condition, viz.:

(3) “Powerful *tzimtzumim*.” I.e., *tzimtzumim* which entirely change the *character* of the life-force (and not only its intensity), to the point where it can create and give life to material beings. But even this type of *tzimtzum* cannot produce a world like ours, in which it is not apparent that G-d is the Creator, and where, in fact, G-d’s creations can be used in defiance of His Will. This is achieved only when —

(4) “The life-force... clothes itself in *kelipat nogah*” (and thereby also in the other *kelipot*, as will soon be explained). As defined in the first chapter of *Tanya*, *kelipat nogah* is a mixture of good and evil. Therefore, whatever receives its G-dly life-force through the veil of *kelipat nogah* (in which the life-force is clothed) can be utilized either for a holy purpose, in serving G-d’s Will through performing a *mitzvah*, or for an unholy purpose, in violating His Will through a sinful act.

In summary: Through many descents and powerful *tzimtzumim*, the G-dly life-force clothes itself in *kelipat nogah*, and thereby gives life to all the creatures of this world.

The Alter Rebbe now distinguishes between permitted and forbidden objects. The former receive their life-force directly through *kelipat nogah*; for the latter to receive the G-dly life-force clothed in *kelipat nogah*, it must first descend still further, to be veiled in the three completely impure *kelipot*.

דהיינו כל דברים המותרים והטהורים שבעולם הזה, וממנה ועל ידה מושפעים דברים הטמאים כי היא בחינה ממוצעת, כנ"ל

This means: (1) all things of this world that are permitted and pure which receive their vitality directly via *kelipat nogah*; and from and through [*kelipat nogah*] evolve (2) all impure, forbidden things, which derive their vitality from the three impure *kelipot*; yet their vitality too, stems from *nogah* since it is the intermediary level between holiness (where *all* life originates) and the three impure *kelipot*, as mentioned above.

We can conclude from this that there is no difference between the life-force of the soul and that of the body in terms of revelation or concealment. Since both body and soul are of this world, the life-force in them is equally concealed in the veil of *kelipat nogah*.

אף על פי כן, ההארה, שהיא המשכת החיות אשר ה' מאיר ומחיה דרך לבוש זה

Nevertheless, the [G-dly] illumination, meaning the flow of vitality by which G-d illumines and gives life to *all* creatures of this world by way of this garment i.e., *kelipat nogah*,

אינה שוה בכולן, בבחינת צמצום והתפשטות

is not the same for them all, and the difference between the life-force of the various creatures is in terms of contraction and expansion. In some creatures the life-force is constricted and limited, while in others it finds broader expression.

The difference between “concealment” (*hester*) of the life-force and its “contraction” (*tzimtzum*) can be expressed as follows:

Suppose one hangs a thick curtain on a window to screen out the sunlight. The light entering the room through the curtain will be of an entirely different quality; in fact it might be described as a mere echo of the original light. This is “concealment”.

If on the other hand, one boards up the window and leaves only a tiny hole by which the light may pass, the light shining through the hole, though greatly restricted, will be the same, qualitatively, as the original light. This is what is meant by “contraction”.

So it is too with regard to our subject: *Kelipat nogah* is the thick curtain which veils the divine creative power equally from *all* creatures of this world. This “curtained” light varies, however, from one creature to another in degree of contraction. The Alter Rebbe now goes on to enumerate these differences:

כי בגוף הגשמי והדומם ממש כאבנים ועפר

In the physical body [of a living creature], and in an absolutely inanimate [being] such as stones or earth, in which no life or spirituality are apparent, since they lack even the power of growth,

ההארה היא בבחינת צמצום גדול אשר אין כמוהו

the ray of the divine creative power is in a state of unparalleled contraction.

והחיות שבו מועטת כל כך עד שאין בו אפילו כח הצומח

So minute is the life-force within these inanimate beings that they lack even the power of growth.

ובצומח ההארה אינה בצמצום גדול כל כך

In vegetation, the ray is not so greatly contracted; the phenomenon of growth indicates the presence of something more than mere physical matter; some degree of spirituality is in evidence.

ודרך כלל נחלקות לארבע מדרגות: דומם, צומח, חי, מדבר

In general [all things in this world] are divided into four categories: mineral, vegetable, animal and man (lit., “the speaker”),

כנגד ד' אותיות שם הוי"ו, ברוך הוא, שממנו מושפעים

corresponding to the four letters of the Divine Name (the Tetragrammaton) from which they are derived. Each of these four categories receives its vitality from one of the four letters.

וכמו שאין ערך ודמיון ההארה והמשכת החיות שבדומם וצומח, להארה והמשכת החיות המלוכשות בחי ומדבר

Now, just as the illumination and the flow of vitality found in the mineral and vegetable [categories] bears no comparison or likeness to the illumination and flow of vitality clothed in animals and man (since in the latter two categories it is clearly apparent that they are alive) —

אף שבכולם אור אחד שוה בבחינת הסתר פנים, ומלוכש בלבוש אחד בכולם, שהוא לבוש נוגה

although in all [four categories] the [divine animating] light is the same in terms of the “concealment of Countenance” i.e., in all four categories the inner aspect of the divine light is concealed equally, and in all [four categories the light] is clothed in the same garment, namely the garment i.e., veil of *nogah*; hence, in none of these categories is it apparent that their vitality is actually G-dliness — yet despite this equality, the vitality of inanimate beings and plants is incomparable to that of animals and man;

כך אין ערך ודמיון כלל בין הארת והמשכת אור אין סוף ברוך הוא, שהוא פנימיות רצונו יתברך, בלי הסתר פנים ולבוש כלל

similarly, there is no comparison or likeness between the illumination and flow of the blessed *Ein Sof*-light — meaning the inner aspect of His Will, without “concealment of Countenance” and with no garment whatsoever —

המאירה ומלוכשת במצות מעשיות ממש. וכן במצות התלויות בדבור וביטוי שפתיים בלי כוונה, שהוא נחשב כמעשה ממש, כנ"ל

as it radiates in and is clothed within the *mitzvot* consisting of action — whether actual action, or *mitzvot* performed through speech and verbal articulation which is regarded as actual action as mentioned above — when performed without *kavanah*,

לגבי ההארה והמשכת אור אין סוף ברוך הוא המאירה ומלובשת בכוונת המצות מעשיות

[The illumination of *Ein Sof* found in these *mitzvot* bears no likeness or comparison] with the [superior] illumination and flow of the blessed *Ein Sof*-light radiating and clothed in the *kavanah* of the *mitzvot* of action,

שהאדם מתכוין בעשייתו כדי לדבקה בו יתברך על ידי קיום רצונו, שהוא ורצונו אחד

meaning man's intention to attach himself to G-d by fulfilling His Will as expressed in the *mitzvot*, since He and His Will are one.

וכן בכוונת התפלה, וקריאת שמע וברכותיה, ושאר הברכות, שבכוונתו בהן מדבק מחשבתו ושכלו בו יתברך

Similarly with regard to *kavanah* in prayer, the recital of *Shema* and its blessings, and in other blessings, where, through one's *kavanah* in them, he attaches his thought and intellect to G-d.

ולא שדבקות המחשבה ושכל האדם בו יתברך היא מצד עצמה למעלה מדבקות קיום המצות מעשיות בפועל  
ממש

It is not that attachment of man's thought and intellect to G-d is intrinsically superior to attachment through the actual, practical fulfillment of the *mitzvot* dependent on action —

כמו שכתוב לקמן

for as will be explained further on the unity with G-d achieved by performance of *mitzvot* is described in the same terms as the unity of husband and wife — “*kiddushin*”, as we say in the blessing preceding the fulfillment of a *mitzvah*: “...G-d,... Who sanctified us (קדשנו) with His commandments....” Naturally, man cannot attain this degree of unity with G-d by his own efforts. It is only by G-d's kindness in charging us with the *mitzvot* that we become united with Him thereby.

Obviously, the quality of man's attachment to G-d through *kavanah* cannot surpass that of the performance of *mitzvot*, which possesses the G-d-given ability to unite man with Him. Where, then, lies the superiority of *kavanah* over actual performance of *mitzvot* (described earlier as paralleling the superiority of soul over body)?

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to say that, like the actual *mitzvot* themselves, man's *kavanah* in performing them expresses G-d's Will. It is the illumination of Divine Will contained in *kavanah* that is superior. In the Alter Rebbe's words:

אלא מפני שזהו גם כן רצונו יתברך, לדבקה בשכל ומחשבה וכוונת המצות מעשיות ובכוונת קריאת שמע ותפלה ושאר ברכות

Rather *kavanah* is superior because this, too, is G-d's Will — that one attach himself to Him by intellect and thought, and [by] the *kavanah* of the active *mitzvot*, and by one's *kavanah* during the recital of *Shema*, and in prayer and other blessings;

והארת רצון העליון הזה המאירה ומלובשת בכוונה זו

and the illumination of the Supernal Will that radiates and is clothed in this *kavanah*

היא גדולה לאין קץ למעלה מעלה מהארת רצון העליון המאירה ומלובשת בקיום המצות עצמן במעשה ובדבור בלי כוונה

is infinitely greater and loftier than the illumination of the Supernal Will that radiates and is clothed in the performance of the *mitzvot* themselves, in action and speech, without *kavanah*.

כגודל מעלת אור הנשמה על הגוף שהוא כלי ומלבוש הנשמה, כמו גוף המצוה עצמה שהוא כלי ומלבוש לכוונתה

This superiority of *kavanah* is similar to the superiority of the light of the soul over the body, which is a vessel and garment for the soul — just as the body of the actual *mitzvah* is a vessel and garment for its *kavanah*. For this reason, then, the performance of a *mitzvah* is likened to a body, and its *kavanah* to a soul.

ואף שבשתייהן, במצוה ובכוונתה, מלובש רצון אחד, פשוט בתכלית הפשיטות בלי שום שינוי וריבוי, חס ושלו, ומיוחד במהותו ועצמותו יתברך בתכלית היחוד

True, although both the actual *mitzvah* and its *kavanah* contain the same [Supernal] Will, which is perfectly simple, i.e., changeless and indivisible so that it cannot be said that *kavanah* contains “more” of G-d's Will and performance contains “less”, and [this Will] is united with G-d's essence and being in perfect unity,

אף על פי כן ההארה אינה שווה בבחינת צמצום והתפשטות

nevertheless, the illumination of the Supernal Will in one's soul is different in terms of its contraction and expansion.\*

In the performance of a *mitzvah* this illumination is in a state of “contraction”; one's attachment to G-d's Will is not readily apparent. In the *kavanah*, however, the illumination is in a state of “expansion” and revelation in one's soul: here, clearly, one's thought and intellect are attached to G-d.

\*NOTE

In the note which follows, the Alter Rebbe traces the difference between *mitzvot* and their *kavanah* to their source in the Supernal *Sefirot*.

Each *Sefirah* consists of an *or*, a “light”, and a *keli*, a vessel or receptacle for the *or*. The *kelim* of the *Sefirot* have a well-defined character: one is *Chochmah*, another *Binah*, and so forth. The *orot*, however, are G-dly energy, “simple” in the sense that they are devoid of definition, unlimited, and not restricted to any specific character.

Restated, this means that *kelim* are “contracted” and limited, while “*orot*” are “expanded” and unconfined — the very traits that differentiate between *mitzvot* and their *kavanah*.

הגהה

וכמו שכתוב בעץ חיים שכוונת המצות ותלמוד תורה היא במדרגת אור, וגוף המצות הן מדרגות ובחינת כלים

It is also so explained in *Etz Chayim* that *kavanah* in *mitzvot* and in Torah study is on the level of “light”, while the “body” *i.e.*, *performance* of the *mitzvot* is the level and category of “vessels”.

שהם בחינת צמצום, שעל ידי צמצום האור נתהוו הכלים

These [vessels] represent “contraction”, for it is through contraction of the light that the vessels came into being,

כידוע ליודעי ח"ן

as is known to those familiar with the Kabbalah (lit., “esoteric wisdom”).

Similarly, the difference between *mitzvot* and their *kavanah* is one of contraction and expansion respectively, as explained above.

END OF NOTE

The Alter Rebbe now expands the analogy of body and soul to *mitzvot* and *kavanah*. He states that just as in the analogy all existence is classified into four categories, with two of them (mineral and vegetable) belonging in turn to the broader category of “body-beings”, and two (animal and man) to the broader category of “soul-beings”, so it is also with regard to *mitzvot* and *kavanah*.

The Alter Rebbe now resumes the thought intercepted by the above Note.

ונהלקת גם כן לארבע מדרגות

They, too (the *mitzvot* and their *kavanah*), are differentiated into four levels.

כי גוף המצות עצמן ממש הן ב' מדרגות, שהן מצות מעשיות ממש

For the “body” of the *mitzvot* themselves comprises two levels, namely, *mitzvot* consisting of real action (as opposed to speech, which is merely “regarded as action”),

ומצות התלויות בדבור ומחשבה, כמו תלמוד תורה וקריאת שמע ותפלה וברכת המזון ושאר ברכות

and *mitzvot* performed with speech and thought, such as Torah study, reciting the *Shema*, praying, saying the grace after meals, and other blessings. Both these levels — (a) action, and (b) thought and speech — are subdivisions of the category of the “body” of *mitzvot*.

וכוונת המצות, לדבקה בו יתברך, שהיא כנשמה לגוף

The *kavanah* of *mitzvot*, i.e., one’s intention to attach oneself to G-d by performing the *mitzvah*, this (the *kavanah*) being like a soul for the body of the *mitzvah*,

נחלקת גם כן לשתי מדרגות, כמו שתי מדרגות הנשמה שהן בגוף החומרי שהן חי ומדבר

is likewise divided into two levels — corresponding to the two levels of soul found in material bodies, namely (a) in animals, and (b) in man.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to discuss two levels in *kavanah*, the higher one of which is comparable to the soul of man, and the lower to the soul of animals.

כי מי שדעתו יפה לדעת את ה' ולהתבונן בגדולתו יתברך

The first level is that of a person discerning enough to know G-d and to reflect on His greatness,

ולהוליד מבינתו יראה עילאה במוחו, ואהבת ה' בחלל הימני שבלבו

and to create out of his understanding a lofty fear in his mind and a love of G-d in the right part of his heart (the seat of the divine soul’s emotions),

להיות נפשו צמאה לה' לדבקה בו

so that his soul thirsts for G-d [seeking] to cleave to Him

על ידי קיום התורה והמצות, שהן המשכת והארת אור אין סוף ברוך הוא על נפשו לדבקה בו

by fulfilling the Torah and *mitzvot*, which are the extension and illumination of the *Ein Sof*-light upon one’s soul by which one may cleave to Him.

In other words, this person’s desire to cleave to G-d through the only means of doing so, viz., Torah and *mitzvot*, stems from a love and awe of G-d created by intellectual appreciation of His greatness. His *kavanah* in *mitzvot* (i.e., his desire to cleave to G-d through *mitzvot*) thus has an intellectual basis.



ובכוונה זו הוא לומד ומקיים המצות, וכן בכוונה זו מתפלל ומברך

When he studies [Torah] and fulfills the *mitzvot* [it is] with this *kavanah*, and likewise when he prays and recites blessings [it is] with this *kavanah* of cleaving to G-d Whose greatness he has come to understand.

הרי כוונה זו על דרך משל כמו נשמת המדבר, שהוא בעל שכל ובחירה, ובדעת ידבר

Such *kavanah* is analogous to the soul of a human being, who possesses intelligence and freedom of choice and who speaks with wisdom, for such *kavanah* is likewise based on intellect and choice.

ומי שדעתו קצרה לידע ולהתבונן בגדולת אין סוף ברוך הוא

The second level of *kavanah* is that of a person whose understanding is too limited to know and to reflect on the greatness of the blessed *Ein Sof*,

להוליד האהבה מבינתו בהתגלות לבו, וכן היראה במוחו, ופחד ה' בלבו

so as to create out of his understanding a revealed love in his heart, and also awe in his mind and dread of G-d in his heart. His level of understanding is inadequate to create a palpable spiritual emotion.

Since one's observance of the *mitzvot* is contingent on love of G-d, and refraining from sin is contingent on fear of G-d, how can one who cannot evoke these emotions because of his limited understanding fulfill the Torah and *mitzvot*? What motivates *him*?

Such a person, the Alter Rebbe will say, is motivated by his arousal of the "hidden love," the love of G-d (which also comprises an aspect of fear) hidden in the heart of every Jew.

Even if he cannot arouse this love to a revealed state, where he can actually *feel* this love (and fear) in his heart, he can surely arouse it in his mind, so that at that level he will experience a conscious desire to attach himself to G-d. This desire will lead him to study Torah and fulfill the *mitzvot*, since this is the only way for him to realize his wish.

In this case, his *kavanah* in Torah study and in *mitzvot* (i.e., his desire to cleave to G-d) is based on "instinct", i.e., on the innate love of G-d found in his heart. This level of *kavanah* therefore resembles the soul of an animal, whose actions are instinctive, not rational.

In the Alter Rebbe's words:

רק שזוכר ומעורר את האהבה הטבעית המסותרת בלבו

He merely recalls and arouses the natural love hidden in his heart,

ומוציאה מההעלם והסתר הלב אל הגילוי במוח, על כל פנים

and brings it out of concealment in his heart to a state of consciousness, in his mind at least (even if he cannot arouse a revealed feeling of love in his heart, surely he can summon it to mental consciousness),

שיהיה רצונו שבמוחו ותעלומות לבו מסכים ומתרצה בריצוי גמור באמת לאמיתו

so that his will in his mind and in the recesses of his heart should approve and consent, with complete willingness and perfect sincerity

למסור נפשו בפועל ממש על יחוד ה'

to surrender his life in martyrdom, in actual fact (not merely as a figure of speech), for his affirmation of the unity of G-d (rejecting belief in any other divinity),

כדי לדבקה בו נפשו האלקית ולבושיה, ולכללן ביחודו ואחדותו

in order to attach to Him his divine soul and its garments of thought, speech and action, and to unite them with His unity —

שהוא רצון העליון המלוּבש בתלמוד תורה וקיום המצות, כנ"ל

which is identical with the Supernal Will that is clothed in Torah study and performance of the *mitzvot*, as explained above.

Like martyrdom that one undergoes out of love for G-d, study of the Torah and performance of the *mitzvot* unite the soul with G-d. Therefore, one's arousal of his natural love of G-d (to the point where he is prepared to offer his life for G-d's unity) will also motivate him to fulfill the Torah and *mitzvot*.

וגם היראה כלולה בה, לקבל מלכותו, שלא למרוד בו, חס ושלום

This [natural love] also comprises fear [of G-d]: acceptance of His dominion, so as not to rebel against Him, G-d forbid, through sin.

ובכוונה זו הוא סר מרע ועושה טוב, ולומד ומתפלל ומברך

When, motivated by this *kavanah* (which is born of his innate love and fear of G-d), one “turns away from evil” (by refraining from sin) and “does good” (by observing the *mitzvot*), and studies, prays, and recites the blessings,

בפירוּש המלות לבדו, בלא דחילו ורחימו בהתגלות לבו ומוחו

thinking merely of the meaning of the words, without conscious love and fear of G-d in his heart and mind, which would lend emotional intensity to his prayer; lacking revealed

love and fear, he prays only with the meaning of the words; when one fulfills the Torah in this manner,

הרי כוונה זו, על דרך משל, כמו נשמת החי שאינו בעל שכל ובהירה

this level of *kavanah* is analogous to the soul of an animal, which possesses neither intelligence nor freedom of choice,

וכל מדותיו, שהן יראתו מדברים המזיקים אותו ואהבתו לדברים הנאהבים אצלו, הן רק טבעיים אצלו, ולא מבינתו ודעתו

and whose emotions — its fear of harmful things and its love of pleasing things — are merely natural to it, not a product of its intelligence or understanding.

וכך הן, על דרך משל, היראה והאהבה הטבעיות המסותרות בלב כל ישראל

So, too, by way of example, are the natural love and fear hidden in the heart of every Jew; they, too, are not a product of intelligence or choice,

כי הן ירושה לנו מאבותינו, וכמו טבע בנפשותינו

for they are our inheritance from our Patriarchs, and are like a natural instinct in our souls,

כנזכר לעיל

as mentioned above, in ch. 18.

The Alter Rebbe explained there that the Patriarchs bequeathed to their descendants as an eternal inheritance, a divine soul with an intrinsic love (and fear) of G-d. Because this love is merely instinctive and natural, its function as motivation (*kavanah*) for the fulfillment of Torah and *mitzvot* is likened to the soul of an animal.

To summarize: Both the performance and *kavanah* of *mitzvot* are divided into two categories.

The two levels in performance (the “body” of the *mitzvot*) are analogous to the two classes of “body”-creatures — inanimate beings and plants. They are (a) *mitzvot* performed with action and (b) *mitzvot* performed through speech or thought.

The two levels in *kavanah* (the “soul” of the *mitzvot*) correspond to the two classes of “soul”-creatures — animals and man. They are: (a) *kavanah* generated by one’s intellectual contemplation of G-dliness, and (b) *kavanah* arising from one’s natural love (and fear) of G-d.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Berachot* 20b; *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim*, 62:3. [2.](#) *Shulchan Aruch, ibid.* 185:2. [3.](#) *Rambam, Hilchot Berachot* 1:1. [4.](#) *Shulchan Aruch, ibid.* 206:3. [5.](#)

*Ibid.* 101:2. [6.](#) *Shulchan Aruch, ibid.* 60:5. [7.](#) *Ibid.* 101:1. [8.](#) 13b. [9.](#) *Shnei Luchot HaBerit*, Vol. I, p. 249b.

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## Chapter 39

In the previous chapter the Alter Rebbe explained why our Sages compare the performance of a *mitzvah* to a body, and one's *kavanah* in performing the *mitzvah* to a soul.

He stated that *kavanah* can be classified into two categories, analogous to the two classes of creatures which possess a soul — animals and man.

The higher level of *kavanah* is that created by an intellectual appreciation of G-dliness. Upon contemplating G-d's greatness, a love and fear of Him is born in one's heart, which translates into a desire to cleave to Him. This desire in turn motivates one to fulfill the Torah and *mitzvot*, since they bind him to G-d, and this motivation is the *kavanah* in his fulfillment of the Torah and *mitzvot*. Such *kavanah*, born of reason and produced by one's own volition, is analogous to the soul of man, the intelligent being who determines his actions by choice.

The lower level of *kavanah* is that which stems from an arousal of the soul's natural, instinctive love and fear of G-d. Such *kavanah* is comparable to the soul of an animal, which is ruled by its natural instincts.

The Alter Rebbe now opens ch. 39 by stating that for this reason the angels, who fear and love G-d by their very nature, are metaphorically called “animals”.

ומפני זה גם כן נקראים המלאכים בשם חיות ובהמות, כדכתיב: ופני אריה אל הימין וגו' ופני שור מהשמאל וגו'

For this reason, too, the angels are called *chayyot* (“beasts”) and *behemot* (“animals”), as it is written,<sup>1</sup> “and an angel with the face of a lion is to the right of the divine chariot... and the face of an ox is on the left....”

לפי שאינם בעלי בחירה, ויראתם ואהבתם היא טבעית להם, כמו שכתוב ברעיא מהימנא, פרשת פינחס

For they have no freedom of choice between good and evil, as man has. And their fear and love [of G-d] is natural to them; they need not create fear and love of G-d through intellectual contemplation of G-d's greatness, as is written in *Ra'aya Mehemna (Parshat Pinchas)*. Because their fear and love of G-d are natural and instinctive to them, they are compared to animals.

ולכן מעלת הצדיקים גדולה מהם, כי מדור נשמות הצדיקים הוא בעולם הבריאה, ומדור המלאכים בעולם היצירה

Therefore, *tzaddikim* are on a higher level than them (the angels):<sup>2</sup> the abode of the souls of *tzaddikim* is in the World of *Beriah* (Creation), whereas the abode of the angels is in the World of *Yetzirah* (Formation).\*

הגהה

והיינו בסתם מלאכים, אבל יש מלאכים עליונים בעולם הבריאה, שעבודתם בדחילו ורחימו שכליים

\*NOTE

This is so [only] in the case of ordinary angels. There are, however, higher angels in the World of *Beriah*, whose service [of G-d] is with intelligent fear and love.

כמו שכתוב ברעיא מהימנא שם, שיש שני מיני חיות הקדש, טבעיים ושכליים, וכמו שכתוב בע' חיים

It is written so in *Ra'aya Mehemna, ibid.*, that there are two kinds of holy *chayyot*, instinctive and intelligent (*i.e., those whose love and fear are instinctive, and those who create love and fear intellectually*), as is also written in *Etz Chayim*.

END OF NOTE

The abode of ordinary angels, however, is in the World of *Yetzirah*; and they are thus lower than the souls of the *tzaddikim*, whose abode is in *Beriah*. The Alter Rebbe now explains how intellectually created love and fear are related to *Beriah*, and instinctive love and fear to *Yetzirah*.

והבדל שביניהם הוא

The difference between [*Beriah* and *Yetzirah*] is as follows:

כי בעולם היצירה, מאירות שם מדותיו של אין סוף ברוך הוא לבדן, שהן אהבתו ופחדו ויראתו כו'

In *Yetzirah*, only the *middot* of the Blessed *Ein Sof* radiate (*i.e., only the Sefirot of Chesed* (kindness), *Gevurah* (Severity), etc.) — meaning the love of Him (corresponding to *Chesed*), dread and fear of Him (corresponding to *Gevurah*), and so on (with the other four *middot*).

וכמו שכתוב בתקונים וע' חיים דשית ספירין מקננין ביצירה

For it is thus written (in *Tikkunei Zohar* and in *Etz Chayim*) that the six *Sefirot* (*i.e., the six middot, from Chesed through Yesod*) “nest” in (*i.e., pervade*) the World of *Yetzirah*.

The four *partzufim* (lit., “countenances”; i.e., configurations of *Sefirot*) of the *Sefirot* of *Atzilut* (the World of Emanation) radiate in the four Worlds — *Atzilut*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and (the World of Action, viz.,) *Asiyah*; one *partzuf* predominates in each World, representing the manifestation of G-dliness in that World.

These *partzufim* are: (a) *Chochmah* (Wisdom); (b) *Binah* (Understanding); (c) *Ze‘er Anpin* (lit., “The Small Image”; i.e., the six *middot*); (d) *Malchut* (Sovereignty).

In *Atzilut*, *Chochmah* is the dominant *partzuf*. *Atzilut* is thus pervaded with an atmosphere of utter self-nullification before G-d; for *Chochmah*, the dominant influence in that World, represents the perception that “*Ein Sof* is One alone, and there is naught besides Him” (as discussed in ch. 35).

In *Beriah* (also called the “World of the Throne”), *Binah* is the dominant *partzuf*. *Beriah* is therefore a World of intellect; the souls and angels of *Beriah* are distinguished by superior intellectual appreciation of G-dliness.

*Yetzirah* is dominated by the six *middot* (which together constitute the *partzuf* of *Ze‘er Anpin*). It is therefore a World of emotion; the creatures of *Yetzirah* serve G-d with great emotional intensity.

*Asiyah*, the lowest World, is dominated by the *partzuf* of *Malchut*. G-d’s attribute of Sovereignty evokes subservience in His subjects; therefore, in our service of G-d in this World, the emphasis is on “accepting the yoke of heaven.”

To return to our subject: *Middot* are the dominant influence in *Yetzirah*.

ולכן זאת היא עבודת המלאכים, תמיד יומם ולילה לא ישקוטו, לעמוד ביראה ופחד וכו'

Therefore, this is the service of the angels whose abode is in *Yetzirah*, as mentioned above, constantly, never ceasing day or night, to stand in fear and dread [of G-d].

והיינו כל מחנה גבריאל, שמהשמאל

This refers to the entire host of [angels under] Gabriel, which is on the left. “Left” represents the *middah* of *Gevurah*, which evokes fear and awe. Therefore all these angels stand in constant fear of G-d.

ועבודת מחנה מיכאל היא האהבה כו'

The service of the host of [angels under] Michael, on the other hand, is love [of G-d]; they stand in constant adoration of G-dliness, corresponding to the *middah* of *Chesed*, and so on.

Thus, because *middot* constitute the dominant *partzuf* in *Yetzirah*, the service of the creatures of *Yetzirah* consists of emotion.

אבל בעולם הבריאה מאירות שם חכמתו ובינתו ודעתו של האין סוף ברוך הוא, שהן מקור המצות, ואם ושרש להן

But in the World of *Beriah* radiate the *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat* of the Blessed *Ein Sof* (i.e., the upper three *Sefirot* — *ChaBaD* — of *Atzilut*), which are the source of *middot*, and their “mother” and root.

וכדאיתא בתקונים דאימא עילאה מקננא בתלת ספירן בכרסיא, שהוא עולם הבריאה

For it is written thus in *Tikkunei Zohar*, that *Imma Ila'ah* (lit., “The Supernal Mother”; i.e., the *Sefirah* of *Binah*, described as “mother” of the World of *Atzilut*) “nests” (radiates) in “the Throne,” meaning the World of *Beriah*, with three *Sefirot* of *Atzilut*: *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat*.

ולכן הוא מדור נשמות הצדיקים, עובדי ה' בדחילו ורחימו הנמשכות מן הבינה ודעת דגדולת אין סוף ברוך הוא

Because these three *Sefirot* — *ChaBaD* — of the *Ein Sof* radiate in the World of *Beriah*, it is therefore the abode of the souls of those *tzaddikim* who serve G-d with a fear and love that stem from understanding and knowledge of G-d's greatness,

שאהבה זו נקרא רעותא דלבא, כנ"ל

this love being called *re'uta delibba* (lit., “the heart's desire,” i.e., a desire created by intellect, as opposed to desire that transcends intellect), as mentioned above.

ומרעותא דלבא נעשה לבוש לנשמה בעולם הבריאה, שהוא גן עדן העליון, כדלקמן, וכמו שכתוב בזהר, ויקהל

From this *re'uta delibba* a garment is formed for the soul in the World of *Beriah*, which is the Higher Garden of Eden, as will be discussed further, and as is written in the *Zohar*, *Parshat Vayakhel*. The Lower Garden of Eden is in *Yetzirah*, and the Higher Garden of Eden in *Beriah*.

Ultimately, the souls of those who serve G-d with intellectual love and fear are privileged to abide in the Higher Garden of Eden — *Beriah*. For the reward given in the Garden of Eden (Paradise) is that the souls “delight in the radiance of the *Shechinah*,” i.e., they delight in their perception of G-d's glory. Since one's reward is commensurate with his level of divine service, the delight in intellectual perception of G-dliness is reserved for the souls of those who served G-d with *intellectual* love and fear during their lifetime on earth.

At this point the Alter Rebbe qualifies his earlier statement: Only those *tzaddikim* whose souls are on the level of *Neshamah* (i.e., the highest of the three soul-levels — *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah*) abide in *Beriah*. *Neshamah* represents *Mochin deGadlut* — a “superior intellectual grasp” of G-dliness; those on the level of *Neshamah* understand G-dliness directly as it is, without recourse to analogy or anthropomorphic terms. Love and fear follow from such direct understanding of G-dliness as its natural extensions;

they are not products of intellect, a generation removed. In this case, in fact, the emotions may be considered as part of an intellectual process, rather than emotion proper.

אך היינו דווקא נשמות ממש

However this statement, that the abode of *tzaddikim* who serve G-d with intellectual love and fear is in the World of *Beriah*, applies only to those souls which are actually on the level of *Neshamah* — the level of *Neshamah* being that of intellect, as the verse states,<sup>3</sup> “The divine *Neshamah* will give them discernment” —

שהן בחינת מוחין דגדלות אין סוף ברוך הוא

and which represent a “superior intellectual perception” of the Blessed *Ein Sof*.

אבל בחינת הרוח של הצדיקים

But the *tzaddikim* who are at the level of *Ruach*,

וכן שאר כל נשמות ישראל, שעבדו את ה' בדחילו ורחימו המסותרות בלב כללות ישראל

and similarly all the other souls of Israel, who served G-d with the natural fear and love hidden in the heart of all Israel, not with love and fear born of intellect,

אין עולות לשם רק בשבת וראש חודש לבד

ascend thereto (to *Beriah*) only on *Shabbat* and the New Moon when all creation ascends to a higher level (as it is written, “...every month, on the New Moon, and every week, on the *Shabbat*, all flesh will come to prostrate themselves before Me, says G-d”); it is only then that these souls ascend to the World of *Beriah*, the Higher Garden of Eden,

דרך העמוד שמגן עדן התחתון לגן העליון, שהוא עולם הבריאה, הנקרא גן עדן העליון

by means of the pillar that extends from the Lower Garden of Eden (*Yetzirah*) to the Higher Garden of Eden, i.e., the World of *Beriah*, which is called the Higher Garden of Eden.<sup>4</sup>

להתענג על ה' וליהנות מזיו השכינה

By means of this pillar, these souls ascend thereto to delight in G-d, and to bask in the radiance of the *Shechinah*.

Such pleasure is the prerogative of the souls in *Beriah*, since the soul's delight is from its understanding and appreciation of G-dliness — to the extent that a soul is capable of such understanding.

כי אין הנאה ותענוג לשכל נברא אלא במה שמשכיל ומבין ויודע ומשיג בשכלו ובינתו



The intellect of a created being delights and derives pleasure only in that which it conceives, understands, knows (— corresponding to *ChaBaD*) and grasps with its intellect and understanding,

מה שאפשר לו להבין ולהשיג מאור אין סוף ברוך הוא, על ידי חכמתו ובינתו יתברך המאירות שם, בעולם הבריאה

as much as it can grasp of the Blessed *Ein Sof*-light, through His wisdom and His understanding which radiate there (in *Beriah*), enabling the soul to perceive G-dliness. For, as mentioned earlier, the *ChaBaD* of *Atzilut* (to which the Alter Rebbe refers as “*His* wisdom,” “*His* understanding”) radiate in *Beriah*, for which reason *Beriah* is the “World of understanding.”

With this the Alter Rebbe concludes his statement that on *Shabbat* and *Rosh Chodesh* the souls of other Jews (who had not served G-d with intellectual love and fear) ascend to *Beriah*.

ומה שזוכות נשמות אלו לעלות למעלה מהמלאכים, אף שעבדו בדחילו ורחימו טבעיים לבד

These souls (who served G-d with natural love and fear) are privileged to rise occasionally to *Beriah*, higher than the angels, whose abode is in *Yetzirah*, as mentioned above, never rising to *Beriah*, although they too, like the angels, served G-d only with natural fear and love; why, then, is their service of G-d considered superior to that of the angels?

היינו שעל ידי דחילו ורחימו שלהם, אתכפיה סטרא אחרא המלובשת בגופם

because through their fear and love, the *sitra achra* clothed in their body is subdued,

בין בבחינת סור מרע, לכבוש התאוות ולשברן

whether (in the case of fear) in the realm of “turning away from evil” (refraining from doing evil, and thereby) conquering and crushing their desires through not giving their illicit desires expression in thought, speech and action,

ובין בבחינת ועשה טוב, כנ"ל

or whether (in the case of love) subduing the *sitra achra* in the realm of “doing good” as mentioned above, i.e., actively pursuing the observance of the *mitzvot* out of love for G-d, despite the contrary desire of the animal soul which is rooted in the *sitra achra*.

והם היו בעלי בחירה, לבחור ברע, חס ושלום

These souls, while in the physical world, had freedom of choice; they might have chosen evil, G-d forbid,

ובחרו בטוב, לאכפיא לסטרא אחרא, לאסתלקא יקרא דקודשא בריך הוא כו' כיתרון האור כו', כנ"ל

yet they chose good — to subdue the *sitra achra*, so that G-d's glory be elevated... [in all Worlds], with an elevation similar to the superiority of light... [emerging from the darkness] over ordinary light, as mentioned above. By dispelling the darkness of *sitra achra*, these souls added to the light of holiness.

Thus, although these souls served G-d as angels do, with love and fear that are natural, not intellectual, yet their service ranks higher than that of an angel; for the soul acts out of free choice, while the angel is a creature of compulsive instinct (albeit holy instinct). Therefore it is occasionally granted to the soul, unlike the angel, to rise to the Higher Garden of Eden in *Beriah*.

In the following paragraphs, the Alter Rebbe will differentiate between the respective stations of the *souls* on the one hand, and of their divine *service* (i.e., the actual Torah and *mitzvot* that the soul studies and observes) on the other. But before examining his words, an introduction is in order:

Although we spoke above of the *Sefirot* of each of the Four Worlds, it must nevertheless be understood that the *Sefirot* of each World do not constitute that World itself. The *Sefirot* represent, rather, the G-dliness inherent in each World — its divine life-force. The World itself, on the other hand, is a *Yesh*, a separate being, which comes about through the *Sefirot*.

The significance of this distinction with regard to our discussion is as follows: The Alter Rebbe spoke above of the abode of the soul in either the World of *Yetzirah* or the World of *Beriah* (depending on the level of its divine service). The emphasis here is on the word “World”: the soul's abode is in the *World* of *Beriah* or *Yetzirah* (also described as the *heichalot* (“Chambers”) of these Worlds), not in the *Sefirot* of these Worlds.

The soul's divine service, on the other hand, ascends to the *Sefirot* (of the appropriate World); this means, in effect, that it is absorbed in the *Ein Sof*.

In fact, the soul's reward in the Garden of Eden, described before as the pleasure of “basking in the radiance of the Shechinah,” is actually the radiance of the Torah and *mitzvot* that the person observed while in this physical world, which have ascended to the supernal *Sefirot*.

In the Alter Rebbe's words:

והנה כל זה הוא במדור הנשמות ומקום עמידתן

All the aforesaid concerns the abode and station of the *souls*. (The Rebbe notes: “Station” is not necessarily synonymous with “abode”; a soul whose abode is in *Yetzirah* may rise periodically (on *Shabbat* and *Rosh Chodesh*) to a temporary station in *Beriah*, as said above.)

אך תורתן ועבודתן נכללות ב'י' ספירות, שהן בחינת אלקות, ואור אין סוף מתייחד בהן בתכלית היחוד

Their Torah and divine service, however, are actually absorbed in the Ten *Sefirot*, which are a manifestation of G-dliness, and with which the *Ein Sof*-light unites, in perfect unity i.e., the *Ein Sof*-light radiating in each World is completely unified with the *Sefirot* of that World.

והיינו ב'י' ספירות דבריאה על ידי דחילו ורחימו שכליים, וב'י' ספירות דיצירה על ידי דחילו ורחימו טבעיים

Specifically, this means that one's Torah and divine service ascend to the Ten *Sefirot* of *Beriah*, when generated by intellectual fear and love, and to the Ten *Sefirot* of *Yetzirah* when prompted by natural fear and love.

ובתוכן מלובשות 'י' ספירות דאצילות, ומיוחדות בהן בתכלית

Now, within them (within the *Sefirot* of *Beriah* and *Yetzirah*) are clothed the Ten *Sefirot* of the World of Emanation — *Atzilut*, and they are completely unified with them: the *Sefirot* of *Atzilut* are clothed in, and completely unified with, the *Sefirot* of *Beriah* and *Yetzirah*.

ו'י' ספירות דאצילות מיוחדות בתכלית במאצילן, אין סוף ברוך הוא

The Ten *Sefirot* of *Atzilut* are, in turn, perfectly united with their Emanator, the Blessed *Ein Sof*. It follows, then, that by ascending to the *Sefirot* of *Beriah* or *Yetzirah*, the soul's Torah and divine service actually unite with the *Ein Sof*.

מה שאין כן הנשמות אינן נכללות באלקות ד'י' ספירות

The souls, on the other hand (in contrast with their Torah and divine service), are not absorbed into the G-dliness of the Ten *Sefirot*,

אלא עומדות בהיכלות ומדורין דבריאה או יצירה

but stand instead in the “chambers” and “abodes” of *Beriah* or *Yetzirah*, which are the *Worlds* of *Beriah* and *Yetzirah*, separate beings that are not united with G-d as are the *Sefirot*.

ונהנין מזיו השכינה, הוא אור אין סוף ברוך הוא, ומיוחד ב'י' ספירות דבריאה או דיצירה

There [the souls] delight in the radiance of the *Shechinah*, meaning the Blessed *Ein Sof*-light [as it is] unified with the Ten *Sefirot* of *Beriah* or *Yetzirah*;

והוא זיו תורתן ועבודתן ממש עיין זהר, ויקהל, דף ר"י

and this radiance that they enjoy is actually a “ray” of [the light of] their own Torah and divine service (see *Zohar, Parshat Vayakhel*, p. 210),

for “The reward of a *mitzvah* is the *mitzvah* itself.”

A “ray” issuing from the *mitzvot* that they have performed, and that have become united with the *Ein Sof*, shines forth upon the *tzaddikim* in the Garden of Eden; it is the revelation of this ray that delights the soul.

From this we may catch a glimpse of the stature of a *mitzvah* performed in this world. From a mere glimmer of the light radiated by a *mitzvah*, a soul in Paradise derives pleasure so exquisite that, as our Sages say, all the suffering of Purgatory — a suffering so acute that one moment of it is worse than enduring seventy years of Job’s afflictions — is worthwhile, so long as it enables one subsequently to experience the boundless delight of Paradise.

In fact, were the soul when in Paradise to apprehend the essence of the *mitzvah* instead of a mere ray of it, it would expire — it would dissolve out of existence in the intensity of its light.

This is the meaning of the *Mishnah*,<sup>5</sup> “Better one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world, than all the life of the World to Come.” For in the World to Come the soul has only a glimmer of the light of *mitzvot*, whereas in this world we have the essence of *mitzvot*, whereby we are united with G-d Himself.

The soul’s great pleasure in Paradise is due only to its clear perception of the ray of light given off by the *mitzvah*, a perception that we lack in this physical world; wherefore the *Mishnah* concludes, “Better one hour of bliss in the World to Come, than all the life of this world” — better even than the bliss of fulfilling the Torah and *mitzvot* in this world, for true bliss can be experienced only in Paradise, where the soul actually perceives and grasps the G-dliness of the Torah and *mitzvot*.

Having explained that *Beriah* is the abode of souls that served G-d with intellectual love and fear, and *Yetzirah* — of souls that served Him with natural love and fear, the Alter Rebbe will now discuss the divine service of those souls whose abode is the World of *Atzilut*. The quality of their divine service, he explains, surpasses even that of intellectual love and fear. This is the level of those *tzaddikim* who become veritable “chariots” for G-d: they have no will save His Will, and their every act testifies to their utter self-nullification before Him.

ועולם האצילות, שהוא למעלה מהשכל וההשגה וההבנה לשכל נברא

The World of *Atzilut* is beyond the intelligence, grasp and understanding of a created being’s intellect. Even a spiritual being in the World of *Beriah* is after all a created being, and *Atzilut* is beyond its grasp as well.

כי חכמתו ובינתו ודעתו של אין סוף ברוך הוא מיוחדות שם בו בתכלית היחוד

For the *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat* of the *Ein Sof* are united with Him there (in *Atzilut*) in perfect unity,

ביחוד עצום ונפלא, ביתר שאת ויתר עז לאין ק' מבעולם הבריאה

in a profound and wonderful unity infinitely superior to that [unity] found in *Beriah*.

כי שם ירדו להאיר בבחינת צמצום

For there they descended to illuminate [only] to a restricted (“contracted”) degree. The *ChaBaD* of *Atzilut* (referred to here as “*ChaBaD* of *Ein Sof*”) radiate in *Beriah* only after their light is “contracted”,

כדי שיוכלו שכלים נבראים לקבל מהן חב"ד, לידע את ה' ולהבין ולהשיג איזו השגה באור אין סוף ברוך הוא

so as to enable the intellect of created beings (namely, the angels and souls of *Beriah*) to receive *ChaBaD* — wisdom, understanding and knowledge — from [these *Sefirot* of *Atzilut*], so that they might know G-d, and so that they might grasp and comprehend something of the *Ein Sof*-light,

כפי כח שכלים הנבראים, שהם בעלי גבול ותכלית

to the extent that the intellect of finite, limited, created beings is capable of understanding.

שלא יתבטלו במציאותם ולא יהיו בגדר נבראים כלל, רק יחזרו למקורם ושרשם, שהוא בחינת אלקות ממש

To achieve this purpose a “contraction” of *ChaBaD* of *Atzilut* was necessary, lest they (the created beings of *Beriah*) dissolve out of existence and lest they furthermore cease altogether to exist as created beings, reverting instead to their source and root, namely G-dliness itself.

Were the *ChaBaD* of *Atzilut* to shine forth in *Beriah* without being “contracted”, allowing the creatures of *Beriah* to grasp G-dliness as it radiates in the *Sefirot* of *Atzilut*, these creatures would be overwhelmed by the G-dly illumination beyond their capacity to absorb, and would dissolve out of existence.

Hence, the Alter Rebbe will now continue, it is only the G-dliness in a “contracted” *ChaBaD* that creatures of *Beriah* can grasp and absorb (and even then, only to the extent of their limited capacity); the light of *ChaBaD* in its pristine state, as in *Atzilut*, is beyond them.

והנה צמצום זה היא סבת ההארה שמאירות שם חב"ד של אין סוף ברוך הוא לנשמות אלו בעולם הבריאה

This contraction (which *ChaBaD* of *Atzilut* undergo in order to radiate in *Beriah*) thus causes the souls in the World of *Beriah* to be illuminated by a glow of *ChaBaD* of *Ein*

*Sof* (i.e., *ChaBaD* of *Atzilut*); it is this contraction that enables them to have some perception of the *Ein Sof*-light.

מה שאין כן באצילות, שאינם בבחינת צמצום כל כך, אי אפשר לשכלים נבראים לקבל מהן

The created intellectual beings [of *Beriah*] cannot, however, apprehend *ChaBaD* as they are (i.e., in all their undimmed intensity) in the World of *Atzilut*, where the *ChaBaD* are not contracted to such a great degree as in *Beriah*.

“To such a great degree” — for the very fact of their being *Sefirot* (i.e., individual, defined categories) indicates that *ChaBaD* are merely contracted, limited manifestations of the undefinable *Ein Sof*; the degree of contraction, however, is much less than that of *Beriah*, and therefore the creatures of *Beriah* cannot receive intellectual illumination from *ChaBaD* of *Atzilut*.

ולכן לית מחשבה דלהון תפיסא שם כלל

Therefore, their thought cannot grasp there at all, i.e., the thought and intellect of the created beings of *Beriah* can in no way grasp the light radiating in *Atzilut*.

לכן הוא מדור לצדיקים הגדולים

For this reason, [*Atzilut*] is the abode of the great *tzaddikim*,

שעבודתם היא למעלה מעלה אפילו מבחינת דחילו ורחימו הנמשכות מהבינה ודעת בגדולתו יתברך

whose service of G-d is far superior even to fear and love derived from understanding and knowing His greatness,

כמו שעולם האצילות הוא למעלה מעלה מבחינת בינה ודעת לשכל נברא

just as *Atzilut* transcends by far the level of the understanding and knowledge of a created being's intellect.

אלא עבודתם היתה בבחינת מרכבה ממש לאין סוף ברוך הוא

Their service is, rather, on the level of an actual “chariot” of the blessed *Ein Sof*,

וליבטל אליו במציאות, ולהכלל באורו יתברך, הם וכל אשר להם

nullifying their very existence before Him, and incorporating themselves, and all that they possess, within His light,

על ידי קיום התורה והמצוות

through the observance of the Torah and the *mitzvot*.

על דרך שאמרו: האבות הן הן המרכבה, והיינו לפי שכל ימיהם היתה זאת עבודתם

Our Sages applied such a description to the Patriarchs, saying that<sup>6</sup> “they themselves constituted the divine chariot,” for this was the Patriarchs’ level of service, throughout their lives.

The Patriarchs were constantly in that state of self-nullification before G-d denoted by the term “chariot”. Similarly, in the case of the *tzaddikim* spoken of here. Through their Torah and *mitzvot*, they effect the highest degree of self-nullification before G-d in themselves and in all their affairs. The abode of their souls, therefore, is likewise in a World pervaded with this spirit of self-nullification, namely the World of *Atzilut*.

אך מי ששרש נשמתו קטן מהכיל עבודה תמה זו

But he whose soul’s root is of too limited a capacity for this perfect service on the level of a “chariot”,

ליבטל וליכלל באורו יתברך בעבודתו בקביעות

so that through his service of Torah and *mitzvot* he be constantly nullified before and absorbed in G-d’s light,

רק לפרקים ועתים שהם עת רצון למעלה

[and he can therefore attain this state] only intermittently and [only] at times of divine favor on high,

וכמו בתפלת שמונה עשרה, שהיא באצילות

such as during the *Shemoneh-Esreh* prayer, which is at the level of *Atzilut*,

The four rungs in the ladder of prayer correspond to the four Worlds: The prayers preceding *Baruch She’amar* correspond to *Asiyah*; the Psalms of Praise to *Yetzirah*; the *Shema* to *Beriah*, and the *Shemoneh-Esreh* is at the level of *Atzilut*.

ובפרט בהשתחוואות שבה, שכל השתחוואה היא בבחינת אצילות כמו שכתוב בפרי עץ חיים, בקבלת שבת

and especially when bowing in the four designated places in this prayer, for every such act of bowing represents the level of *Atzilut* (7as is written in *Pri Etz Chayim*, in the section dealing with the welcoming of the Sabbath),

כי היא ענין ביטול באורו יתברך, להיות חשיב קמיה כלא ממש

for it embodies the idea of self-nullification in G-d’s light — to be accounted as absolutely naught before Him;

אזי גם כן עיקר קביעות נשמתו הוא בעולם הבריאה

In the case of he who can attain the level of a “chariot” only at such propitious times, then even at these times, the principal abode of his soul is in the World of *Beriah* (for we are dealing here with a soul associated with the World of *Beriah*),

רק לפרקים, בעת רצון, תעלה נשמתו לאצילות בבחינת מין נוקבין, כידוע ליודעי ח"ן

(and only occasionally, at a time of divine favor, will his soul rise to *Atzilut* as “feminine waters,” as is known to the initiates of Kabbalah).

Having discussed the various “abodes” of souls — three Worlds in which the souls receive a reward commensurate with the level of their divine service during their life on earth — the Alter Rebbe now returns to the theme begun in ch. 38. There he noted that *kavanah* in *mitzvot* (which is the “soul” of the *mitzvot*) can be classified into various categories, corresponding to the different levels of soul found in living beings — the souls of animals, of man, and so on. A *kavanah* which consists of intellectual love and fear is like the volitional soul of man; a *kavanah* consisting of natural love and fear, like the instinctive soul of an animal.

To support this contention, he discussed the various levels of “abodes” where souls receive their reward commensurate with their divine service on earth.

Returning now to his original theme, the Alter Rebbe points out that from the varying levels of reward, we can deduce the respective levels of divine service motivated by the different levels of *kavanah*.

והנה שכר מצוה מצוה

“The reward of a *mitzvah* is the *mitzvah* itself.”

Unlike wages paid to a laborer, for example, which are no index of the *nature* of the work performed, the reward for a *mitzvah* — i.e., the revelation of G-dliness experienced by the soul that performed the *mitzvah* — is actually the fruit of the *mitzvah* itself; the revelation consists of a ray of the G-dly light emitted by the *mitzvah*.

פירוש, שמשכרה נדע מהותה ומדרגתה

This means that we can know the essential nature and rank [of the *mitzvah*] by its reward (by the nature of the light generated by the *mitzvah*, and revealed to the soul as its reward).

ואין לנו עסק בנסתרות

Now, we will not concern ourselves with explaining hidden matters,



שהם צדיקים הגדולים שהם בבחינת מרכבה

meaning the great *tzaddikim* who are at the level of a “chariot”, whose divine service comes under the heading of “hidden matters” because it transcends understanding,

רק הנגלות לנו, שאחריהם כל אדם ימשוך

but only with those matters revealed to us, to which every man must aspire i.e., only with those levels of divine service which may — and ought to — be attained by every Jew; as follows:

לידע נאמנה מהות ומדרגת עבודת ה' בדחילו ורחימו בהתגלות לבו

One must know with certainty that the essential nature and rank of divine service with fear and love revealed in the heart,

הנמשכות מן הבינה ודעת בגדולת אין סוף ברוך הוא

derived from understanding and knowledge of the greatness of the Blessed *Ein Sof*, and of which it was said earlier that the *reward* for divine service motivated by such love and fear is on the level of the World of *Beriah*, —

מקומה בי' ספירות דבריאה

from this reward we know that its place i.e., the level of such service — of *mitzvot* performed with such motivation, is in the Ten *Sefirot* of *Beriah*;

ועבודה בדחילו ורחימו הטבעיים שבמוחו

and the service motivated by natural fear and love hidden in one's mind (not emotions experienced in the heart, but mental awareness of one's inborn love and fear of G-d), of which it was said earlier that such service is rewarded in the World of *Yetzirah*, —

בי' ספירות דיצירה

from this reward we know that its place is in the Ten *Sefirot* of *Yetzirah*.

אבל עבודה בלי התעוררות דחילו ורחימו, אפילו במוחו בבחינת גילוי

But divine service performed without arousing one's fear and love to a revealed state even in one's mind,

דהיינו לעורר האהבה הטבעית המסותרת בלב, להוציאה מהעלם והסתר הלב

meaning that the service is done without arousing the natural love hidden in one's heart so that it will emerge from the hidden recesses of the heart,

אל הגילוי אפילו במוחו ותעלומות לבו על כל פנים

to be revealed at least in one's conscious mind and in the latency of his heart, so that it might evoke (if not passionate fervor, then at least) a mental resolve to cleave to G-d by fulfilling the *mitzvot*;

רק היא נשארת מסותרת בלב כתולדתה, כמו שהיתה קודם העבודה

if instead, the love remains hidden in the heart as in its native state, as it was before the divine service when it was surely concealed, not expressing itself in divine service; if the love is similarly hidden when he engages in divine service, and the *mitzvot* that he does are in no way affected by the love, then —

הרי עבודה זו נשארת למטה, בעולם הפירוד, הנקרא חיצוניות העולמות

such service remains below in this “World of Separation,”<sup>9</sup> in the level called the externality of the worlds<sup>10</sup> (as opposed to the *Sefirot* which are the internal aspect of the Worlds);

ואין בה כח לעלות וליכלל ביחודו יתברך, שהן עשר ספירות הקדושות

it has not the power to rise and to be absorbed in G-d's Unity, meaning the ten holy *Sefirot*,

וכמו שכתוב בתקונים, דבלא דחילו ורחימו לא פרחא לעילא, ולא יכלא לסלקא ולמיקם קדם ה'

as is written in *Tikkunei Zohar*, that “Without fear and love it does not fly upward, and it cannot rise to stand before G-d.”

As explained at length further, love and fear are the “wings” of one's divine service; lacking the wings, it cannot soar aloft.

The Alter Rebbe now proceeds to amplify his previous statement.

והיינו אפילו אם אינו עוסק שלא לשמה ממש לשום איזו פניה, חס ושלום

This inability of one's divine service to ascend to the *Sefirot* applies not only where one's motive for engaging in Torah and *mitzvot* is actually *shelo lishmah* (“not for its own sake”), i.e., for some ulterior motive, heaven forbid, in which case one is actually serving himself, not G-d, and his service surely cannot ascend “to stand before G-d.”

אלא כמו שכתוב: ותהי יראתם אותי מצות אנשים מלומדה

It also applies even if, as the verse describes it,<sup>11</sup> “Their fear of Me was like commandments of men done by rote,”

פירוש: מחמת הרגל שהורגל מקטנותו

meaning [that one serves G-d] out of a habit acquired in his youth,<sup>12</sup>

שהרגילו ולימדו אביו ורבו לירא את ה' ולעבדו

having been trained and taught by his father and teacher to fear G-d and to serve Him,

ואינו עוסק לשמה ממש

but he does not really do it for its own sake [*lishmah*].

כי לשמה ממש אי אפשר בלא התעוררות דחילו ורחימו הטבעיים, על כל פנים

For it is impossible to serve G-d truly *lishmah* without arousing one's natural fear and love, at least,

להוציאן מהסתר הלב אל הגילוי במוח ותעלומות לבו, על כל פנים

by bringing them out from the concealment of the heart into revelation, at least in the mind and the latency of the heart.

If one cannot arouse his natural love of G-d to the point where it is actually felt in the heart, he must try, as discussed above, to arouse it at least so that it be felt in the conscious mind and in the substratum of the heart. Even this low-level arousal can produce a will and resolve to study the Torah and fulfill the *mitzvot*. Thus, the resulting divine service contains (at least to some degree) the force and *kavanah* of his natural love, since it was this love that created the resolve which he is now implementing.

If, however, one does not produce even this minimal level of arousal, the love, although naturally found in his heart, has no bearing on his divine service, and he cannot, therefore, do this service *lishmah* ("for its own sake").

כי כמו שאין אדם עושה דבר בשביל חברו למלאת רצונו, אלא אם כן אוהבו או ירא ממנו

For just as one does not do something for his fellow, to carry out his [friend's] will, unless he loves him or fears him,

כך אי אפשר לעשות לשמו יתברך באמת למלאת רצונו לבד

so, too, is it impossible to act truly for G-d's sake, solely in order to carry out His Will,

בלי זכרון והתעוררות אהבתו ויראתו כלל, במוחו ומחשבתו ותעלומות לבו על כל פנים

unless he remembers and arouses his love and fear of G-d to some degree — in his mind, thought and the latent level of his heart, at least, if he cannot arouse these emotions openly in his heart.

One who observes the *mitzvot* out of habit, however, lacking even this minimal arousal of love, cannot be described as serving G-d for His sake even though his performance is impelled by no ulterior motive.

וגם אהבה לבדה אינה נקראת בשם עבודה בלי יראה תתאה לפחות, שהיא מסותרת בלב כל ישראל, כמו שכתוב לקמן

Furthermore, [the arousal of] love alone, without [the arousal of] at least the lower-level fear of G-d hidden in every Jewish heart, is not called “service”, as will be explained later.

Divine “service” connotes the relationship of a servant to his master, whom he serves chiefly out of fear, unlike a child, who carries out his father’s wishes mainly because he loves him. When one performs a *mitzvah* out of the love of G-d alone, without fear of Him, he is indeed acting for G-d’s sake — but he is not *servicing* Him.

וכשעוסק שלא לשמה ממש, לשום איזו פניה לכבוד עצמו

However, when one engages in divine service explicitly not *lishmah* but for an ulterior motive of self-glorification,

כגון להיות תלמיד חכם וכהאי גוונא

as, for example, in order to become a scholar, and the like,

אזי אותה פניה, שמצד הקליפה דנוגה, מתלבשת בתורתו

then this motive, which is derived from *kelipat nogah*, clothes itself in his Torah study,

והתורה היא בבחינת גלות בתוך הקליפה

and the Torah studied for this motive is in a state of exile within the *kelipah*;

לפי שעה, עד אשר יעשה תשובה, שמביאה רפואה לעולם

but only temporarily, until he repents, since [13](#) “Repentance brings healing to the world.”

שבשובו אל ה', גם תורתו שבה עמו

For when he returns to G-d, his Torah returns with him from *kelipah* to holiness.

ולכן אמרו רז"ל: לעולם יעסוק אדם וכו' שמתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה בודאי

Therefore our Rabbis, of blessed memory, said,<sup>14</sup> “One should always engage [in Torah and *mitzvot*, even *shelo lishmah*], for out of *shelo lishmah* he will certainly arrive at [study and observance] *lishmah*,

שבודאי סופו לעשות תשובה, בגלגול זה או בגלגול אחר

since it is certain that he will ultimately repent, whether in this incarnation or another,

כי לא ידה ממנו נדח

because<sup>15</sup> “No one banished from Him by his sins will remain banished,” but will ultimately repent.

The Alter Rebbe thus perceives two novel insights in the statement that one should always engage in Torah and *mitzvot* even *shelo lishmah*, etc.

(a) Progress from *shelo lishmah* to *lishmah* is a certainty, not a possibility, since every sinner will ultimately repent (— and the Alter Rebbe therefore adds the word “certainly” to the quotation);

(b) Not only will the *person* advance from the state of *shelo lishmah* to *lishmah*, but even the Torah that he studied *shelo lishmah* will be elevated, so that it attains the quality of *lishmah*; for when one repents and returns to G-d, his Torah “returns” with him.

The aforesaid applies to one who engages in divine service for an ulterior motive, strictly *shelo lishmah*.

אך כשעושה סתם לא לשמה, ולא שלא לשמה, אין הדבר תלוי בתשובה

But if one acts neutrally, neither *lishmah* nor *shelo lishmah*, then the matter is not contingent on repentance.

אלא מיד שחוזר ולומד דבר זה לשמה, הרי גם מה שלמד בסתם מתחבר ומצטרף ללימוד זה, ופרחא לעילא

Rather, as soon as he reviews the subject *lishmah*, then even that which he had studied neutrally soars on high, attaching itself to and joining his present study,

מאחר שלא נתלבש בו עדיין שום קליפה דנוגה

since no *kelipat nogah* had yet clothed itself in [his previous study].

Because his earlier study was not motivated by selfish reasons, the Torah studied is not in exile within the *kelipah*; it merely lacks the quality of *lishmah*. This fault is remedied by reviewing the subject *lishmah*.

ולכן לעולם יעסוק אדם כו'

Therefore, “A man should always occupy himself [with Torah...even *shelo lishmah*, for out of *shelo lishmah* he will come to *lishmah*”] — the Torah that he studied will itself be elevated to the level of *lishmah*. In this case, the *lishmah* “comes” automatically when one reviews his studies; it is not contingent on repentance (as it is in the case of Torah studied for personal motives).

וכן הענין בתפלה שלא בכוונה, כמו שכתוב בזהר

The same is true of prayer without *kavanah*, as discussed in the *Zohar*.[16](#)

When one recites the prayer once again, this time with *kavanah*, his earlier prayer ascends as well. Further in *Tanya*, the Alter Rebbe states that even if from all one’s prayers throughout the year, only one full prayer with *kavanah* can be assembled piecemeal (from one part of prayer said with *kavanah* one day, another part on another day, and so on), this one prayer is sufficient to elevate all the prayers of the entire year. For even where specific *kavanah* is lacking, the prayer is endowed with the comprehensive *kavanah* that one is praying to G-d.

FOOTNOTES [1. Yechezkel 1:10.](#) [2.](#)

The divine service of angels, the Rebbe points out, would seemingly have no place in *Tanya*, whose purpose is to serve as a guide to *Beinonim* — a guide to every Jew’s service of G-d.

The simple reason, explains the Rebbe, is to emphasize the lofty level of Torah and *mitzvot* that are motivated by intelligent love and fear of G-d. So sublime is this form of service, that it transcends the service of angels.

Moreover: Since this is a book written for *Beinonim*, the Alter Rebbe seeks to make it perfectly clear that it is “very nigh” — because it is innate — to every Jew to perform Torah and *mitzvot* with love and fear of G-d experienced in the heart. An individual who attains this degree of natural love and fear of G-d but lacks intellectual love and fear, should not be misled into thinking that his love and fear lacks intensity and consequently, his resultant actions are deficient as well. Rather, this degree of love and fear, too, is of remarkable intensity.

The Alter Rebbe makes his point by emphasizing that both the angels and the creatures of the Divine Chariot serve G-d out of natural love and fear of Him. We are thus able to understand how great this manner of service truly is. It is deficient only in that it is an emotional form of service rather than an intellectual one.

However, with regard to service of G-d being “very nigh in your *heart*,” natural love and fear fulfill this function admirably. Thus, every Jew is quite capable of revealing his latent love and fear of G-d so that it emerge forcefully, for his love and fear is similar to the love and fear experienced by the angels and other celestial beings. This ensures that a Jew’s actions, which result from his *feelings* toward G-d, be performed in a forceful

manner as well, so that each and every Jew perform Torah and *mitzvot* with the inner life and vitality that stems from his love and fear of G-d.

[3.](#) *Iyov* 32:8. [4.](#)

The Rebbe explains that the Alter Rebbe's statement regarding an ascent from the lower to the higher level of *Gan Eden* by means of the "pillar" answers the following question:

How is it possible that there be an ascent from the level of "animal", the lower level of the Garden of Eden, to the level of "man", the higher level of the Garden of Eden? This is possible, says the Alter Rebbe, by means of the "pillar". This also serves to demonstrate that though the higher and lower levels of the Garden of Eden are two distinct categories, it is nevertheless possible to ascend from one to the other.

[5.](#) *Avot* 4:17. [6.](#) *Bereishit Rabbah* 47:6; *Zohar* I, 210b. [7.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [8.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [9.](#) Note of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of righteous memory, "See further, beginning of ch. 40: it may also be in the World of *Yetzirah*. This requires to be understood since the Alter Rebbe says here, 'remains below.' See also *Kuntres Acharon*." [10.](#) The Rebbe notes: "Accordingly, the word 'Worlds' — in the plural — is now understood, [referring to the Worlds of] *Asiyah* and *Yetzirah*." [11.](#) *Yeshayahu* 29:13. [12.](#)

The Rebbe explains that the Alter Rebbe uses the word "youth" judiciously. Were he referring to a habit acquired when one grew older (as described in ch. 15), then it might well be said that the *lishmah* at the *outset* of his service (before it became a habit) elevated his current service as well. This would be similar to assembling piecemeal — from all one's prayers throughout the year — one complete prayer with *kavanah*, which would suffice to elevate all the prayers of the entire year. (See end of the present chapter.)

The Rebbe queries, however, whether the *lishmah* of one's youth is indeed similar to the aforementioned example of prayer, and whether this was indeed the Alter Rebbe's reason for using the word "youth".

The Rebbe therefore offers an alternative reason. In the normal course of events parents train their children in the observance of Torah and *mitzvot*. *This* training (unlike an adult's unthinking habituation to doing good deeds) is laudable, for the Torah commands us: "And you shall teach them to your children..."

[13.](#) Cf. *Yoma* 86a. [14.](#) *Pesachim* 50b. [15.](#) Cf. *II Shmuel* 14:14. [16.](#) The Rebbe notes: "It would seem that the reference is to *Zohar* II, 245b."



## Chapter 40

In ch. 39 the Alter Rebbe explained that the ascent of one's Torah and *mitzvot* is commensurate with the level of *kavanah* that one invests in study and performance. If one's *kavanah* stems from love and fear of G-d created by one's understanding of His greatness, his Torah and *mitzvot* ascend to the *Sefirot* of *Beriah*, a World of intellect. If one's *kavanah* stems from natural love and fear, his Torah and *mitzvot* ascend to the *Sefirot* of *Yetzirah*, a World of emotion.

If, however, one's study and observance are not *lishmah* ("for its own sake"), because he feels no love or fear of G-d, his Torah and *mitzvot* cannot ascend at all to "stand before G-d" by being absorbed in the *Sefirot*. This is true even where his observance is not strictly *shelo lishmah* (not for its own sake), i.e., for some selfish motive, but even where he acts out of habit. In the case of Torah studied by rote, however, the Torah ascends before G-d when he reviews the subject *lishmah*, joining it to his present study.

אך כל זמן שלא חזר ולמד דבר זה לשמה

But as long as he does not review this subject *lishmah*,

אין לימודו עולה אפילו ב"י ספירות המאירות בעולם היצירה והעשיה

his study does not ascend even to the Ten *Sefirot* which radiate in the Worlds of *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* (not to mention the *Sefirot* of *Beriah*).

כי הספירות הן בחינת אלקות, ובהן מתלבש ומתייחד אור אין סוף ברוך הוא ממש

For the *Sefirot* are a level of G-dliness, and the blessed *Ein Sof*-light is clothed within them and is united with them; and therefore, were this person's Torah to ascend into the *Sefirot*, it would actually ascend to the *Ein Sof*-light,

ובלא דחילו ורחימו לא יכלא לסלקא ולמיקם קדם ה'; כמו שכתוב בתיקונים

and without fear and love [the Torah] cannot rise to stand before G-d — the *Ein Sof*-light — as is written in *Tikkunei Zohar*.

רק לימודו עולה להיכלות ומדורין, שהן חיצוניות העולמות

Instead, his Torah study rises to the "chambers" and "abodes" of *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*, which are the externality of the Worlds,

The *Sefirot* are the internal aspect of each World, i.e., its divine creative power; the "chambers" constitute the (created) World itself.

שבהן עומדים המלאכים



where the angels are situated.

וכמו שכתב הרב חיים ויטל ז"ל בשער הנבואה פרק ב', שמהתורה שלא בכוונה נבראים מלאכים בעולם היצירה, ומהמצות בלי כוונה נבראים מלאכים בעולם העשיה

Rabbi Chayim Vital, of blessed memory, writes in ch. 2 of his *Shaar HaNevuah* (“The Portal of Prophecy”) that from Torah [studied] without *kavanah* angels are created in the World of *Yetzirah*, and from *mitzvot* [performed] without *kavanah* angels are created in the World of *Asiyah*.

This indicates that Torah and *mitzvot* without *kavanah* are not absorbed in the *Sefirot*, but rise only to the level of angels, who are created beings and are thus on the level of the “externality” of the Worlds.

But one might argue that Rabbi Chayim Vital’s statement cannot be cited in support of the Alter Rebbe’s statement: the former speaks of Torah and *mitzvot* “without *kavanah*,” while the latter deals with Torah and *mitzvot* that were not observed “*lishmah*”. Perhaps the meaning of “without *kavanah*” is that one recited words of Torah or performed a *mitzvah* in a *mechanical* manner, without involving his thought at all. Accordingly, we might say that only such a lowly level of observance is incapable of rising any higher than the level of angels, whereas Torah and *mitzvot* lacking only the quality of “*lishmah*” may indeed — we might argue — rise to be absorbed into the *Sefirot*.

To forestall such an argument the Alter Rebbe adds to Rabbi Chayim Vital’s words:

וכל המלאכים הם בעלי חומר וצורה

Now, all angels are possessed of matter and form.

Similarly with angels created of Torah and *mitzvot*: the angels’ “matter” is formed by the “matter” of Torah and *mitzvot*, and their “form” — by the “form” of Torah and *mitzvot*.

Thus, any *mitzvah* of which an angel is created must consist of more than mere *mechanical* action, which is the “matter” of a *mitzvah*; it must also contain some thought (such as an understanding of the words of Torah that one recites, or the realization that he is performing a *mitzvah*); and this thought is the “form” of the *mitzvah*.

Clearly, then, Rabbi Chayim Vital is not dealing with mechanical observance when he says that Torah and *mitzvot* “without *kavanah*” produce angels in *Yetzirah* or *Asiyah*. The term “without *kavanah*” (as used here) must refer to Torah and *mitzvot* lacking the intention of *lishmah*.<sup>1</sup> Yet, for lack of *lishmah* the Torah and *mitzvot* can ascend only to the level of angels, not to the *Sefirot*.

All the aforesaid concerns Torah and *mitzvot* which lack the intention of *lishmah*, but which were not performed expressly *shelo lishmah*, for personal motives.

אבל תורה שלא לשמה ממש, כגון להיות תלמיד חכם, וכהאי גוונא

But Torah [studied] strictly *shelo lishmah*, for selfish reasons, as, for example, for the purpose of becoming a scholar and the like,

אינה עולה כלל למעלה, אפילו להיכלות ומדור המלאכים דקדושה

does not ascend on high at all, not even to the “chambers” or to the abode of the holy angels (for even the “externality” of the Worlds is, after all, in the realm of holiness; therefore Torah studied with such intention does not ascend even to this level),

אלא נשארת למטה בעולם הזה הגשמי, שהוא מדור הקליפות

but remains instead below, in this physical world, which is the abode of the *kelipot*. \*  
Since the selfish motive stems from *kelipah*, the Torah study that it elicits remains in the abode of *kelipot*.

הגהה

כמו שכתוב בזהר חלק ג', דף ל"א עמוד ב', ודף קכ"א עמוד ב', עיין שם:

\*NOTE

Note *Zohar*, Part III, pp. 31b and 121b, where it is similarly written,

ההיא מלה סלקא ובקעא רקיעין כו' ואתער מה דאתער

“That [spoken] word ascends and pierces the heavens...and evokes what it evokes:

אי טב טב כו'

if [the word is] good — *a word of Torah or the like* — [it evokes] good...“; note there.

ע"ש ודף ק"ה ע"א מלה דאורייתא אתעביד מיניה קלא וסליק כו'

Note also on p. 105a: “From a word of Torah a voice is formed which rises...”;

וד' קס"ח ע"ב קלין דאורייתא וצלוחא בקעין רקיעין כו'

and on p. 168b: “The voices of Torah and prayer [ascend on high and] pierce the heavens....”

END OF NOTE

All three passages from the *Zohar* indicate that words of Torah ascend on high, rending the heavens.

וכמו שכתוב בזהר על פסוק: מה יתרון לאדם מכל עמלו שיעמול תחת השמש

It is similarly written in the *Zohar*, commenting on the verse,<sup>2</sup> “What profit has a man of all his toil that he labors under the sun?”

Our Sages point out that only man’s labor “*under the sun*,” i.e., toil in mundane matters, does not realize any profit; the labor of Torah, however, is “*above the sun*” and does indeed profit a man. The *Zohar*, though, stipulates:

דאפילו עמלא דאורייתא, אי עביד בגין יקריה כו'

“Even with the toil of Torah, if one does it for his own glory... it belongs to the category of ‘labor *under the sun*,’ and there is no profit in it.”

וזה שאמרו: אשרי מי שבא לכאן ותלמודו בידו

This is also the meaning of the saying [of our Sages]:<sup>3</sup> “Happy is he who arrives here on high with his Torah study in his hand,”

פירוש: שלא נשאר למטה בעולם הזה

meaning that [his Torah study] did not remain below in this world.

The saying thus means: “Happy is he who studies Torah *lishmah*, so that his Torah ascends on high.” Had he not studied Torah *lishmah* his Torah would not be with him (“in his hand”) when his soul ascends, but would have remained in this world.

It has been demonstrated above that Torah studied out of habit, without personal motive yet lacking any intention of *lishmah*, cannot ascend on high to be absorbed into the *Sefirot*. The Alter Rebbe now proceeds to explain why this is so.

The difficulty: The Torah and G-d are altogether one, for the Torah is G-d’s Will. Thus, the Torah is higher even than the *Sefirot*, just as G-d’s Will transcends the *Sefirot*. Why then does the Torah need one’s *kavanah* to elevate it to the *Sefirot*?

ואף דאורייתא וקודשא בריך הוא כולא חד, שהוא ורצונו אחד

Although the Torah and the Holy One, blessed be He, are altogether one, for He and His Will are one, and the Torah represents His Will, nevertheless the Torah will not ascend on high without *kavanah*.

The reason (presently stated) in brief:

The words of Torah that one speaks are physical, as are all things in this material world. True, they are holy words; the divine life-force within them is not concealed and veiled,

as it is in other material beings. Yet, being physical, the words of Torah share with all physical existence a divine life-force that is greatly contracted and limited.

Therefore they cannot ascend to the G-dly *Sefirot* unless they are impelled by *kavanah*, i.e., a *spiritual* intention generated by love and fear of G-d, which elevate the words of Torah and cause the Divine Will to be revealed in them.

In the Alter Rebbe's words:

הרי קודשא בריך הוא איהו ממלא כל עלמין בשוה, ואף על פי כן אין העולמות שוים במעלתם

The Holy One, blessed be He, fills all the worlds alike, yet the worlds are not equal in rank.

והשינוי הוא מהמקבלים בב' בחינות

The difference [between one world and another] is due to the recipients [of the divine life force], and is twofold:

האחת: שהעליונים מקבלים הארה יותר גדולה לאין קץ מהתחתונים

(a) The higher [worlds and beings] receive an illumination infinitely greater than [the illumination received by] the lower;

והשנית: שמקבלים בלי לבושים ומסכים רבים כל כך כהתחתונים

b) The higher ones receive [this illumination] without as many garments and veils as the lower ones.

ועולם הזה הוא עולם השפל בב' בחינות

This world is the lowest of worlds in both respects.

כי ההארה שבו מצומצמת מאד, עד קצה האחרון, ולכן הוא חומרי וגשמי

For (a) the illumination [of divine life-force] within it is greatly contracted, to the furthest degree; it is therefore corporeal and material.

וגם זאת היא בלבושים ומסכים רבים

Furthermore, (b) even this [contracted illumination] is clothed in many garments and veils,

עד שנתלבשה בקליפת נוגה, להחיות כל דברים הטהורים שבעולם הזה, ובכללם הוא נפש החיונית המדברת שבאדם

until it is clothed in *kelipat nogah*, to give life to all clean permitted things of this world, including the animating intelligent soul in man.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, all permitted objects receive their vitality via *kelipat nogah*, and can therefore serve either a good or an evil purpose.

ולכן כשמדברת דברי תורה ותפלה בלא כוונה

Therefore, when the animating soul speaks words of Torah or prayer without *kavanah*, the concealment characteristic of this world is absent, yet the contraction still applies, as follows:

אף שהן אותיות קדושות, ואין קליפת נוגה שבנפש החיונית מסך מבדיל כלל להסתיר ולכסות על קדושתו  
יתברך המלובשת בהן

Though these are holy letters and thus, in this case, the *kelipat nogah* of the animating soul does not constitute a veil of separation, concealing or covering the divine holiness clothed in these letters,

כמו שהיא מסתרת ומכסה על קדושתו יתברך שבנפש החיונית כשמדברת דברים בטלים

as [*kelipat nogah*] conceals and covers the divine holiness in the animating soul when it utters idle chatter,

ושבנפש החיונית שבשאר בעלי חיים הטהורים

and [the divine holiness] in the animating souls of other ritually clean living creatures, where *kelipat nogah* likewise conceals the divine life-force,

דאף דלית אתר פנוי מיניה

for although<sup>4</sup> “no place is devoid of Him,” and His presence is found in man’s animating soul even when he engages in idle talk, and in the soul of all living creatures —

-מכל מקום איהו סתימו דכל סתימין, ונקרא אל מסתתר

yet, He is the<sup>5</sup> “Most Hidden One of all the hidden,” and is called<sup>6</sup> “a hidden G-d,” for He is hidden from his creations.

וגם ההארה והתפשטות החיות ממנו יתברך מסתתרת בלבושים ומסכים רבים ועצומים

Similarly, the illumination and extension of vitality from Him is hidden in many dense garments and veils,

עד שנתלבשה ונסתתרה בלבוש נוגה

and is finally clothed and hidden in the garment of *nogah*, which completely conceals man's divine life-force when he engages in idle talk, and the life-force in other animals, as stated.

מה שאין כן באותיות הקדושות של דברי תורה ותפלה

It is different, however, with the holy letters in words of Torah and prayer:

דאדרבה, קליפת נוגה מתהפכת לטוב, ונכללת בקדושה זו, כנ"ל

Here, not only does *kelipat nogah* not obscure G-dliness, but on the contrary, *kelipat nogah* is transformed to good and is absorbed into this holiness, as explained above.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, the second of the two aforementioned traits that make this world the lowest of worlds — namely, the complete concealment of divine life-force in the garment of *kelipat nogah* — is absent in words of Torah and prayer. But the first trait, the Alter Rebbe will now state, is present even in these holy words: they are physical, as are all things of this world, so that the contraction of divine life-force that characterizes physical matter in general, applies to these words as well.

מכל מקום, ההארה שבהן מקדושתו יתברך הוא בבחינת צמצום עד קצה האחרון, מאחר שהקול והדבור הוא גשמי

Nevertheless, the illumination from His holiness that [these words] contain is contracted to the furthest degree, since the voice and speech uttering words of Torah and prayer are material.

Therefore, although Torah is one with G-d, words of Torah will not ascend to the *Sefirot* without *kavanah*, since the G-dliness within them is so greatly contracted.

אבל בתפלה בכוונה ותורה בכוונה לשמה

But in the case of prayer [recited] with *kavanah* and Torah [studied] with *kavanah lishmah*,

הרי הכוונה מתלבשת באותיות הדבור, הואיל והיא מקור ושרש להן

the *kavanah* is clothed in (i.e., permeates) the letters of speech, since it is their source and root,

שמחמתה ובסיבתה הוא מדבר אותיות אלו

for he speaks these words for, and because of, this *kavanah*.

לכן היא מעלה אותן עד מקומה

Therefore, the *kavanah* elevates the words to its own level,

ב"י ספירות דיצירה או דבריה

meaning to the Ten Sefirot of either *Yetzirah* or *Beriah*,

לפי מה שהיא הכוונה, בדחילו ורחימו שכליים או טבעיים כו', כנ"ל

depending on the type of *kavanah* — whether a *kavanah* of intellectual fear and love, in which case they ascend to *Beriah*, or natural fear and love, which elevates them to *Yetzirah*, as explained above.

At any rate, the *kavanah* which is *spiritual* elevates the *material* words to the *Sefirot* of *Yetzirah* or *Beriah*.

ושם מאיר ומתגלה אור אין סוף ברוך הוא

There, in the *Sefirot*, the *Ein Sof*-light shines forth and is revealed,

שהוא רצון העליון ברוך הוא המלוּבש באותיות התורה שלומד ובכוונתו, או בתפלה בכוונתה, או במצוה ובכוונתה

meaning the blessed Divine Will vested in the letters and in the *kavanah* of the Torah that one studies, or the Divine Will in prayer and in its *kavanah* or in a *mitzvah* and in its *kavanah*.

One's *kavanah*, too, expresses the Divine Will, for G-d desires that man cleave to Him with love and fear.

בהארה גדולה לאין קץ, מה שלא יכול להאיר ולהתגלות כלל בעוד האותיות והמצוה בעולם הזה הגשמי

This *Ein Sof*-light of the Divine Will radiates in the *Sefirot* with an infinitely great brightness, that can by no means shine forth and be revealed while the letters of Torah and prayer and the *mitzvah* are still in this physical world.

The Torah and the *mitzvot* contain the radiance of Divine Will even as they are in this physical world. But this radiance is altogether incomparable to the radiance of Divine Will that Torah and *mitzvot* contain when they ascend to the *Sefirot* of *Yetzirah* or *Beriah*, for —

לא מינה ולא מקצתה

neither the radiance itself that shines forth in the *Sefirot* nor any part of it can be revealed in this physical world.

עד עת קץ הימין, שיתעלה העולם מגשמיותו, ונגלה כבוד ה' וגומר, כנ"ל באריכות

This disparity between the respective levels of radiance of the Divine Will in the *Sefirot* and in this world, will remain until the era of the End of Days, when the world will rise out of its materiality, and <sup>8</sup> “The glory of G-d will be revealed...for all flesh to behold,” as explained above <sup>9</sup> at length.\*

At that time the Divine Will contained in the Torah and *mitzvot* of this world will shine forth in all its splendor. Until then, however, this radiance is incomparable to that of the Divine Will contained in the Torah and *mitzvot* insofar as they ascend to the *Sefirot*.

\*NOTE

In the following note the Alter Rebbe states that the revelation of Divine Will in a particular World, caused by the ascent of Torah and *mitzvot* thereto — a revelation which he describes as “an hour of ‘(Divine) Will,’ or ‘(Divine) Favor’” — produces a reaction in the *middot* of that World: With the revelation of Divine Will the *middot* fuse, and the attributes of Severity are “sweetened”, or tempered, with Kindness. This in turn results in an increased flow of Divine Kindness into our world.

This effect of the *mitzvot* is felt primarily in the fusion of the *middot* of *Atzilut*.

הגהה

ושם מאיר ומתגלה גם כן היחוד העליון הנעשה בכל מצוה ותלמוד תורה

There *in the higher Worlds*, there also shines forth and is revealed the Supernal union effected by every *mitzvah* and by Torah study,

שהוא יחוד מדותיו ית'

namely, the union of G-d's *middot*.

שנכללות זו בזו ונמתקות הגבורות בחסדים

These *middot* fuse with each other, and the *Gevurot* (the attributes of “Severity”) are “sweetened” by *Chassadim* (the attributes of “Kindness”)

ע"י עת רצון העליון א"ס ב"ה המאיר ומתגלה בבחי' גילוי רב ועצום

through the ‘Hour of Will (*favor*) of the blessed *Ein Sof*,’ i.e., the revelation of the Will of the *Ein Sof*, which shines forth and reveals itself in abundant and intense revelation,

באתערותא דלתתא היא עשיית המצוה או עסק התורה שבהן מלובש רצון העליון א"ס ב"ה

by reason of the “arousal (*of man*) below,” consisting of the performance of a *mitzvah* or occupation in Torah in which the Supernal Will of the blessed *Ein Sof* is clothed.



The revelation of Divine Will (i.e., the Will clothed in Torah and *mitzvot*) produces a fusion of the *middot* and a “sweetening” of *Gevurot* in whatever World the Torah and *mitzvot* ascend to.

אך עיקר היחוד הוא למעלה מעלה, בעולם האצילות

But the main unity *caused by Torah and mitzvot* takes place far higher, in the World of *Atzilut*,

ששם הוא מהות ועצמות מדותיו ית' מיוחדו' במאצילן א"ס ב"ה

where the core and essence of G-d's *middot* are united with their Emanator, the *Ein Sof*, blessed be He,

ושם הוא מהות ועצמות רצון העליון א"ס ב"ה

and there is found the core and essence of the Supernal Will of the blessed *Ein Sof*,

והארתן לבד היא מאירה בבי"ע בכל עולם מהן לפי מעלתו

of which a mere glimmer radiates in *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* — in each of these Worlds according to its rank.

ואף שנפש האדם העוסק בתורה ומצוה זו אינה מאצילות

Now, although the soul of the person engaging in this Torah study or *mitzvah* does not stem from *Atzilut*,

מ"מ הרי רצון העליון המלוכש במצוה זו והוא הוא עצמו הדבר הלכה והתורה שעוסק בה

nevertheless *he is able to effect unity in the middot of Atzilut because the Supernal Will, which is clothed in this mitzvah, and in the case of Torah it is not merely “clothed” in it, but furthermore — it is indeed the very halachah and Torah that he is studying, —*

הוא אלהות ואור א"ס המאציל ב"ה שהוא ורצונו אחד

*this Supernal Will is G-dliness, and is the Ein Sof-light of the Emanator [of the Sefirot of Atzilut], since He and His Will are one;*

וברצונו ית' האציל מדותיו המיוחדות בו ית'

and *this Supernal Will is actually the source of the middot, since it was by His Will that He emanated His middot, which are united with Himself.*

וע"י גילוי רצונו המתגלה ע"י עסק תורה ומצוה זו הן נכללות זו בזו

Therefore, by means of the revelation of His Will caused by one's engaging in Torah or in a particular *mitzvah*, the *middot* fuse with each other,

ונמתקות הגבורות בחסדים בעת רצון זו

and the *Gevurot* are sweetened by *Chassadim* at this “hour of revealed, favorable Will.”

END OF NOTE

Having stated that love and fear of G-d elevate one's Torah and *mitzvot* on high, the Alter Rebbe continues:

ובזה יובן היטב הא דדחילו ורחימו נקראים גדפין, דרך משל, כדכתיב: ובשתים יעופף

This explains clearly why fear and love are figuratively called “wings”, as it is written:<sup>10</sup> “And with two wings he flies,” alluding to the two *middot* of love and fear.

וכמו שכתב הרב חיים ויטל ז"ל בשער היחודים פרק י"א שהכנפיים בעוף הן זרועות האדם כו'

(<sup>11</sup>As Rabbi Chayim Vital, of blessed memory, stated in *Shaar HaYichudim*, ch. 11:) For wings are for a bird what arms are for a man; just as it is written, “*Chesed* (corresponding to love) is the right arm, and *Gevurah* (fear) the left arm,” similarly, the “wings” represent these two *middot*.

ובתיקונים פירש שהעוסקים בתורה ומצות בדחילו ורחימו נקראים בנים

It is also explained in *Tikkunei Zohar*, that those who engage in Torah and *mitzvot* out of fear and love are called “children”;

ואם לאו, נקראים אפרוחים דלא יכלין לפרחא

otherwise (i.e., if their Torah and *mitzvot* lack the fear and love of G-d), they are called “fledgelings” who cannot fly.\*

\*NOTE

In this note, the Alter Rebbe elaborates on the correspondence of “wings” to fear and love. He quotes *Tikkunei Zohar*, where the subject is treated extensively.

ובתיקון מ"ה דעופא הוא מט"ט

In *Tikkun 45* it is written that [the figure of] a bird represents *the archangel Metatron*.

רישא דיליה י' וגופא וא"ו ותרין גדפין ה' ה' כו'

His head is the letter *yud of the Divine Name* (yud-hei-vav-hei), the *yud* representing Chochmah; his body is the *vav*, the *six* middot; and his two wings are the two letters *hei* and *hei*, representing Binah and Malchut, respectively.

והיינו עולם היצירה שנקרא מט"ט

This corresponds to the World of *Yetzirah*, which is called Metatron.

Thus, applying the various elements of the figure to their corresponding aspects in *Yetzirah*, we obtain:

שבמשנה הלכות גופי הן 12 וברו

*Vav*, the “body” of *Metatron*, represents the “body” of the laws in the *Mishnah* (since *Mishnah* is at the level of *Yetzirah*, as will soon be explained), for the “body” of the laws, i.e., the actual rulings determining what is permitted or forbidden, who is guilty or innocent, and the like, are related to the *middot*, which are represented by the letter *vav*.

ורישא דיליה הן המוחין ובהי' חב"ד שהן פנימיות ההלכות וסודן וטעמיהן

His head represents intelligence — the level of *ChaBaD*, which are, *in terms of the* *Mishnah*, the inner depth of the laws, their esoteric meaning and their reasons.

ותרין גדפין דחילו ורחימו הן ה' עילאה שהיא רחימו

The two “wings” denoting *flight*, namely fear and love, represent [respectively]: the higher *hei*, which is an allusion *prevalent in the literature of the Kabbalah* to love;

וה' תתאה היא יראה תתאה עול מלכות שמים ופחד ה' כפחד המלך ד"מ

and the lower *hei*, alluding to “lower-level fear,” namely “the yoke of the Heavenly Kingdom,” and the dread of G-d similar to the dread of a king.

שהיא יראה חיצונית ונגלית

Such fear is external and revealed, *and is therefore alluded to by the lowest level (i.e., letter) of the Divine Name.*

משא"כ יראה עילאה ירא בושתי היא מהנסתרות לה' אלקינו

“Higher-level fear,” however, meaning “awe consisting of shame *before G-d's greatness*,” is of those “hidden matters belonging to G-d, our L-rd.

והיא בחכמה עילאה יו"ד של שם הוי"ה ב"ה כמ"ש בר"מ

It is on the level of Supernal Wisdom, *alluded to by the yud* of the Four-letter Divine Name, blessed be He, as is written in *Ra'aya Mehemna*.

END OF NOTE

We see, at any rate, that love and fear of G-d are described as “wings”. According to what has been said above concerning the role of love and fear in elevating one’s Torah and *mitzvot*, the analogy is clearly understood, as follows:

כי כמו שכנפי העוף אינם עיקר העוף, ואין חיותו תלוי בהם כלל

The wings of a bird are not its main components; its life does not depend on them at all,

כדתנן: ניטלו אגפיה כשרה

for as the *Mishnah* implies,<sup>13</sup> a bird whose wings were removed is kosher.

והעיקר הוא ראשו וכל גופו, והכנפיים אינם רק משמשים לראשו וגופו לפרחא בהון

Rather, the main parts are its head and the rest of its body; the wings merely serve the head and body, enabling them to fly.

וכך, דרך משל, התורה ומצות הן עיקר היחוד העליון, על ידי גילוי רצון העליון המתגלה על ידיהן

Likewise with Torah and *mitzvot*: They constitute the essential Supernal union by the revelation of Supernal Will which they cause;

והדחילו ורחימו הם המעלים אותן למקום שיתגלה בו הרצון, אור אין סוף ברוך הוא, והיחוד, שהן יצירה ובריאה

fear and love, like wings, [merely] elevate the Torah and *mitzvot* to a place where this Will — the blessed *Ein Sof*-light — and this unity can be revealed, namely, *Yetzirah* and *Beriah*.\*

\*NOTE

To his statement that *Beriah* and *Yetzirah* are the place to which Torah and *mitzvot* are elevated, and where the union caused by them is revealed, the Alter Rebbe adds:

הגהה

או אפילו בעשיה, בי' ספירות דקדושה, מקום מצות מעשיות

Or even in *Asiyah*, in the ten holy *Sefirot* [of that World], the abode of the *mitzvot* consisting of action.

Performing these *mitzvot* out of “submission to the heavenly yoke” elevates the *mitzvot* to the *Sefirot* of *Asiyah* and reveals the Supernal union there. For such submission is related to G-d’s attribute of Sovereignty (*Malchut*), which pervades *Asiyah*; moreover, these *mitzvot* are performed at the level of *action*, which corresponds to *Asiyah*.

וכן מקרא

Likewise with [the study of] Scripture.

This, too, is related to *Asiyah*, for the *mitzvah* of studying Scripture requires one to recite the holy words, and speech is considered a minor form of *action*.

אבל במשנה, מתגלה היחוד ואור אין סוף ברוך הוא ביצירה

But in the case of *Mishnah*, the union and the blessed *Ein Sof*-light are revealed in *Yetzirah*.

For the halachic rulings contained in the *Mishnah* are derived from the *middot*: the attribute of *Chesed* dictates that a particular object be deemed kosher, or a litigant judged innocent, while *Gevurah* dictates that it be ruled unkosher, and the litigant pronounced guilty, and so on. The *Mishnah* is therefore on the level of *Yetzirah*, the World of *middot*.

ובתלמוד בבריאה

In the case of *Talmud* [the union and *Ein Sof*-light are revealed] in *Beriah*<sup>14</sup> — *for the Talmud seeks out the logic underlying the Mishnaic laws; it is thus related to ChaBaD, which are manifest in Beriah*.

This does not mean, however, that the union effected by the study of *Mishnah*, for example, takes place *only* in *Yetzirah*, and that effected by study of Scripture *only* in *Asiyah*, etc. Were this the intention, an obvious difficulty would arise: *Scripture* is holier than *Mishnah* (as indicated by the law that one may place the Scriptures on top of a book of *Mishnah*, but not vice versa), and *Mishnah* holier than *Talmud*. Why then should the revelation of *Ein Sof*-light created by their (respective) study be in reverse order, with *Talmud*, the least holy of the three, effecting a revelation in *Beriah*, the highest of the three Worlds?

We must, perforce, say that —

דהיינו שבלימוד מקרא מתפשט היחוד ואור אין סוף ברוך הוא מאצילות עד העשיה

This means that by the study of Scripture the union and [revelation of] the blessed *Ein Sof*-light extends from *Atzilut* downward *till* the World of *Asiyah*;

ובמשנה עד היצירה לבדה ובתלמוד עד הבריאה לבדה

through study of *Mishnah*, only till *Yetzirah*; and through *Talmud*, only till *Beriah*;

כי כולן באצילות

for all of them (*Scripture*, *Mishnah* and *Talmud*) are in *Atzilut*, and effect the union and revelation there. The difference between them lies only in how “far” from *Atzilut* the impact of the study reaches.

אבל קבלה אינה מתפשטת כלל מאצילות לבי"ע כמ"ש בפרע"ה

Kabbalah, however, *effects a union and revelation in Atzilut that does not extend at all to the lower Worlds — Beriah, Yetzirah or Asiyah*, as is written in *Pri Etz Chayim*.

END OF NOTE

The Alter Rebbe previously compared love and fear of G-d to the wings of a bird; the wings are not the essential part of the bird, but merely serve it, enabling it to fly; likewise, love and fear merely serve the *mitzvot*, which are the essential objective, by elevating them to a level where the union effected by them can be revealed.

He now raises a question: Love and fear of G-d are themselves enumerated among the 613 *mitzvot*; why, then, are they assigned a secondary status?

והנה אף דדחילו ורחימו הם גם כן מתרי"ג מצות

Although fear and love are also among the 613 *mitzvot*,

אף על פי כן נקראין גדפין

they are nevertheless described as [mere] wings for other *mitzvot*,

להיות כי תכלית האהבה היא העבודה מאהבה

because the goal of love is the service of G-d resulting from this love.

Its purpose lies, not in itself, but in its role as motivation for serving G-d via the *mitzvot*. For this reason it is likened to “wings”, which are secondary to the bird itself.

ואהבה בלי עבודה היא אהבה בתענוגים, להתענג על ה'

Love without “service” i.e., a love that is not a means to an end, but an end in itself is a “love of delights,” a supremely high level of love, in which one delights in G-dliness.

מעין עולם הבא, וקבלת שכר

This is in the nature of the World to Come, and thus constitutes reward.

I.e., such love for G-d is actually a foretaste and part of the reward to be given in the World to Come; it does not in itself represent *service* of G-d.

והיום לעשותם כתיב, ולמחר לקבל שכרם

But it is written,<sup>15</sup> “Today — to *do* them (i.e., ‘today’, this life in the time of action and service), and tomorrow (in the World to Come) to receive their reward.” Thus, in this life, the time of service, the love that leads to service is the love most prized.

ומי שלא הגיע למדה זו, לטעום מעין עולם הבא

He, however, who has not attained to this level of savoring a foretaste of the World to Come, and has not reached the level of “a love of delights,”

אלא עדיין נפשו שוקקה וצמאה לה' וכלתה אליו כל היום

but whose soul yet yearns and thirsts for G-d and goes out to Him all day long,

ואינו מרוה צמאונו במי התורה שלפניו, הרי זה כמי שעומד בנהר וצועק: מים מים לשתות

and he does not quench his thirst for G-dliness with the “water” of Torah that is in from of him, — such a person is comparable to one who stands in a river and cries: “Water, water to drink!”

כמו שקובל עליו הנביא: הוי כל צמא לכו למים

Thus the Prophet laments over him:<sup>16</sup> “Ho, all of you who thirst, go to the waters!”, on which our Sages comment<sup>17</sup> that “water” refers to Torah.

Surely the Prophet is not addressing (as the simple meaning of the words would indicate) one who thirsts for Torah, for such a person will surely quench his thirst and study Torah without the Prophet’s exhortation. Clearly, then, these words are addressed to one who thirsts for G-d; and the Prophet tells him that he must quench the thirst of his love by studying and practicing the Torah.

In the Alter Rebbe’s words:

כי לפי פשוטו אינו מובן

For in its simple meaning the verse is incomprehensible:

דמי שהוא צמא ומתאוה ללמוד, פשיטא שילמוד מעצמו

he who is thirsty and desires to study [Torah], will surely do so of his own accord.

ולמה לו לנביא לצעוק עליו: הוי

Why must the Prophet cry over him, “Ho”? Clearly, then, the verse refers to one who loves G-d and thirsts for Him.

Now if love of G-d were an end in itself, the service of prayer could suffice, for it creates a love and thirst for G-d. But because the purpose of love is that it lead one to serve G-d, the Prophet exhorts us not to rest content with love itself, but to study Torah — and thereby quench the thirst for G-dliness, and also realize the purpose of love.

וכמו שכתוב במקום אחר באריכות

This matter is discussed elsewhere at length.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) The commentary on the phrase, “all angels are possessed of matter and form,” is from the distinguished *rav* of Yekaterinoslav, Rabbi Levi Isaac Schneerson, of blessed memory, as transmitted by his son, the Rebbe. [2.](#) *Kohelet* 1:3. [3.](#) *Pesachim* 50a. [4.](#) *Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun* 57, p. 91b. [5.](#) *Ibid.*, Introduction. [6.](#) *Yeshayahu* 45:15. [7.](#) Chs. 35, 37, *et al.* [8.](#) *Yeshayahu* 40:5. [9.](#) Ch. 36. [10.](#) *Yeshayahu* 6:2. [11.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [12.](#) The Rebbe notes that there seems to be a typographical error - ובו instead ובו (spelling out the Hebrew letter *vav*). Accordingly, many of the difficulties in this note are resolved. Additionally, the text that follows is more clearly understood: “*Vav* represents the ‘body’ of the laws in the *Mishnah*”; and thereafter, “his head...,” and so on. [13.](#) The Rebbe notes: “The actual wording of the *Mishnah* is, ‘if they were broken’ (*Chullin* 3:4). However, we learn from this that the same law applies to a case where the wings have been removed. (See *Taz*, beginning of ch. 53.)” [14.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “At first glance this is difficult to understand, for Scripture is more sacred than *Mishnah* (which is why a *Chumash* may be placed on a *Mishnah*, but not the other way around); so too, *Mishnah* [is more sacred] than *Talmud*. Nonetheless, with regard to their revelation we find the opposite to be the case, as just mentioned [in *Tanya*]. Namely, Scripture is revealed within the lowest of all worlds, the World of *Asiyah*, *Mishnah* [is revealed in *Yetzirah*], and so on.” However, the answer is: ‘When one studies...’ [i.e., there is a difference between the actual text and the study of that text]; see *Torah Or* 17a.“ [15.](#) *Eruvin* 22a. [16.](#) *Yeshayahu* 55:1. [17.](#) *Bava Kama* 17a.



## Chapter 41

As mentioned in the title-page of *Tanya*, this work is based on the verse, “For this thing is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.” This means that observing the Torah and the *mitzvot* with one’s heart, with a love and fear of G-d, is very “near” — within simple reach.



The Alter Rebbe devoted the first twenty-five chapters of his work to an explanation of the role of love and fear (awe) in a Jew's divine service. He also explained how they may be readily attained.

It is the love of G-d, wrote the Alter Rebbe, that motivates one to fulfill all the positive *mitzvot*. In order for a Jew to perform them properly and eagerly he must be imbued with a love for G-d and a desire to cleave to Him, for performing them will *enable* him to cleave to G-d.

Similarly, fear of G-d lies at the root of one's observance of the prohibitive *mitzvot*: when one stands in true fear and awe of G-d, he will refrain from transgressing, and thereby rebelling against His Will.

In the last few chapters the Alter Rebbe went on to explain that love and fear are the wings that elevate one's *mitzvot*, causing them to ascend to the *Sefirot* of the upper Worlds. Conversely, *mitzvot* fulfilled without the spiritual intent fostered by the love and fear of G-d, are likened to a body bereft of its soul.

In ch. 41, the Alter Rebbe now goes on to say that fear of G-d is the beginning and core of divine service. This is so not only regarding the negative precepts, but also with regard to the positive precepts. While it is true that *love* of G-d motivates one's observance of the positive commands, nevertheless, the observance of these commands too must be impelled by some measure of fear as well. For *avodah* ("divine service") implies an analogy with the manner in which an *eved* ("servant") serves his master — service out of fear. Fear of G-d is therefore the beginning and the mainstay of spiritual service.

ברם צריך להיות לזכרון תמיד ראשית העבודה ועיקרה ושרשה

One must, however, constantly bear in mind what is the beginning of [divine] service, as well as its core and root.

והוא: כי אף שהיראה היא שרש לסור מרע, והאהבה לועשה טוב

This means: Although fear is the root of "turn away from evil" and love [is the root of] "do good,"

I.e., fear of G-d is what basically urges one to refrain from evil and not to transgress the negative precepts, while love of G-d is what basically motivates one to perform good deeds and positive commands,

אף על פי כן לא די לעורר האהבה לבדה לועשה טוב

nevertheless, it is not sufficient to awaken the love alone to "do good,"

ולפחות צריך לעורר תחלה היראה הטבעית המסותרת בלב כל ישראל, שלא למרוד במלך מלכי המלכים,  
הקב"ה, כנ"ל

but at the very least, before performing the positive command, one must first arouse the innate fear which lies hidden in the heart of every Jew not to rebel against the Supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, as has been stated above,

שתהא בהתגלות לבו, או מוחו על כל פנים

so that [this fear] should manifest itself in his heart or, at least, in his mind.

Optimally, a Jew should be able to create a feeling of fear in his heart through meditating upon G-d's greatness. If, however, this proves to be beyond his capacity, he should at least arouse the innate fear which lies hidden in his heart. This degree of fear is attainable to all, inasmuch as it does not require such profound meditation.

This innate fear may be aroused either (a) to such a degree that it is actually felt in his *heart*, or (b), if the individual is incapable of evoking palpable fear in his heart, he will at least be able to summon up his innate fear in his *mind*, so that he will be able to apprehend and experience the fear of G-d intellectually.

דהיינו להתבונן במחשבתו על כל פנים גדולת אין סוף ברוך הוא ומלכותו

This means that in order to arouse within himself the latter category of fear he should at least contemplate in his mind the greatness of the blessed *Ein Sof* and His Kingship,

To arouse the former category of fear, that which is palpably felt in the heart, one must engage one's *Daat* in profound meditation. He who is unable to do so should contemplate, at least superficially, G-d's greatness:

אשר היא מלכות כל עולמים עליונים ותחתונים

which extends to all worlds, both higher and lower, bearing in mind that the greater the king's dominion, the more awe it inspires in his subjects;

ואיהו ממלא כל עלמין

and let him further consider that "He fills all worlds," animating them with an indwelling life-force that created beings can experience and comprehend,

וסובב כל עלמין

"and encompasses all worlds," i.e., He also animates them with a life-force that transcends the experience and comprehension of created beings,

וכמו שכתוב: הלא את השמים ואת הארץ אני מלא

as it is written:<sup>1</sup> "Do I not fill heaven and earth?"

Yet He leaves aside [the creatures of] the higher [worlds] and [the creatures of] the lower [worlds],

Neither the higher nor the lower creatures represent the Creator's ultimate intention. He therefore does not bestow His Kingship upon them, so that He be called their G-d and King; rather:

ומייחד מלכותו על עמו ישראל בכלל, ועליו בפרט, כי חייב אדם לומר: בשבילי נברא העולם

He uniquely bestows His Kingship upon His people Israel, in general — for G-d is known as “King of Israel” — and upon him in particular, for a man is obliged to say:<sup>2</sup> “For my sake was the world created.”

A Jew should remind himself that the whole purpose and intent of creation, viz., G-d's Sovereignty, relates to himself specifically, that G-d become King over *him*. This is no mere hyperbole. Since the Jewish people collectively constitute a complete body comprised of individual organs, it follows that if even one Jew — one particular organ — is blemished, then the whole body, even the head, is blemished as well.

Similarly with regard to G-d's bestowing His Kingship upon all of Israel: if one solitary Jew is found wanting in this matter, this will affect the whole body of the Jewish people.

The realization that G-d bestows His Kingship upon each individual in particular touches a responsive chord within one; he is then more apt to demand of himself that he accept the heavenly yoke.

והוא גם הוא מקבל עליו מלכותו, להיות מלך עליו, ולעבדו ולעשות רצונו בכל מיני עבודת עבד

And he for his part accepts His Kingship upon himself, that He be King over him, to serve Him and do His Will in all kinds of servile work.

This acceptance of the yoke of divine service is required of all Jews.

The Rebbe points out that the Alter Rebbe will now go on to say that the above meditation — aimed at awakening innate awe in one's mind — does not suffice: an individual must also realize that G-d not only bestows His Kingship upon him in a general manner, but that He also does so in a (so-to-speak) personal manner. In the Alter Rebbe's words:

והנה ה' ניצב עליו, ומלא כל הארץ כבודו, ומביט עליו

“And, behold, G-d [Himself] stands over him,”<sup>3</sup> and “The whole world is full only with His Glory,” and not only being omnipresent does He see everything, but moreover He scrutinizes him in particular,

ובוחן כליות ולב אם עובדו כראוי

and searches his reins and heart i.e., his innermost thoughts and emotions [to see] if he is serving Him as is fitting.

ועל כן צריך לעבוד לפניו באימה וביראה כעומד לפני המלך

Therefore, he must serve in His Presence with awe and fear (i.e., notes the Rebbe, not merely like one who is located in the King's domain, but moreover) like one standing before the King.

ויעמיק במחשבה זו, ויאריך בה כפי יכולת השגת מוחו ומחשבתו, וכפי הפנאי שלו

One must meditate profoundly and at length on this concept, according to the capacity of apprehension of his brain and thought, and the time available to devote to this contemplation; this time being:

לפני עסק התורה או המצוה, כמו לפני לבישת טלית ותפילין

before he engages in [the study of] Torah or [the performance of] a commandment, such as before putting on his *tallit* or *tefillin*.

This meditation will enable him to then serve G-d with awe.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain another form of meditation. Unlike the above thoughts which should preface divine service in general, this meditation relates to the particular *mitzvah* that the individual is about to perform — to the content of this *mitzvah*, its distinctive effect, and its influence on his soul.

וגם יתבונן איך שאור אין סוף ברוך הוא, הסובב כל עלמין וממלא כל עלמין, הוא רצון העליון

He should also reflect how the light of the blessed *Ein Sof*, which encompasses all worlds and pervades all worlds, and which is identical with the Higher Will,

Previous chapters have stated that G-d's Will is the source of the life-force that animates all worlds in both a transcendental and an indwelling mode.

הוא מלוּבש באותיות וחכמת התורה

is clothed in the letters and wisdom of the Torah,

In the very letters of Torah that the person utters and in the Torah wisdom that he comprehends, G-d's Will is to be found. As explained in ch. 4, the Divine Will clothed itself in the ink and parchment of the Torah scroll, and similarly clothed itself in the wisdom of Torah. Thus, when the wisdom of the Torah determines that a certain object is either kosher or invalid, it is expressing the Divine Will.

Accordingly, before a person commences his Torah study, he should ponder on how the *Ein Sof*-light — the Divine Will — is vested in the letters and wisdom of the Torah he is now about to study,

או בציצית ותפילין אלו

or, if his meditation takes place before he puts on his *tallit* and *tefillin*, he should contemplate how the Divine Will is clothed in these *tzitzit* and *tefillin*, it being G-d's Will that a Jew wear them,

ובקריאתו או בלבישתו

and through his recitation or study of the Torah, or by his wearing *tzitzit* and *tefillin*,

הוא ממשיך אורו יתברך עליו, דהיינו על חלק אלוה ממעל שבתוך גופו

he draws upon himself His blessed light, that is, over the “part of G-d above” — his soul — which abides in his body, and animates it.

ליכלל וליבטל באורו יתברך

This he does with the intent that it may be absorbed and nullified in His blessed light.

The individual's intent, then, is that the aforementioned study and performance have an effect on his soul. In particular, as will soon be explained, the intellectual and emotional faculties of the soul are affected by *tefillin*.

ודרך פרט בתפילין, ליבטל וליכלל בחינת חכמתו ובינתו שבנפשו האלקית בבחינת חכמתו ובינתו של אין סוף ברוך הוא, המלוכשות דרך פרט בפרשת קדש, והיה כי יביאך

Specifically, through *tefillin*, [he should intend that] the attributes of wisdom and understanding which are in his divine soul should be nullified and absorbed into the attributes of wisdom and understanding of the blessed *Ein Sof*, these being clothed, in particular, in the passages of *Kadesh* and *Vehayah ki yeviacha*.<sup>4</sup>

In these passages, both of which are found in the *tefillin*, G-d's wisdom (*Chochmah*) and understanding (*Binah*) are en clothed, wisdom in the former and understanding in the latter. By putting on *tefillin*, the individual's wisdom and understanding are absorbed in G-d's. How does this find expression?

דהיינו שלא להשתמש בחכמתו ובינתו שבנפשו בלתי לה' לבדו

That is to say, that he should use the wisdom and understanding that are in his soul, for G-d alone — only in pursuit of Torah and *mitzvot*, and for understanding G-dliness.

וכן ליבטל וליכלל בחינת הדעת שבנפשו, הכולל חסד וגבורה שהן יראה ואהבה שבלבו

Similarly, [he should intend that] the attribute of *Daat* (the third of the three components of *seichel*) in his soul, which includes both the *Chesed* (kindness) and *Gevurah* (severity), i.e., fear and love, in his heart,

The attribute of *Daat* comprises kindness and severity insofar as these attributes exist on an intellectual level. Moreover, as is explained at the end of ch. 3, the profound and involved meditation that characterizes the level of *Daat* actually creates love and fear, insofar as they exist independently on an emotional level. This faculty of *Daat*, then, should —

בבחינת דעת העליון, הכולל חסד וגבורה, המלוּבש בפרשת שמע, והיה אם שמוע

be nullified and absorbed into the attribute of the Higher Knowledge (*Daat HaElyon*), which comprises kindness and severity, and which is clothed in the passage of *Shema* and *Vehayah im shamo*.

והיינו כמו שכתוב בשולחן ערוך: לשעבד הלב והמוח כו'

This accords with the statement of the *Shulchan Aruch*,<sup>5</sup> [that while putting on the *tefillin* one should intend] “to make one’s heart and brain subservient to G-d.”

In this way, then, the divine soul as a whole, and its intellectual and emotive faculties in particular, are affected by one’s wearing *tefillin*.

ובעטיפת ציצית יכין כמו שכתוב בזהר, להמשיך עליו מלכותו יתברך

And while putting on the *tzitzit* one should bear in mind what is written in the *Zohar*, namely, that he should draw upon himself His blessed Kingdom,

אשר היא מלכות כל עולמים וכו', לייחדה עלינו על ידי מצוה זו

which is the Kingdom over *all* worlds; nevertheless,<sup>6</sup> we should intend and endeavor to focus [G-d’s Kingdom] specifically over ourselves, through this *mitzvah* — for the commandment of *tzitzit* is peculiarly effective in enhancing one’s acceptance of the yoke of heaven.

והוא כענין: שום תשים עליך מלך

This is similar to [the commandment]: “You shall surely set a king over yourself.”<sup>7</sup>

The Rebbe notes: The verse implies<sup>8</sup> that before one set a king over himself he had no king, and it is he who now sets the king over himself.

ואזי אף אם בכל זאת לא תפול עליו אימה ופחד בהתגלות לכו

In such a case, i.e., having contemplated this matter, then: even though after all this [meditation] no fear or dread descends upon him in a manifest manner in his heart,

מכל מקום מאחר שמקבל עליו מלכות שמים וממשיך עליו יראתו יתברך בהתגלות מחשבתו ורצונו שבמוחו

nevertheless, since he accepts the Kingdom of Heaven upon himself, and draws upon himself the fear of Him in his conscious thought and rational volition,

וקבלה זו היא אמיתית בלי שום ספק, שהרי היא טבע נפשות כל ישראל שלא למרוד במלך הקדוש יתברך

and this submission to G-d and his fear of Him is beyond doubt a sincere one — for it is the nature of all Jewish souls not to rebel against the blessed Holy King —

הרי התורה שלומד או המצוה שעושה מחמת קבלה זו ומחמת המשכת היראה שבמוחו נקראות בשם עבודה שלמה

then the Torah he studies or the commandment he performs because of his submission to the heavenly yoke and because of the fear that he has drawn into his mind, are termed “complete service,” of the kind that can result only from a fear of G-d, as the Alter Rebbe soon goes on to say,

ככל עבודת העבד לאדונו ומלכו

like all service [performed] by a slave for his master or king, which is, of course, prompted by fear and awe.

All this can be accomplished by arousing — even if only in his mind — at least a minimal level of fear, and utilizing it in the study of Torah and the performance of the commandments.

מה שאין כן אם לומד ומקיים המצוה באהבה לבדה כדי לדבקה בו על ידי תורתו ומצותיו, אינה נקראת בשם עבודת עבד

On the other hand, if one studies [Torah] and performs a commandment with love alone, in order to cleave to Him through [the study of] His Torah and [the performance of] His commandments, then this is not termed “service of a servant,”

והתורה אמרה: ועבדתם את ה' אלקיכם וגו' ואותו תעבדו וגו'

whereas the Torah has declared:<sup>9</sup> “You shall *serve* (*vaavadetem*) the L-rd your G-d....” This verb is cognate with the noun *eved* (servant or slave), and signifies service motivated by the fear and awe of G-d; and it is likewise written:<sup>10</sup> “Him shall you *serve* (*taavodu*)....”

וכמו שכתוב בזהר פרשת בהר : כהאי תורא דיהבין עליה עול בקדמיתא, בגין לאפקא מיניה טב לעלמא כו', הכי נמי איצטריך לבר נש לקבלה עליה עול מלכות שמים בקדמיתא כו', ואי האי לא אשתכח גביה לא שריא ביה קדושה כו'

As explained in the *Zohar (Parshat Behar)*: “Just like the ox on which one first places a yoke in order to make it useful to the world,...so too must a human being first of all submit to the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven,... and only then engage in divine service; and if this [submission] is not found in him, holiness cannot rest within him....”

וברעיא מהימנא שם דף קי"א עמוד ב', שכל אדם צריך להיות בשתי בחינות ומדריגות

And (in *Ra'aya Mehemna, ibid.*, 111b) it is written that every man must in his divine service belong to two categories and levels,

והן בחינת עבד ובחינת בן

namely, the category of a servant, who serves his master out of fear, and the category of a son, who serves his father out of love.

ואף דיש בן שהוא גם כן עבד, הרי אי אפשר לבא למדריגה זו בלי קדימת היראה עילאה, כידוע ליודעים

And although one may find a son who is also a servant, it is impossible to attain to this degree without the prerequisite of the higher level of fear and awe known as *yirah ila'ah*, as is known to the initiated.

It is clear from all the above that even if one loves G-d, but lacks a fear of Him, his spiritual labors will not be of the kind that the Torah calls *avodah*, divine service. And should he fail in his attempts at awakening a fear of G-d in his heart, he should at least arouse a feeling of fear and awe in his mind.

But what of one who finds it impossible to arouse even a feeling of intellectual awe of G-d? — The Alter Rebbe will now go on to say that since this individual, too, meditates upon the above-mentioned concepts, and, furthermore, his intent during the study of Torah and the performance of *mitzvot* is to serve G-d, these activities are therefore also deemed to constitute a completely valid form of service.

והנה אף מי שגם במוחו ומחשבתו אינו מרגיש שום יראה ובושה

Furthermore, even in the case of an individual who even in his mind and thought feels no fear or shame,

I.e., an individual who is not moved by his contemplation of G-d uniquely bestowing His Kingdom upon him, and furthermore, is not moved by the consideration that G-d is scrutinizing him to see if he is serving Him as is fitting,

מפני פחיתות ערך נפשו ממקור חוצבה ממדריגות תחתונים די' ספירות דעשיה



on account of the limited grade of his soul, originating in the lower degrees of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Asiyah*,

The soul of this individual derives from *Asiyah*, the lowest of the Four Worlds. Moreover, within this World itself, it originates from the lowest degrees of the Ten *Sefirot* that span it. Since his soul stems from such a lowly level, he finds it impossible to reveal within himself a sensitivity to G-dliness, to experience even an intellectual fear of G-d.

אף על פי כן מאחר שמתכוין בעבודתו כדי לעבוד את המלך, הרי זו עבודה גמורה

nevertheless, since he is intent in his service to serve the King, this is unequivocally a complete service.

כי היראה והעבודה נחשבות לשתי מצות במנין תרי"ג, ואינן מעכבות זו את זו

For fear and service are accounted as two commandments of the total of 613, and they do not exclude each other.

Thus, although this individual fails to fulfill the command of fearing G-d, for fear must be felt in one's heart and at the very least in one's mind, he is nevertheless able to fulfill the precept of divine service by studying Torah and performing the commandments with the intention that he is thereby serving G-d, his King.

After all this has been said, the Alter Rebbe will now say, that although this person fails to experience the fear even in his mind, yet since he *thinks* about those ideas which should evoke fear, he is fulfilling the command of fearing G-d.

ועוד, שבאמת מקיים גם מצות יראה כמה שממשיך היראה במחשבתו

Furthermore, as a matter of fact, he not only fulfills the obligation of service, he also fulfills the commandment of fearing [G-d] by introducing the fear into his thought — by thinking about it and seeking to arouse it,

כי בשעה ורגע זו, על כל פנים, מורא שמים עליו, על כל פנים כמורא בשר ודם הדיוט לפחות, שאינו מלך, המביט עליו

for at this hour and moment, at any rate, there rests upon him the fear of heaven, at least like one's fear in the presence of an ordinary mortal, even not a king, who is watching him,

שנמנע בעבורו מלעשות דבר שאינו הגון בעיניו

when he would refrain from doing anything unseemly in the other's eyes.

שזו נקראת יראה, כמו שאמר רבן יוחנן בן זכאי לתלמידיו: יהי רצון שיהא מורא שמים עליכם כמורא בשר ודם כו'

This — even this simple expression of fear — is termed fear; as Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai said to his disciples:<sup>11</sup> “May it be G-d’s Will that the fear of heaven be upon you like the fear of a human being.”

Whereupon his disciples protested: “No more than this?!”

תדעו כשאדם עובר עבירה, אומר: שלא יראני אדם כו'

He responded that the proof that this is indeed a true form of fear is as follows: “...For you know that when a person commits a sin, he says [to himself]: ‘May no one see me!’ ...”

Such fear, held Rabbi Yochanan, would ensure that they refrain from sinning.

At any rate, we note that this manner of fear is duly designated as “fear of heaven,” because it distances a person from sin. Accordingly, attaining this level of fear through meditation amounts to a proper fulfillment of the command to fear G-d.

רק שיראה זו נקראת יראה תתאה ויראת חטא, שקודמת להכמתו

Such fear, however, is termed *yirah tata'ah* (“lower-level fear”) and *yirat chet* (“fear of sin”), which precedes wisdom;<sup>12</sup> i.e., it is only a lower level of fear, a fear of transgressing, rather than a fear of G-d Himself,

For “wisdom” is an appellation for the fulfillment of Torah and *mitzvot*, inasmuch as<sup>13</sup> “the ultimate purpose of wisdom is repentance and good deeds.” This lower level of fear is therefore considered a prelude to Torah and *mitzvot*. And, indeed, in this spirit our Sages state:<sup>14</sup> “If there is no fear, there is no wisdom.”

Conversely,<sup>15</sup> however, our Sages also state:<sup>16</sup> “If there is no wisdom, there is no fear,” which would seem to imply the very opposite — that wisdom precedes fear.

In fact there is no contradiction between the two statements. For there are two levels of fear: (a) *yirah tata'ah*, the lower level of fear, and (b) *yirah ila'ah*, the higher level of fear.

The lower level of fear is a necessary prelude to “wisdom”, to the proper fulfillment of Torah and *mitzvot*. The higher level of fear, however, can only be attained after “wisdom”, i.e., after the proper performance of Torah and *mitzvot*. Hence, “If there is no wisdom, there is no fear.”

ויראה עילאה הוא ירא בושת כו'

while the higher fear is a “shamefaced fear,” i.e., the state of being abashed and overawed in G-d’s presence.

דאית יראה ואית יראה כו'

For there are two kinds of fear... — the lower level of fear which leads to the performance of Torah and *mitzvot*, and the higher level of fear which *results* from the proper performance of Torah and *mitzvot*.

אבל בלי יראה כלל, לא פרחא לעילא באהבה לבדה, כמו שהעוף אינו יכול לפרוח בכנף אחד

Without any fear at all, however, it i.e., one's fulfillment of Torah and *mitzvot* does not soar on high to the supernal *Sefirot* through love alone, just as a bird cannot fly with one wing,<sup>17</sup>

דדחילו ורחימו הן תרין גדפין כמו שכתוב בתיקונים

for fear and love are the two wings (as stated in *Tikkunei Zohar*).

The spiritual wings of love and fear of G-d elevate the Torah and *mitzvot* performed under their impetus to the supernal *Sefirot*, as explained in the previous chapters. When one lacks a fear of G-d and acts only out of love, he is operating with only one “wing”, thus making it impossible for his Torah and *mitzvot* to soar on high.

וכן היראה לבדה היא כנף אחד, ולא פרחא בה לעילא, אף שנקראת עבודת עבד

Similarly, fear alone is but one wing, and [one's service] cannot ascend with it on high, even though it is termed the “service of a servant,” duly motivated by awe, or fear,

וצריך להיות גם כן בחינת בן

for there must also be [the service characteristic of] a “son”, i.e., service motivated by love,

לעורר האהבה הטבעית על כל פנים המסותרת בלבו, שתהא בהתגלות מוחו על כל פנים

in order to awaken at least the natural love for G-d that is hidden in one's heart, so that he should at least become conscious of it in his mind,

לזכור אהבתו לה' אחד במחשבתו וברצונו לדבקה בו יתברך

to recall his love of the One G-d in his thought, and in his desire to cleave to Him. This recollection of his hidden love for G-d should arouse within him a desire to cleave to Him.

וזאת תהיה כוונתו בעסק התורה או המצוה הזו

This should be his intent when occupying himself with the Torah, or with the particular commandment he is about to perform, viz.,

לדבקה בו נפשו האלקית והחיונית ולבושיהן כנ"ל

that his divine soul as well as his vivifying soul, together with their “garments”, shall cleave to Him, as has been explained above.

In summary: a Jew’s divine service must embrace both that of a son who serves his father out of love, and that of a servant who serves his master out of fear and awe.

The Alter Rebbe had stated earlier that a person’s intention while performing Torah and *mitzvot* should be that his soul cleave to G-d.

He now goes on to say that a Jew’s spiritual service also includes the goal of becoming one with all the Jewish people. For this reason his intentions should not be limited to having his own soul cleave to G-d, but also that the source of his soul and the source of all the souls of Israel cleave to Him.

By doing so the individual brings about the union (*yichud*) of the higher and lower levels of G-dliness known respectively as *Kudsha Brich Hu* (“the Holy One, blessed be He”) and His *Shechinah* (“the Divine Presence”), for the former is the source of Torah and *mitzvot* and the latter is the source of all Jewish souls.

This explains the concluding phrase of the formula recited before the performance of certain *mitzvot*: “For the sake of the union of *Kudsha Brich Hu* with His *Shechinah*...*in the name of all Israel*.” As the Rebbe notes: “In the name of all Israel” implies that the union achieved through the performance of the *mitzvah* is for the sake of, and in the name of, all of Israel. For it is with the *Shechinah* that *Kudsha Brich Hu* is united and the *Shechinah* is the source of *all* Jewish souls.

In the Alter Rebbe’s words:

אך אמנם אמרו רז"ל: לעולם אל יוציא אדם עצמו מן הכלל

Yet in fact, the Sages, of blessed memory, have said<sup>18</sup> that “a man should never separate himself from the community.”

לכן יתכוין ליחד ולדבקה בו יתברך, מקור נפשו האלקית ומקור נפשות כל ישראל

Therefore he should intend to unite and attach to Him, blessed be He, the source of his divine soul and in addition the source of the souls of all Israel,

שהוא רוח פיו יתברך, הנקרא בשם שכינה על שם ששוכנת ומתלבשת תוך כל עלמין להחיותן ולקיימן

[this source] being the spirit of His mouth, called by the name ‘*Shechinah*’ because it dwells (*shochenet*) and clothes itself in all worlds, animating them and giving them existence,

והיא היא המשפעת בו כח הדבור הזה שמדבר בדברי תורה, או כח המעשה הזה לעשות מצוה זו

and it is the *Shechinah* which imbues him with the power of speech to utter his current words of Torah, or with the power of action to perform the particular commandment at hand.

One should thus intend to become united with the infinite *Ein Sof*-light through speaking words of Torah or performing a commandment. For it is the *Shechinah* which is the source of his power of speech and action, as well as the source of his divine soul and the souls of all Israel.

ויחוד זה הוא על ידי המשכת אור אין סוף ברוך הוא למטה, על ידי עסק התורה והמצוות שהוא מלובש בהן

This union of the source of Jewish souls with G-d is attained through drawing forth the light of the blessed *Ein Sof* here below, by being occupied in the Torah and the commandments wherein it (the light of the *Ein Sof*) is clothed.

ויתכוין להמשיך אורו יתברך על מקור נפשו ונפשות כל ישראל לייחדן

And he should be intent on drawing His blessed light over the source of his soul and of the souls of all Israel, so as to unite them with Him.

וכמו שכתוב לקמן פירוש יחוד זה באריכות, עיין שם

The meaning of this union will be discussed at length later on; note there.

וזהו פירוש לשם יחוד קודשא בריך הוא ושכינתיה בשם כל ישראל

This, then, is the meaning of the words we recite before performing various commandments: “For the sake of the union of *Kudsha Brich Hu* with his *Shechinah*...in the name of all Israel.”\*

That is to say, one’s observance of the commandments unites *Kudsha Brich Hu* (the source of Torah and *mitzvot*) with the *Shechinah* — in the name of all the Jewish people, for the *Shechinah* is the source of the souls of them all.

הגהה

#### \*NOTE

The Alter Rebbe now notes that much more than the union of divine souls and G-d is accomplished by the study of Torah and the performance of *mitzvot*. These activities also bring about *hamtakat hadinim*, the tempering (lit., “sweetening”) of harsh judgment and *Gevurot*, and their transformation into kindness and *Chassadim*.

This is effected through the coalescing of the supernal *Sefirot* of *Chesed* and *Gevurah* (kindness and severity). These *Sefirot*, which by nature are opposites, are fused into one

through the revelation and diffusion of a divine light which is spiritually superior to them both.

This light is the Supernal Will drawn down upon these two attributes through the performance of Torah and *mitzvot*, for inasmuch as Torah and *mitzvot* are expressions of the Divine Will, their spirituality far surpasses the spirituality of the *Sefirot* of *Chesed* and *Gevurah*.

When the Divine Will — the source of Supernal kindness — is revealed through the study of Torah and the performance of *mitzvot*, the attributes of kindness and severity are united, and severity is transformed into kindness.

In the Alter Rebbe's words:

וגם על ידי זה יתמתקו גם כן הגבורות בחסדים ממילא

Thereby, *i.e.*, through the performance of Torah and *mitzvot*, the *Gevurot* will, of themselves, also be sweetened by the Chassadim through the coalescence of the *middot* and their union,

על ידי גילוי רצון העליון ברוך הוא, המתגלה למעלה באתערותא דלתתא

by means of the revelation of the Supernal Will, which is revealed on high through the stimulus from below,

הוא גילוי למטה בעסק התורה והמצוה, שהן רצונו יתברך

namely, its revelation *here* below in one's occupation in the Torah and commandments, for they are His blessed Will.

Thus, when a Jew reveals and draws down G-d's Will into this world as a result of his spiritual activities, the Divine Will will also be revealed in the Supernal *Sefirot*, resulting in the unification and coalescing of the *middot*, so that the *Gevurot* are sweetened by and transformed into *Chassadim*.

וכמו שכתוב באדרא רבא ובמשנת חסידים מסכת אריך אנפין פרק ד'

Thus it is written in *Idra Rabba* and in *Mishnat Chassidim*, Tractate *Arich Anpin*, ch. 4,

שתרי"ג מצות התורה נמשכות מחיורתא דאריך אנפין, שהוא רצון העליון מקור החסדים

*that the 613 commandments of the Torah are derived from the "whiteness" — the Chassadim — of Arich Anpin, which is the Supernal Will, the source of the Chassadim.*

Although this is stated in Kabbalistic terms, the intent is clear: Kindness and benevolence are drawn down into the world through the study of Torah and the performance of *mitzvot*.

## END OF NOTE

It has been previously noted that it is not enough to intend to unify one's own soul with G-d through the performance of Torah and *mitzvot*; one must also seek to unite the source of *all* the souls of Israel with the infinite *Ein Sof*-light.

In point of fact, there is quite a difference between these two intentions. A Jew's personal desire to cleave to G-d because of his love for Him is surely an utterly truthful intention: since his love of G-d is sincere, his desire to cleave to Him is likewise sincere.

However, for a Jew to sincerely desire that his performance of Torah and *mitzvot* connect the source of all the souls of Israel with the infinite *Ein Sof*-light (i.e., that it effect the union of *Kudsha Brich Hu* and His *Shechinah*, as explained above), — this presupposes a far greater love of G-d: a love so fierce that his only desire is to cause G-d pleasure through his actions, thinking of himself not at all. It is thus entirely possible that this general intention is not completely genuine.

Now we are constantly taught that one should be wary of spiritual intentions which outstrip one's current spiritual pace: spirituality must be earned in an environment of honesty. How, then, are we to expect that every Jew study Torah and perform *mitzvot* for the sake of uniting all of Israel with G-d, when he himself knows that he does not mean it wholeheartedly?

The Alter Rebbe therefore goes on to explain that although an individual may not be entirely sincere in this intention, his integrity is not compromised thereby. For every Jew desires to fulfill G-d's Will — and uniting Jews with G-d is surely His Will.

One should therefore not be apprehensive about his own sincerity to the point that he refrains from this comprehensive intention of unity, for to a certain degree his intention is consciously sincere. Moreover, there is no self-delusion here, for this unity is what his soul desires.

ואף שלהיות כוונה זו אמיתית בלב, שיהיה לבו חפץ באמת יחוד העליון הזה, צריך להיות בלבו אהבה רבה  
לה' לבדו

And although in order that this intent should be sincere in his heart, so that his heart should truly desire this Higher Union, uniting all Jewish souls with their source in G-dliness, his heart must harbor a great love (*ahavah rabbah*) for G-d alone,

Often, loving another is ultimately a result of self-love: a person loves that which is good for *him*. The same is true with regard to loving G-d and desiring to cleave to Him through the study of Torah and the performance of *mitzvot*: the individual desires his own welfare, and that which will benefit his own soul — and there can be no better way of achieving this than by cleaving to G-d.

If, however, he is to truly desire the unification of *all* Jewish souls with their source in G-d, a much deeper love is required: a love untainted by the faintest vestige of self-interest, a love wholly and exclusively directed toward G-d,

לעשות נחת רוח לפניו לבד ולא לרוות נפשו הצמאה לה'

to do what is gratifying to Him alone, and not for the purpose of quenching his soul's thirst for G-d,

אלא ככרא דאשתדל בתר אבוי ואמיה, דרחים לון יתיר מגרמיה ונפשיה כו' כמו שכתוב לעיל בשם רעיא מהימנא

but he must be “like a son who strives for the sake of his father and mother, whom he loves more than his own body and soul,...” (as explained above in ch. 10, citing *Ra'aya Mehemna*),

As explained above, this degree of love was experienced by Moses, who sacrificed himself utterly in order to secure the unification of the Jewish people with G-d. His love was similar to that of a child who is ready to give his very life for his parents' sake. How, then, can every Jew be expected to summon up this lofty level of love, which is a prerequisite for the desire to unite all Jewish souls with their G-dly source?

מכל מקום יש לכל אדם להרגיל עצמו בכוונה זו

nevertheless, every person should habituate himself to this intent.

כי אף שאינה באמת לאמיתו לגמרי בלבו שיחפוץ בזה בכל לבו

For though it may not be in his heart in perfect and complete truth, so that he should long for it with all his heart, for in order to truly do so one must have attained a totally selfless love for G-d,

מכל מקום מעט מזעיר חפץ לבו בזה באמת, מפני האהבה הטבעית שבלב כל ישראל לעשות כל מה שהוא רצון העליון ב"ה

nevertheless, to some small extent, his heart genuinely desires it, because of the inborn love in every Jewish heart to do whatever is the Supernal Will of G-d.

ויחוד זה הוא רצונו האמיתי

And this union — the union of the source of all Jewish souls with the infinite *Ein Sof*-light — is His true desire,

והיינו יחוד העליון שבאצילות, הנעשה באתערותא דלתתא על ידי יחוד נפש האלקית והתכללותה באור ה' המלוּבש בתורה ומצות שעוסקת בהן



namely, the Supernal Union in the World of *Atzilut*, which is produced by an arousal from below, through the divine soul's union and absorption in G-d's light that is clothed in the Torah and the commandments in which it is engaged,

והיו לאחדים ממש, כמו שכתוב לעיל

so that they — the divine soul and G-d — become One in reality, as has been explained above. And thus one effects the union in the World of *Atzilut*.

כי על ידי זה מתיחדים גם כן מקור התורה והמצות, שהוא הקב"ה, עם מקור נפשו האלקית, הנקרא בשם שכינה

For by reason of this, the source of the Torah and the commandments, i.e., the Holy One, blessed be He, is united with the source of the individual's divine soul, which is called '*Shechinah*'.

שהן בחינת ממלא כל עלמין ובחינת סובב כל עלמין, כמו שכתוב במקום אחר באריכות

Expressed in terms of the different levels of supernal illumination, these are the categories of "filling all worlds" and of "encompassing all worlds," as is explained elsewhere at length.

In summary: Since all Jews desire to do G-d's Will, and He desires that their souls all unite with their source, there is a measure of truth in a Jew's intent to bring about this union, even if his love of G-d is not completely selfless.

The Alter Rebbe will now go on to say that a Jew's desire for his *own* soul to be united with its source is an utterly honest one, for every Jew possesses an innate love of G-d.

אבל יחוד נפשו והתכללותה באור ה' להיות לאחדים

But the union of the person's own soul with, and its absorption into, the light of G-d, making them one,

בזה חפץ כל אדם מישראל באמת לאמיתו לגמרי, בכל לב ובכל נפש

this is what every member of Israel desires in absolute and utter truth, with all his heart and all his soul,

מאהבה הטבעית המסותרת בלב כל ישראל, לדבקה בה' ולא ליפרד ולהיות נכרת ונבדל חס ושלום מיחודו ואחדותו יתברך בשום אופן, אפילו במסירות נפש ממש

because of the natural love that is hidden in every Jewish heart to cleave to G-d and not, under any circumstances, to be parted or sundered or separated, G-d forbid, from His blessed Unity and Oneness, even at the cost of his very life.

This readiness for self-sacrifice surfaces, for example, when a Jew is forced by heathens to bow down to an idol. Even if merely going through the motions would satisfy them, and they do not impose their belief upon him, the Jew will be ready to literally sacrifice his life so as not to be sundered from his unity with G-d.

ועסק התורה ומצות והתפלה הוא גם כן ענין מסירת נפש ממש, כמו בצאתה מן הגוף במלאת שבעים שנה

Being engaged in the Torah and commandments and prayer is also a matter of actual surrender of the soul, just as when it leaves the body at the end of seventy years,

שאינה מהרהרת בצרכי הגוף, אלא מחשבתה מיוחדת ומלובשת באותיות התורה והתפלה, שהן דבר ה' ומחשבתו יתברך, והיו לאחדים ממש

for then it does not think of bodily needs, but its thought is united with, and clothed in, the letters of the Torah and prayer, which are the word and thought of G-d, and they (the soul and the letters of Torah and prayer — G-d's thought and speech) truly become one.

שזהו כל עסק הנשמות בגן עדן, כדאיתא בגמרא ובזהר

This is [also] the whole occupation of the souls in the Garden of Eden, as is stated in the *Gemara* and in the *Zohar*,

Just as the soul in heaven has no other occupation apart from Torah and prayer, so too, a person occupied in Torah and prayer in this world is immersed in it to the exclusion of all material needs and desires. As such, he is then renouncing all materiality and is totally surrendering his soul to G-d. This comes as a result of the love of G-d concealed within every Jewish heart.

אלא ששם מתענגים בהשגתם והתכללותם באור ה'

except that there, i.e., when souls in *Gan Eden* are immersed in the letters of Torah and prayer, they delight in their apprehension of, and absorption into, the light of G-d.

Though this delight is lacking in this world, the manner of service remains the same.

וזהו שתקנו בתחלת ברכות השחר קודם התפלה: אלקי נשמה וכו' אתה נפחתה וכו' ואתה עתיד ליטלה ממני כו'

This is why it was ordained by the Men of the Great Assembly that one recite at the beginning of the morning blessings, before the prayers: "My G-d, the soul [which you have placed within me is pure]... You have breathed it [into me]... And You will eventually take it from me...."

כלומר: מאחר שאתה נפחתה בי ואתה עתיד ליטלה ממני, לכן מעתה אני מוסרה ומחזירה לך, לייחודה באחדותך

That is to say: Inasmuch as You have breathed it into me and You will eventually take it from me, I therefore as of now hand it over and return it to You, to unite it with Your Oneness,

וכמו שכתוב: אליך ה' נפשי אשא

as it is written: [19](#) “To You, O L-rd, I lift my soul,” in order to unite it with G-d,

והיינו על ידי התקשרות מחשבתי במחשבתך ודיבורי בדבורך, באותיות התורה והתפלה

that is, through binding my thought with Your thought, and my speech with Your speech, by means of the letters of the Torah and prayer which I utter;

ובפרט באמירה לה' לנכה, כמו: ברוך אתה, וכהאי גוונא

and, especially, when one addresses G-d in the second person, as in the phrase, “Blessed are You,” and the like.

והנה בהכנה זו של מסירת נפשו לה'

With this preparedness to surrender his soul to G-d, i.e., through engaging in Torah and prayer in the same spirit in which a man surrenders his soul to G-d before his demise,

יתחיל ברכות השחר: ברוך אתה כו'

one should begin to recite the morning benedictions: “Blessed are You...,” and so on, these benedictions being the beginning of one’s prayers.

וכן בהכנה זו יתחיל ללמוד שיעור קבוע מיד אחר התפלה

Similarly, with this preparedness one should also begin a regular course of study immediately after prayer.

In the words of the Sages, “From the House of Prayer (lit., ‘the House of Assembly’) to the House of Study.” As with prayer, this regular study session should also be preceded by the resolve to surrender one’s soul wholly to G-d.

וכן באמצע היום קודם שיתחיל ללמוד, צריכה הכנה זו לפחות

So also, in the course of the day, before one begins to study, such preparation at least is necessary,

כנודע שיעיקר ההכנה לשמה לעכב, הוא בתחלת הלימוד בבינונים

as is known, that in the case of *Beinonim*, the essential preparation and intent “for its own sake,” where it is indispensable, is before the beginning of study.

וכמו בגט וספר תורה שצריכים לשמה לעכב

This is the same as in the case of [writing] a bill of divorce or a scroll of the Torah, where “for their own sake” is an indispensable requirement, and should this intention be lacking they are invalid,

ודיו שיאמר בתחלת הכתיבה: הריני כותב לשם קדושת ספר תורה או לשמו ולשמה כו'

and it is sufficient if at the commencement of writing a Torah scroll [the scribe] says: “I am now about to write for the sacred purpose of the scroll of the Torah,” or in the case of a bill of divorce, “For him and for her,” and so on.

Similarly, it is sufficient for a *Beinoni* to have the intention of “for its own sake” at the beginning of his study.

וכשלומד שעות הרבה רצופות, יש לו להתבונן בהכנה זו הנ"ל בכל שעה ושעה על כל פנים

And when he studies for a number of consecutive hours he should reflect on the preparedness referred to above, at least at hourly intervals.

כי בכל שעה ושעה היא המשכה אחרת מעולמות עליונים להחיות התחתונים, והמשכת החיות שבשעה שלפניה חוזרת למקורה

For in each hour there is a different flow from the higher worlds to animate those who dwell here below, while the flow of vitality from on high of the previous hour returns to its source,

בסוד רצוא ושוב שבספר יצירה

(in accordance with the esoteric principle of “Advancing and Retreating” expounded in *Sefer Yetzirah*),

As the divine life-force animates the world, alternately “Advancing and Retreating,” it is first drawn down into this world, and then it returns to its source in the higher spiritual worlds. Each hour, then, the creative life-force of the previous hour returns to its source,

עם כל התורה ומעשים טובים של התחתונים

together with all the Torah and good deeds of those who dwell here below.

כי בכל שעה שולט צירוף אחד מ"ב צירופי שם ה' ברוך הוא בי"ב שעות היום, וצירופי שם אדנ"י בלילה, כנודע

For in each of the twelve hours of the day, there rules one of the twelve combinations of [the letters that form] the Four-Letter Name of G-d,<sup>20</sup> while the combinations of [the letters that comprise] the Divine Name A-D-N-Y rule at night, as is known.

Speaking of the form of service that was earlier deemed surrender of the soul, the Alter Rebbe will now go on to say that it should be undertaken not for the sake of returning the soul to its original source, but only to cause G-d pleasure.

והנה כל כוונתו במסירת נפשו לה' על ידי התורה והתפלה, להעלות ניצוץ אלקות שבתוכה למקורו

Now, all one's intent in the surrender of his soul to G-d through Torah and prayer, to elevate the spark of G-dliness therein — in the soul — back to its source,

תהא רק כדי לעשות נחת רוח לפניו יתברך, כמשל שמחת המלך בבוא אליו בנו יחידו בצאתו מן השביה ובית האסורים כנ"ל

should be solely for the purpose of causing Him gratification, like the joy of a king when his only son returns to him, after having been released from captivity or imprisonment, as has been explained earlier.

In ch. 31, the Alter Rebbe compared the soul's return to G-d through Torah and prayer to the return of a captive prince to his overjoyed father, the king. For a Jewish soul is G-d's child; hence His great joy when it is reunited with Him, after its imprisonment within the body and animal soul. Accordingly, as a Jew prepares to study Torah and engage in prayer, his spiritual objective should be that this reunion come about for the sole purpose of bringing joy to the soul's father, the King.

However, the Alter Rebbe explained earlier that in order to attain this degree of selfless love, one must have attained an extremely lofty degree of spirituality, a level possessed only by *tzaddikim*. How, then, is this to be expected of every Jew?

The Alter Rebbe therefore goes on to explain that when the purpose of one's service is simply to restore his own soul to its source — and not the souls of all Jews to their source — then this lofty degree of selfless love is not a prerequisite. The latent love of G-d possessed by all Jews is sufficient to cause one to desire to bring Him this manner of gratification.

והנה כוונה זו היא אמיתית באמת לאמיתו לגמרי בכל נפש מישראל בכל עת ובכל שעה

Now, this intent, solely to bring gratification to G-d by returning one's own soul to G-d, is genuine and truly and completely sincere in every Jewish soul at all times and at every hour,

מאהבה הטבעית שהיא ירושה לנו מאבותינו

by virtue of the natural love which is a heritage bequeathed to us by our ancestors.

רק שצריך לקבוע עתים להתבונן בגדולת ה', להשיג דחילו ורחימו שכליים

Nevertheless, one should not be satisfied merely with this level of service: one needs to establish set periods for reflecting on the greatness of G-d in order to attain intellectually-generated fear and love,

וכולי האי ואולי וכו' כנ"ל

and with all that, perhaps [one may succeed] in attaining such fear and love, as has been stated previously.

Thus, although one already possesses a hidden love of G-d which enables him to study Torah and pray out of a readiness to surrender his very soul, he should still seek to attain that level of fear and love of G-d that is born of his own intellectual endeavor.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Yirmeyahu* 23:24. [2.](#) *Sanhedrin* 4:5. [3.](#) *Bereishit* 28:13. [4.](#) “As explained at length in the discourses on *tefillin* in *Pri Etz Chayim*; *Siddur* (edition with chassidic discourses); *Imrei Binah*; etc.” (— Comment by the Rebbe.) [5.](#) *Orach Chayim* 25:5. [6.](#) “As explained at the beginning of the chapter.” (— Comment by the Rebbe.) [7.](#) *Devarim* 17:15. [8.](#) See *Likkutei Torah, Masei* 90d. [9.](#) *Shmot* 23:25. [10.](#) *Devarim* 13:5. [11.](#) *Berachot* 28b. [12.](#) See *Avot* 3:9. [13.](#) *Berachot* 17a. [14.](#) *Avot* 3:17. [15.](#) See beginning of ch. 43, where this subject is treated in greater detail. [16.](#) *Avot* 3:17. [17.](#)

The Rebbe notes that this does not contradict the statement of the *Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah* 39:8, quoted in *Tosafot, Shabbat* 49a, s.v. כנפיה), that when a dove is tired it “flies with one wing,” indicating that a bird can indeed fly with only one wing.

There is no contradiction, because the *Midrash* concludes with the words, “(it flies with one) and rests with one”; the bird possesses both wings. Here, however, the Alter Rebbe is describing a situation where the individual possesses only a love of G-d and lacks fear of Him; he thus completely lacks the second “wing”.

Furthermore, according to the Midrashic text and commentary of the *Matnot Kehunah*, although the dove is mostly flying with one wing it also makes use, albeit minimal use, of the second wing as well; even a dove cannot fly with just one of its two wings.

[18.](#) *Berachot* 49b. [19.](#) *Tehillim* 25:1. [20.](#)

The Tetragrammaton is composed of the four letters: *yud* and *hei*, *vav* and another *hei*. Since two of the letters are similar, we are left with three different letters, which can form a total of twelve combinations — or so it would seem.

The Rebbe notes, however, that first of all, the Name A-D-N-Y consists of four different letters, providing for a total of twenty-four permutations (while only twelve of them predominate during the twelve hours of the night). Secondly, the two letters *hei* in the Tetragrammaton have significantly different spiritual connotations. Thus this Divine Name, too, is able to form twenty-four different (spiritual) permutations.

The Rebbe therefore explains that the Alter Rebbe is saying here that twelve of the twenty-four possible combinations of the Tetragrammaton rule during the twelve hours of the day (while the other twelve have no connection at all to time). The same principle applies to the twelve stitches in the *tefillin* of the hand, which according to the *Mishnat Chassidim* correspond to twelve combinations of A-D-N-Y. There, too, twelve of the possible twenty-four combinations are related to these stitches, while the other twelve are not related to the *tefillin* at all.

At any rate, twelve of the permutations of the Tetragrammaton rule during the twelve hours of the day, and twelve combinations of the Name A-D-N-Y rule during the twelve hours of the night.



## Chapter 42

In the previous chapter the Alter Rebbe explained that fear of G-d is a prerequisite to divine service. Every Jew is capable of attaining this level, by contemplating how “G-d stands over him” and “searches his reins and heart [to see] if he is serving Him as is fitting.” This thought will lead him to bring forth at least some measure of fear in his mind. This in turn will enable him to study Torah properly, as well as to perform both the positive and negative commandments.

The Alter Rebbe also noted that this level of fear is known as *yirah tata'ah*, “lower-level fear,” which is a preparatory step to the proper performance of Torah and *mitzvot*. This degree of fear must be manifest, if one’s Torah study and performance of the *mitzvot* are to be deemed *avodah*, divine service.

והנה במה שכתוב לעיל בענין יראה תתאה

In the light of what has already been said on the subject of the lower level of fear, as summarized above,

יובן היטב מה שנאמר בגמרא על פסוק: ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך כי אם ליראה את ה' אלקיך, אטו יראה מילתא זוטרתא היא

one will clearly understand the Talmudic comment<sup>1</sup> on the verse,<sup>2</sup> “And now, Israel, what does the L-rd your G-d require of you? Only that you fear the L-rd your G-d.” The *Gemara* asks: “Is fear, then, such a small thing?”

אין: לגבי משה מילתא זוטרתא היא וכו'

Answers the *Gemara*: “Yes, in the case of Moses it is a small thing,” and so forth.

Superficially, the answer seems to be that this was said by Moses to the Jewish people, and for him, fear of G-d is indeed a simple thing.

דלכאורה אינו מובן התירו', דהא שואל מעמך כתיב

At first glance the answer of the *Gemara* is incomprehensible, for the verse asks, “What does [He] require of *you*?” — i.e., What does G-d require of every Jew? For the majority of Jews, fear of G-d is certainly no mean accomplishment. What, then, is the point of answering that for *Moses* it is a simple thing?

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain that the answer of the *Gemara*, that “in the case of Moses it is a simple thing,” does not refer to Moses alone, but to the “Moses” which is found in every Jew, for Moses imbues all Jews with the level of *Daat* (lit., “knowledge”), enabling them all to bind their own faculty of *Daat* to G-dliness. It is concerning this level of Moses found within *every* Jew, that the statement is made, “...in the case of Moses it is a simple thing.” For when a Jew utilizes the power of Moses found within him, i.e., when he binds his *Daat* with G-dliness, then fear of G-d is indeed a simple thing and easy to attain, as shall presently be explained.

אלא הענין הוא כי כל נפש ונפש מבית ישראל יש בה מבחינת משה רבנו עליו השלום, כי הוא משבעה רועים

The explanation, however, is as follows: Each and every soul of the House of Israel comprises within it something of the quality of our teacher Moses, peace unto him, for he is one of the <sup>3</sup> “seven shepherds”

הממשיכים חיות ואלקות לכללות נשמות ישראל, שלכן נקראים בשם רועים

who cause vitality and G-dliness to flow to the community of the souls of Israel, for which reason they are called “shepherds”.

Just as a shepherd provides nourishment for his sheep, thereby supplying them with vitality, so too do the “seven shepherds” sustain Jewish souls with “vitality and G-dliness,” each from his own spiritual level. Abraham provides the Jews with the spiritual faculty of *Chesed* and love, and so forth.

Chassidim relate that the Alter Rebbe pondered for a goodly number of weeks whether to write that the “seven shepherds” provide “G-dly vitality” (אלוקות חיות), or whether he should write “vitality and G-dliness” (ואלוקות חיות). He finally resolved to write the latter — “vitality *and* G-dliness.” For “vitality” refers to love and fear of G-d, since it is they that vitalize one’s performance of Torah and *mitzvot*; “G-dliness” refers to self-nullification before G-d. The “seven shepherds,” then, cause both “vitality *and* G-dliness” to flow into Jewish souls.



ומשה רבנו, עליו השלום, הוא כללות כולם, ונקרא רעיא מהימנא, דהיינו שממשיך בחינת הדעת לכללות ישראל לידע את ה'

Our teacher, Moses, peace unto him, comprises [aspects of] them all, and he is called “the faithful shepherd.” This means that he draws down the quality of *Daat* to the community of Israel, that they may know and be cognizant of the L-rd, so that for them G-dliness will be self-evident, and experienced by every Jew,

כל אחד כפי השגת נשמתו ושרשה למעלה

each according to the intellectual capacity of his soul and its root above, i.e., according to the height of the source of the soul as it exists above,

ויניקתה משרש נשמת משה רבנו, עליו השלום, המושרשת בדעת העליון שבי' ספירות דאצילות המיוחדות במאצילן, ברוך הוא

and according to [the degree of] its nurture from the root of the soul of our teacher Moses, peace unto him, which is rooted in the *Daat Elyon* (“Supernal Knowledge”) of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Atzilut*, which are united with their Emanator,

Just as G-d is termed the Creator of *created* beings, so, too, is He called the Emanator of those entities found in the World of *Atzilut*, a World which, together with its beings, is an *emanation* of the *Ein Sof*.

שהוא ודעתו אחד, והוא המדע כו'

for He and His Knowledge are one, and “He is the Knowledge....”

As explained in ch. 2 above, G-d’s knowledge and man’s are utterly dissimilar. On the human plane, the *knower* and the faculty of *knowledge* and that which is *known*, are three distinct and separate entities. However, concerning G-d: “*He* is the Knowledge, *He* is the Knower, and *he* is That which is Known.” Thus, Supernal Knowledge is one with Him. And it is within this level of *Daat* that Moses’ soul is rooted.

When a Jew receives the capacity for *Daat* from the soul of Moses, he is able to perceive G-dliness in a truly knowing and internalized manner, so that he actually experiences Him. Utilizing this capacity enables every Jew to know and feel how “G-d stands over him... and sees his actions.” It is therefore easy for him to summon up within himself a fear of G-d.

However, all the above refers to the luminary aspect of Moses which is received by *every* Jew. The Alter Rebbe now goes on to say that there is an even higher level of Moses — a “spark” of Moses’ soul, that is bestowed upon the spiritual leaders and sages of each generation. (A spark is an actual part of the flame, unlike rays of illumination which are not truly part of the luminary. So, too, the sparks of the soul of Moses found within the leaders and scholars throughout the generations, are a *part* of Moses’ soul.) The task of

these leaders is to teach G-d's greatness to the Jewish people, so that they will serve G-d with all their heart.

ועוד זאת, יתר על כן, בכל דור ודור יורדין ניצוצין מנשמת משה רבנו, עליו השלום, ומתלבשין בגוף ונפש של חכמי הדור, עיני העדה

In addition and beyond this pervasive influence to the community as a whole, there descend, in every generation, sparks from the soul of our teacher Moses, peace unto him, and they clothe themselves in the body and soul of the sages of that generation, the “eyes” of the congregation,

Because of the “spark” of Moses found within a spiritual leader he is called “Moses”, as in the Talmudic expression,<sup>4</sup> “Moses, do you speak aright?” This spark is clothed not only in a leader's soul, but also in his body.<sup>5</sup> This is why chassidim say that one never tires of gazing at a *rebbe*, for within him is a spark of Moses. These sparks which are clothed in sages and spiritual leaders enable them —

ללמד דעת את העם, ולידע גדולת ה' ולעבדו בלב ונפש

to impart knowledge to the people, that they may know the greatness of G-d and [hence] serve Him with heart and soul.

כי העבודה שבלב היא לפי הדעת, כמו שכתוב: דע את אלקי אביך, ועבדהו בלב שלם ונפש חפצה

For the service of the heart, i.e., one's love and fear of G-d, is according to the *Daat*, according to one's degree of knowledge and understanding of G-d's greatness, as it is written,<sup>6</sup> “Know the G-d of your father, and serve Him with all your heart and with a longing soul.”

Thus, in order to “serve Him with all your heart and with a longing soul,” it is necessary to “know the G-d of your father” — to know and comprehend His greatness. This is taught to the Jewish people by the scholars of each generation, within whom sparks of Moses are en clothed.

ולעתיד הוא אומר: ולא ילמדו איש את רעהו לאמר, דעו את ה', כי כולם ידעו אותי וגו'

Only concerning the future [Messianic era] is it written:<sup>7</sup> “And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the L-rd,’ for they shall all know Me...”

Only at that time will a teacher be unnecessary. However, in our era, one needs to have a mentor impart knowledge of G-d's greatness if one is to know how to serve Him with heart and soul. And one's dependence on Moses through the intermediary scholars of each generation (the “sparks” of Moses) is of the very essence of one's divine service.

אך עיקר הדעת אינה הידיעה לבדה, שידעו גדולת ה' מפי סופרים ומפי ספרים

However, the essence of knowledge which leads one to serve G-d with his whole soul and heart, is not mere knowing alone, that people should know the greatness of G-d from authors (i.e., sages and spiritual guides) and books,

אלא העיקר הוא להעמיק דעתו בגדולת ה', ולתקוע מחשבתו בה' בחוזק ואומ' הלב והמוח

but the essential thing is to immerse one's *own* mind deeply into those things which explain the greatness of G-d, and fix one's thought on G-d with strength and vigor of the heart and mind,

עד שתהא מחשבתו מקושרת בה' בקשר אמ' וחזק, כמו שהיא מקושרת בדבר גשמי שרואה בעיני בשר ומעמיק בו מחשבתו

until his thought shall be bound to G-d with a strong and mighty bond, as it is bound to a material thing which he sees with his physical eyes and upon which he concentrates his thought.

When one does so, he is mightily bound up with the object of his thoughts and is unable to free himself from them. Thinking about G-d and His greatness should be done in the selfsame all-absorbing manner — and thereby the thinker will be truly bound up with Him.

כנודע שדעת הוא לשון התקשרות, כמו: והאדם ידע וגו'

For it is known that *Daat* connotes union, as in the verse,<sup>8</sup> “And Adam *yada* (lit., ‘knew’) Eve....” The word ידע in this verse connotes union. Thus, *Daat* entails knowing something to the point that one is completely united with it. The same is true regarding knowledge of G-dliness. Although when one just knows G-dliness, he is already fulfilling a *mitzvah*, still this does not suffice; it is necessary that one achieve the union of *Daat* by meditating deeply on G-d's greatness.

וכח זה ומדה זו, לקשר דעתו בה', יש בכל נפש מבית ישראל ביניקתה מנשמת משה רבנו, עליו השלום

This capacity and this quality of attaching one's *Daat* to G-d, so that he not only understands, but also feels G-dliness and so becomes wholly united with Him, is present in every soul of the House of Israel, by virtue of its nurture (*yenikah*, lit., “suckling”) from the soul of our teacher Moses, peace unto him.

רק מאחר שנתלבשה הנפש בגוף, צריכה ליגיעה רבה ועצומה, כפולה ומכופלת

Only, since the soul has clothed itself in the body, it needs a great and mighty exertion, doubled and redoubled, in order to feel and be attached to G-d.

While it is true that the soul has this capacity by dint of its being nurtured from the soul of Moses (for were the soul lacking this capacity, then even the greatest effort would be of no avail, for how can a created being possibly comprehend and feel its Creator? How

can a soul enclotted in a body feel and be bound to G-dliness?), nevertheless, even after possessing this capacity, it requires a prodigious effort to actually comprehend and feel G-dliness.

האחת היא יגיעת בשר, לבטש את הגוף ולהכניעו, שלא יחשיך על אור הנפש

First is the “exertion of the flesh,” to throw off the bodily shackles, to pound the body, i.e., to weaken its corporeality, and gain its submission, so that it shall not obscure the light of the soul, thus making it possible for one to understand and feel G-dliness,

כמו שנאמר לעיל בשם הזהר, דגופא דלא סליק ביה נהורא דנשמתא, מבטשין ליה, והיינו על ידי הרהורי תשובה מעומק הלב, כמו שכתוב שם

as has been mentioned above<sup>9</sup> in the name of the *Zohar*, that “A body into which the light of the soul does not penetrate should be crushed,” this being accomplished by means of penitential reflections from the depths of the heart, as is explained there.

When one has weakened the grossness of the body, so that it hinders no longer, it becomes possible for the “light of the soul” to be manifest. This, then, is one manner of exertion, known as “exertion of the flesh.”

והשנית היא יגיעת הנפש, שלא תכבד עליה העבודה ליגע מחשבתה, להעמיק ולהתבונן בגדולת ה' שעה גדולה רצופה

And the second is the exertion of the soul — to reveal the powers of the soul, that the service of exerting one’s thought not be burdensome to it, to delve into and reflect upon the greatness of G-d for a long and uninterrupted period,

כי שעור שעה זו אינו שוה בכל נפש

for this measure of time necessary to immerse oneself in a G-dly concept in order to arouse love or fear of G-d is not the same for every soul. Some people require more time, others less.

יש נפש זכה בטבעה, שמיד שמתבוננת בגדולת ה', יגיע אליה היראה ופחד ה'

There is the naturally refined soul which, immediately upon considering the greatness of G-d, attains a fear and dread of Him.

כמו שכתוב בשלחן ערוך אורח חיים סימן א': כשיתבונן האדם שהמלך הגדול, מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא, אשר מלא כל הארץ כבודו, עומד עליו ורואה במעשיו, מיד יגיע אליו היראה וכו'

As is written in *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim*, sec. I, that “When a man reflects that the great King — the Supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, with Whose glory the whole world is filled — stands over him and sees his actions, he will *immediately* be overcome with fear....”

And, as the *Shulchan Aruch* concludes, “he will be humbled and abashed before G-d.” This is true of one whose soul is naturally refined; he is “*immediately...overcome with fear,*” without great effort or time required on his part.

ויש נפש שפלה בטבעה ותולדתה, ממקור חוצבה ממדרגות תחתונות די ספירות דעשיה

Then there is a soul that is of lowly nature and origin, coming from the lower gradations of the Ten *Sefirot* of *Asiyah*,

Within the World of *Asiyah* itself, the lowest of all Worlds, this type of soul comes from the lowest of the Ten *Sefirot*. It is thus a soul of “lowly nature and origin,” which finds it difficult to conceptualize G-dly matters.

ולא תוכל למצוא במחשבתה האלקות, כי אם בקושי ובחזקה

and it is unable to discover G-dliness by contemplation except with difficulty and forceful insistence,<sup>10</sup>

I.e., only by expending a great amount of effort and contemplating G-dliness for a long stretch of time will it be able to secure a degree of G-dly illumination, and conceptualize a notion of G-dliness. Only then will this contemplation penetrate such a person so that he will be fearful of G-d.

ובפרט אם הוטמאה בחטאת נעורים, שהעוונות מבדילים כו' כמו שכתוב בספר חסידים סימן ל"ה

especially if the soul is not only of a lowly nature, but in addition it had been defiled by the “sin of youth,” for one’s sins interpose [between a Jew and G-d] (<sup>11</sup>as is written in *Sefer Chassidim*, ch. 35).

ומכל מקום, בקושי ובחזקה, שתתחזק מאד מחשבתו באומי ויגיעה רבה ועומק גדול, להעמיק בגדולת ה' שעה גדולה

Nevertheless, with difficulty and with forceful effort, when his thought greatly exerts itself with vigor and great toil and intense concentration, immersing [itself] in contemplation of the greatness of G-d for a long time,

The previous Lubavitcher Rebbe of blessed memory once said in a talk that a “long time” means, “an hour today,... an hour tomorrow,” until ultimately the repetitiveness of intense concentration day after day will ensure that no matter how lowly the soul may be,

בודאי תגיע אליו על כל פנים היראה תתאה הנ"ל

there will certainly come to him at least the “lower-level fear” referred to above, i.e., enough to prevent him from doing something which is opposed to G-d’s Will.

(With regard to the Alter Rebbe's above assurance that no matter how lowly the soul and notwithstanding its previous sins, still with intense concentration on G-d's greatness it will surely attain the lower level of fear, the Rebbe comments: "We also understand from this that *even before* [attaining] this [level of fear], the person will *surely* succeed in undoing his separation [from G-d] that was brought about through his sins; i.e., he will [regret his sins and] repent."<sup>12</sup>)

וכמו שאמרו רז"ל: יגעתי ומצאתי, תאמין

And, as the Rabbis of blessed memory have said:<sup>13</sup> "[If a man says,] 'I have labored and I have found,' believe him."

The Rebbe explains: One's labor not only helps a person achieve something commensurate with the amount of labor, similar to payment received for doing a job, but moreover enables him to say, "I have found." For in the case of a person who *finds* an object, his find is incomparably greater in value than the labor invested in finding it.

וכדכתיב: אם תבקשנה ככסף, וכמטמונים תחפשנה, אז תבין יראת ה'

It is also written, with regard to the success one achieves when he labors to attain the fear of G-d:<sup>14</sup> "If you seek it like money, and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of G-d."

פירוש: כדרך שמחפש אדם מטמון ואוצר הטמון בתחתיות האר', שחופר אחריו ביגיעה עצומה

This means: In the manner of a person seeking a hidden treasure buried in the depths of the earth, for which he digs with tireless toil, for he *knows* that it is surely buried there,

כך צריך לחפור ביגיעה עצומה לגלות אוצר של יראת שמים הצפון ומוסתר בבינת הלב של כל אדם מישראל

so must one delve with unflagging energy in order to reveal the treasure of the fear of heaven, which lies buried and concealed in the understanding of the heart of every Jewish individual,

Since this treasure is surely concealed within every Jewish heart, all that needs to be done is to dig it out and seek to reveal it.

שהיא בחינה ומדרגה שלמעלה מהזמן

this "understanding of the heart" being of a quality and level transcending the limitations of time,

Hence it cannot be said that during a particular time this treasure is lacking and unattainable.

והיא היראה הטבעית המסותרת הנ"ל

and this is the natural, hidden fear referred to above.

A question now arises. If this fear is “natural” and is always found within a Jew’s heart, why then is it necessary to take measures involving profound contemplation of G-d’s greatness in order to attain it? The Alter Rebbe therefore goes on to say, that since this fear is found in the recesses of the heart it does not affect one’s actions and enable him to refrain from sinning. It is thus necessary to take steps that will *reveal* this fear, and ensure that it will affect one’s actual deeds.

רק שכדי שתבא לידי מעשה בבחינת יראת חטא, להיות סור מרע במעשה דבור ומחשבה, צריך לגלותה ממצפוני בינת הלב שלמעלה מהזמן, להביאה לבחינת מחשבה ממש שבמוח

However, in order that it should be translated into action, in the sense of “fear of sin,” so that one will turn away from evil in deed, word and thought, one needs to bring it to light from the hidden depths of the understanding of the heart where it transcends time, and to place it within the realm of actual thought that is in the brain.

להעמיק בה מחשבתו משך זמן מה ממש, עד שתצא פעולתה מהכח אל הפועל ממש

[This means,] immersing his thought in it for a lengthy period of time until its effect will emerge from the potential into the actual, so that it affects the soul and body of man,

להיות סור מרע ועשה טוב במחשבה דבור ומעשה, מפני ה' הצופה ומביט ומאזין ומקשיב ומבין אל כל מעשהו, ובוחן כליותיו ולבו

so that he will turn away from evil and do good in thought, speech and action, because of G-d who looks and sees, hears and listens, and perceives all his deeds, and searches his “kidneys and heart.”

When a man realizes that G-d scrutinizes his innermost thoughts, he will surely refrain from sinning, and will seek instead to perform *mitzvot*.

וכמאמר רז"ל: הסתכל בשלשה דברים כו', עין רואה ואוזן שומעת כו'

As the Rabbis, of blessed memory, said:<sup>15</sup> “Reflect upon three things [and you will not come to sin: Know what is above you] — an Eye that sees, and an Ear that hears....”

וגם כי אין לו דמות הגוף

And although He has no bodily likeness,

How, then, can we possibly say that G-d possesses an “eye” and “ear”, organs that are part of a physical body?

הרי אדרבה, הכל גלוי וידוע לפניו ביתר שאת לאין קו' מראיית העין ושמיעת האזן, על דרך משל

yet, on the contrary: i.e., this is the very reason that everything is revealed and known to Him infinitely more than, for example, through the physical medium of sight and hearing.

When we say that G-d does not possess any bodily likeness, we mean that He is not bounded by the frailties of a physical body. A physical eye can observe corporeality, but not spirituality; it can see only when there is adequate light, and only up to a given distance, and so on. Physical hearing is likewise limited. G-d's "seeing" and "hearing", however, possess only the merits of these faculties, but none of their physical limitations. For it goes without saying that any quality possessed by created beings is surely possessed by their Creator.

על דרך משל, כמו אדם היודע ומרגיש בעצמו כל מה שנעשה ונפעל באחד מכל רמ"ה איבריו, כמו קור או חום

By way of illustration, G-d's "seeing" and "hearing", and the fact that everything is revealed to Him and known by Him, are like a man who knows and feels within himself all that is happening to and being experienced by each of his 248 organs, such as cold and heat,

ואפילו חום שבצפרני רגליו, על דרך משל, אם נכוה באור

feeling even the heat in his toenails, for example, as when he is scorched by fire;

וכן מהותם ועצמותם

so also their essence and substance,

I.e., not only is a person aware of all that is happening *to* his organs; he also feels the organs themselves.

וכל מה שמתפעל בהם יודע ומרגיש במוחו

and all that is affected [16](#) in [ *or*: by] them, is known to the person and sensed in his brain.

One need not use his eyes or ears to see or hear what has happened to a limb of his body, such as the pain of a burned hand or foot, for he knows and senses it in his mind.

וכעין ידיעה זו, על דרך משל, יודע הקב"ה כל הנפעל בכל הנבראים עליונים ותחתונים, להיות כולם מושפעים ממנו יתברך, כמו שכתוב: כי ממך הכל

In a similar manner of knowledge, by way of analogy, G-d knows all that befalls all created beings of both higher and lower worlds, because they all receive their flow of life from Him, as it is written: [17](#) "For from You come all things."

Just as the brain, which is the source of life for the whole body, knows what transpires within it, so too does G-d, the Source of all life, know what is happening with all of creation.



וזה שנאמר: וגם כל היצור לא נכחד ממך

And this is the meaning of what we say: [18](#) “...and no creature is hidden from You,” inasmuch as all created beings emanate from Him.

וכמו שכתב הרמב"ם והסכימו לזה חכמי הקבלה, כמו שכתב הרמ"ק בפרדס

And as Maimonides speaking as a philosopher has said ([19](#) and this has been agreed to by the scholars of the Kabbalah, as Rabbi Moses Cordovero writes in *Pardess*),

שבידיעת עצמו, כביכול, יודע כל הנבראים הנמצאים מאמיתת המצאו וכו'

that by knowing Himself, as it were, He knows all created things, whose source of existence is His true existence.

However, G-d provides creation with life in a different manner than the manner in which the soul provides life to the body. The soul must garb itself in the body in order to provide it with life. By doing so it is affected by the body (for “enclothing” implies that the clothed object undergoes a change). G-d, however, is of course not subject to change when He provides life to creation. Hence:

רק שמשל זה אינו אלא לשכך את האזן, אבל באמת אין המשל דומה לנמשל כלל

This analogy of soul and body, however, is only to “calm the ear” — to make it possible for man’s ear and intellect to perceive how one may know about something without having to actually see or hear it. In truth, however, the analogy of soul and body bears no similarity at all to the analogue of G-dliness and creation.

כי נפש האדם, אפילו השכלית והאלקית, היא מתפעלת ממאורעי הגוף וצערן מחמת התלבשותה ממש בנפש החיונית המלובשת בגוף ממש

For the human soul, even the rational and the divine soul, is affected by the events which transpire with the body and its pain, by reason of its (the rational and divine soul’s) being actually clothed within the vivifying soul (i.e., the soul which provides the body with physical life) which in turn is clothed in the body itself.

אבל הקב"ה אינו מתפעל, חס ושלום, ממאורעי העולם ושינויו, ולא מהעולם עצמו

G-d, however, is not (heaven forbid) affected by the events of the world and its changes, nor by the world itself,

He is not affected by the existence (the essence and being [20](#)) of the world;

שכולם אינן פועלים בו שום שינוי, חס ושלום

none of them effect any change in Him, G-d forbid, nor in His absolute unity; just as He was One and Unified before He created them, so, too, does He remain One and Unified after their creation.

והנה כדי להשכיל זה היטב בשכלנו, כבר האריכו חכמי האמת בספריהם

In order to help us understand this well with our intelligence, the Scholars of Truth (i.e., the Kabbalists) have already treated it at length in their books, and an explanation will be found there.

אך כל ישראל מאמינים בני מאמינים, בלי שום חקירת שכל אנושי, ואומרים: אתה הוא עד שלא נברא העולם וכר

However, all Jews as descendants of the Patriarchs who believed in G-d, are “believers, descendants of believers,” without any speculation of mortal intellect whatever, and they declare:<sup>21</sup> “You were [the same] before the world was created,” and so forth,

The passage concludes: “You are [the same] since the world has been created”; thus, all Jews firmly believe that the world’s creation causes no change in G-d,

כנ”ל פרק כ’

as has been explained above in ch. 20.

והנה כל אדם מישראל, יהיה מי שיהיה, כשיתבונן בזה שעה גדולה בכליו, איך שהקב”ה מלא ממש את העליונים ואת התחתונים, ואת השמים ואת הארץ ממש מלא כל הארץ כבודו ממש

Now, therefore, each individual Jew, whoever he may be, i.e., whatever his spiritual state, when he ponders upon this for a considerable time each day — how G-d is truly omnipresent in the higher and lower [worlds], and the actual heaven and earth (i.e., not only the spiritual heaven and earth, the Supernal *Sefirot*, but the actual heaven and earth itself) is truly filled with His glory,

וצופה ומביט ובוהן כליותיו ולבו וכל מעשיו ודבוריו, וכל צעדיו יספור

and that He looks, seeks and searches his “kidneys and heart” (i.e., his inner thoughts and emotions) and all his actions and words, and counts his every step —

אזי תקבע בלבו היראה לכל היום כולו, כשיחזור ויתבונן בזה אפילו בהתבוננות קלה

then fear will be implanted in his heart throughout the day, even when he is occupied with other matters and cannot contemplate the above, when he will again meditate on this, even with a superficial reflection that does not demand a particular effort and a set time;

בכל עת ובכל שעה יהיה סור מרע ועשה טוב במחשבה דבור ומעשה, שלא למרות חס ושלום עיני כבודו אשר מלא כל הארץ

at any time<sup>22</sup> or moment, he will thus turn away from evil and do good, (i.e., he will refrain from transgressing negative commands and perform positive commands) in thought, speech and deed, so as not to rebel, G-d forbid, in the sight of His glory whereof the whole world is filled.

וכמאמר רבן יוחנן בן זכאי לתלמידיו כנ"ל

This is in accord with the statement<sup>23</sup> of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai to his disciples, quoted above, viz., “May it be G-d’s Will that the fear of heaven be upon you [and keep you from sinning] like the fear of a human being [who by observing your actions keeps you from sinning].”

וזה שאומר הכתוב: כי אם ליראה את ה' אלקיך, ללכת בכל דרכיו

This, then, is the meaning of the verse:<sup>24</sup> “[G-d demands of you] only to fear the L-rd your G-d, to walk in all His ways.”

The question arises: Is attaining the fear of G-d such an easy thing that the verse says, “*only* to fear Him”? The answer which is given (“For Moses it is a simple matter”) is difficult to comprehend, for the verse speaks of what “G-d demands of *you*” — of every Jew. The explanation is as follows: the verse is referring here to a level of fear which is indeed simple for every Jew to reach, that level being fear that leads one to “walk in all His ways.”

שהיא יראה המביאה לקיום מצותיו יתברך, בסור מרע ועשה טוב, והיא יראה תתאה הנ"ל

For this is the fear that leads to the fulfillment of G-d’s commandments, which involve turning away from evil and doing good. This is the “lower-level fear” which has been discussed earlier.

Accordingly, the *Gemara’s* answer (“For Moses it is a simple matter”) is now understandable. It means:

ולגבי משה, דהיינו, לגבי בחינת הדעת שבכל נפש מישראל האלקית, מילתא זוטרתא היא, כנ"ל

As it applies to “Moses”, that is to say, in relation to the quality of *Daat* that is in the divine soul of every Jew, this quality being the quality of Moses found within “*you*”, within each Jewish soul, this is indeed a minor thing, as has been stated above — that when a Jew reflects with his *Daat* upon matters that arouse fear of G-d, he will surely succeed in attaining it,

שהדעת הוא המקשר מצפוני בינת הלב אל בחינת גילוי במחשבה ממש, כידוע ליודעי ח"ן

(<sup>25</sup>for *Daat* is [the faculty] which connects the hidden understanding of the heart with revelation in actual thought, as is known to those who are familiar with the Esoteric Discipline).

As mentioned earlier, all Jews possess a “hidden treasure of fear of heaven” in their hearts. Through the faculty of *Daat*, this fear of heaven is revealed and felt in one’s thought, and also affects his speech and actions.

\* \* \*

In describing earlier the fear a Jew should possess for G-d, the Alter Rebbe said that it should be similar to the fear felt “when one stands before a king,” for G-d is omnipresent and observes all man’s actions.

A question arises: When one stands before a king, he is not only being seen by the king, but he is also looking at him, and this helps him to stand in fear of him. In the analogue, however, this is not the case: though G-d, the King, sees him, he fails to see G-d.

The Alter Rebbe will now respond to this question by saying that there is yet another means by which an individual may awaken within himself the fear of G-d — by being able to “see” the King. For by observing heaven and earth and all the created beings that people them, and realizing that they all derive their life from G-d, he will have fear of Him.

ועוד זאת יזכור כי כמו שבמלך בשר ודם, עיקר היראה היא מפנימיותו וחיותו ולא מגופו, שהרי כשישן אין שום יראה ממנו

In addition to this, one should remember that, as in the case of a mortal king, the fear of him relates mainly to his inner essence and vitality and not to his body — for when he is asleep, though his body does not change, there is no fear of him,

This is because while he sleeps his inner essence and vitality are in a state of concealment. Clearly, then, they are the main reason for fearing a king while he is awake.

והנה פנימיותו וחיותו אין נראה לעיני בשר, רק בעיני השכל

and, surely, his inner essence and vitality are not perceived by physical eyes, but only by the mind’s eye,

על ידי ראיית עיני בשר בגופו ולבושיו, שיודע שחיותו מלובש בתוכם

through the physical eyes’ beholding his body and garments, and knowing that his vitality is clothed in them.

This in turn leads the beholder to fear him.

ואם כן

And if this is so, then surely in the analogue as well, not only is the king seeing him, but he is seeing the king as well, and this causes him to fear G-d. Moreover,

ככה ממש יש לו לירא את ה' על ידי ראיית עיני בשר בשמים ואר' וכל צבאם, אשר אור אין סוף ברוך הוא מלובש בהם להחיותם

he must truly likewise fear G-d when gazing with his physical eyes at the heavens and earth and all their hosts, wherein is clothed the [infinite] light of the blessed *Ein Sof* that animates them.\*

הגהה

\*NOTE

The Alter Rebbe will now say that by looking at heaven and earth one not only becomes aware of their G-dly vitalizing force, but also perceives how the world and all its inhabitants are truly nullified to the divine life-force. This can be perceived by observing the stars and planets, all of which travel in a westerly direction. In doing so they express their nullification to the *Shechinah*, the Divine Presence, which is in the west.

וגם נראה בראיית העין שהם בטלים לאורו יתברך בהשתחוואתם כל יום כלפי מערב בשקיעתם, כאמר רז"ל על פסוק: וצבא השמים לך משתחווים, שהשכינה במערב

And it is also seen with a glance of the eye that they are nullified to His blessed light, by the fact that they “prostrate” themselves every day towards the west at the time of their setting. As the Rabbis, of blessed memory, commented on the verse: [26](#) “...and the hosts of the heavens bow before You,” that the *Shechinah abides in the west*,

ונמצא הילוכם כל היום כלפי מערב הוא דרך השתחוואה וביטול

Hence, *not only do the heavenly hosts show their self-abnegation when they set in the west, but* their daily orbit westwards is a kind of prostration and self-nullification.

We find it written that if the sun, moon and planets were to follow their natural characteristics they would travel in an easterly, rather than in a westerly direction. That they do not do so testifies to their constant self-nullification to the Divine Presence which is found in the west. For the four points of the compass are rooted in the Supernal *Sefirot*, and *Malchut* — the level of the *Shechinah* — is in the west. Thus, even man’s eye observes the self-nullification of creation to the divine life-force.

והנה גם מי שלא ראה את המלך מעולם ואינו מכירו כלל, אף על פי כן, כשנכנס לחצר המלך

Even he who has never seen the king and does not recognize him at all, nevertheless, when he enters the royal court,

“There the king is not revealed at all: it is not the place of his royal throne and the like. (In the analogue this refers to the physical world, in which various proofs are necessary in order to bring about self-nullification to the King.)” — Note of the Rebbe.

ורואה שרים רבים ונכבדים משתחווים לאיש אחד

and sees many honorable princes prostrating themselves before one man,

“The person who enters and looks superficially is unable to detect a difference between him and the other men present.” — Note of the Rebbe.

תפול עליו אימה ופחד

there falls on him a dread and awe.

So, too, the self-nullification before G-d shown by the awesome creatures, such as the heavenly bodies, enables one to be in fear and awe of Him.

END OF NOTE

However, the question may be asked: When one gazes at the body of a physical king, he sees before him beyond a shadow of a doubt the king himself. He therefore can extrapolate intellectually about the inner essence and vitality of the king and come to fear him. This is not so, however, with regard to physical creatures. The divine life-force is so concealed within them through so many garbs of concealment, that it is quite possible for one to gaze at them and fail to be aware that their bodies are but garments to the divine life-force they contain.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to say, that it is therefore important for a person who observes physical created beings to cultivate the habit of immediately recalling that within the concealment of their external trappings and garments, there is to be found the G-dliness that animates them. By doing so, one is then able to *perceive* the divine life-force found within the world.

ואף שהוא על ידי התלבשות בלבושים רבים

And although many garments are involved in this vestiture, so that when one gazes at created beings, one does not perceive that they are but garments to their divine life-force,

הרי אין הבדל והפרש כלל ביראת מלך בשר ודם, בין שהוא ערום, ובין שהוא לבוש לבוש אחד, ובין שהוא לבוש בלבושים רבים

there is no difference or distinction at all in the fear of a mortal king, whether he be naked,<sup>27</sup> or clothed in one or many garments.

It is the realization that the king is found within the garments that creates the fear of him. And the same, the Alter Rebbe will conclude, is true here. When a person becomes accustomed to remember that when he gazes upon created beings he is in reality gazing upon the King's garments, he will then come to fear Him.

אלא העיקר הוא ההרגל, להרגיל דעתו ומחשבתו תמיד, להיות קבוע בלבו ומוחו תמיד, אשר כל מה שרואה בעיניו, השמים והארץ ומלואה, הכל המלבושים החיצונים של המלך הקב"ה

The essential thing, however, is the training to habituate one's mind and thought continuously, so that it always remain imprinted in his heart and mind, that everything one sees with his eyes — the heavens and earth and all they contain — constitutes the outer garments of the king, the Holy One, blessed be He.

ועל ידי זה יזכור תמיד על פנימיותם וחיותם

In this way he will constantly remember their inwardness and vitality, which is G-dliness. This will create within him a fear of G-d.

The Rebbe explains that what now follows answers a question: How can we possibly say here that the nullification of the world to G-d is a concept that can be perceived intellectually, when in ch. 33 the Alter Rebbe explained that this was a matter of faith? In this chapter too, we have learned that it is a matter of faith — “that all Jews are believers, descendants of believers,” and so on. Faith and intellect are not only distinct entities, they are antithetical; for example, when something is understood, faith is not necessary.

The Alter Rebbe therefore now goes on to explain that this intellectual perception is also implicit in the word *emunah* (“faith”). For this word is etymologically rooted in the word *uman* (“artisan”). In order for an artisan with a talent for painting, creating vessels, or whatever, to be successful, he must habituate and train his hands; only then will they reveal the latent talents of the artistry found in his soul.

The same is true here: The soul of every Jew possesses the abovementioned faith. However, in order for this faith to be actualized, so that one's actions will be in consonance with it, one must habituate and train himself to realize that all he sees — heaven and earth and all of creation — are but G-d's external garments. By constantly remembering that their inwardness is G-dliness, the soul's essential faith will be revealed and will affect one's actions. His bodily organs will then follow the dictates of his faith.

וזה נכלל גם כן בלשון אמונה, שהוא לשון רגילות, שמרגיל האדם את עצמו, כמו אומן שמאמן ידיו וכו'

This is also implicit in the word *emunah* (“faith”), which is a term indicating “training” to which a person habituates himself, like a craftsman who trains his *hands*, and so forth.

The Rebbe notes that “who trains his *hands*” means: “He is cognizant of the craft in his soul; he has a natural talent for it, but needs only to train his hands, so that it will find tangible expression in his actions (be it through art, or fashioning vessels, or the like).”

Thus, the analogue contains both aspects: The king sees the individual, and he sees the king, as it were, by looking at created beings and perceiving through them the divine life-force that vitalizes them.

\* \* \*

The Rebbe notes that the reason the Alter Rebbe now goes on to say “There should also be etc.” is that until now it has been explained how a Jew generates the fear of heaven through intellectual contemplation. The degree of fear he arouses will correspond exactly to the extent of his contemplation; the deeper the contemplation, the greater his fear. It also depends on how much each individual is governed by his intellect. Furthermore, it is too much to expect that *all* people constantly achieve a state of intellectual awareness — yet *all* people are obliged to stand in constant fear of heaven. The Alter Rebbe therefore now goes on to elaborate on a frame of mind which can and must exist constantly — “acceptance of the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven.” This is not attained through contemplation. Rather it comes as a result of faith alone — and this state can exist constantly in all individuals.

וגם להיות לזכרון תמיד לשון חז"ל: קבלת עול מלכות שמים, שהוא כענין: שום תשים עליך מלך

There should also be a constant remembrance (it is constant because it does not depend on prior contemplation, but rather on pure faith) of the dictum of the Sages, of blessed memory, “acceptance of the *yoke* of the Kingdom of Heaven,” which parallels the injunction,<sup>28</sup> “You shall appoint a king (i.e., G-d) over you,”

כמו שכתוב במקום אחר וכו'

as has been explained elsewhere, and so on.

This is also what the Alter Rebbe says earlier in *Tanya* (beginning of ch. 41): “Even though after all this [meditation] no fear or dread descends upon him in a manifest manner in his heart,” still he should accept upon himself G-d as his king, and *accept upon himself* the yoke of the heavenly Kingdom. As the Alter Rebbe explains there, this attribute is found within every Jew in a sincere manner, because of the nature of Jewish souls not to rebel against G-d, the King of kings. This level of fear can therefore *always* be present.

כי הקב"ה מניח את העליונים והתחתונים ומייחד מלכותו עלינו וכו', ואנחנו מקבלים וכו'

For G-d, blessed be He, forgoes the creatures of the higher and lower worlds, i.e., they are not the ultimate intent of creation, and uniquely bestows His kingdom upon us, ...and we accept [the heavenly yoke].

וזהו ענין ההשתחוואות שבתפלת שמונה עשרה, אחר קבלת עול מלכות שמים בדבור בקריאת שמע

And this is the significance of the obeisances in the prayer of the Eighteen Benedictions, following the verbal acceptance of the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven in the Reading of *Shema*, when we say, “...the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is one,” and so on,

לחזור ולקבל בפועל ממש במעשה וכו', כמו שכתוב במקום אחר



whereby one accepts it once again in actual deed, and so on (for by bowing in the course of the prayer of *Shemoneh Esreh* one shows one's acceptance in actual deed of one's self-nullification to G-d), as is explained elsewhere.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Berachot* 33b. [2.](#) *Devarim* 10:12. [3.](#) Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph, David. [4.](#) *Shabbat* 101b, and elsewhere. [5.](#)

Explaining why the Alter Rebbe says here that sparks from the soul of Moses are clothed in *the body and soul* of the sages of every generation, the Rebbe points out: It would seem that the order should be reversed — the sparks clothe themselves not only in the soul of the sage, but also in his body.

The Rebbe explains, however, that if the order would indeed be reversed one could erroneously be led to think that the spark of Moses clothed in the sage does not reach his body directly from Moses, except after first being clothed in his soul. By first stating “body” and then “soul” the Alter Rebbe underscores the fact that the spark of Moses clothed in the body arrives at its destination *directly* from Moses, without the interposition of the sage's soul. Just as the distinctive quality of Moses himself related not only to his soul but also to his body, so, too, regarding the spark that emanates from him: it is clothed directly in the body of the sage.

This helps us understand more deeply why the sages are known as Moses, as mentioned earlier, for even within their bodies a spark of Moses is clothed.

[6.](#) *I Divrei HaYamim* 28:9. [7.](#) *Yirmeyahu* 31:33. [8.](#) See above, ch. 3. [9.](#) Beginning of ch. 29. [10.](#) The Rebbe notes: “The wording is from *Sefer Chassidim*, and so too later on.” [11.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [12.](#)

The Rebbe notes: In the second edition of the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, in which the subjects are discussed — as can plainly be seen — in more detail and in a more inward manner, the Alter Rebbe adds: “And if the person does not immediately attain fear of G-d, he should immerse himself deeply.... He should also fully repent for his sins, for it is they that hinder him from attaining fear [of G-d].”

This *supplements* the statement of the *Shulchan Aruch* and of the first edition of the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch* (as quoted above in *Tanya*), that “when he will contemplate...he will immediately attain this fear....”

Thus, in the second edition of his *Shulchan Aruch*, the Alter Rebbe addresses the issue of what is to be done if fear is not immediately attained. The situation may be remedied by (a) “immersing himself more deeply, etc.,” and by (b) “fully repenting, etc.”

[13.](#) *Megillah* 6b. [14.](#) *Mishlei* 2:4-5. [15.](#) *Avot* 2:1. [16.](#)

The Rebbe indicates in a footnote that it is incorrect to translate “all that is done to them,” namely, the effect of heat or cold on the organs. For were that to be so: (a) this has

already been mentioned earlier; why repeat it again; (b) the Hebrew should have read, “*nif'al bahem*,” which would translate to “done to them,” and not, “*mitpa'el bahem*,” which translates literally, “what is affected in them.” For this reason the phrase has been translated, “and all that is affected in them.”

Furthermore, says the Rebbe, it is possible that there is a typographical error, and that the phrase should read, *מהם*... — “and all that is affected *by* them,” i.e., all that which *man as a whole* is affected by the organs. For this reason the translation has alternatively been given as, “and all that is affected by them.”

This emendation parallels that which is stated a little later on, that the analogy of man’s knowledge of his organs is *not at all* similar to the analogue, for a person is affected by his body; G-d, however, is in no way affected by changes in the world. It therefore is reasonable to assume that the analogy given here is that of the person being affected by his bodily organs, for it is in this regard that the analogue is not at all similar to the analogy.

[17.](#) *I Divrei HaYamim* 29:14. [18.](#) In the *Mussaf* prayer of *Rosh HaShanah*. [19.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [20.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “In line with the analogy (end of side (a) in the Hebrew text). ‘The creation’ is not part of the analogy at all, for the soul does not create the body. The Alter Rebbe therefore does not speak of it or negate it in the analogue.” [21.](#) In the morning prayers. [22.](#)

Note of the Rebbe: At first glance it would seem that there is no compelling evidence as to whether “at any time or moment” is connected to the earlier clause (“when he will again meditate... even with a superficial reflection *at any time or moment*”), or whether it is connected to the following clause (“*at any time or moment*, he will turn away from evil and do good...”).

However, since “any time or moment” is mentioned in ch. 14 with regard to a person’s ability to become a *Beinoni*, and the Alter Rebbe explains there that this phrase refers to his thought, speech and deed, it follows that here, too, “at any time or moment” relates to the following clause — “he will turn away from evil and do good, in thought, speech and deed.”

[23.](#) *Berachot* 28b. [24.](#) *Devarim* 10:12. [25.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [26.](#) *Bava Batra* 25a. [27.](#) The Rebbe notes: “Cf. *Mishnah, Sanhedrin*, end of ch. 2.” [28.](#) *Devarim* 17:15.



## Chapter 43

The Alter Rebbe explained in the previous chapter that every Jew has the ability to attain *yirah tata'ah*, the lower level of fear of G-d. This enables him to perform all the positive commandments and refrain from transgressing all the negative commandments. In the present chapter the Alter Rebbe goes on to explain the two levels of fear of G-d, *yirah tata'ah* and *yirah ila'ah*, the lower and higher levels of fear respectively.

This distinction clarifies a seeming contradiction. The *Mishnah* first states:<sup>1</sup> “If there is no wisdom, there is no fear [of G-d].” Wisdom must precede fear. But the *Mishnah* then goes on to say: “If there is no fear [of G-d], there is no wisdom.” Fear must *precede* wisdom!

The explanation is as follows: The *Mishnah* refers to the two above-mentioned levels of fear. The first statement — “If there is no fear, there is no wisdom” — refers to the lower level of fear, *yirah tata'ah*. Without this level of fear, it is impossible to attain wisdom, i.e., the performance of Torah and *mitzvot*. (This is deemed wisdom, since the ultimate purpose of wisdom is repentance and good deeds.) The second statement — “If there is no wisdom, there is no fear” — refers to the higher level of fear, *yirah ila'ah*. This level of fear must be preceded by wisdom, i.e., the performance of Torah and *mitzvot*. Only thus is one able to attain the higher level of fear.

The Alter Rebbe also explains in this chapter that just as there are two general levels of fear of G-d, there are also two general levels of love of G-d.

והנה על יראה תתאה זו, שהיא לקיום מצותיו יתברך, בבחינת סור מרע ועשה טוב

Concerning this level of *yirah tata'ah* of which it was said in the previous chapter that it is in the province of every Jew, which is [necessary] for the fulfillment of His commandments, in both areas of “Turn away from evil and do good,” i.e., in the performance of the negative and positive commands,

אמרו: אם אין יראה, אין חכמה

it was said, by our Sages, “If there is no fear, there is no wisdom.” If fear of G-d is lacking, then one cannot properly fulfill the Torah and *mitzvot*.

ויש בה בחינת קטנות ובחינת גדלות

It (this lower level of fear) comprises a quality of “smallness” and a quality of “greatness”.

The quality of “smallness” describes the fear which is experienced as a result of a Jew’s *innate* fear of G-d, and which is merely *revealed* through meditating upon matters that lead to the fear of G-d. Since it does not result from contemplating G-d’s greatness it is deemed “small”. The quality of “greatness” characterizes the fear of G-d that results from contemplating G-d’s greatness as it can be discerned from creation.

דהיינו, כשנמשכת בחינת יראה זו מההתבוננות בגדולת ה'

This means i.e., fear has the quality of “greatness” when this category of the lower level of fear is a result of contemplation on the greatness of G-d as it is perceived through His providing life to creation —

דאיהו ממלא כל עלמין

that He fills all worlds,

G-d provides all worlds with vitality by vesting Himself in them. This life-force is attuned to the innate spirituality of the particular world or created being in which it is vested; the higher the world or created being, the loftier its life-force.

ומהאר' לרקיע מהלך ת"ק שנה וכו', ובין רקיע לרקיע כו'

and<sup>2</sup> from the earth to the heavens is a distance of 500 years,... and the distance from one heaven to the next... is also a journey of 500 years,

רגלי החיות כנגד כולן וכו'

[and] “the feet i.e., the lowest level of the angels called *chayyot* measure up to them all...”

The lowest level of the *chayyot* transcends all the other levels.

וכן השתלשלות כל העולמות, למעלה מעלה עד רום המעלות

and similarly with one’s contemplation on the evolvement of all the worlds, one above the other to the topmost heights of the most spiritual worlds.

When a person contemplates and gains a deep understanding of the divine life-force that provides life to all worlds and spiritual levels, and hence achieves a fear of G-d, then this understanding may be described by the term “greatness”. However, if this is the case, why then is this level considered part of *yirah tata'ah*, the lower level of fear?

The Alter Rebbe answers this by explaining that since this fear derives from contemplation of G-dliness as it “fills all worlds” and thus is bound up with them, it is necessarily a lower level of fear. For this life-force is concealed in the worlds in such a way that they are still able to be aware of their own existence and being. As this level, the worlds merely nullify their being and existence in deference to their life-force. This is termed *bittul hayesh*, the self-nullification of a being that is aware of its own existence.

The fear which results from this contemplation can only belong to the level of *bittul hayesh*, and not the higher form of nullification known as *bittul bimetziut*, which is total and complete nullification of self. It is for this reason that even the fear which has the

quality of “greatness” is still only on a level of *yirah tata‘ah*, the lower level of fear. And this is what the Alter Rebbe now says:

אף על פי כן נקראת יראה זו יראה חיצונית ותתאה, מאחר שנמשכת מהעולמות

Nevertheless, this fear is called an external and inferior fear, *yirah tata‘ah*, since it is derived from the worlds i.e., from understanding the greatness of G-d as a result of meditating upon the divine life-force which animates them,

שהם לבושים של המלך, הקב"ה, אשר מסתתר ומתעלם ומתלבש בהם, להחיותם ולקיימם, להיות יש מאין וכו'

for they are “garments” of the King, the Holy One, blessed be He, Who conceals and hides and clothes Himself in them, in these worlds, to animate them and give them existence, that they may exist *ex nihilo*,....

Before the worlds were created they did not exist at all; they were in a state of non-being. Through their creation they became “beings”, entities whose existence could be experienced. This is the manner in which the divine life-force animates (and clothes itself in) creation: that created beings should be able to perceive themselves as existing entities which, nevertheless, are nullified to their divine life-force. Therefore, as explained earlier, this contemplation can only result in the level of *bittul hayesh* and not in *bittul bimetzuiut*, which is the level of *yirah ila‘ah*, the higher level of the fear of G-d.

רק שהיא השער והפתח לקיום התורה והמצוות

It is only that this fear serves as the gate and entrance to the performance of Torah and *mitzvot*.

For, as mentioned earlier, *yirah tata‘ah* leads to the performance of Torah and *mitzvot*. And it is concerning this lower level of fear that our Sages have said, “If there is no fear, there is no wisdom”; fear of G-d must precede the performance of Torah and *mitzvot*.

אך היראה עילאה, ירא בשת

However, as for *yirah ila‘ah*, a fear stemming from a sense of shame before G-d’s greatness,

Fear of G-d stemming from a sense of shame is similar to the shame and total sense of abnegation a person feels when he is in the presence of a truly outstanding *tzaddik*.<sup>3</sup> His shame is not from that great man’s external and revealed powers, as would be the case when one fears a king.

Fearing a king only involves fear of his externality, which finds expression in his rule. (Generally, the more extensive the king’s domain, the greater will be the fear of him.)

The same is true of the fear of G-d which results from contemplating the “garments” and revelation of G-dliness in all worlds. It is therefore termed *yirah tata’ah*, a lower level of the fear of G-d, inasmuch as it does not evoke the same degree of shame and self-nullification as is evoked by recognizing the greatness of a truly righteous person. There, the shame and fear is prompted by the great man’s *essence*; the nullification and shame will therefore be total. Thus, *yirah ila’ah* is a fear which stems from a sense of shame when one is confronted by G-d’s greatness.

ויראה פנימית, שהיא נמשכת מפנימית האלקות שבתוך העולמות

and an inner fear that derives from the inward aspects of G-dliness within the worlds,

wherein the person is cognizant of the inward and essential aspects of G-dliness and not only of the external qualities of G-dliness which are clothed in all the worlds. The worlds are wholly nullified before this inward aspect of G-dliness with a complete and total nullification, *bittul bimetzit*. Awareness of this higher level of nullification leads to the higher level of fear, *yirah ila’ah*.

עליה אמרו: אם אין חכמה, אין יראה

concerning this level of fear it was said by our Sages, “If there is no wisdom, there is no fear.” This level of fear must be prefaced by wisdom.

דחכמה היא כ"ח מ"ה

For<sup>4</sup> *Chochmah* is *ko’ach mah*, the level of nullification which is termed *mah* (“What?”), as the verse says,<sup>5</sup> “...and we are *mah*” — a phrase that expresses the complete and total nullification which is termed *bittul bimetzit*,

והחכמה מאין תמצא

and<sup>6</sup> “*Chochmah* comes from *ayin*” (“nothingness”), for which reason *Chochmah* is *ayin* and nullity,

ואיזהו חכם, הרואה את הנולד. פירוש: שרואה כל דבר איך נולד ונתהוה מאין ליש, בדבר ה' ורוח פיו יתברך, כמו שכתוב: וברוח פיו כל צבאם

and our Sages said, moreover,<sup>7</sup> “Who is wise? He who sees that which is born [and created].” That is to say, that the wise person is he who sees how everything is born and created from non-being to being by means of the Word of G-d and the breath of His mouth, as it is written,<sup>8</sup> “...and by the breath of His mouth all their hosts [were created].”

ואי לזאת, הרי השמים והארץ וכל צבאם בטלים במציאות ממש בדבר ה' ורוח פיו, וכלא ממש חשיבי, ואין ואפס ממש, כביטול אור וזיו השמש בגוף השמש עצמה

Therefore, the heavens and the earth and all their hosts, i.e., all of creation, are truly nullified out of existence within the Word of G-d and the breath of His mouth — the level of their nullification is thus not that of *bittul hayesh* but of *bittul bimetziut* — and are accounted as nothing at all, as naught and nothingness indeed, just as the light and brightness of the sun are nullified within the body of the sun itself.

Once sunlight has left the sun one can perceive actual rays and illumination. However, when the light of the sun is found in its source, the body of the sun itself, it is completely nullified and does not exist in a luminous state; all that exists there is the source of light, the sun itself.

So, too, are all created beings nullified in their source, the Word of G-d that creates them *ex nihilo*. When a person ponders this matter, it will so affect him that his nullification to G-d will be at the level of *bittul bimetziut*.

ואל יוציא אדם עצמו מהכלל

And no man should except himself from this principle — from the principle governing all created beings, about which he understands that they are totally nullified to G-d. He should realize:

שגם גופו ונפשו ורוחו ונשמתו בטלים במציאות בדבר ה'

that also his body and *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah* are utterly nullified in the Word of G-d that created them,

ודבורו יתברך מיוחד במחשבתו כו' וכנ"ל פרק כ' וכ"א באריכות, בדרך משל מנפש האדם, שדבור אחד מדבורו ומחשבתו כלא ממש כו'

and His Word is united with His thought... and G-d's thought in turn is one with G-d Himself. Thus, the nullification is not only to G-d's Word, but is a total nullification to G-d Himself, as has been explained above at length (9chs. 20 and 21), by analogy with the human soul, one utterance of whose speech and thought are veritably as nothing..., when compared to the power of speech which is limitless.

Surely, one word pales utterly in comparison to man's *thought*, which is the source of speech. Even more so when a single utterance is compared to the *source* of thought — the power of intellect or emotion, depending on whether the individual is thinking about intellectual or emotional things. Surely, then, this spoken word cannot in any way be compared to the soul itself.

There is, however, a difference between man's speech and G-d's. When a human being speaks, the sound emitted from his mouth departs from its source and becomes a separate entity. G-d's creative speech, however, never departs — heaven forbid — from its source, that source being G-d Himself, Who is omnipresent. Thus, divine speech is always found within its source.

It now becomes even more clear that G-d's Word, the source of creation, is truly and totally nullified to and unified with G-d. Thus all of creation is completely nullified to G-d.

וזה שאומר הכתוב: הן יראת ה' היא חכמה

This is what is meant by the verse: [10](#) "Behold, the fear of G-d, that is wisdom."

For as explained earlier, the level of *yirah ila'ah* and *bittul bimetziut* is the same as "wisdom"; it, too, is essentially *bittul bimetziut*.

אך אי אפשר להשיג ליראה וחכמה זו אלא בקיום התורה והמצוות על ידי יראה תתאה החיצונית, וזה שכתוב:  
אם אין יראה, אין חכמה

However, one cannot attain this fear and wisdom except by means of the fulfillment of the Torah and *mitzvot* through *yirah tata'ah*, which is an external fear. And this is what is meant by the statement, "If there is no fear, there is no wisdom."

First must come *yirah tata'ah* and the resulting performance of Torah and *mitzvot*; only then can one attain "wisdom" — *yirah ila'ah* and *bittul bimetziut*.

\* \* \*

The Alter Rebbe now explains that there are also two general levels in the love of God. The higher level is called *ahavah rabbah* ("great love"). It is a gift from above, granted to an individual after he has attained the level of *yirah ila'ah*. This love is so lofty that one cannot hope to achieve it unaided.

The second and lower level of love is attained by contemplating G-d's greatness. It is called *ahavat olam* ("eternal love," and more literally, "love of the world"), because it emanates from one's comprehension of the world, i.e., from one's appreciation of the G-dly life-force that animates the world.

והנה באהבה יש גם כן שתי מדרגות, אהבה רבה ואהבת עולם. אהבה רבה היא אהבה בתענוגים

Now, in love too there are two grades — *ahavah rabbah* and *ahavat olam*. *Ahavah rabbah* is a love of delight [and ecstasy], a love of G-d which delights in Him. There is no other desire or goal present, such as the *desire* to cleave to Him or to expire in one's yearning for Him. The love itself is comprised purely of delight in Him and cleaving to Him,

והיא שלהבת העולה מאליה

and it is a fiery flame that rises of itself. Man does not create or kindle this love within himself; rather, it comes forth spontaneously,



ובאה מלמעלה בבחינת מתנה למי שהוא שלם ביראה, כנודע על מאמר רז"ל: דרכו של איש לחזור אחר אשה, שאהבה נקראת איש וזכר, כמו שכתוב: זכר חסדו

and it comes from above by way of a gift to him who is perfect in fear, as is known from the saying of the Rabbis, of blessed memory:<sup>11</sup> “The way of a man is to search for a woman.” And in spiritual terms: Love is called “man” or “male”, as it is written:<sup>12</sup> “He has remembered his lovingkindness.”

The second letter of the verb (זכר) is vocalized with a *patach*; changing this vowel to a *kamatz* makes it mean “male”. Thus, love is alluded to as “male”,

ואשה יראת ה', כנודע

while a woman [symbolizes] “fear of G-d,” as is known.

The connection between a female and the fear of G-d is alluded to by the verse that says,<sup>13</sup> “a G-d-fearing woman.” This, then, is the spiritual meaning of the statement of the Sages, “The way of a man is to search for a woman”: the level of love (“man”) is revealed from above (“to search for”) where the level of fear (“woman”) is already present and complete.

ובלי קדימת היראה אי אפשר להגיע לאהבה רבה זו, כי אהבה זו היא מבחינת אצילות, דלית תמן קיצו' ופירוד, חס ושלום

Without the prerequisite of fear, it is impossible to attain the level of *ahavah rabbah*, for this love originates from the realm of *Atzilut* wherein there is no sundering or separateness, G-d forbid.

In the World of *Atzilut* nothing exists which is separate from G-dliness; nothing at that level feels that it exists independently of G-d, and everything in *Atzilut* is totally nullified to G-dliness. Understandably, the love that emanates from such a level cannot light upon one whose fear of G-d is imperfect, and who still perceives himself as existing independently of Him. Complete self-abnegation is a prerequisite for this level of love.

אך אהבת עולם היא הבאה מהתבונה ודעת בגדולת ה', אין סוף ברוך הוא, הממלא כל עלמין וסובב כל עלמין

*Ahavat olam*, however, the second and lower level of love, is that which comes from the understanding and knowledge of the greatness of G-d, the blessed *Ein Sof*, Who fills all worlds, animating them with a *permeating* mode of vitality, which is limited and tailored to the capacity of each creature, and encompasses all worlds, animating them with a vitality which *transcends* them, not being limited by the worlds and created beings it animates.

וכולא קמיה כלא ממש חשיב, וכביטול דבור אחד בנפש המשכלת בעודו במחשבתה או בחמדת הלב כנ"ל

and before Whom everything is accounted as nothing at all, like the nullity of one utterance within the intelligent soul while it is still in its thought or in the desire of the heart, as has been explained earlier.[14](#)

אשר על ידי התבוננות זו ממילא תתפשט מדת האהבה שבנפש מלבושיה

As a result of such contemplation the attribute of love which is in the soul will as a matter of course divest itself of its garments, which it had previously worn.

This means to say that the individual will cease loving those things he had previously loved (this love having previously led him to vest himself in those things), and all his love will be directed to G-d alone.

דהיינו: שלא תתלבש בשום דבר הנאה ותענוג גשמי או רוחני, לאהבה אותו, ולא לחפוי כלל שום דבר בעולם בלתי ה' לבדו, מקור החיים של כל התענוגים

I.e., it will not clothe itself in anything of pleasure or enjoyment whether physical or spiritual, to love it, and will not desire anything whatever in the world other than G-d alone, the Source of the vitality of all enjoyments,

שכולם בטילים במציאות, וכלא ממש קמיה חשיבי, ואין ערוך ודמיון כלל ביניהם, חס ושלוים, כמו שאין ערוך לאין ואפס המוחלט לגבי חיים נצחיים

for they are all nullified in reality and are accounted as nothing at all, compared with Him, there being no manner of comparison or similitude between them, G-d forbid — between all worldly pleasures and G-d, the “Source of the vitality” of all pleasures, just as there is no comparison between that which is absolutely naught and nothing — and everlasting life.

Reflecting on this matter will lead the person to desire G-d alone, and not to desire any worldly pleasures at all, seeking as he will the Source of all pleasures, which is G-dliness.

וכמו שכתוב: מי לי בשמים, ועמך לא חפצתי באר'

As it is written,[15](#) “Whom have I in Heaven [to love other than G-d]?” The verse goes on to say: “And there is nothing upon earth that I desire *with* You.”

This means to say that anything “*with* You” — that is subjugated and nullified to G-d — is not desired as well.

כלה שארי ולבבי, צור לבבי וגו', וכמו שכתוב לקמן

The next verse continues: “My flesh and my heart yearn for You, Rock of my heart...,” as the various levels of love a Jew may attain by contemplating G-d’s greatness will be explained later.[16](#)

All the above refers to a person who has a love for worldly matters, and divests himself of this love because of his contemplation of G-d's greatness. His love will then be felt for G-d rather than for mundane things.

However, he who by nature is cold and removed from any feelings of love, whether to G-d or otherwise, cannot simply *transfer* his love. It is much more difficult for such a person to awaken a feeling of love for G-d. Nevertheless, the Alter Rebbe goes on to say, even he can arouse within himself a fiery love for G-d through the above-mentioned contemplation.

וגם מי שאין מדת אהבה שבנפשו מלובשת כלל בשום תענוג גשמי אדוּחֵנִי, יְכוּל לְהִלָּחֵב נַפְשׁוֹ כְּרֵשְׁפֵי אֵשׁ וְשִׁלְהֶבֶת עֲזוּהָ וְלִהְבֵּב הָעוֹלָה הַשְּׁמַיִמָה, עַל יְדֵי הַתְּבוֹנְנוֹת הַנִּיִּל, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב לְקַמֵּן

Also he, whose soul's attribute of love is not vested at all in any physical or spiritual enjoyment, is able to kindle his soul as with burning coals and an intense fire and a flame that soars heavenward, by contemplating the above-mentioned matters, as shall be explained later on.

It has previously been noted that the higher level of love can come about only after one's fear of G-d is total. However, the lower level of love may sometimes come about, as shall soon be explained, even without being preceded by the fear of G-d.

וְהֵנָּה בַּחֲיִנַת אַהֲבָה זֶה, פְּעָמִים שֶׁקוֹדֶמֶת לִירְאָה, כְּפִי בַּחֲיִנַת הַדַּעַת הַמּוֹלִידָהּ, כְּנוֹדֵעַ שֶׁהַדַּעַת כּוֹלֵל חֲסָדִים וְגִבּוֹרוֹת, שֶׁהֵם אַהֲבָה וִירְאָה

This [latter] category of love sometimes precedes fear, according to the quality of the *Daat* which fathers it, as is known. (17) For *Daat* incorporates both *Chassadim* and *Gevurot*, which are love and fear; *Chessed* is love and *Gevurah* is fear. *Daat* reveals both these emotions. Thus, binding one's *Daat* intensely to the greatness of G-d gives rise to both feelings, fear and love,

וּפְעָמִים שֶׁהַחֲסָדִים קוֹדְמִים לִירֵד וְלִהְתַּגַּלוֹת

and sometimes the *Chassadim* descend and manifest themselves first).

The *Chassadim* may sometimes precede the *Gevurot*; this means that *Daat* may sometimes evoke love before fear.

וְלָכֵן אִפְשָׁר לְרַשָּׁע וּבַעַל עֲבִירוֹת שִׁיעֶשֶׂה תְּשׁוּבָה מֵאַהֲבָה הַנוֹלָדָה בְּלִבּוֹ, בּוֹכְרוֹ אֶת ה' אֱלֹקָיו

Therefore it is possible for a wicked and sinful person to repent by virtue of the love that is born in his heart at the time he remembers the L-rd his G-d.

Although up to the point of his repentance he was wicked, and lacked a fear of G-d, still there may be born in him a love for G-d that will lead him to repent.

ומכל מקום, היראה גם כן כלולה בה ממילא, רק שהיא בבחינת קטנות והעלם, דהיינו, יראת חטא למרוד בו, חס ושלום, והאהבה היא בהתגלות לבו ומוחו

At any rate, fear, too, is included therein — in the love, as a matter of course, except that it is [there] in a state of “minuteness” and “concealment”, namely, as the fear of sin — of rebelling against Him, G-d forbid, while the love is in a revealed state in his heart and mind, so that consciously the individual is only aware of a love for G-d.

אך זהו דרך מקרה והוראת שעה בהשגחה פרטית מאת ה' לצורך שעה, כמעשה דרבי אלעזר בן דורדייא

However, such a case — where the wicked and sinful person should suddenly attain a love of G-d and become a penitent — where love precedes fear is an extraordinary occurrence, and an “emergency prescription,” through G-d’s particular providence as the occasion requires, as happened with Rabbi Elazar ben Durdaya,<sup>18</sup> who had been sinful, and suddenly became a penitent, repenting out of a love for G-d. Indeed, so intense was his penitence that it caused his soul to depart his body.

This was an “emergency prescription” required for that occasion. For it is written<sup>19</sup> that Rabbi Elazar ben Durdaya was a *gilgul* — the reincarnated soul — of Yochanan the High Priest, who served in that office for eighty years and then became a Sadducee.<sup>20</sup> All the Torah and *mitzvot* fulfilled by Yochanan were elevated through the transmigration of his soul into the body of Rabbi Elazar ben Durdaya, whose life-story followed the reverse course, that of a sinner who ultimately repented out of his love for G-d.<sup>21</sup>

אבל סדר העבודה הקבועה ותלויה בבחירת האדם, צריך להקדים תחלה קיום התורה והמצוות על ידי יראה תתאה, בבחינת קטנות על כל פנים, בסור מרע ועשה טוב

However, the [regular] order of divine service, which is determined by and depends on a man’s choice, is to begin with the fulfillment of the Torah and *mitzvot* through *yirah tata’ah* in its state of “minuteness” at least, departing from evil and doing good, i.e., refraining from committing any sins and performing all the *mitzvot*,

להאיר נפשו האלקית באור התורה ומצותיה

so as to illuminate his divine soul with the light of the Torah and its commandments,

ואחר כך יאיר עליה אור האהבה

whereupon the light of love will also shine upon it,

כי ואהבת בגימטריא ב' פעמים אור, כידוע ליודעי ח"ן

(<sup>22</sup>for the word *ve’ahavta*, (“And you shall love [the L-rd your G-d]”) has a numerical value twice that of *or* (“light”), as is known to those who are familiar with the Esoteric Discipline [of the *Kabbalah*]).

Thus, first must come the illumination earned by the fulfillment of Torah and *mitzvot*; only then can one be granted the illumination of experiencing a love of G-d.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Avot* 3:17. [2.](#) Cf. *Chagigah* 13a. [3.](#) The Alter Rebbe explains this comparison in greater detail in his *Siddur*, in his notes on *Tikkun Chatzot*. [4.](#) See ch. 19. [5.](#) *Shmot* 16:7. [6.](#) *Iyov* 28:12. [7.](#) *Tamid* 32a. [8.](#) *Tehillim* 33:6. [9.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [10.](#) *Iyov* 28:28. [11.](#) *Kiddushin* 2b. [12.](#) *Tehillim* 98:3. [13.](#) *Mishlei* 31:30. [14.](#) Chs. 20-21. [15.](#) *Tehillim* 73:25-26. [16.](#) In ch. 44. [17.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [18.](#) See *Avodah Zarah* 17a. [19.](#) In *Likkutei Torah* of the AriZal, *Tehillim* 32. [20.](#) See *Berachot* 29a. [21.](#) The Rebbe cites the letter of the previous Rebbe, printed at the end of *Kuntres HaAvodah*, which states that the Alter Rebbe here speaks of Rabbi Elazar ben Durdaya's love for G-d, even though the plain meaning of the narrative would seem to highlight only his *repentance*. True enough, the experience of *ahavat olam* alone would not be expected to bring about *klot hanefesh*, the expiry of his soul. Both love and repentance, however, were present here; indeed, his *teshuvah* was so intense that his soul left his body while he shed tears of contrition. [22.](#) Parentheses are in the original text.



## Chapter 44

In the previous chapter the Alter Rebbe explained that there are two broad categories in the love of G-d, *ahavah rabbah* and *ahavat olam*. *Ahavah rabbah* cannot be attained by man unaided. It is granted as a gift from above when an individual merits it; reflection alone on G-d's greatness can in no way engender this level of love. *Ahavat olam*, however, results from intense and sustained meditation on the greatness of G-d.

והנה כל מדרגת אהבה מב' מדרגות אלו, אהבה רבה ואהבת עולם, נחלקת לכמה בחינות ומדרגות לאין קץ, כל חד לפום שיעורא דיליה

Each of the two grades of love — *ahavah rabbah* and *ahavat olam* — is subdivided into limitless shades and gradations, in each individual according to his [spiritual] capacity,

כמו שכתוב בזהר הקדוש על פסוק: נודע בשערים בעלה, דא קודשא בריך הוא, דאיהו אתידע ואתדבק לכל חד לפום מה דמשער בלביה וכו'

As it is written in the holy *Zohar*<sup>1</sup> on the verse,<sup>2</sup> “Her husband is known in the gates,” that “This refers to the Holy One, blessed be He, so called since He is the “husband“ of the “Congregation of Israel,“ Who makes Himself known and attaches Himself to every one according to the extent which one measures in one's heart....”

Thus, two individuals may have the same general level of love of G-d, yet their particular, individual levels of love will differ.

ולכן נקראים דחילו ורחימו: הנסתרות לה' אלקינו

Therefore, fear and love are called<sup>3</sup> “the secret things [known] to the L-rd our G-d,” for people cannot know the varying degrees of love of G-d harbored in the hearts of others,

ותורה ומצות הן הנגלות לנו ולבנינו לעשות כו'

while the Torah and *mitzvot* are those things which are<sup>4</sup> “revealed to us and to our children to do....”

They are found in all Jews equally,

כי תורה אחת ומשפט אחד לכולנו, בקיום כל התורה ומצות בבחינת מעשה

for we have all one Torah and one law, insofar as the fulfillment of all the Torah and *mitzvot* in actual performance is concerned. All Jews perform *mitzvot* in the very same manner; the greatest Jew and the smallest both put on the same *tefillin*.

מה שאין כן בדחילו ורחימו, שהם לפי הדעת את ה' שבמוח ולב

It is otherwise with fear and love, which vary according to the knowledge of G-d in the mind and heart,

Here, Jews are not equal. He whose knowledge of G-dliness is greater, will experience the love and fear of G-d to a greater degree than his less knowledgeable colleague.

כנ"ל

as has been explained earlier, in ch. 42.

The Alter Rebbe explained in the previous chapter that *ahavah rabbah* cannot be attained alone, while *ahavat olam* can. He now goes on to explain that there is a manner of love of G-d which incorporates the qualities of both *ahavah rabbah* and *ahavat olam*. It has the qualities of the former since it comes from above, and exists in the soul of every Jew in the form of an inheritance from the Patriarchs. However, in order for this love to be revealed, it is necessary for the individual to contemplate and comprehend G-dliness, as is the case with *ahavat olam*, which is revealed through man's service.

אך אחת היא אהבה הכלולה מכל בחינות ומדרגות אהבה רבה ואהבת עולם, והיא שוה לכל נפש מישראל, וירושה לנו מאבותינו

Yet there is one singular and unique love which incorporates something of all the distinctions and gradations of both *ahavah rabbah* and *ahavat olam*, and is found equally in every Jewish soul, as our inheritance from our Patriarchs.

והיינו מה שכתב הזהר על פסוק: נפשי אויתך בלילה וגו'

And that is what the *Zohar* says on the verse:<sup>5</sup> “My soul, I desire You at night.”

The *Zohar* notes that the verse is grammatically anomalous. It should either say, “My soul desires You,” or alternatively, “I desire You.” Therefore the *Zohar* explains that “My soul” refers to G-d, the Soul of all beings. In effect, the Jew says to G-d: “You are my Soul, therefore I desire you.” And as the *Zohar*<sup>6</sup> goes on to say:

דירחים לקודשא בריך הוא רחילותא דנפשא ורוחא, כמה דאתדבקו אילין בגופא, וגופא רחים לון וכו', וזה שכתוב: נפשי איתך, כלומר: מפני שאתה ה' נפשי וחי האמיתים, לכך איתך, פירוש: שאני מתאוה ותאב לך כאדם המתאוה לחיי נפשו, וכשהוא חלש ומעונה מתאוה ותאב שתשוב נפשו אליו

“One should love G-d with a love of the soul and the spirit, as they are attached to the body and the body loves them....” This is the interpretation of the verse: “My soul, I desire You,” which means, “Since you, G-d, are my true soul and life, therefore do I desire You.” That is to say, “I long and yearn for You like a man who craves the life of his soul, and when he is weak and exhausted he longs and yearns for his soul to revive in him (lit., ‘to return to him’).

Truly, the pleasure of living is the greatest pleasure of all, and a man will forgo all manner of pleasure in order to stay alive. Nevertheless we do not feel the pleasure of simply being alive because “a constant pleasure is not felt to be pleasurable.” However, when a person is weak and tired, and his life-force is not as manifest as it should be, then he feels the desire to live and senses the pleasure of simply being alive.

וכן כשהוא הולך לישן מתאוה וחפץ שתשוב נפשו אליו כשיעור משנתו, כך אני מתאוה ותאב לאור אין סוף ברוך הוא, חיי החיים האמיתיים, להמשיכו בקרבי על ידי עסק התורה בהקיצו משנתי בלילה, דאורייתא וקודשא בריך הוא כולא חד

“Likewise when he goes to sleep, at which time his life-force is in a state of concealment, for<sup>7</sup> ‘Sleep is one sixtieth of death,’ he longs and yearns for his soul to be restored to him when he awakens from his sleep. So do I long and yearn to draw within me the infinite light of the blessed *Ein Sof*, the Life of true life, through engaging in the [study of the] Torah when I awaken during the night from my sleep”; for the Torah and the Holy One, blessed be He, are one and the same.

Thus, the individual’s love of G-d will encourage him in his Torah study, since He realizes that this will enable him to draw down the infinite light of the *Ein Sof* and become united with G-d. Just as creation is renewed continuously (<sup>8</sup>“In His goodness He renews each day, continuously, the work of Creation”), Torah, too,<sup>9</sup> “should be viewed every day as if it were new.” So, too, regarding the love and yearning for G-d brought about through the study of Torah: he should experience this just as one yearns and desires for the full restoration of his vitality — a desire which is both revealed and powerful.

כמו שכתב הזהר שם: דבעי בר נש מרחילותא דקודשא בריך הוא למיקם בכל לילא לאשתדלא בפולחניה עד צפרא כו'

So the *Zohar* says, (*ibid.*), “Out of love for the Holy One, blessed be He, a man should rise each night and exert himself in His service until the morning....”

This, then, is the love expressed in the phrase, “My soul, I desire You,” the innate love that a Jew feels when he realizes that G-d is his true soul and Source of life. This love must be revealed — by pondering deeply and often how G-d is the Source of all life, as will be explained later on in this chapter.

ואהבה רבה וגדולה מזו, והיא מסותרת גם כן בכל נפש מישראל מאבותינו, היא מה שכתוב ברעיא מהימנא:  
כברא דאשתדל בתר אבוי ואימיה, דרחים לון יתיר מגרמיה ונפשיה ורוחיה כו'

A greater and more intense love than this (i.e., than the love which results from realizing that G-d is one's true soul and life), a love which is likewise concealed in every soul of Israel as an inheritance from our ancestors, is that which is defined in *Ra'aya Mehemna*, [10](#) in description of Moses' divine service: “Like a son who strives for the sake of his father and mother, whom he loves even more than his own body, soul and spirit,... sacrificing his life for his father and mother in order to redeem them from captivity.”

This manner of service is not limited to Moses alone: it is within the province of every Jew,

כי הלא אב אחד לכולנו

for [11](#) “have we not all one Father?”

Just as Moses possessed this love because G-d is his Father, so, too, every Jew can possess this love, for G-d is equally our Father.

This level of love is more selfless than that described by the phrase, “My soul, I desire You.” For love which results from realizing that G-d is one's true life will only be as intense as a person's desire for life itself. It will not demand total self-sacrifice, which is the opposite of life. The love of a child for his parent, however, is not limited to his love for life; his parents' lives take precedence over his own, and he is ready to give his very life in order to save theirs.

ואף כי מי הוא זה ואיזהו אשר ערב לבו לגשת להשיג אפילו חלק אחד מני אלף ממדרגת אהבת רעיא מהימנא

And although one may ask, who is the man and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to approach and attain even a thousandth part of the degree of love felt by Moses, “The Faithful Shepherd,”

How, then, do we say that every Jew can feel the same love of G-d that Moses felt?

מכל מקום הרי אפס קצהו ושמץ מנהו מרב טובו ואורו מאיר לכללות ישראל בכל דור ודור, כמו שכתוב בתיקונים: דאתפשטותיה בכל דרא ודרא, לאנהרא לון וכו'



nevertheless a minute portion and particle of his great goodness and light illumines the community of Israel in each generation, as it is stated in the *Tikkunim*,<sup>12</sup> that “an emanation from him Moses is present in every generation,” ...<sup>13</sup> “To illumine them.”

Since this luminous particle is found in all Jews in all generations, it thus becomes possible for every Jew — through Moses’ goodness and light — to feel the love that he possesses as an inheritance from the Patriarchs *in a manner* similar to that of Moses.<sup>14</sup>

רק שהארה זו היא בבחינת הסתר והעלם גדול בנפשות כל בית ישראל, ולהוציא אהבה זו המסותרת מהעלם וההסתר אל הגילוי, להיות בהתגלות לבו ומוחו, לא נפלאות ולא רחוקה היא, אלא קרוב הדבר מאד בפיך ובלבך

Only, the glow from Moses’ soul is present in the souls of all Israel in a manner of great obscurity and concealment. But to bring forth this hidden love from its latency and concealment to a state of revelation, so that it will be manifest in his heart and mind, is<sup>15</sup> “not beyond reach, nor is it afar off, but it is very close to you, in your mouth and heart.”

דהיינו להיות רגיל על לשונו וקולו לעורר כוונת לבו ומוחו

That is to say, it should be habitual with his tongue and voice to arouse the intention of his heart and mind, for<sup>16</sup> “the sound of one’s voice arouses the devout concentration” of heart and mind,

להעמיק מחשבתו בחיי החיים, אין סוף ברוך הוא, כי הוא אבינו ממש האמיתי ומקור חיינו, ולעורר אליו האהבה כאהבת הבן אל האב

so as to immerse his thought in the Life of life, the blessed *Ein Sof*, for He is literally our true Father and the Source of our life, and to awaken our love for Him like the love of a son for his father.

וכשירגיל עצמו כן תמיד, הרי ההרגל נעשה טבע

And when one accustoms himself to this continually, habit will become nature.

ואף אם נדמה לו לכאורה שהוא כח דמיוני

Even if it appears to him at first sight that this is an illusion, and that in truth he does not possess this love for G-d, and thinking that he does is nothing less than deluding himself as to his true spiritual status,

לא יחוש, מאחר שהוא אמת לאמיתו מצד עצמו בבחינת אהבה מסותרת

he need not be concerned, because it is intrinsically the absolute truth even without his own spiritual service, by virtue of the “hidden love” which his soul possesses for G-d.

רק שתועלת יציאתה אל הגילוי: כדי להביאה לידי מעשה

But the benefit derived from the spiritual service through which he effects its emergence into the open is that he should translate it into action, and when his love is in a state of concealment it cannot affect his actions.

שהוא עסק התורה והמצות שלומד ומקיים על ידי זה, כדי לעשות נחת רוח לפניו יתברך, כבן העובד את אביו

This means being occupied with the Torah and the *mitzvot*, which he studies and performs as a result of it, i.e., as a result of revealing this love, with the intention of causing gratification to G-d, like a son serving his father, who does so in order to cause him gratification.

Since the revelation of this love leads in fact to increased performance, he should not be troubled by the fact that he may be deluding himself in thinking that he possesses this love when in actuality he does not — particularly since his soul does truly love G-d.

ועל זה אמרו: מחשבה טובה, הקב"ה מצרפה למעשה, להיות גדפין לפרחא כנ"ל

Concerning this it was said that [17](#) “a good thought is joined by the Holy One, blessed be He, to a deed,” providing it with the “wings” to soar upwards, as explained earlier, in ch. 16.

“A good thought is joined... to a deed” cannot simply mean that when one thinks about doing a good deed and then, through no fault of his own, he is unable to do it, G-d considers it as if he had actually done it. For if this were so the expression should be, “A good thought is considered by G-d as an actual deed.” Rather, the term “joined to” indicates that the deed was actually done, but that the thought and deed were unconnected. G-d, in His goodness, therefore connects the thought and the deed.

When a love of G-d is revealed within one’s heart, there is an actual connection between the thought and the deed, for the revealed love adds vitality to the performance of the deed.

However, when love of G-d is not revealed in one’s heart and is limited to one’s mind, it is considered to be a “good thought” that is not connected to a deed. Thus when one understands that something ought to be done, but he has no love for it, then the deed will be performed without fervor.

It is therefore necessary for G-d to connect the “good thought” with the deed, thereby ensuring that the “good thought” — the love and fear of G-d in his mind — will elevate the Torah and *mitzvot* which result from it, to the world and level of the “good thought.”

והנחת רוח הוא כמשל שמחת המלך מבנו שבא אליו בצאתו מבית האסורים כנ"ל

The gratification he provides G-d is akin, by way of the illustration used earlier, [18](#) to the joy of a king whose son returns to him after liberation from captivity;

When the soul, G-d's child, is clothed in the body and animal soul, it is in a state of captivity. Through Torah and *mitzvot* it is liberated from this captivity and is joined with G-d. This causes Him a joy similar to that experienced by the mortal king in the analogy.

או להיות לו דירה בתחתונים כנ"ל

or G-d's gratification may be from the fact that it has been made possible for Him to have a habitation among mortals, as already mentioned.

Thus, the love which is "like a son who strives for the sake of his father" can be revealed by habituating oneself (with his tongue and voice) to arouse the intention of heart and mind. The Alter Rebbe soon goes on to explain, that the love of "My soul, I desire You" may also be revealed and awakened through habitually speaking about it, when one does so in a manner where the heart will feel that G-d is his true life, the "Life of life."

והנה גם לבחינת נפשי אומיתך הנ"ל, קרוב הדבר מאד להוציאה מההעלם אל הגילוי על ידי ההרגל תמיד, בפיו ולבו שוין

Even in regard to the above-mentioned love, of the category of "My soul, I desire You," it is readily possible to bring it out of its concealment into the open through constant practice, with mouth and heart in full accord, so that one's heart should *feel* what his mouth utters, about G-d's being his true life.<sup>19</sup>

אך אם אינו יכול להוציאה אל הגילוי בלבו, אף על פי כן יכול לעסוק בתורה ומצות לשמן על ידי ציור ענין אהבה זו במחשבה שבמוחו, ומחשבה טובה, הקב"ה מצרפה כו'

However, even if he cannot bring it (the love) into a revealed state in his heart, nevertheless he can occupy himself because of this love in the Torah and *mitzvot* "for their own sake" through portraying the idea of this love in his mind — and "a good thought is united by G-d..."

It is therefore possible for his Torah and *mitzvot* to be elevated to the Supernal *Sefirot* just as if he had fulfilled them with a love revealed in his heart.

As explained in the previous chapters, the love and fear that lead to performance of Torah and *mitzvot* elevate them to the Supernal *Sefirot*. If the love and fear are "natural" — i.e., they do not result from contemplating G-d's greatness, but from the soul's *natural* resources — then the Torah and *mitzvot* are elevated only as far as the World of *Yetzirah*, the World of emotion. For since the level of "natural" love and fear of G-d belongs in that World, it follows that the Torah and *mitzvot* performed as a result of that level, will be elevated there as well.

However, if the love and fear are "intellectual" — created by one's reflection on G-d's greatness — then the Torah and *mitzvot* performed as a result of this contemplation will be elevated to the *Sefirot* of the World of *Beriah*, the World where the *Sefirah* of *Binah* ("understanding") is preeminent.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to say that although the two above-mentioned loves (“My soul...” and “Like a son...”) are *naturally* found in a Jew’s soul, deriving as they do from the Patriarchs, still, when they are in a revealed state in one’s heart, they are able to elevate the Torah and *mitzvot* that result from them to the World of *Beriah*. Only when “natural” love remains concealed in the mind, is it restricted to elevating Torah and *mitzvot* no higher than *Yetzirah*. When, however, it is in a revealed state, they are elevated to the World of *Beriah*.

For while it is true that these loves are natural, yet in order for them to be revealed there must be profound contemplation on the theme of G-d as our true Father and Source of life. Such contemplation gives this natural love the additional qualitative trait achieved by “intellectual” love, so that the Torah and *mitzvot* which result from this love are elevated to the World of *Beriah*, the World of knowledge. This is now going to be discussed:

והנה ב' בחינות אהבות אלו

The said two categories of love — that of “My soul...,” the love a Jew feels for G-d upon realizing that He is his true life, and that which is “Like a son...,” loving G-d as one’s true father —

אף שהן ירושה לנו מאבותינו, וכמו טבע בנפשותינו, וכן היראה הכלולה בהן, שהיא לירא מליפרד, חס ושלום, ממקור חיינו ואבינו האמיתי, ברוך הוא

though they are an inheritance unto us from our Patriarchs, and like a natural instinct in our souls (and so, too, as a natural instinct, is the fear that is comprised in them, namely the fear of being sundered, G-d forbid, from the Source of our life and our true Father, blessed be He),

When one feels that G-d is the true Source of his life he will fear to transgress, so as not to become separated from his source of life. The feeling of G-d being one’s true father will likewise keep him from sinning, since he does not want to be torn away from his father.

Although both the above-mentioned degrees of love and fear are instinctively found within Jews,

אף על פי כן אינן נקראות בשם דחילו ורחימו טבעיים, אלא כשהן במוחו ומחשבתו לבד ותעלומות לבו, ואז מקומן ב" ספירות דיצירה, ולשם הן מעלות עמהן התורה והמצות הבאות מחמתן ובסיבתן

they are, nevertheless, not termed “natural” fear and love unless they be in the mind and thought alone and in the latency of the heart. Then their place is in the Ten *Sefirot* of *Yetzirah*, the place and level of the “natural” emotions, whither they raise up with them the Torah and *mitzvot* of which they have been the inspiration and cause.

These levels of love are the cause of the performance of one’s Torah and *mitzvot*, for they result from the portrayal of this love in his mind.

אבל כשהן בהתגלות לבו, נקראים רעותא דלבא בזהר

But when they (the two degrees of love) are in a manifest state in the heart, as a result of his contemplation, they are called in the *Zohar*, *re'uta delibba* (“the heart’s desire” — a more exalted love than “natural” love),

ומקומן ב'י' ספירות דבריאה, ולשם הן מעלות עמהן התורה והמצות הבאות מחמתן

and their place is in the Ten *Sefirot* of *Beriah*, where they raise up with them the Torah and *mitzvot* of which they have been the cause, i.e., which have been performed with the ardor of this love.

The reason this is indeed so, notwithstanding the fact that they are “naturally” found with the soul of every Jew, is now given:

מפני שיציאתן מהעולם והסתר הלב אל בחינת גילוי היא על ידי הדעת, ותקיעת המחשבה בחוזק והתבוננות עצומה מעומקא דלבא יתיר ותדיר באין סוף ברוך הוא, איך הוא חיינו ממש ואבינו האמיתי, ברוך הוא

For their emergence from the latency and concealment of the heart into a state of revelation comes through the faculty of *Daat*, i.e., through a powerful fixation of the mind and an intense concentration — from the depths of the heart, powerfully and frequently — on the blessed *Ein Sof*, as to how He is our very life and our blessed true Father. And since his contemplation is so powerful and deep:

ומודעת זאת מה שכתוב בתיקונים כי בעולם הבריאה מקננא תמן אימא עילאה שהיא ההתבוננות באור אין סוף חיי החיים ברוך הוא, וכמאמר אליהו: בינה לבא, ובה הלב מביין

Moreover, what is written in the *Tikkunim*<sup>20</sup> is well known, that “there, in the World of *Beriah*, nests the ‘Supernal Mother,’” i.e., the level of *Binah* of *Atzilut*, which in terms of man’s spiritual service, is the contemplation of the (infinite) light of the blessed *Ein Sof*, the Giver of life, blessed be He. And this is in accordance with the teaching of Elijah in *Tikkunei Zohar*,<sup>21</sup> in the section beginning *Patach Eliyahu*: “*Binah* is the heart, and with it the heart understands.” This means to say that the meditation and understanding taking place in the mind illuminate the heart.

Since the contemplation of G-dliness is related to the World of *Beriah*, the World which is illuminated by *Binah* of *Atzilut*, it follows that the various forms of love which are revealed through such contemplation have their place in that World as well, and it is there that they elevate one’s Torah and *mitzvot*.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to say that the two kinds of love — “My soul...” and “Like a son...” — not only have the quality of love that results from contemplation, but they also have the quality of *ahavah rabbah*, the love that is granted from above. For they, too, are granted from above, inasmuch as Jews inherit them from the Patriarchs, as explained earlier.

Since these two kinds of love possess all these qualities, it would seem that they should suffice, and love born wholly of intellect is superfluous. Nevertheless, the Alter Rebbe concludes that a Jew should also strive to attain the love that results wholly from contemplating G-d's greatness, because of the reasons he will soon give.

ולא עוד, אלא שבי' בחינות אהבות אלו הנזכרות למעלה הן כלולות מן בחינת אהבה רבה וגדולה ומעולה מדחילו ורחימו שכליים, אשר האהבה נקראת לעיל בשם אהבת עולם

Furthermore, these two categories of love that have been referred to above, the love of "My soul..." and the love of "Like a son...", incorporate a quality of love which is greater and more sublime than intelligent fear and love, the kind that result from contemplating G-d's greatness, the love termed above *ahavat olam*; these two kinds of love also partake of the quality of *ahavah rabbah*, which is loftier than *ahavat olam*.

The Rebbe explains that *ahavah rabbah* is rooted in *Atzilut*, which is far superior to *Beriah*, where *ahavat olam* is rooted. The Alter Rebbe alludes to this by saying "Furthermore": i.e., these loves not only have the qualities of "natural" love and "intellectual" love, found in the Worlds of *Yetzirah* and *Beriah* respectively, but they also have the quality of the love of *ahavah rabbah* found in the World of *Atzilut*. This tremendous quality notwithstanding, the Alter Rebbe concludes that it is necessary to achieve the love brought about wholly through contemplation, for this love is unique in its passion and yearning for G-dliness.

רק שאף על פי כן צריך לטרוח בשכלו להשיג ולהגיע גם לבחינת אהבת עולם הנזכרת למעלה, הבאה מהתבונה ודעת בגדולת ה'

Nonetheless a person must strain his intellect to apprehend and attain also the above-mentioned<sup>22</sup> level of *ahavat olam*, which stems from an understanding and knowledge of the greatness of G-d,

As such it differs from the loves of "My soul..." and "Like a son..." which essentially are inherited, and are only *revealed* through contemplation.

כדי להגדיל מדורת אש האהבה ברשפי אש ושלהבת עזה ולהב העולה השמימה, עד שמים רבים לא יוכלו לכבות וגו' ונהרות לא ישטפוה וגו'

in order to fan the blaze of the fiery love, with glowing coals and an intense fire and a flame that rises heavenwards, so that<sup>23</sup> "not even many waters which are enemies of the love can extinguish it..., nor rivers quench it..."

Love created purely as a result of contemplation is more passionate and fiery than love which is essentially inherited, even when the inherited love is revealed through contemplation.

כי יש יתרון ומעלה לבחינת אהבה כרשפי אש ושלהבת עזה וכו' הבאה מהתבונה ודעת בגדולת אין סוף ברוך הוא, על שתי בחינות אהבה הנזכרות למעלה כאשר אינן כרשפי אש ושלהבת כו'

For there is a superiority and excellence in the quality of love burning like fiery coals and an intense flame,... which comes from an understanding and knowledge of the greatness and *transcendence* of the blessed *Ein Sof*, over the two categories of love referred to above, when they are not like fiery coals<sup>24</sup> and a blaze,... but merely result from feeling (or contemplating) G-d's *closeness* to a Jew, inasmuch as He is “the Source of our life” and “our true Father.” The superiority of this love is:

כיתרון ומעלת הזהב על הכסף וכו' כמו שכתוב לקמן

similar to the superiority and excellence of gold over silver, and so forth, as will be explained later.<sup>25</sup>

Not only is gold worth more than silver ounce for ounce, in which case a preponderance of silver would be more valuable, but gold is intrinsically of greater value in that it possesses a distinctive gleam which people find highly attractive.

So, too, with regard to love that results wholly from contemplation: it is not a *higher level* of love; on the contrary, the level of love that comes from above and is termed *ahavah rabbah*, “*great love*,” is the higher form of love. The superiority of love that results entirely from contemplation lies in its fiery passion and yearning of the soul. This is one reason why the two previously-mentioned kinds of love that Jews inherit do not suffice; they lack passion when compared to love emanating entirely from one's intellect.

The Alter Rebbe now provides yet another reason why wholly contemplative love is necessary: It is important to attain contemplative love not only because of the superiority of the resulting passion, but because the contemplation is an end unto itself. By contemplating G-d's greatness, one fulfills the whole purpose of creation — that created beings should come to know and understand G-d's greatness.

וגם כי זה כל האדם ותכליתו

Besides, this is the whole man and his *raison d'etre*:

למען דעת את כבוד ה' ויקר תפארת גדולתו, איש איש כפי אשר יוכל שאת, כמו שכתוב ברעיא מהימנא,  
פרשת בא: בגין דישתמודען ליה וכו' וכנודע

that one may know the glory of G-d and the majestic splendor of His greatness, each according to the limit of his capacity, as is written in *Ra'aya Mehemna, Parshat Bo*: “In order that they may know Him,” and so forth, as is known.

Thus, there is a special quality and purpose in contemplation (that leads to love) itself. Contemplation of G-d's greatness is exercised to a much greater degree in the love that is *created* from contemplation, than it is found in a love which is merely *revealed* through contemplation, as is the case in the two aforementioned kinds of love.

In order to merely reveal the love of “My soul...” by contemplating how G-d is the “true Source of life,” or to reveal the love of “Like a son...” by contemplating how G-d is “our true Father,” one’s meditation need not be exceedingly profound. A much deeper understanding and more profound mode of meditation is necessary in order to create a love of G-d based solely on intellectual comprehension.

As a result, the divine intention “that they may know Him” — that created beings come to know G-dliness — is realized to a much greater extent through wholly contemplative love. This is the additional reason as to why the kinds of love inherited from the Patriarchs do not suffice, and it is necessary to exert oneself to attain a love of G-d that stems entirely from contemplating His greatness.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Zohar* I, 103b. [2.](#) *Mishlei* 31:23. [3.](#) *Devarim* 29:28. [4.](#) *Devarim* 29:28. [5.](#) *Yeshayahu* 26:9. [6.](#) *Zohar* III, 68a. [7.](#) *Berachot* 57b. [8.](#) *Siddur*, morning prayers. [9.](#) Cf. *Rashi* on *Devarim* 26:16. [10.](#) *Zohar* III, 281a. [11.](#) *Malachi* 2:10. [12.](#) *Tikkun* 69, 112a; 114a. [13.](#) Cf. *Zohar* III, 216b; 273a. [14.](#)

The Rebbe responds to a question that may very well arise: It was previously explained that the love every Jew has for G-d is an inheritance from the Patriarchs. Here, however, we learn that it is because Moses possessed such a love for G-d, and there is an emanation of him present in every Jew in each generation.

The discrepancy cannot be explained by saying that since this love is concealed in the heart, it is Moses’ emanation that enables a Jew to reveal it, for the revelation of love (which is about to be spoken of) is unconnected with the emanation from Moses.

The Rebbe explains: While it is indeed true that this love is an inheritance from the Patriarchs, yet the *manner* and intensity of this love is received from Moses. We need the emanation from Moses in order to ensure that the love be like the love of a child for his parents, a love so strong that the child is totally nullified to them and is ready to give his very life for them. For such was the manner of divine service and the love of Moses, and a minute particle of this love was transmitted by him to all Jews.

A wise man who by nature is drawn to the attribute of kindness, severity, or mercy will find that his wisdom enables him to achieve these traits in a wise manner. So, too, when one accomplishes self-abnegation it will enhance his natural attribute of love for G-d, so that it will be felt in a manner of self-nullification.

Moses, whose essence was *Daat* and self-nullification, loved G-d with these traits. And as a “faithful shepherd” he emanated these traits to all of Jewry as well.

This is why — the Rebbe says — the Alter Rebbe also quotes the beginning of the text in the *Zohar*, namely, “Like a son who *strives* for the sake of his father and mother,” which describes the *manner* of service, instead of beginning only with the continuation of the sentence in the *Zohar*, that speaks of the love itself — “whom he loves etc”. *Devarim* 30:11, 14.



[15.](#) Cf. *Devarim* 30:11, 14. [16.](#) *Shnei Luchot HaBrit*. [17.](#) *Kiddushin* 40a. [18.](#) Chs. 31, 41. [19.](#)

Earlier on, when the Alter Rebbe speaks of the two types of love — “My soul...” and “Like a son...” — he first explains the former love and then the latter. Here, however, when he speaks of the *revelation* of these kinds of love through “the voice rousing the devout concentration of the heart and mind,” he discusses them in opposite order.

He begins by discussing at length that “it should be habitual with his tongue and voice...for He is literally our true Father.” Only later does he briefly state that “*even* in regard to the...love of...’My soul...,’ it is readily possible to bring it out of its concealment... through constant practice, with mouth and heart in full accord.” Moreover, the Alter Rebbe immediately follows this with, “However, even if he cannot bring it into a revealed state in his heart...”

All the above seems to indicate that the “voice rousing the devout concentration of the heart and mind” is more applicable to the love of “Like a son...” than “My soul...” The Rebbe explains why this is so. To quote:

“[The love of ‘Like a son...’] necessitates that it become one’s nature to perceive that He is our *Father* — an intellectual and emotional concept, unconnected with physicality. It is therefore more readily understood that arousing the *kavanah* (through one’s voice) will be beneficial. [The love of ‘My soul...,’ by contrast,] necessitates that it become one’s nature to perceive that G-dliness is *his very life*. It would seem that if his *body* fails to feel this (as he does feel the life of his soul — when exhausted, and so on), what benefit will be derived from the spiritual intention of the heart?”

[20.](#) *Tikkun* 6. [21.](#) Introduction to *Tikkunei Zohar*, 17a. [22.](#) Ch. 43. [23.](#) *Shir HaShirim* 8:7. [24.](#)

Commenting on the words “when they are not like fiery coals,” the Rebbe notes that it is indeed possible for the loves of “My soul...” and “Like a son...” to possess the quality and passion of “fiery coals.” This comes about when the contemplation which leads to the revelation of these two loves focuses [not on His nearness, but] on the *transcendence* of “our true Father” and the “Source of our life”; the majestic exaltedness of the Father arouses a thirsting and longing love in the son.

Briefly, the matter is as follows: There are two general modes of contemplating G-dliness — contemplating His transcendence and exaltedness (or conversely, the distance of the worlds from G-d), and contemplating G-d’s close relationship with us. The former will result in the thirsting and longing love of “fiery coals,” while the latter will result in a Jew’s feeling close to G-d. This love is known as “love similar to water.”

Each of these two modes of contemplation has two possible results: (1) it leads to the *revelation* of a love (or fear) that already exists in the soul (as an inheritance from the Patriarchs), or (2) it *creates* love (or fear).

The Rebbe concludes: “It is noteworthy that [love resulting from contemplating G-d’s] transcendence must refer to a form of transcendence that has some relationship to the person; otherwise the result will be self-abnegation. The same is true with regard to [contemplating the world’s] distance [from G-d]. Cf. references cited in note to *Kuntres Etz HaChayim*, ch. 2.”

[25](#). In ch. 50.

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## Chapter 45

In the previous chapters the Alter Rebbe explained how a Jew can perform Torah and *mitzvot* “with his heart” — with a love and fear of G-d. When a Jew is motivated by love and by a desire to cleave to the Almighty, his Torah and *mitzvot* will then surely be *lishmah*, i.e., with the most purely focused intentions. This, in turn, will add vitality to his endeavors. It is also possible, as explained in the previous chapter, that his love for G-d is such that he is motivated in his Torah and *mitzvot* by the desire to cause G-d gratification, just as a son strives to do all he possibly can for his father, so that his father may derive pleasure from his actions.

Love and fear of G-d stem from the two attributes of kindness (*Chesed*) and severity (*Gevurah*).<sup>1</sup> The attribute of kindness and love is that exemplified by our forefather Abraham, who is described (*Yeshayahu* 41:8) as “Abraham who loves me.” The attribute of severity and fear is that of our forefather Isaac; the Patriarch Jacob refers to the G-d of his father (*Bereishit* 31:42) as the “Fear of Isaac.”

In the chapter that follows the Alter Rebbe describes yet another manner of attaining the level of *lishmah*, of performing Torah and *mitzvot* with the innermost feelings of one’s soul. This approach consists of utilizing the third of the primary spiritual emotions, namely, compassion — the attribute of *Tiferet* (lit., “beauty”), which is the distinctive characteristic of our forefather Jacob — as follows. Before engaging in Torah and *mitzvot* a Jew should arouse in his mind the attribute of compassion for the divine spark of his soul. For the soul had to descend from its source, from the most lofty of spiritual heights, to the nethermost level, in order to garb itself in a body whose life-force derives from *kelipot*, and is as distant as possible from G-d. This is all the more so if the individual caused the “Exile of the *Shechinah*” through improper thoughts, speech or deeds. With this sense of spiritual compassion he should study Torah and perform *mitzvot*, for they enable the soul, with the Divine spark that animates it, to return to its source in the blessed *Ein Sof*.

עוד יש דרך ישר לפני איש לעסוק בתורה ומצות לשמן

There is yet another direct path open to man, namely, to occupy himself with Torah and *mitzvot* that are *lishman* (lit., “for their own sake”), with the innermost feelings of heart and soul,

על ידי מדתו של יעקב אבינו, עליו השלום, שהיא מדת הרחמים

through the attribute of our forefather Jacob, peace unto him, this being the attribute of mercy.

לעורר במחשבתו תחלה רחמים רבים לפני ה'

This is accomplished by first arousing in his mind i.e., before his performance of Torah and *mitzvot*, great compassion before G-d,

על ניצוץ אלקות המחיה נפשו, אשר ירד ממקורו, חיי החיים, אין סוף ברוך הוא

for the Divine spark which animates his divine soul that has descended from its source, the Life of life, the blessed *Ein Sof*,

הממלא כל עלמין וסובב כל עלמין

Who pervades all worlds and animates them with a vitality which is encloded in and compatible with the created beings and encompasses all worlds and animates them with a vitality that transcends created beings and affects them from without, as it were,

וכולא קמיה כלא חשיב

and in comparison with Whom everything is accounted as nothing,

This then, is the exalted level from which the soul has descended,

ונתלבש במשכא דחויא

and has been clothed in the body which is called<sup>2</sup> “a serpent’s skin,”

The body is referred to as a skin, since it serves as a garment to the soul, as the verse states (*Iyov* 10:11), “You have garbed me with skin and flesh.” This is moreover the skin of a “snake”, since the body in its unrefined state is loathesome, as explained in ch. 31.<sup>3</sup> The Divine spark must enter into such a body,

הרחוק מאור פני המלך בתכלית ההרחק

which is far removed from the light of the King’s countenance, at the greatest possible distance,

כי העולם הזה הוא תכלית הקליפות הגסות

since this world is the nadir of the coarse *kelipot*, i.e., this world is coarser than the coarsest of *kelipot* found in the spiritual worlds,

כ"ו

etc. The Rebbe notes that this word alludes to ch. 36, where the Alter Rebbe concludes that this world is “lowest in degree; there is none lower than it in terms of concealment of His light; [a world of] doubled and redoubled darkness, so much so that it is filled with *kelipot* and *sitra achra*, which actually oppose G-d.”

Since the Divine spark of the soul is clothed in a body which is animated by the *kelipat nogah* of this world, it is removed at the farthest possible distance from G-d. This descent in itself would suffice to arouse compassion for the Divine spark of the soul, even when the person has transgressed neither in action nor in speech nor even in thought.

ובפרט כשיזכור על כל מעשיו ודבוריו ומחשבותיו מיום היותו, אשר לא טובים המה

And especially will he feel great compassion for his soul when he recalls all his actions and utterances and thoughts since the day he came into being, unworthy as they were,

ומלך אסור ברהטים, רהיטי מוחא

and the King of the world is thereby<sup>4</sup> “fettered by the tresses,” i.e.,<sup>5</sup> “by the impetuous thoughts of the brain”; G-d is, so to speak, “fettered” by his impetuous thoughts,

כי יעקב חבל נחלתו

for<sup>6</sup> “Jacob — an appellation for the Jewish people — is the rope of His inheritance,”

The word *chevel*, usually translated as “lot” (i.e., a tract of land), is here interpreted by its alternative meaning of “rope”. When a rope has one end tied above, tugging at the lower end will draw down the upper end as well. The upper extremity of a Jew’s soul is likewise bound to its source in the blessed *Ein Sof*, while at its lower extremity it is encloded in the body. When the lower extremity of the soul is dragged into spiritual exile through wrongful action, speech or thought, this has a corresponding effect upon the upper reaches of the soul which are bound Above.

וכמשל המושך בחבל

as in the above illustration of one pulling a rope,

וכ"ו

and so forth. The Rebbe notes that this phrase may allude to *Iggeret HaTeshuvah*, ch. 5, where this matter is explained at length.

This is the esoteric doctrine of the “Exile of the *Shechinah*.”

A Jew’s sin causes his soul to be exiled within the domain of the *kelipot*. This in turn (so to speak) exiles the *Shechinah*, the source of his soul, too. Pondering this matter will awaken within a Jew a profound feeling of compassion for his soul and for its source. This compassion, as the Alter Rebbe will now point out, should be utilized in one’s study of Torah and performance of *mitzvot*. This will elevate his soul, enabling it to reunite with its source, the blessed *Ein Sof*.

ועל זה נאמר: וישוב אל ה' וירחמהו

Concerning this matter, that the pity is all the greater since even the soul’s source is in exile, it is written:<sup>7</sup> “And let him return to G-d, and have mercy upon Him,”

לעורר רחמים רבים על שם ה' השוכן אתנו, כדכתיב: השוכן אתם בתוך טומאתם

arousing great compassion towards the Divine Name Who dwells among us, as it is written:<sup>8</sup> “Who dwells among them in the midst of their uncleanness.”

Even when Jews are (heaven forbid) in an unclean spiritual state, the Divine Name dwells among them. This arousal of compassion towards the Divine Name is what is alluded to in the previous phrase: “And let him return to G-d,” the stimulus for his repentance being one’s “mercy upon *Him*,” i.e., the Divine Name, the source of Jewish souls, inasmuch as Jews are part of the Divine Name.

The Alter Rebbe goes on to explain that it was our forefather Jacob whose entreaties secured an abundance of divine compassion for all Jews, throughout the generations. Even when their misdeeds cast them into exile, they are able through their study of Torah and performance of *mitzvot* to be raised from this state and become reunited with the *Ein Sof*.

וזה שאמר הכתוב: וישק יעקב לרחל וישא את קולו ויבך, כי רחל היא כנסת ישראל, מקור כל הנשמות

This is the meaning of the verse:<sup>9</sup> “And Jacob kissed Rachel and lifted up his voice and wept.” For Rachel is *Knesset Israel*, the community of Israel, the fount of all souls; Rachel represents the supernal attribute of *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, the source of all Jewish souls.

ויעקב, במדתו העליונה שהיא מדת הרחמים שבאצילות, הוא המעורר רחמים רבים עליה

And Jacob — with his supernal attribute, the attribute of Mercy of *Atzilut* — is the one who arouses great compassion for her, for Rachel, the source of all Jewish souls.

וישא את קולו: למעלה, למקור הרחמים העליונים

“And he lifted up his voice” — upwards, to the fount of the Higher Mercies, to the source of the Thirteen Divine Attributes of Mercy.

The Thirteen Divine Attributes of Mercy are far loftier than the supernal attribute of Mercy of *Atzilut*. For the latter is but an attribute of a spiritual world, and is hence bounded, while the Thirteen Divine Attributes of Mercy, transcending all worlds, are boundless. They are the fount of all mercies, including the level called the Mercy of *Atzilut*.

הנקרא אב הרחמים ומקורם

Indeed, they are called the “Father of Mercies,” and their source;

The supernal attribute of Mercy of *Atzilut* is known as *Av Harachaman* (“the Merciful Father”), while the Thirteen Divine Attributes of Mercy are called *Av Harachamim* (“the Father and source of Mercy”).<sup>10</sup> (It is for this reason that on especially propitious occasions, the term *Av Harachamim* is used in the prayers, rather than *Av Harachaman*.)

This, then, is the meaning of “And Jacob lifted up...”: Jacob elevates his supernal attribute, the Mercy of *Atzilut*, to the level of the Mercies of the Thirteen Divine Attributes of Mercy. The verse goes on to say:

ויבך: לעורר ולהמשיך משם רחמים רבים על כל הנשמות, ועל מקור כנסת ישראל

“and he wept” — in order to awaken and draw from there, from the boundless Divine Mercies, abundant compassion upon all the souls and upon the fount of the community of Israel,

להעלותן מגלותן, ולייחדן ביהוד העליון, אור אין סוף ברוך הוא, בבחינת נשיקין

to raise them from their exile<sup>11</sup> and to unite them in the *Yichud Elyon* (Higher Unity) of the light of the blessed *Ein Sof*, at the level of “kisses”,

שהיא אתדבקות רוחא ברוחא, כמו שכתוב: ישקני מנשיקות פיהו

which is “the attachment of spirit with spirit,” as it is written,<sup>12</sup> “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth,”

The community of Israel begs of the Almighty that He unite with them in a manner of “kisses”. In the case of “kisses of the mouth” there is not only an external union of mouth and mouth, but also a more internal union, that of “spirit” (breath) and “spirit” (breath). And so it is regarding this manner of unity of Jews with G-d, which is brought about by Torah and *mitzvot*.

דהיינו: התקשרות דבור האדם בדבר ה', זו הלכה, וכן מחשבה במחשבה

which means the union of the word of man who studies Torah with<sup>13</sup> “the word of G-d, namely, the *Halachah*,” which is G-d’s speech. This union resembles the “kisses of the mouth.” So too, through thinking Torah thoughts, mortal thought is united with divine thought,

ומעשה במעשה, שהוא מעשה המצות

and so too, mortal action is united with Divine action, through active observance of the commandments,

ובפרט: מעשה הצדקה והחסד

and, in particular, the practice of charity and lovingkindness.

חסד: דרועא ימינא

For<sup>14</sup> “*Chesed* (‘kindness’) is the [Divine] right arm,” and man’s kindness is a fitting vessel for G-d’s kindness,<sup>15</sup>

והוא בחינת חיבוק ממש

and this is, as it were, an actual embrace,

Just as in physical terms an embrace manifests one’s love of the beloved, so too, so to speak, G-d’s kindness embraces the Jew who performs acts of charity and lovingkindness.<sup>16</sup>

כמו שכתוב: וימינו תחבקני

as it is written:<sup>17</sup> “And His right arm — Divine kindness — embraces me,”

ועסק התורה בדבור ומחשבת העיון הן בחינת נשיקין ממש

while one’s occupation in the Torah by word of mouth and concentrated thought constitutes the level of actual “kisses”.<sup>18</sup>

The unity of Jew and G-d accomplished through speech and thought of Torah — “actual kisses” — is twofold: the external level of kisses, mouth to mouth, is attained through the words of Torah, while the internal level of kisses, spirit to spirit, is attained through concentrated thinking on one’s Torah studies.

והנה על ידי זה

In this way, through arousal of deep compassion for his soul, which brings about the study of Torah and the performance of *mitzvot*,

יכול לבוא לבחינת אהבה רבה בהתגלות לבו

one is able to attain the level of *Ahavah Rabbah* (“great love”) in the consciousness of his heart — his intense love of G-d will be palpable,

כדכתיב: ליעקב אשר פדה את אברהם

as it is written,<sup>19</sup> “Of Jacob, who redeemed Abraham,”

In the context of man’s spiritual service Abraham denotes man’s love of G-d, while Jacob symbolizes the attribute of compassion. When “Abraham” — the individual’s love for G-d — is hidden and must be “redeemed” and revealed, it is “Jacob” — the attribute of compassion — that brings about this redemption. The arousal of profound compassion for one’s soul enables his latent love of G-d to become manifest,

כמו שכתוב במקום אחר

as is explained elsewhere.

FOOTNOTES <sup>1.</sup> “Love is internal and kindness is external. So, too, with regard to fear and severity [— the former is internal; the latter, external], as explained in *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle 15, p. 123a.” (— Note of the Rebbe.) <sup>2.</sup> As mentioned earlier, in ch. 31, quoting the *Zohar*. <sup>3.</sup>

We find in *Etz Chayim* that the body is called a “serpent’s skin” because the three totally impure *kelipot* are referred to as a “snake”. *Kelipat nogah*, from whence the body derives its life-force, is accordingly termed a “serpent’s skin.”

The Rebbe says that it is illogical to suppose that this is the reason why the Alter Rebbe refers here to the body by this expression. For since here he is stressing the lowliness of the body, it would be inappropriate to refer only to the skin of the serpent and not to the serpent itself. The Rebbe therefore interprets “serpent’s skin” as explained in the text.

<sup>4.</sup> *Shir HaShirim* 7:6. <sup>5.</sup> Addenda to *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 6. (— Note of the Rebbe). <sup>6.</sup> *Devarim* 32:9. <sup>7.</sup> *Yeshayahu* 55:7. <sup>8.</sup> *Vayikra* 16:16. <sup>9.</sup> *Bereishit* 29:11. <sup>10.</sup> *Likkutei Torah*, *Devarim* 62d. (— Note of the Rebbe). <sup>11.</sup> The Rebbe notes that in the glosses of the *Tzemach Tzedek* to *Eichah* (p. 23), he cites this text as stating “to raise them from their descent” (rather than “from their exile”). That is to say, through Torah and *mitzvot* Jewish souls are raised up from their descent. <sup>12.</sup> *Shir HaShirim* 1:2. <sup>13.</sup> *Shabbat* 138b. <sup>14.</sup> *Tikkunei Zohar*, Introduction, p. 17a. <sup>15.</sup> The Rebbe quotes *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle 32, wherein the Alter Rebbe says: “and the whole body is included in the right side.” This serves as an explanation, says the Rebbe, as to why the Alter Rebbe says “*in particular*, the practice of charity and lovingkindness.” They are singled out because “the whole body is included in the right side.” <sup>16.</sup> The Rebbe explains that by using the term “*actual* embrace” the Alter Rebbe forestalls the following question: It was taught in ch. 4 that Torah study is also likened to an embrace from G-d; what, then, is the distinctive



merit of *tzedakah*? The Alter Rebbe therefore writes that *tzedakah* is not merely likened to an embrace: it is an “*actual embrace*.” [17. Shir HaShirim 2:6.](#) [18.](#) The Rebbe explains that by using the term “*actual kisses*” the Alter Rebbe anticipates the following question: The performance of *mitzvot*, too, is often likened to a kiss, as previously mentioned. He therefore writes “*actual kisses*”: Torah study is not merely likened to kisses, but constitutes “*actual kisses*.” [19. Yeshayahu 29:22.](#)



## Chapter 46

In the previous chapter the Alter Rebbe described yet another manner in which a person can perform Torah and *mitzvot* “with his heart” — with the love and fear of G-d — and that is, by utilizing the attribute of Jacob, which is the quality of mercy. In this case the individual arouses compassion within himself upon his exiled soul and upon its source, the *Ein Sof*, and in this frame of mind he studies Torah and performs *mitzvot*. This endeavor extricates his soul from its spiritual exile (whither it has been banished by his own inappropriate thoughts, words and deeds), and restores it to its source in the blessed *Ein Sof*.

In this chapter the Alter Rebbe goes on to explain how very, very close it is for every Jew to reveal his hidden love of G-d. The approach explained in this chapter is novel (as the Rebbe clarifies), inasmuch as it utilizes the Jew’s very nature, thereby obviating the need for a specific manner of contemplation; a relatively general and tangible manner of contemplation will do, as will soon be explained. Indeed, the lower the spiritual level of the individual, the *easier* it is for him to awaken this hidden love — a paradox that will also be explained presently.

This manner of contemplation enables a Jew to serve G-d with fiery, passionate love, leading him to excel in his study of Torah and performance of *mitzvot*. It also enables him to overcome all obstacles, whether from within or from without, that seek to hinder his service of G-d.

Let a man think along these lines: It is in the nature of a human being that when he feels a strong emanation of love from his fellow he will respond in kind. And if the manifestation of love is showered by an exalted personage upon a very lowly individual, the responsive chord of the lowly person’s love will be all the more vibrant.

In a like manner, but infinitely more so, should this obtain when a human being is enveloped by G-d’s boundless love for him. Such is the case with the Jewish people. G-d showed His boundless love for His people by choosing them from all created beings, from the highest level to the lowest. This love manifested itself by His taking them out of

Egypt and bestowing the Torah and its *mitzvot* upon them alone. And so too does G-d show this love to every individual Jew at all times and in all places.

Such boundless love should surely awaken within a Jew an ardent reciprocal love for G-d. Moreover, just as G-d, because of His love for the Jewish people, “overcame all obstacles” which stood in the way of creating this world (as will be explained in ch. 49), so too should each Jew strive to overcome all obstacles that hinder his service of G-d.

ויש דרך ישר לפני איש, שוה לכל נפש, וקרוב הדבר מאד מאד

There is yet another straight way i.e., simple and straightforward, that is equally applicable and suitable to every man, and this matter is very, very nigh, inasmuch as the technique involved is uncomplicated,

לעורר ולהאיר אור האהבה התקועה ומסותרת בלבו

to arouse and kindle the light of the love that is implanted and concealed in his heart,

This love is already found in the heart of every Jew in a concealed state; utilizing the approach about to be described, makes it very simple for every Jew to reveal and actualize it.

להיות מאירה בתוקף אורה, כאש בוערה, בהתגלות לבו ומוחו

that it may shine forth with its intense light, like a flaming fire, in the consciousness of the heart and mind,

למסור נפשו לה' וגופו ומאודו

ultimately enabling the person to surrender his soul to G-d together with his body and [material] possessions,

בכל לב ובכל נפש ומאד

this being done with all his heart, and all his soul and all his “might” — with the boundless devotion of his soul’s essence,

מעומקא דלבה באמת לאמיתו

from the depth of the heart, in absolute truth,

ובפרט בשעת קריאת שמע וברכותיה, כמו שיתבאר

and especially, i.e., a most propitious time for the person to kindle this love in such a manner is, at the time of the recital of the *Shema* and its blessings, as will be explained

later, on the particular connection of the *Shema* and its blessings to the arousal of this love.

והוא

And this technique for revealing this love is,

כאשר ישים אל לבו מה שאומר הכתוב: כמים הפנים לפנים, כן לב האדם לאדם

to take to heart the meaning of the verse:<sup>1</sup> “As water mirrors the face to the face, so does the heart of man to man.”

פירוש: כמו שכדמות וצורת הפנים שהאדם מראה במים, כן נראה לו שם במים אותה צורה עצמה

This means<sup>2</sup> that as [in the case of] the likeness and features of the face which a man presents to the water, the identical face is reflected back to him from the water,

That image mirrors not only the person’s external features, but also the nuances of facial expression that signify joy, sorrow, and so on, thus revealing not only his physical state but his mental state as well.

ככה ממש לב האדם הנאמן באהבתו לאיש אחר

so indeed is also the heart of a man who is loyal in his affection for another person,

הרי האהבה זו מעוררת אהבה בלב חבירו אליו גם כן, להיות אוהבים נאמנים זה לזה

for this love which he has for the other awakens a loving response for him in the heart of his friend also, so that they come to love each other loyally,

Even the love harbored in one’s heart arouses a reflected love in another.

בפרט כשרואה אהבת חבירו אליו

especially when he sees his friend’s love for him, freely revealed.

והנה זהו טבע הנהוג במדת כל אדם, אף אם שניהם שוים במעלה

Such is the common nature in the character of every man, even when they are equal in status.

ועל אחת כמה וכמה, אם מלך גדול ורב מראה אהבתו הגדולה והעצומה לאיש הדיוט ונבזה ושפל אנשים, ומנוול ומוטל באשפה

How much more so is this the case if a great and mighty king who rules over many lands displays his great and intense love for a commoner who is despised and lowly among men, a disgraceful creature cast on the dunghill,

The king depicted here rules not over one land but over many; his love for the person is not only harbored in the heart but is manifest; the manner of love is not ordinary but “great and intense”; and the love is shown not to an ordinary person but to a truly despicable character. The Alter Rebbe goes on to state how his love is displayed:

ויורד אליו ממקום כבודו עם כל שריו יחדיו

yet he the king comes down to him from the place of his glory, together with all his retinue,

ומקימו ומרימו מאשפתו, ומכניסו להיכלו, היכל המלך, חדר לפניים מחדר, מקום שאין כל עבד ושר נכנס לשם

and raises him and exalts him from his dunghill and brings him into his palace — the royal palace, and within the palace itself he leads him in the innermost chamber, a place such as no servant nor lord ever enters,

ומתייחד עמו שם ביחוד וקירוב אמיתי, וחיבוק ונישוק, ואתדבקות רוחא ברוחא בכל לב ונפש

and there shares with him the closest companionship with mutual embraces and kisses and attachment of “spirit to spirit,” with their whole heart and soul, —

When a mighty king shows such great affection and companionship to such a lowly person, then,

על אחת כמה וכמה שתתעורר ממילא האהבה כפולה ומכופלת בלב ההדיוט ושפל האנשים הזה אל נפש המלך, בהתקשרות הנפש ממש, מלב ונפש, מעומקא דלבא לאין קץ

how much more so will there be aroused, of itself, a doubled and redoubled love in the heart of this most common and humble individual for the person of the king,<sup>3</sup> with a true attachment of spirit, from heart and soul, from the infinite depths of his heart.

ואף אם לבו כלב האבן, המס ימס והיה למים, ותשתפך נפשו כמים בכלות הנפש ממש, לאהבת המלך

Even if his heart be like a heart of stone, and not easily roused to tender feelings of love for another, yet, in such a situation, it will surely melt and become [like] water, and his soul will pour itself out like water, with soulful longing for the love of the king.

The Alter Rebbe goes on to explain that all the details mentioned in the parable of the king are infinitely more applicable with regard to the object of the parable — the relationship of G-d with each and every Jew. For G-d, the King of kings, showed his unending love of the Jewish people by taking them out of their nethermost level, in Egypt, and exalting them to the highest of levels by giving them the Torah. Through study of

Torah and performance of *mitzvot*, Jews are united with G-d to the utmost possible degree.

This was so not only at the time the Torah was given. But at all times, as shall soon be explained, contemplating this matter will arouse within every Jew — “as water mirrors the face to the face” — a parallel love of G-d.

והנה ככל הדברים האלה, וככל החזיון הזה, וגדול יתר מאד בכפלי כפליים לאין קץ, עשה לנו אלקינו

In a manner corresponding in every detail to the said figure and image of the love shown by the mighty king to this most lowly individual, but to a much greater degree, doubled and redoubled infinitely more than in the parable, has our G-d dealt with us.

כי לגדולתו אין חקר

For His greatness is beyond comprehension,

Just as G-d is infinitely greater than any physical king, so too does his kingdom extend over an infinitely greater territory, so to speak.

ואיהו ממלא כל עלמין וסובב כל עלמין

and He pervades all worlds and encompasses i.e., transcends all worlds;

ונודע מזהר הקדוש והאר"י ז"ל ריבוי ההיכלות והעולמות עד אין מספר, ובכל עולם והיכל, ריבוא רבבות מלאכים לאין קץ ותכלית

and from the holy *Zohar*, as also from our Master, Rabbi Isaac Luria of blessed memory, it is known of the multitude of *Heichalot* — these being the specific levels within each spiritual world — and worlds which are infinite, and of the myriads of myriads of angels found in each world and *Heichal*, countless and without end.

וכמו שכתוב בגמרא: כתיב, היש מספר לגדודיו, וכתיב, אלף אלפין ישמשוניה, וריבו רבבן קדמוהי גו'

So does the *Gemara* note:<sup>4</sup> “It is written:<sup>5</sup> ‘Is there any numbering His regiments of angels?’ Yet it is also written:<sup>6</sup> ‘A thousand thousands minister unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him....’”

The second verse indicates that there is indeed a finite number of angels, albeit a very great number, while the rhetorical question in the first verse implies that the number is truly infinite.

ומשני: אלף אלפין וכו' מספר גדוד אחד, אבל לגדודיו אין מספר

The *Gemara* answers: “‘A thousand thousands...’ is the quota of one regiment, but His regiments are innumerable.” The second verse, then, speaks of the number of angels

within one regiment, while the first verse alludes to the number of regiments, which is truly infinite.

וכולם קמיה כלא ממש השיבי, ובטלים במציאות ממש, כביטול דבור אחד ממש לגבי מהות הנפש המדברת ועצמותה, בעוד שהיה דיבורה עדיין במחשבתה, או ברצון וחמדת הלב, כנ"ל באריכות

Yet, before Him, all of them are accounted as nothing at all and are nullified in their very existence, just as one word is truly nullified in relation to the essence and being of the articulate soul, the soul possessing the power of speech, while the speech of the soul was still present in [the soul's] faculty of thought, or in the will and desire of the heart, as has been explained above at length.

In chs. 20 and 21 the Alter Rebbe explained at length how a single utterance is as absolutely nothing when compared to the infinite capacity of the articulate soul. This is so even when the word has already been uttered and has thereby become a distinct entity. Even more so, in the case when the person's speech is *in potentia* in the person's thought or heart's desire (which are the sources of speech, since a person thinks before he speaks, and speaks about things that he desires). In such an instance, the single word is totally nullified in its source and is not at all perceptible as an entity separate from it.

So too with Divine speech that creates and animates angels, the various worlds, and all creatures. Divine speech is always absolutely united with its source, and is therefore always in a state of total nullification to it.

וכולם שואלים: איה מקום כבודו, ועונים: מלא כל הארץ כבודו, הם ישראל עמו

All these [angels] ask: "Where is the place of His glory?" And they answer:<sup>7</sup> "The whole physical earth is full of His glory"; that is — i.e., How is this world "full of His glory?" — because of His people, Israel.

כי הניח הקב"ה את העליונים ואת התחתונים

For the Holy One, blessed be He, forsook the higher and lower creatures that are not the ultimate purpose of His creation,

ולא בחר בכלום, כי אם בישראל עמו, והוציאם ממצרים, ערות הארץ, מקום הזוהמא והטומאה

choosing none of them but Israel His people, whom He brought out of Egypt<sup>8</sup> — "the obscenity of the earth," the place of filth and impurity —

Like the lowly and disgraceful individual who was raised from the dunghill by the king in person, the Children of Israel were brought forth out of Egypt by the King Himself:

ולא על ידי מלאך ולא על ידי כו', אלא הקב"ה בכבודו ובעצמו ירד לשם

“not<sup>9</sup> through an angel which is a created being whose abode is in the World of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* or *Asiyah*, nor through a messenger from the level of the World of *Atzilut*, but the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself in His glory” descended there.

כמו שכתוב: וארד להצילו וגו'

as it is written:<sup>10</sup> “And I descended to save him from the hand of the Egyptians,”

Just as the king in the parable, after raising the individual from the dungheap, takes him into his palace and shares with him the closest companionship, in a like manner did G-d treat His people.

כדי לקרבם אליו בקירוב ויחוד אמיתי, בהתקשרות הנפש ממש

in order to bring them near to Him in true closeness and unity, with a real attachment of soul — so that the Jew’s soul will be truly bound up with the Almighty,

This is also so regarding the Torah, concerning which G-d says: “I have written and given My ‘soul\*’ to the Jewish people, by giving them the Torah. Thus, not only is the Jew’s soul truly bound up with G-d, but G-d’s “soul”, too, is united with the Jew.

בבחינת נשיקין פה לפה, לדבר דבר ה', זו הלכה

on the level of “kisses” of mouth to mouth, so that the Jew’s mouth be united with the “mouth” and speech of G-d, by uttering “the word of G-d, namely, the *Halachah*,”

When a Jew speaks and studies the words of the Torah his speech is united with Supernal speech in a manner of “kisses” of mouth to mouth. This unity, however, is external in comparison with the deeper and more inward “union of spirit and spirit,” as explained in the previous chapter. This deeper level of unity is also attained through Torah study:

ואתדבקות רוחא ברוחא, היא השגת התורה, וידיעת רצונו והכמתו

and the fusion of “spirit” of man with “spirit” of G-d, namely, the comprehension of the Torah and the knowledge of His Will and wisdom,

When Torah is studied with comprehension, the person knows both G-d’s Will and wisdom. Knowing the *halachah*, the law that determines that an object is (say) either kosher or non-kosher, constitutes the knowledge of G-d’s Will, while comprehending the reason for the *halachah* relates to G-d’s wisdom.

דכולא חד ממש

which are truly one; G-d’s Will and wisdom are truly one with Him. Hence, through Torah study, Jews become united with G-d in a manner of “union of spirit and spirit”;

also with a form of “embrace”, for Torah and *mitzvot* also effect the unity of an “embrace”, similar to a person embracing his friend with his body and arms,

הוא קיום המצות מעשיות ברמ"ח אברים

namely, the fulfillment of the positive precepts with the 248 organs which the human being possesses. Performance of the 248 positive commandments brings about a state of “embrace” wherein G-d’s 248 “organs” embrace man’s,

דרמ"ח פיקודין הן רמ"ח אברין דמלכא, כנזכר לעיל

for the 248 ordinances are the 248 “organs” of the King, as mentioned earlier, in ch. 23.

Each organ of the body is an appropriate vessel for the particular faculty of the soul that resides therein, such as the eye for the faculty of sight, the ear for the faculty of hearing, and so on. So too, each *mitzvah* is an appropriate vessel for the specific emanation of the Divine Will that desires the Jew to perform the particular commandment.

ודרך כלל נחלקין לשלש בחינות: ימין ושמאל ואמצע, שהן חסד דין ורחמים

In a general manner, these 248 positive *mitzvot* are divided into three categories — right, left, and center — namely, *Chesed* (“kindness”), *Din* (“stern justice”), and *Rachamim* (“mercy”).

There are *mitzvot* which are in the category of the “right side” — *Chesed*; others in the category of the “left side” — *Din*; still others, in the category of the “center” — *Rachamim*. These are:

תרין דרועין וגופא וכו'

the two arms and the body.

*Chesed* is the right arm; *Gevurah*, or *Din*, is the left; and *Rachamim* represents the body (the center). Just as when a person embraces another he does so with both arms and his body, so too, do the “two arms” and “body” of the *mitzvot* embrace the Jew who performs them.

וזה שאומרים: אשר קדשנו במצותיו

This is the meaning of the text of the various blessings pronounced before one fulfills a *mitzvah*: “[Blessed be He] Who has betrothed us by His commandments”:



The Hebrew word *kidshanu* — generally rendered, “Who has sanctified us” — is here rendered, “Who has betrothed us,” from the Hebrew word *kiddushin* (“betrothal”). For *mitzvot* too, are:

כאדם המקדש אשה, להיות מיוחדת עמו ביחוד גמור, כמו שכתוב: ודבק באשתו והיו לבשר אחד

like a man who betrothes a wife, so that she be united with him in a perfect bond, as it is written: [11](#) “And he shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be one flesh.”

ככה ממש, ויתר על כן לאין קץ, הוא יחוד נפש האלקית העוסקת בתורה ומצות, ונפש החיונית ולבושיהן הנ"ל, באור אין סוף ברוך הוא

Exactly similar to the unity achieved through betrothal, and even infinitely surpassing it, is the union of the divine soul that is engaged in Torah and the commandments, and of the vivifying soul, and their garments referred to above, viz., thought, speech and action — all of them becoming united with the light of the blessed *Ein Sof*.

This spiritual union infinitely surpasses the physical union of man and wife. The correlation to a physical union is valid only in the sense that in this world there can be no greater union than that of man and wife. This union is termed *kiddushin*.

ולכן המשיל שלמה עליו השלום בשיר השירים יחוד זה ליחוד חתן וכלה

Therefore did Solomon, peace unto him, in the *Song of Songs* compare this union of G-d and Jews through Torah and *mitzvot* with the union of bridegroom and bride,

בדביקה חשיקה וחפיצה, בחיבוק ונישוק

this union being with attachment — an external level of unity, with longing — a more inward level of unity, and desire — an even more inward level of unity, with embrace and kissing.

All the above manners of union are found in the Jew’s relationship to G-d through Torah and *mitzvot*.

Until now the Alter Rebbe expounded on the theme of unity, understanding *kidshanu* as deriving from *kiddushin* (“betrothal”). The Alter Rebbe now goes on to say that the word *kidshanu* also alludes to the sanctification a Jew achieves through Torah and *mitzvot*, sanctification implying a state of exaltation and separation from all worlds.

וזה שאומרים: אשר קדשנו במצותיו

This is also the meaning of the blessings alluded to above: “Who has sanctified us by His commandments,” the verb *kidshanu* (“Who has sanctified us”) here meaning:

שהעלנו למעלת קודש העליון, ברוך הוא, שהיא קדושתו של הקב"ה בכבודו ובעצמו

that He has elevated us to the heights of the Supreme Holiness, which is the holiness of the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself.

וקדושה היא לשון הבדלה, מה שהקב"ה הוא מובדל מהעולמות

Kedushah (“holiness”) is a term indicating separateness, in that the Holy One, blessed be He, is apart from the worlds,

והיא בחינת סובב כל עלמין, מה שאינו יכול להתלבש בהן

this being the quality of “encompassing all worlds,” being unable to clothe Himself within them.

Because of the inability of created beings to absorb the extreme holiness of this transcendent level, G-d (as it were) cannot enclothe Himself *within* the worlds, and therefore affects them in an encompassing manner. It is to this lofty level that Jews are elevated through their performance of *mitzvot*.

כי על ידי יחוד הנפש והתכללותה באור אין סוף ברוך הוא, הרי היא במעלת ומדרגת קדושת אין סוף ברוך הוא ממש

For through the union of the soul with, and its absorption into, the light of the *Ein Sof*, it attains the quality and the degree of holiness of the blessed *Ein Sof* Himself,

מאחר שמתייחדת ומתכללת בו יתברך, והיו לאחדים ממש

since it unites itself with Him, and is integrated into Him, and they become truly one.

וזה שכתוב: והייתם לי קדושים כי קדוש אני ה', ואבדיל אתכם מן העמים להיות לי

This is the meaning of the verse:<sup>12</sup> “And you shall be holy unto Me, for I the Lord am holy; the verse gives us the reason for the Jew’s sanctity, connecting it with G-d’s Supreme Holiness, which Jews can attain through Torah and *mitzvot*; and I have separated you from other peoples that you should be Mine.” Here we see that holiness implies separation, as mentioned earlier.

ואומר: ועשיתם את כל מצותי והייתם קדושים לאלקיכם, אני ה' אלקיכם וגו'

Another verse states:<sup>13</sup> “You shall fulfill all My commandments and be holy unto your G-d: I am the Lord your G-d...” The term “*your* G-d,” in the possessive form, recalls the relationship set up when a man betrothes a woman, whereby she becomes *his* wife.<sup>14</sup>

-פירוש: כי על ידי קיום המצות הריני אלוה שלכם

The meaning is that “through the fulfillment of the commandments I become ‘your’ G-d,” in the same manner

כמו אלקי אברהם, אלקי יצחק וכו'

as G-d is called “the G-d of Abraham,” “the G-d of Isaac,” and so on,

שנקרא כן מפני שהאבות היו בחינת מרכבה לו יתברך

called thus because the Patriarchs were on the level of a “vehicle” unto Him,

The Patriarchs were totally dedicated to G-d, and nullified before Him, like a vehicle (lit., “chariot”) which is totally nullified to its driver, possessing no independent will.

ובטלים ונכללים באורו

and they were nullified and absorbed in His light.

וככה הוא בכל נפש מישראל, בשעת עסק התורה והמצות

So it is with the soul of every Jew at the time he is occupied with Torah and the commandments.

When a Jew occupies himself with Torah study and the performance of its commandments he is totally nullified and absorbed in G-d’s light. The only difference between the Patriarchs and other Jews is that the Patriarchs were in this state constantly, while other Jews attain this level only at the above-mentioned times.

ולכן חייבו רז”ל לקום ולעמוד מפני כל עוסק במצוה, אף אם הוא בור ועם הארץ

Therefore the Sages, of blessed memory, made it obligatory to rise and remain standing<sup>15</sup> in the presence of anyone who is engaged in fulfilling a commandment, even if the latter is uncultured and illiterate. When such a person performs a *mitzvah*, such as bringing *Bikkurim* (the First Fruits) to the *Beit HaMikdash*, one must rise before him.

והיינו מפני ה' השוכן ומתלבש בנפשו בשעה זו

This is because G-d dwells and clothes Himself in this man’s soul at such time.

רק שאין נפשו מרגשת

It is only that his soul is unconscious of this sanctity that resides within him at the time of his performance,

מפני מסך החומר הגופני שלא נזדכך, ומחשיך עיני הנפש מראות מראות אלקים

because of the barrier of the bodily grossness within which the soul dwells, which has of yet not been refined, and which dims the eyes of the soul preventing it from seeing Divine visions,

כמו האבות וכיוצא בהן, שראו עולמם בחייהם

as experienced by the Patriarchs and others of their stature, who “saw their world the spiritual World to Come during their lifetime.”

These great *tzaddikim* were able in this world to see Divine visions normally seen only in the World to Come. This was so because their bodies, having been purified, did not conceal G-dliness. Truly, each and every Jew would be capable of witnessing such visions of holiness during the performance of a *mitzvah*, were it not for the coarseness of his body.

וזה שאמר אסף ברוח הקדש בעד כל כנסת ישראל שבגולה

This is also the meaning of what Asaf said,<sup>16</sup> under Divine inspiration, on behalf of the whole community of Israel who were later to be in exile:<sup>17</sup>

The barriers that conceal holiness are particularly strong during the time of exile. Concerning that time Asaf said:

ואני בער ולא אדע, בהמות הייתי עמך, ואני תמיד עמך

“And I am foolish and know and feel not; I was as a beast before You. [Yet] I am continually with You.”

כלומר, שאף על פי שאני כבהמה בהיותי עמך

This means<sup>18</sup> that even though I am as a “beast” when I am with You,

Even when I perform a *mitzvah* and am thus united with You, I am still like a beast.

ולא אדע ולא ארגיש בנפשי יחוד זה

my soul being unaware of, and insensitive to, this union achieved between my soul and G-d through performing a *mitzvah*; for were I to be aware and sensitive, my soul would be affected in a manner

שתפול עליה אימתה ופחד תחלה, ואחר כך אהבה רבה בתענוגים או כרשפי אש

which should bring down upon it fear and awe first, followed by a great love of delights, a love wherein the soul derives great pleasure from G-dliness, or a love like fiery flames of ardent longing for G-dliness,

כמדת הצדיקים שנזדכך חומרם

like the quality of the *tzaddikim* whose corporeality has been refined;

When *tzaddikim* perform a *mitzvah* they actually feel how it unifies their soul with G-d. This, in turn, awakens within their soul a feeling of fear and awe of G-d, followed by a feeling of intense love of Him. This, of course, is not the case with these who “feel not.”

וכנודע שדעת הוא לשון הרגשה בנפש, והוא כולל חסד וגבורה

for, as is known, the term *Daat* connotes a sensitivity of the soul, and this is comprised of *Chesed* and *Gevurah*.

*Chesed* gives rise to love and *Gevurah* to fear. Only when one possesses the attribute of *Daat* and spiritual sensitivity, will one experience the kinds of love and fear of G-d described above.

אף על פי כן אני תמיד עמך, כי אין החומר מונע יחוד הנפש באור אין סוף ברוך הוא, הממלא כל עלמין

Nevertheless, “I am continually with You,” for the corporeality of the body does not prevent the union of the soul with the light of the blessed *Ein Sof*, Who fills all worlds,

Corporeality can only prevent the soul from being *conscious* of its unity with G-d, inasmuch as it hinders the *revelation* and *awareness* of the unity accomplished during the performance of a *mitzvah*. It cannot, however, hinder the actual unity objectively effected.

וכמו שכתוב: גם חושך לא יחשיך ממך

and as it is written:<sup>19</sup> “Even darkness cannot obscure You.”

ובזה

Accordingly,<sup>20</sup> since (as above) every Jew who performs a *mitzvah* is granted the unity and sanctity of “Supreme Holiness,” even when he does not perceive it, as does a *tzaddik*,

יובן חומר עונש איסור מלאכה בשבתות וחמץ בפסח, השווה לכל נפש

one will be able to understand the severity of the punishment for transgressing the prohibition of work on Sabbath or that of leavened bread on Passover, which equally applies to all.

The very same severe punishment applies equally to the loftiest *tzaddik* and to the coarsest boor, were either of them, heaven forbid, to transgress one of the above-mentioned prohibitions. The reason:

-לפי שאף בנפש בור ועם הארץ גמור מאיר אור קדושת שבת ויום טוב, ונידון בנפשו בכרת וסקילה על חילול קדושה זו

For even in the soul of an uncultured and completely illiterate person shines the light of the sanctity of Sabbath or Festival; hence he faces capital punishment by *Karet* for eating

leavened bread on Passover and stoning for doing a prohibited form of labor on Sabbath, for the profanation of this sanctity which illuminates his soul.

Though a particular individual may not *feel* this sanctity, still, as explained earlier, this sanctity does indeed illuminate his soul. This being the case, the soul of this individual is tainted by his misdeed in a manner equal to that of a *tzaddik* in similar circumstances. It is for this reason that the manner of punishment applies equally to all.

וגם משהו חמץ, או טלטול מוקצה, פוגם בקדושה שעל נפשו כמו בקדושת נפש הצדיק

Similarly, the transgression involving the slightest amount of leaven on Passover, or the moving of *muktzeh* on Sabbath, blemishes the sanctity which rests on his (the uncultured person's) soul just as it would the sanctity of the soul of a *tzaddik*,

כי תורה אחת לכלנו

for we all have one Torah: the laws of the Torah apply equally to all Jews.

From all the above it becomes eminently clear that though a person may not feel the sanctity brought about by the performance of a *mitzvah*, so much so that he is likened to a beast, nevertheless, through his performance of a *mitzvah*, this “beast” is unified with G-d to the same degree as the greatest sage. Indeed, this is the implication of the verse, “Beasts I am with You, [yet] I am constantly with You.”

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to say that there is a definite reason why the similarity to a beast is described in the plural (“*beasts* I am with you”). This tells us that the performance of a *mitzvah* on the level of a beast — with neither comprehension nor feeling — is related to the spiritual level which *transcends* comprehension and feeling, this level too being termed “beast” since it is not in the realm of comprehension, rather transcending it. Thus there are two levels of “beasts”, that which is lower than the realm of comprehension and that which is above it. Both are alluded to by the same word, since the two are connected.

ומה שכתוב: בהמות, לשון רבים

(21) And as for the use of the plural form “beasts”, which is inconsistent both with the singular form mentioned earlier (“and *I* am a fool”) and with the singular form mentioned later (“And *I* am constantly...”),

לרמז כי לפניו יתברך גם בחינת דעת העליון, הכולל חסד וגבורה, נדמה כבהמות ועשייה גופנית לגבי אור אין סוף

this intimates that before Him, even *Daat Elyon* (“Supernal Knowledge”) — which comprises *Chesed* and *Gevurah* — is like “beasts” and a physical creation (i.e., the physical world of *Asiyah*, not its spiritual counterpart), when compared with the light of the *Ein Sof*,

כמו שכתוב: כולם בחכמה עשית

as it is written:<sup>22</sup> “You made (עשית) them all with wisdom,” thereby comparing the level of *Chochmah* (“wisdom”) with *Asiyah* (“physical creation”). From G-d’s perspective, *Chochmah* and *Asiyah* are equally distant.

ונקרא בהמה רבה, כמו שכתוב במקום אחר

And this is called *Behemah Rabbah* (“a great beast”), denoting that level of “beast” which transcends understanding rather than that which lacks comprehension, as is explained elsewhere.

והוא שם ב"ן, בגימטריא בהמ"ה, שלפני האצילות

And this is the level of the Supernal Name of “*Ban*” (one of the four variations of the Tetragrammaton, corresponding with the number 52), with the same numerical equivalent of the Hebrew word *Behemah* (“beast”), which is on a level even preceding *Atzilut*).

We thus see that even one who performs *mitzvot* on the level of a “fool” or “beast”, neither comprehending nor sensing the unity and holiness achieved and drawn down through his actions, — even such a person, too, attains a union with the level of “beast” that transcends even that most lofty of levels — *Daat* of *Atzilut*.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Mishlei* 27:19. [2.](#)

The Rebbe explains that by going on to say “This means...” after having quoted from *Mishlei*, the Alter Rebbe is expounding the verse in a manner other than its supposed simple meaning.

As stated at the opening of *Mishlei*, the purpose of the book is to teach “wisdom and ethics” — proper moral behavior. This verse, then, teaches us that “as water mirrors the face...,” so, too, should one person’s heart respond to the other; one should not repay kindness with evil, and so on.

It goes without saying that some of the ethical exhortations of *Proverbs* are easier to fulfill than others. Accordingly, this verse cannot serve to buttress that which is being taught here in *Tanya* — that G-d’s love of Jews should arouse a similar response within *each and every* Jew. The Alter Rebbe therefore does not interpret the verse to mean that “*so should be* the heart of man to man,” but that “*so is* the heart of man to man.” King Solomon is not exhorting: he is merely stating an established fact; just as the nature of water is to reflect an image, so, too, is it in man’s nature to mirror the emotion of another. To accomplish this, one need not labor at all; one has but to recognize and consider the fact that his friend is showing him love. He will then immediately be filled with love in return.

However, according to the interpretation of the Alter Rebbe, what is the verse teaching us? And teach us it must, for as mentioned above the purpose of *Mishlei* is to *instruct* the reader in proper conduct, and not merely to state truisms.

The lesson may be, proposes the Rebbe, as follows: Since it is indeed a fact that “love reflects love,” one should make an effort to love his fellow abundantly, thereby ensuring that he, in turn, will reflect this love towards himself. Even if the other person may hate him for the moment, still, by being shown love, he will eventually become aware of it; his hatred will wither, and be replaced by love.

In the epistle to his chassidim upon his release from Peterburg (entitled *Katonti*, and appearing in *Iggeret HaKodesh* as Epistle 2), the Alter Rebbe exhorts them likewise "not to become haughty-minded in relation to their brethren nor to speak defiantly against them. Rather they are to subdue their spirit and heart before everyone.... And, perhaps, through all that, G-d will put it into the heart of their brethren that *as water [reflects] the face....*"

### 3.

The Rebbe notes that according to the explanation provided in the previous note it becomes abundantly clear how the arousal of love in this manner is not only suitable to all, but is also “very nigh indeed.”

Inasmuch as it is within the nature of man to mirror love, the arousal of such love is an approach “suitable for all.” This is true even when both parties are on the same level. Furthermore, it is “very nigh,” for in the analogue of G-d’s love for the Jewish people, the two are on entirely different levels. His love for them is similar to the love that a great king showers upon a most coarse commoner. This provides all the more reason for the king’s love to evoke a similar response in the heart of the commoner. Additionally, not only is it “very nigh,” but it is “very nigh *indeed*.” For this love is unique in that the lower the level of the person upon whom the love is showered, the more it evokes a reciprocal love. Thus, G-d’s love for insignificant man should arouse within him an intense love for G-d in return.

This is alluded to by the Alter Rebbe when he enumerates the various levels in his analogy. For even when two people are on the same plane, love will mirror love. How much more so when the love is shown by (a) “a *king*”; moreover, (b) “a *great king*”; furthermore, (c) “a great and *mighty king*.” Surely, then, the recipient will reciprocate this love.

The person to whom the love is shown is also described in a number of ways. Not only is he unlike the king: he is also (a) “a commoner”; moreover, (b) he is “despised”; furthermore, (c) he is “lowly among men,” and so on.

At any rate, the lower the person’s spiritual level and the feebler his comprehension, the greater should be his impetus to arouse this form of love within himself. It is therefore



“very nigh indeed” for people to arouse their love of G-d when they become cognizant of His love for them.

This, then, is what is novel in this chapter of *Tanya*. The previous chapters informed us that *even* a person of lowly spiritual stature may *nevertheless* attain a love for G-d. In this chapter the Alter Rebbe explains that quite the opposite is the case: the very lowliness of the individual serves as an impetus to his attainment of a love for G-d; the lower he is, the greater his ability to arouse it within himself. Moreover, this love may be achieved by all for it requires only awareness, not contemplation.

[4.](#) *Chagigah* 13b. [5.](#) *Iyov* 25:3. [6.](#) *Daniel* 7:10. [7.](#) *Yeshayahu* 6:3. [8.](#) *Bereishit* 42:9. [9.](#) *Haggadah* of Passover. [10.](#) *Shmot* 3:8. [11.](#) *Bereishit* 2:24. [12.](#) *Vayikra* 20:26. [13.](#) *Bamidbar* 15:40-41. [14.](#)

The Rebbe explains that the Alter Rebbe cites these verses to provide evidence of the various aspects inherent in the term, “has sanctified us.” That sanctification is similar to the sanctification and union of a marriage we learn from the phrases, “...unto *your* G-d; I am the L-rd *your* G-d.” I.e., G-d is *our* G-d in a manner of a man taking a wife, whereby she becomes *his* wife.

The second form of “sanctification” — the concept that Jews are (a) elevated to Supernal Holiness, G-d’s essential holiness, and (b) sanctified in the sense of being apart — is understood from the first verse, as follows: The words, “And you shall be holy unto Me, for I the L-rd am holy,” indicate that the Jews’ sanctity is bound up with G-d’s Supernal Holiness. The concluding words, “...and I have separated you from other nations that you should be Mine,” indicate that sanctity which entails being separate and apart.

[15.](#) See *Kiddushin* 33a. [16.](#) *Tehillim* 73:22-23. [17.](#)

Concerning the statement that “this is also the meaning of what Asaf said, under Divine inspiration...,” the Rebbe remarks that the Alter Rebbe is not in the habit of naming the individual who authored a specific verse, nor is he in the habit of remarking that it was first uttered under Divine inspiration.

An exception was made here, the Rebbe explains, because Asaf is addressing himself to the problem of “a wicked man who prospers” and “a righteous man who suffers.” Asaf is also speaking either about himself, or, at least, about those Jews who lived in his time, for in the same chapter he explicitly says “...until I came to the Holy Temple.” I.e., he is referring to a time when the Temple is standing. Now at that time corporeality did not conceal G-dliness to the same degree as it does now. This being so, how do Asaf’s words apply to our times?

The Alter Rebbe answers this by saying that in this verse Asaf was not talking about himself and his generation, but about the Jewish community in times of exile. Though he was no prophet (as *Rashi* states in *Megillah* 14a), he was nevertheless able to speak of the future, for he spoke under Divine inspiration. Daniel likewise foresaw and foretold many

future episodes, even though (as *Rashi* mentions in his commentary to *Daniel*) he too was no prophet.

In the next footnote the Rebbe will offer evidence that in the verse, “So foolish was I...,” Asaf speaks of the Jews in time of exile.

#### 18.

The Rebbe notes that with the words “This means,” the Alter Rebbe is saying, that unlike the previous verses which speak of Asaf’s own time, this verse refers to the Jewish community in exile. Proof that this is indeed so, lies in the fact that after saying, “And I am foolish and know not,” he goes on to say, “I was as a beast before You.” If Asaf is speaking of himself, his final words are superfluous.

We must therefore say that he is speaking of the time of exile, when the veil of corporeality is so palpable that “even when I am with You” — even in the midst of performing a *mitzvah*, at which time a Jew is at one with G-d — still “I am as a beast,” unable to feel this union with G-d. This also explains why the Alter Rebbe quotes the beginning of the verse (“And I am foolish and know not”), when he mainly addresses himself to the latter part of the verse. He does so because the opening words prove that the phrase, “I was as a beast before You,” speaks of the Jewish people in times of exile.

#### 19. Tehillim 139:12. 20.

The Rebbe explains that with the Alter Rebbe’s statement — “Accordingly, one will be able to understand...” — a number of very problematic issues are resolved. Firstly: How is it possible that an illiterate person be subject to the same severe punishment as a *tzaddik*, for transgressing the prohibition of work on the Sabbath or that of leavened bread on Passover? The punishment results from the individual’s desecration of the sanctity which pervades the Sabbath and festivals. However, this sanctity does not rest upon the illiterate person. Why, then, should he be so severely punished?

Even if we posit that the illiterate person, too, possesses some miniscule measure of the sanctity of the Sabbath and Festivals, we must still understand why the same measure of punishment “equally applies to all.” Reason dictates that the illiterate’s punishment should be much less severe than that of the *tzaddik*, inasmuch as he harbors but an echo of the sanctity enjoyed by the *tzaddik*.

According to what the Alter Rebbe has just now explained, the matter becomes entirely understandable. For within the soul of the illiterate person there radiates the light of the sanctity of those holy days in the *same measure* as within the soul of a *tzaddik*. The only difference between the two is that the *tzaddik* feels this sanctity while the illiterate person does not.

The Rebbe adds that this explanation also helps us understand why the Alter Rebbe cited evidence specifically from transgressing the prohibitions of the Sabbath and Festivals.

These prohibitions, says the Rebbe, are not intrinsic to the acts themselves, for doing these selfsame things on any other day is not prohibited at all. Rather, these are prohibitions which apply to the individual: *he* is not permitted to perform such labor on the Sabbath.

This being so, we must surely say that the light of Sabbath illumines the soul of an illiterate person just as it does that of a *tzaddik*. Were we not to say so, then the question of why the punishment is not for the inherent wrong of the act itself, but for the person's performance of this act on the Shabbath. If the illiterate person's soul is not illumined to the same degree as the *tzaddik's*, it is unthinkable that the punishment should be the same.

[21.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [22.](#) *Tehillim* 104:24.



## Chapter 47

Ch. 46 began with the Alter Rebbe explaining yet another simple and straightforward means by which every Jew can arrive at a great love of G-d, thereby enhancing his performance of Torah and *mitzvot*. This is done by utilizing the love which comes into being “as water mirrors the face to the face.” For just as water reflects the image of a face peering into it, so too, is there reflected the “heart of man to man.” The Alter Rebbe went on to explain that all the particulars mentioned in the parable of the mighty king and the wretched commoner, as enumerated there, are infinitely more applicable with regard to the love showered by G-d upon each and every Jew. He showed us His great love when He Himself descended to take us out of our nethermost level, in Egypt, and led us into His innermost chambers by giving us the Torah and *mitzvot*, whereby we are able to attach ourselves to Him with the ultimate level of unity. Accordingly, the Alter Rebbe then expounded the word *kidshanu* in the text of the benedictions as implying betrothal, the perfect union of man and wife. *Kidshanu* also implies Supernal Holiness, which alludes to the supreme state of exalted separation which Jews attain through the performance of *mitzvot*, recalling G-d’s holiness — His total exalted separation from all worlds.

Ch. 47 will continue this theme, and answer the following question (as the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of righteous memory, notes): How can the love reflected “as water mirrors the face to the face” be expected of us nowadays, when G-d’s love was shown to us thousands of years ago, at the time of the Exodus? The answer given by the Alter Rebbe is: Not only is it reasonable to expect this love of a Jew when he recalls the initial Exodus (and the giving of the Torah) when G-d himself descended (thus showing His great love for us), but also, in truth this is a present-day event as well — for the Exodus is a daily occurrence.

והנה בכל דור ודור, ובכל יום ויום, חייב אדם לראות עצמו כאילו הוא יצא היום ממצרים

“In every generation and every day a person is obliged to regard himself as if he had that day come out of Egypt.”

This text is cited from the *Mishnah (Pesachim 10:5)*, except that the Alter Rebbe inserts the words, “and every day.” For the Exodus is not only an event which takes place in every generation: it is also a daily event in the spiritual life of the Jew.

והיא יציאת נפש האלקית ממאסר הגוף, משכא דחויא

This refers to the release of the divine soul from the confinement of the body, the “serpent’s skin,”

The body is a source of confinement for the divine soul, since it derives its life-force from *kelipah*. It is from this exile that the divine soul escapes,

ליכלל ביחוד אור אין סוף ברוך הוא, על ידי עסק התורה והמצוות בכלל

in order to be absorbed into the unity of the light of the blessed *Ein Sof*, by engaging in the Torah and commandments in general,

ובפרט בקבלת מלכות שמים בקריאת שמע, שבה מקבל וממשיך עליו יחודו יתברך בפירוש, באמרו: ה' אלקינו ה' אחד

and in particular through accepting the Kingdom of Heaven during the recital of the *Shema*, wherein the person explicitly accepts and draws upon himself G-d’s unity, when he says: “The Lord is *our* G-d, the Lord is One.”

וכמו שנתבאר לעיל, כי אלקינו הוא כמו: אלקי אברהם וכו', לפי שהיה בטל ונכלל ביחוד אור אין סוף ברוך הוא

It has previously been explained — in ch. 46 — that “*our* G-d” is understood in the same way as “the G-d of Abraham,” and so forth, because he became nullified and absorbed into the unity of the light of the blessed *Ein Sof*,

Abraham’s self-nullification and consequent union with G-d were so complete that G-d is called “the G-d of Abraham.” Through the performance of the *mitzvot*, the same may be said of every Jew, so that G-d may rightfully be called “*our* G-d,”

רק שאברהם זכה לזה במעשיו, והילוכו בקודש ממדרגה למדרגה

except that Abraham merited this union by reason of his works and his advancing in holiness from degree to degree, until he uplifted himself to this great level of nullity and unification of self with G-d,

כמו שכתוב: ויסע אברם הלך ונסוע וגו'

as it is written:<sup>1</sup> “And Abram journeyed, going on and on [to the South].”

Abraham progressed from level to level until he attained the esoteric level of “the South,” which alludes to the highest possible degree of love for G-d. Abraham, then, achieved this state as a result of his own labors.

אבל אנחנו, ירושה ומתנה היא לנו, שנתן לנו את תורתו, והלביש בה רצונו וחכמתו יתברך, המיוחדים במהותו ועצמותו יתברך בתכלית היחוד

But as for us, the children of Abraham, for us it is a heritage and a gift, in that He has given us His Torah and has clothed in it His Will and wisdom, which are united with His Essence and Being in perfect unity;

והרי זה כאלו נתן לנו את עצמו, כביכול

and surely this is as if He gave us His very self, as it were. Since His wisdom and Will are one with Him, through Torah study and performance of *mitzvot* we are able to take Him, as it were, and be united with Him.

כמו שכתוב בזהר הקדוש על פסוק: ויקחו לי תרומה דלי, כלומר: אותי

This is as the *Zohar*<sup>2</sup> comments on the verse:<sup>3</sup> “that they bring to Me an offering.” (<sup>4</sup>The word “to Me,” says the *Zohar*, actually means “to take Me” — to “take” G-d.

The *Zohar*<sup>5</sup> interprets the word תרומה (“offering”) as referring to the Torah, inasmuch as it is a composite of the word “Torah” and the letter *mem*, alluding to the Torah that was given after Moses’ forty-day sojourn on the mountain. (The numerical value of *mem* is 40.) The *Zohar* goes on to explain that through *terumah*, through Torah, Jews are enabled to “take Me” — to “take” G-d.

והוה לי למימר: ותרומה

The text should hence have read “[Me] and an offering,”

Since “Me” refers to G-d and “an offering” refers to Torah, it would seem more appropriate for the verse to state, “You shall take Me *and* an offering (Torah),” since it is by means of the Torah that the Jew takes “Me”.

אלא משום דכולא חד

except that both are one and the same. G-d and Torah are truly one. Were the verse to state “Me and an offering” we might be led to believe that the two are separate entities, when in truth they are truly one and the same.

Study it well there, and the matter will be clearly understood.

וזה שאומרים: ותתן לנו ה' אלקינו באהבה כו'

This is the meaning of what we recite,<sup>6</sup> “And You have given to us, O L-rd, our G-d, with love....”

Because of His great love for us He granted us the gift that He be *our* G-d, so that we may be united with Him. It is also stated:

כי באור פניך נתת לנו ה' אלקינו כו'

“For by the light of Your countenance have You given us, O L-rd, our G-d...,” once again stressing the gift He has given us, viz., that He is *our* G-d.

ולזה

Therefore —

Since this unity with Him and the gift we have received — that He is *our* G-d — is not dependent on our spiritual service, it is within the province of every Jew. Were this level achieved only through one's spiritual service, it would be correct to say that not everyone has yet reached this lofty level of unity whereby G-d becomes *his* G-d. Since, however, we are granted this level as an inheritance and a gift, it applies to all Jews equally. For a bequest and a gift have nothing to do with the status of the recipient. Should a person be a rightful heir he inherits no matter what his standing; should a benefactor decide to shower his benevolence upon an individual, that individual is a valid recipient no matter how undeserving he may be. (Not so wages, which are commensurate with one's toil.) At any rate, since this unity is equally attainable by all Jews, therefore —

אין מונע לנו מדביקות הנפש ביחודו ואורו יתברך אלא הרצון, שאם אין האדם רוצה כלל, חס ושלום, לדבקה בו כו'

nothing stands in the way of the soul's unity with G-d and His light, except one's will; for should the person not desire at all, G-d forbid, to cleave to Him..., then this unity will not be achieved.

אבל מיד שרוצה, ומקבל וממשיך עליו אלוקותו יתברך, ואומר: ה' אלקינו ה' אחד, הרי ממילא נכללת נפשו ביחודו יתברך, דרוח אייתי רוח ואמשיך רוח

But immediately when he does so desire, and accepts and draws upon himself His blessed G-dliness and declares:<sup>7</sup> “The L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is One,” then surely is his soul spontaneously absorbed into G-d's unity, for the individual's yearning<sup>8</sup> “spirit evokes

spirit and awakening from Above, and draws forth and bestows spirit” — an added measure of spirituality, so that the person is drawn to G-d and cleaves to Him.

והיא בחינת יציאת מצרים

And this dynamic within the person’s soul is a form of “Exodus from Egypt.”

The spiritual counterpart of the Exodus is the acceptance of the Kingdom of Heaven during the recitation of the *Shema*, and one’s desire to cleave to G-d and be united with Him, for by these means the soul frees itself from the exile and confines of the body and becomes one with G-d.

ולכן תקנו פרשת יציאת מצרים בשעת קריאת שמע דווקא, אף שהיא מצוה בפני עצמה, ולא ממצות קריאת שמע, כדאיתא בגמרא ופוסקים

Therefore it was ordained that the paragraph concerning the Exodus from Egypt be read specifically during the recital of the *Shema*, as an adjunct to it, even though it (i.e., recalling and verbalizing the Exodus) is a commandment by itself, not pertaining to the commandment to recite the *Shema*, as stated in the *Talmud* and Codes,<sup>9</sup>

Recalling the Exodus and the formal recitation of the *Shema* were placed together:

אלא מפני שהן דבר אחד ממש

for they are actually the same thing.

Accepting the Kingdom of Heaven during the *Shema* and the Exodus from Egypt are truly one and the same, since this acceptance is one’s personal, spiritual Exodus, whereby the divine soul escapes the encumbrances of the body.

וכן, בסוף פרשת יציאת מצרים מסיים גם כן: אני ה' אלקיכם, והיינו גם כן כמו שנתבאר לעיל

Likewise, the paragraph referring to the Exodus from Egypt also concludes,<sup>10</sup> “I am the L-rd your G-d.” This also accords with what has been explained earlier — that through the Exodus one ensures that G-d becomes *his* G-d, by achieving total unification with Him.

From the above we realize that the Exodus from Egypt is a daily event in the life of the Jew. Hence, just as during the first, historical Exodus (as explained earlier) G-d showed us his boundless love, obligating us to respond in kind, loving him “as water mirrors the face to the face,” so too should the daily, individual, spiritual Exodus affect *us*, since G-d constantly shows us his boundless love.

FOOTNOTES <sup>1.</sup> *Bereishit* 12:9. <sup>2.</sup> II, 101b. <sup>3.</sup> *Shmot* 25:2. <sup>4.</sup> Parentheses are in the original text. <sup>5.</sup> III, 179a. <sup>6.</sup> Liturgy. <sup>7.</sup> *Devarim* 6:4. <sup>8.</sup> *Zohar* II, 162b. <sup>9.</sup> *Berachot* 21a; *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 67:1-2. <sup>10.</sup> *Bamidbar* 15:41.

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## Chapter 48

Having previously explained that G-d showed his love for the Jewish people by taking them out of the physical servitude of Egypt, the Alter Rebbe concluded ch. 47 by describing the love G-d shows His people by releasing them from a spiritual dimension of Egyptian bondage. This spiritual Exodus is daily manifest within all Jewish souls. It is natural, therefore, that Jews should reciprocate with love — like the water that mirrors the face of the beholder — and thereby strive to overcome all obstacles that hinder their service of G-d.

והנה, כאשר יתבונן המשכיל בגדולת אין סוף ברוך הוא, כי כשמו כן הוא: אין סוף ואין קץ ותכלית כלל לאור  
וחיות המתפשט ממנו יתברך ברצונו הפשוט

Contemplating the greatness of the blessed *Ein Sof*, the thinking person [will come to the realization] that as His Name indicates, so is He — there is no end or limit or finitude at all to the light and vitality that diffuse from His simple Will (“simple” in the sense that it has no cause, nor is it subject to the limitations inherent in mortal will),

ומיוחד במהותו ועצמותו יתברך בתכלית היחוד

and which is united with His essence and being in perfect unity.

The light and vitality that emanate from G-d in order that He create and animate finite Worlds, are in no way similar to light and vitality as they are found within created beings.

Light that emanates from a created being is not limited by the capacity of the recipient; on the other hand, the luminary has no control over its power of illumination: having been created as a luminary it has no choice but to illumine. Divine light, however, while possessing all the positive qualities of illumination as found in created luminaries, shares none of its deficiencies: light emanates from the Luminary only when the Luminary desires that it do so.

The will of created beings likewise has strengths and weaknesses. Though it chooses freely, it is by its very nature limited and restrictive. G-d’s Will, by contrast, while maintaining the positive attributes of mortal will, is encumbered by none of its limitations; His Will (to illumine, for example) is unbounded, just as He Himself is without limitation.

Being infinite, G-d’s light cannot give rise to created and finite beings — unless it first undergoes the series of self-limiting, self-concealing contractions known as *tzimtzumim*, as is now stated.



ואילו היתה השתלשלות העולמות מאור אין סוף ברוך הוא בלי צמצומים, רק כסדר המדרגות ממדרגה למדרגה בדרך עלה ועלול

Had the worlds descended from the light of the blessed *Ein Sof* without “contractions”, but according to a gradual descent from grade to grade by means of cause and effect, the loftier level being the direct cause for the manifestation of the level immediately following it, —

Such is the case with regard to thought and speech. That which a person speaks is first found within his thought; thought is the cause and speech is the effect. Though thought is more spiritual than speech, the two levels stand in a certain proportion to each other, in that (for example) both are composed of letters that form words. And so with every cause-and-effect relationship, the effect must partake of the characteristics of its cause; it would be impossible for a “cause” to bring into existence an “effect” which is infinitely removed from it.

Since the light and vitality — the creative power — that emanates from G-d is infinite while created beings are finite, it goes without saying that they could not possibly have come into being in a manner of cause and effect. For if this were the case,

לא היה העולם הזה נברא כלל כמו שהוא עתה בבחינת גבול ותכלית: מהארץ לרקיע מהלך ת”ק שנה

this world and all it contains would not have been created in its present form, in a finite and limited order, [for,] <sup>1</sup> “From the earth to the firmament is a distance of five hundred years,” five hundred years’ journey being a finite dimension,

וכן בין כל רקיע לרקיע, וכן עובי כל רקיע ורקיע

and similarly [limited is] the distance between one firmament and the next, and so also the radial extent of each firmament is a distance of five hundred years. And all the above applies to *this* world.

ואפילו עולם הבא וגן עדן העליון, מדור נשמות הצדיקים הגדולים, והנשמות עצמן, ואין צריך לומר המלאכים, הן בבחינת גבול ותכלית

Even the World to Come and the higher level of *Gan Eden* — the abode of the souls of the great *tzaddikim* — and the souls themselves, and needless to add, the angels, are all in the realm of bounds and limitation,

The Rebbe notes: Although it was indicated early in ch. 39 that souls delight in G-d and derive pleasure from and comprehend the [infinite] *Ein Sof*-light, this poses no difficulty:

כי יש גבול להשגתן באור אין סוף ברוך הוא, המאיר עליהן בהתלבשות חב”ד כו'

for there is a limit to their apprehension of the light of the blessed *Ein Sof*, which shines upon them through being clothed in *ChaBaD*, and so on,

Souls and angels, which people these worlds, comprehend G-d liness as a result of its vestiture in the *ChaBaD* of those worlds. Though lofty, their comprehension is nonetheless limited.

ולכן יש גבול להנאתן שנהנין מזיו השכינה, ומתענגין באור ה'

hence, there is also a boundary to the enjoyment that they derive from the rays of the *Shechinah*, and to their pleasure in the light of G-d;

כי אין יכולין לקבל הנאה ותענוג בבחינת אין סוף ממש, שלא יתבטלו ממציאיותן ויחזרו למקורן

for they are incapable of deriving enjoyment and delight of an infinite order, without being nullified out of their existence and returning to their source.

Thus, even the creatures of the highest spiritual worlds are finite beings, and in order for them to be created in a finite manner the process of “contraction” must be invoked. Being finite, they are totally dissimilar to their source — the infinite G-dly light that exists prior to “contraction”.

והנה, פרטיות הצמצומים איך ומה, אין כאן מקום ביאורם

Now, as for the intricate details of the “contractions”, how they achieve their effect and what they actually are, — this is not the place for their explanation.

אך דרך כלל הן הם בחינת הסתר והעלם המשכת האור והחיות

But in general they are something in the nature of an obscuring and concealment of the flow of light and vitality,

שלא יאיר ויומשך לתחתונים בבחינת גילוי, להתלבש ולהשפיע בהן ולהחיותם להיות יש מאין

so that [the light and vitality] should illumine and reach the lower creatures in a revealed manner, pervading them and acting in them and animating them in such a way that they exist *ex nihilo*

כי אם מעט מזעיר אור וחיות, בכדי שיהיו בבחינת גבול ותכלית

in only an extremely minute measure, so that they be in a state of finitude and limitation.

Were their life-force to be revealed within them they would be infinite. “Contraction” ensures that the light and vitality which is their life-force remains concealed from them; all that is revealed is but a minute degree of light and vitality.

שהיא הארה מועטת מאד, וממש כלא חשיבי לגבי בחינת הארה בלי גבול ותכלית, ואין ביניהם ערך ויחס כלל

This light and vitality that is revealed within them after the “contraction” constitutes an infinitesimal illumination, and is truly considered as naught when compared with the quality of the limitless and infinite illumination, and there is no reference or relationship between them,

I.e., they are not *quantitatively* different, not even immensely different in quantity, but of a wholly different and incomparable quality.

כנודע פירוש מלת ערך במספרים, שאחד במספר יש לו ערך לגבי מספר אלף אלפים, שהוא חלק אחד מני אלף אלפים

as the term “reference” is understood in number values, where the number one has a relevancy to the number one million, for it is a one-millionth part of it;

The sum of one million is merely the sum of one million ones; subtract but one and the million ceases to exist — a clear demonstration of the relation that subsists between one and a million.

אבל לגבי דבר שהוא בבחינת בלי גבול ומספר כלל, אין כנגדו שום ערך במספרים

but as regards a thing which transcends finitude and numeration, there is no number — however great — that can be relative to it,

שאפילו אלף אלפי אלפים ורבוה רבבות אינן אפילו כערך מספר אחד לגבי אלף אלפי אלפים ורבוה רבבות

for a billion and a trillion<sup>2</sup> when compared to infinity do not even attain the relevancy of the value of one in comparison with a billion or a trillion,

אלא כלא ממש השיבי

For the sum of one retains some degree of relevance even when compared to a trillion — it is, in fact, one trillionth of it — while even a sum as large a trillion has no relevance at all when compared to the realm of the infinite, but is veritably accounted as nothing.

וככה ממש היא בחינת ההארה מועטת זו, המתלבשת בעולמות עליונים ותחתונים, להשפיע בהם להחיותם

So, indeed, is the utterly insignificant quality of this minute illumination — after the “contraction” — which clothes itself in the higher and lower worlds in order to provide them with sustenance and life,

לגבי אור הגנוז ונעלם, שהוא בבחינת אין סוף

when compared with the quality of the hidden and concealed light that is of an infinite order,

ואינו מתלבש ומשפיע בעולמות בבחינת גילוי להחיותם, אלא מקיף עליהם מלמעלה, ונקרא סובב כל עלמין

and does not clothe itself or exercise its influence in the worlds in a revealed manner, providing them with life, but encompasses them from above — i.e., it exerts its influence while remaining on its own level — and is called *sovev kol almin* (lit., “encompassing all worlds”).

Unlike the light that pervades all worlds (*memale kol almin*), which permeates and vests itself within them (just as the soul vests itself in the body), the encompassing light remains aloof from the worlds.

ואין הפירוש טובב ומקיף מלמעלה בבחינת מקום, חס ושלום, כי לא שייך כלל בחינת מקום ברוחניות

The meaning of this is not that it encircles and encompasses from above spatially, G-d forbid, for in spiritual matters the category of space is in no way applicable,

Physical objects are spatial; they may be said to be found in one place or the other. Spirituality, however, is non-spatial; the terms “encompassing” and “encircling” are never to be understood in their literal, physical sense,

אלא רוצה לומר: טובב ומקיף מלמעלה לענין בחינת גילוי השפעה

but the meaning is that it “encircles and encompasses from above” insofar as the revelation of this influence is concerned,

כי ההשפעה שהיא בבחינת גילוי בעולמות נקראת בשם הלבשה, שמתלבשת בעולמות, כי הם מלבישים ומשיגים ההשפעה שמקבלים

for influence which is in the category of “revelation” in the worlds is referred to as “investiture”, being “clothed” within the worlds, for the influence that they receive is clothed and comprehended by them, i.e., they are able to comprehend and internalize it,

מה שאין כן ההשפעה שאינה בבחינת גילוי אלא בהסתר והעלם, ואין העולמות משיגים אותה, אינה נקראת מתלבשת, אלא מקפת וסובבת

whereas the influence which does not come within the category of “revelation”, but remains obscured and concealed, and is not apprehended by the worlds, is not described as being “invested” in them but as “encircling and encompassing” [them].

הלכך, מאחר שהעולמות הם בבחינת גבול ותכלית, נמצא שאין השפעת אור אין סוף מתלבשת ומתגלה בהם בבחינת גילוי, רק מעט מזער הארה מועטת מצומצמת מאד מאד

Therefore, since the worlds belong in the order of the finite and limited, it follows that only an extremely minute and contracted reflection of the flow of the [infinite] light of the blessed *Ein Sof* clothes and manifests itself in them in a revealed form,

והיא רק כדי להחיותם בבחינת גבול ותכלית

and this, only to animate them in a finite and revealed state.

In order for creation to come about there must necessarily be at least some glimmer of G-dly illumination, albeit in an extremely limited form, for this enables creation to be finite and bounded.

אבל עיקר האור בלי צמצום כל כך נקרא מקיף וסובב, מאחר שאין השפעתו מתגלית בתוכם, מאחר שהם בבחינת גבול ותכלית

But the principal light that is without contraction to such an extent is called *makkif* (“encircler”) and *sovev* (“encompasser”), since its influence is not revealed within [the worlds], inasmuch as they belong in the order of the finite and the limited.

By way of illustration, the Alter Rebbe will now draw an analogy from the physical earth which is composed of the inanimate and vegetable worlds. These two categories are the least significant of the four categories — man, animal, the vegetative and the inanimate — and the divine life-force found within them is contracted to a greater degree than the life-force found within animal and man. Nevertheless, Scripture attests that the whole world is full of G-d’s glory — because it *encompasses* these two categories, and does not pervade them.

והמשל בזה, הנה הארץ הלזו הגשמית, אף שמלא כל הארץ כבודו

To illustrate this point, consider this material world. Even though “The whole world is full of His glory,”

והיינו אור אין סוף ברוך הוא, כמו שכתוב: הלא את השמים ואת הארץ אני מלא, נאם ה'

namely, not only with a minute glimmer of G-dliness, but with the [infinite] light of the blessed *Ein Sof*, as it is written:<sup>3</sup> “Do I not fill heaven and earth?” says the L-rd,”

אף על פי כן, אין מתלבשת בתוכה בבחינת גילויי ההשפעה רק חיות מעט מזער, בחינת דומם וצומח לבד

nevertheless only very limited vitality, of no more than the category of what is revealed in the inanimate and vegetable worlds, is clothed within [this world] in the form of “revealed” influence,

וכל אור אין סוף ברוך הוא נקרא סובב עליה, אף שהוא בתוכה ממש

while all the light of the blessed *Ein Sof* which fills the world itself in a concealed manner is described as “encompassing” it, even though it actually pervades it,

מאחר שאין השפעתו מתגלית בה יותר, רק משפיעה בה בבחינת הסתר והעלם

since its influence is no more revealed in it than it is revealed within the inanimate and vegetable worlds, but affects it in a hidden and concealed manner;

וכל השפעה שבבחינת הסתר נקרא מקיף מלמעלה

and any influence of a concealed nature is referred to as “encircling from above,”

כי עלמא דאתכסיא הוא למעלה במדרגה מעלמא דאתגליא

for *alma d'itkasya*, the “hidden world,” is on a higher plane than *alma d'itgalya*, the “revealed world.”

G-dliness drawn down in a concealed manner (“from the hidden world”) is on a higher plane than that which is drawn down in a revealed manner (“from the revealed world”). Emanating as it does from a higher level, this mode of divine influence is said to be “encircling from above.”

ולקרב אל השכל יותר הוא בדרך משל

Let us make this more intelligible by means of an example.

A further example is needed in order to clarify this paradox — how G-dliness simultaneously pervades the world and yet remains aloof from it, encircling and encompassing it (as it were) from above, and not being revealed within it.

כמו האדם שמצייר בדעתו איזה דבר שראה או שרואה

When a person forms an image in his mind of something that he has seen or sees,

הנה אף שכל גוף עצם הדבר ההוא, וגבו ותוכו ותוך תוכו, כולו מצוייר בדעתו ומחשבתו, מפני שראהו כולו או שרואהו

even though the entire body and essence of that thing, both its exterior and interior and its very core, are completely mirrored in his mind and thought, for he has seen it or is seeing it in its entirety,

הנה נקראת דעתו מקפת הדבר ההוא כולו

this is expressed by saying that his mind encompasses that object completely, and, just as in the mind’s frame of reference, so, too, regarding the perspective of the visualized object:

והדבר ההוא מוקף בדעתו ומחשבתו

and that thing is enveloped by his mind and thought.

רק שאינו מוקף בפועל ממש, רק בדמיון מחשבת האדם ודעתו

But it is not encompassed in actual fact, only in the imagination of the man's thought and mind.

Since man's thought is limited, he cannot actually encompass the object itself; he only encompasses its image as it exists within his mind.

אבל הקב"ה, דכתיב ביה: כי לא מחשבתי מחשבותיכם גו'

G-d, however, of Whom it is written:<sup>4</sup> "For My thoughts are not your thoughts,..." so that it is utterly impossible for us to grasp His thought process, —

הרי מחשבתו ודעתו, שיודע כל הנבראים, מקפת כל נברא ונברא מראשו ועד תחתיתו, ותוכו ותוך תוכו, הכל בפועל ממש

His Thoughts and His Mind, which knows all created beings, encompasses each and every created thing, from its head i.e., from its highest level to its end i.e., to its lowest level, and its inside and very core, all in actual reality, and not as with the thought of mortal man.

The Alter Rebbe now gives an example of G-d's thought and knowledge encompassing a specific object.

למשל: כדור הארץ הלזו, הרי ידיעתו יתברך מקפת כל עובי כדור הארץ, וכל אשר בתוכו ותוך תוכו, עד תחתיתו, הכל בפועל ממש

For example, in the case of the orb of this earth, His knowledge encompasses the entire diameter of the globe of the earth, together with all that is in it and its deepest interior to its lowest depths, all in actual reality.

שהרי ידיעה זו היא חיות כל עובי כדור הארץ כולו, והתהוותו מאין ליש

For this knowledge constitutes the vitality of the whole spherical thickness of the earth and its creation *ex nihilo*.

The whole earth was originally created and continues to be created *ex nihilo* as a result of G-d's knowledge of it.

רק שלא היה מתהווה כמות שהוא עתה, בעל גבול ותכלית, וחיות מועטת מאד כדי בחינת דומם וצומח

However, it would not have come into being as it is now, as a finite and limited thing, with an exceedingly minute degree of vitality sufficient for the categories of inorganic matter and vegetation,

אם לא על ידי צמצומים רבים ועצומים, שצמצמו האור והחיות שנתלבש בכדור הארץ

were it not for the world being created through the many powerful contractions which have condensed the light and vitality that is clothed in the orb of the earth,

להחיותו ולקיימו בבחינת גבול ותכלית, ובבחינת דומם וצומח בלבד

so as to animate it and sustain it in its finite and limited status and in the categories of inorganic and vegetable matter alone.

Thus the minute degree of illumination which results from the *tzimtzumim* enables the earth to exist in a finite manner, and only in the finitude of inorganic and vegetable matter. G-d's knowledge, however, as shall presently be explained, encircles the earth from above. For since His knowledge is infinite, while the world is finite, it is impossible for this knowledge to pervade the earth, even though this knowledge constitutes the earth's very creation and existence.

אך ידיעתו יתברך המיוחדת במהותו ועצמותו, כי הוא המדע והוא היודע והוא הידוע

But His knowledge which is united with His essence and being, for "He is the Knowledge, the Knower, and the Known,

It has been previously explained (in ch. 2) that G-d's knowledge and intellect are totally different from man's. When a mortal being knows something, three distinct identities are involved: (a) the "knower" — the person in possession of the knowledge; (b) the "knowledge" — the intellectual faculty which enables him to know; (c) the "known" — the particular item of knowledge which he knows. G-d, however, "...is the Knowledge, the Knower, and the Known." He that knows, and the vehicle through which He knows, and that which He knows — are all Himself. Thus His knowledge is wholly united, wholly identified, with His essence.

ובידיעת עצמו, כביכול, יודע כל הנבראים

and knowing Himself, as it were, He knows all created beings,

ולא בידיעה שחוץ ממנו, כידיעת האדם

though not with a knowledge that is external to Himself, like the knowledge of a human being,

Human knowledge requires getting to know something which is external to the knower himself. Not so G-d's knowledge: it comes from His knowing Himself,

כי כולם נמצאים מאמיתתו יתברך

for all of [the created beings] are derived from His true reality,



G-d's true reality and existence is the source of all created beings. By knowing Himself, therefore, as mentioned just above, He knows all of creation.

ודבר זה אין ביכולת האדם להשיגו על בוריו וכי'

and this thing is not within the power of human beings to comprehend clearly...," —\*

The human mind cannot possibly grasp the concept of "Knowledge, Knower and Known" all being one and the same. For whatever matter a man may desire to comprehend, he imagines how it exists within himself — bearing in mind, of course, that when the matter at hand is the knowledge of G-dliness, it is to be conceived on a more exalted and abstract plane than that of simple human existence. Since G-d's manner of knowledge is totally dissimilar from man's, it is thus impossible for him to picture it at all. It must forever remain beyond his ken.

הגהה

\*NOTE

"He is the Knowledge, the Knower..." and so on, is a quotation from *Rambam* (Maimonides). There are prominent sages who take issue with this view, among them *Maharal* (Rabbi Yehudah Loewe) of Prague.

In the introduction to his *Gevurot HaShem*, *Maharal* raises a number of objections to the thesis of *Rambam*. One of his most telling arguments: The descriptive term "knowledge" or "intellect" is one of limitation. By terming something as being "intellect" we are thereby saying that it is not anything other than intellect — such as feelings, action, or whatever. Yet how can we possibly say that G-d is limited in any way? For He is the ultimate in indivisible simplicity, not a complex amalgamation of distinct, limited attributes.

Even if we posit that G-d's knowledge and man's are totally dissimilar, and that man is incapable of comprehending how G-d is both simultaneously "Knowledge, Knower, and Known," yet the fact still remains that knowledge is a specific attribute: we are speaking of knowledge, to the exclusion of all else. This cannot possibly serve as a description of G-d's essence.

*Maharal* goes on to point out that the Sages of the *Talmud* refer to G-d as "the Holy One, blessed be He," not as "the Intellect, blessed be He." For "holy" means separate and apart — utterly transcending anything that is within the realm of description. And it is specifically because He is above everything and beyond all description that everything derives from Him. For He is limited in no respect that might preclude the existence of anything.

Intellect, *Maharal* teaches, is merely one of G-d's creations. Seen in this light, "And G-d knew" is no different from "And G-d said" or "And G-d made." Just as G-d's speech and

action are not His essence but faculties which He brought into being, so, too, with regard to knowledge — the attributes of knowledge and intellect are His creations.

The Alter Rebbe explains in this note that the scholars of the Kabbalah subscribed to the view of *Rambam* that Divine knowledge ought to be considered in terms of “Knowledge, Knower, and Known.” However, they specify, this only applies *after* the light of the *Ein Sof* contracted into the ten *Sefirot* of *Atzilut* — *Chochmah*, *Binah*, *Daat* (wisdom, knowledge and understanding) and so on, i.e., after the “clothing of the light in vessels.” Only after the light of *Chochmah* clothed itself in the vessel of *Chochmah*, the light of *Binah* in the vessel of *Binah*, and so forth — i.e., only after these entities already exist — is it possible to say that this knowledge and intellect is totally at one with G-d. However, before the contraction within these *Sefirot*, G-d supremely transcends intellect and wisdom, even as they exist in their most abstract and rarefied form.

According to the teachings of *Chassidut*, following along the lines of Rabbi Isaac Luria’s interpretation of the doctrine of *tzimtzum* (“contraction”), the views of both *Rambam* and *Maharal* are correct.

G-d’s essential existence and being, before any contraction of G-dliness, is as described by *Maharal* — an existence of unqualified simplicity, beyond the pale of knowledge and intellect in whatever form they may take, even so subtle a form as “Knowledge, Knower, and Known.” However, once the contraction took place, and the *Sefirot* came into being, then His vestiture in them may properly be described by saying, in the words of *Rambam*, that “He is the Knowledge....”

This is because the *Sefirot* are emanations of G-dliness rather than created beings. As such they are wholly united with G-d. This is expressed in the statement of *Tikkunei Zohar*: “He and His life-giving emanations (i.e., the *orot*, the ”lights“ of the ten *Sefirot* of the World of *Atzilut*) are one; He and His causations (i.e., the *kelim*, the ”vessels“ of the ten *Sefirot* of *Atzilut*) are one....” That is to say, the *Ein Sof*-light is one with the lights and vessels of *Atzilut*. This is exactly the same as saying “He is the Knowledge....” for the knowledge of the *Sefirot* is truly one with G-d (and not a created being), as *Maharal* insists.

For the view of *Maharal*, too, is fraught with difficulties. Firstly, we note that Scripture does ascribe knowledge to G-d Himself, as in the verse, “...and His understanding is beyond reckoning.” Furthermore, it appears unreasonable to argue that G-d’s knowledge is dependent on a created entity.

According to the explanation of *Chassidut*, then, all these difficulties — both those in the view of *Maharal* and those in the view of *Rambam* — are satisfactorily resolved: G-d’s essence is indeed beyond description, yet He is still the “Knowledge, the Knower and the Known” as He unites Himself with the *Sefirot* of *Atzilut*, after their having come into being through the medium of “contraction”.

In the words of the Alter Rebbe:

כמו שכתב הרמב"ם ז"ל

As *Rambam*, of blessed memory, has written — *that G-d is “Knowledge, Knower, and Known,*

והסכימו עמו חכמי הקבלה, כמו שכתוב בפרדס מהרמ"ק ז"ל

and the scholars of the Kabbalah have agreed with his views, as is stated in *Pardes* of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, of blessed memory.

וכן הוא לפי קבלת האריז"ל

This is also in accord with the Kabbalah of our master, Rabbi Isaac Luria, of blessed memory,

It was Rabbi Isaac Luria, the *AriZal*, who first revealed the doctrine of *tzimtzum* (“contraction”), which taught that G-d’s exalted essence is even more removed from the *Sefirot* than was thought before then. It would thus be logical to assume that since he stresses this infinite distance from the *Sefirot* (the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah*, for example), he would be unable to accept the statement that “He is the Knowledge...” Nevertheless this teaching holds true even according to him — but with the proviso:

בסוד הצמצום והתלבשות אורות בכלים, כמו שכתוב לעיל, פרק ב'

in the mystery *i.e.*, the doctrine of “contraction” and the clothing of the lights [*of the Sefirot*] in the vessels [*of the Sefirot*], as has been explained previously, in ch. 2.

The unity of G-d with the Divine *Sefirot* is so absolute that even according to Rabbi Isaac Luria one may safely say of this unity, “He is the Knowledge, the Knower, and the Known.”

END OF NOTE

Before the above note the Alter Rebbe stated that G-d’s knowledge is united with His essence and being; since He is infinite His knowledge is infinite as well. It is therefore impossible for this knowledge to pervade the earth, and it must encompass it. This is true, of course, not only of G-d’s knowledge of the earth but of creation as a whole.

הרי ידיעה זו, מאחר שהיא בחינת אין סוף, אינה נקראת בשם מתלבשת בכדור הארץ, שהוא בעל גבול ותכלית, אלא מקפת וסובבת

this knowledge, then, since it is of an infinite order, is not described as *clothing* itself in the orb of the earth, which is finite and limited, while G-d’s knowledge is limitless, but as encircling and encompassing it,

אף שידיעה זו כוללת כל עביו ותוכו בפועל ממש

even though this knowledge embraces its entire thickness and interior in actual reality,

Unlike the knowledge of a human being, which encompasses only the image of an object and not its reality, G-d's knowledge embraces the object in actual reality,

ומהוה אותו על ידי זה מאין ליש

thereby giving it existence *ex nihilo*,

Creation does not come about from the minute glimmer of G-dliness found within the object, which sustains it only at the inanimate and vegetative level, but from the Supernal Knowledge that encompasses and encircles it. And although this knowledge is responsible for the object's existence, it is still described as encompassing. For inasmuch as the knowledge is infinite while the created being is finite, this knowledge is unable to clothe itself within the created being.

וכמו שכתוב במקום אחר

as is explained elsewhere — that creation *ex nihilo* can take place only as a result of the “encompassing light.”

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) *Chagigah* 13a. [2.](#)

“Text of *Nishmat; Sifrei*, beginning of *Parshat Vaetchanan*.” (— Note of the Rebbe.)

It would seem that the Rebbe here explains why the Alter Rebbe specifically chose to mention these two numbers: they are cited in the prayer beginning “*Nishmat...*,” in accordance with the passage in *Sifrei* indicated above.

[3.](#) *Yirmeyahu* 23:24. [4.](#) *Yeshayahu* 55:8.



## Chapter 49

The Alter Rebbe explained in the previous chapter that since the light and life drawn down from G-d is infinite — *Ein Sof*, as its name indicates — therefore in order for this finite world to be created, the Divine light had to undergo a multitude of contractions (*tzimtzumim*). This was the only way that finite creation could proceed from the infinite light of *Ein Sof*; were it to have been drawn down in an orderly progression, finitude would have never resulted.

As will be explained later in this chapter, all these contractions were a result of G-d's love of the Jewish people and His desire that they have the opportunity to fulfill Torah and the *mitzvot*.

The Alter Rebbe will now describe these contractions in a general manner, and will conclude that just as G-d "overcame all obstacles" because of His love for the Jews and created finite worlds and creatures, so, too, "as water mirrors the reflection of a face," should every Jew overcome all obstacles and come to experience a love of G-d. Moreover, just as G-d brought forth His light into this world in a manner that transcended orderly and limited progression, so, too, should every Jew seek to serve G-d not only in an orderly and limited fashion, but without limit, renouncing everything for the sake of his love of Him. Even limitations foisted upon him by the world's very nature should not act as an impediment to his service of G-d.

והנה אף כי פרטי בחינות ההסתר והעלם אור אין סוף ברוך הוא בהשתלשלות העולמות, עד שנברא עולם הזה הגשמי, עצמו מספר ומינים ממינים שונים

Even though the particular aspects of the nature of the obscuring and concealment of the [infinite] light of the blessed *Ein Sof* in the descent of the worlds, descending as they do ever lower until this material world was created, are too numerous to count and are of many diverse kinds,

כידוע לטועמים מעץ החיים

as is known to those who have tasted of the "Tree of Life," the *Kabbalah*,

אך דרך כלל הם שלשה מיני צמצומים עצומים כלליים, לשלשה מיני עולמות כלליים, ובכל כלל יש רבוא רבבות פרטים, והם שלשה עולמות: בריאה, יצירה, עשיה, כי עולם האצילות הוא אלקות ממש

yet in general there are three levels of powerful and comprehensive "contractions" giving rise to three comprehensive Worlds, each category consisting of myriads upon myriads of particulars. These are the Worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* — for the World of *Atzilut* is G-dliness itself.

Since *Atzilut* is G-dliness itself it is not considered to be created *ex nihilo*, but rather is called *Atzilut*, which means an emanation from and an extension of G-dliness — an illumination which comes from G-d liness itself.

וכדי לברוא עולם הבריאה, שהן נשמות ומלאכים עליונים, אשר עבודתם לה' בבחינת חב"ד המתלבשים בהם

In order to create the World of *Beriah*, which consists of the higher souls and angels whose service to G-d is in the sphere of the intellectual faculties of *ChaBaD* which are clothed in them — i.e., G-dliness is revealed to them in an intellectual manner, through the three intellectual faculties of *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat*,

והם משיגים ומקבלים מהם

and they i.e., the souls and angels apprehend them and receive [influence] from them — from *ChaBaD* which illumines them,

In order to create a world whose creations are not wholly nullified to G-d — as is the case in *Atzilut* — but are only capable of knowledge and comprehension (and it will be noted that comprehension entails an awareness of one's own being, in that comprehension presupposes an entity who is comprehending),

היה תחלה צמצום עצום כנ"ל

there necessarily preceded a powerful “contraction”, as mentioned above.

A mighty “contraction” was necessary in order to ensure that the light of G-dliness manifest in *Atzilut* should be hidden, and that only a “contracted” form of light should illuminate and create creatures of the World of *Beriah*, which are on a level of creation *ex nihilo*.

וכן מבריאה ליצירה

So, too, from *Beriah* to *Yetzirah*,

In order for the World of *Yetzirah* — a World far lower than *Beriah* — to be created, there again had to be a powerful contraction.

כי אור מעט מזער המתלבש בעולם הבריאה, עדיין הוא בבחינת אין סוף לגבי עולם היצירה

for the minute portion of light (“minute”, that is, in relation to the light found in *Atzilut*) which clothes itself in the World of *Beriah* is still in a category of infinity in relation to the World of *Yetzirah*, so that the light of *Beriah* had to undergo a powerful “contraction” before it was able to descend into *Yetzirah*,

ואי אפשר להתלבש בו אלא על ידי צמצום והעלם, וכן מיצירה לעשיה

and it is unable to clothe itself in the latter except through contraction and obscuration. So, too, from *Yetzirah* to *Asiyah*.

There, too, the light of the World of *Yetzirah* had to be considerably limited to enable it to descend into the World of *Asiyah*.

וכמו שכתוב במקום אחר ביאור שלשה צמצומים אלו באריכות, לקרב אל שכלינו הדל

([1](#)An elaborate explanation of these three “contractions” is given elsewhere, in order to make them more accessible to our poor intellect.)

ותכלית כל הצמצומים הוא כדי לברוא גוף האדם החומרי, ולאכפייא לסטרא אחרא, ולהיות יתרון האור מן החושך

The purpose of all the “contractions” is the creation of the material human body and the subjugation by man of the *sitra achra*, to bring about the preeminence of light supplanting darkness — by having light replace darkness, and even more so when the darkness itself is transformed into light, at which time the preeminence of light is felt to an even greater degree. This is accomplished:

בהעלות האדם את נפשו האלקית והחיונית ולבושיהן, וכל כחות הגוף כולן, לה' לבדו, כנ"ל באריכות

when a person elevates his divine soul and his vivifying soul (a soul which receives its nourishment from *kelipot*, but through man's service in Torah and *mitzvot* is elevated and incorporated into holiness, thereby elevating the souls) together with their garments of thought, speech and action, and all the powers of the body, to G-d alone, as has been discussed earlier at length,

כי זה תכלית השתלשלות העולמות

for this is the purpose of the progressive descent of the Worlds.

The ultimate purpose of all the descents from level to level and World to World is this physical world. It is here that a Jew is able, through his divine service, to effect the subjugation of evil and the preeminence of light supplanting darkness.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to say that just as G-d's love for the Jews “overcame all obstacles” that (as it were) stood in the way of creating this physical world, contracting His infinite light so that infinite beings could be created, so, too, should every Jew respond in kind by overcoming all obstacles that hinder him from serving G-d. Furthermore, his level of service too should not be finite but infinite.

והנה כמים הפנים לפנים

And “as water mirrors the reflection of a face”:

Just as water reflects an exact replica of one's face, so, too, with regard to the “heart of man to his fellow man,” the love of one person to another results in the other person's loving him as well:

כמו שהקב"ה כביכול הניח וסילק לצדדין דרך משל את אורו הגדול הבלתי תכליתי וגנזו והסתירו בג' מיני צמצומים שונים, והכל בשביל אהבת האדם התחתון, להעלותו לה'

As G-d has (as it were) laid down and set aside, figuratively speaking, His great infinite light, and has stored it away and concealed it by means of three different kinds of “contractions” — and all this because of His love for lowly man, in order to raise him up to G-d,

This means to say that G-d created a world in which man may serve Him, and by doing so man is uplifted to G-d. But how is it possible for love to bring about “contraction”,

when love signifies kindness and expansiveness, while contraction and concealment characterize severity? The Alter Rebbe answers this implied question by pointing out that we find that love, too, can bring about contraction, as in the *Gemara* now quoted:

כי אהבה דוחקת את הבשר

for<sup>2</sup> “love impels the flesh,” so that the flesh will not impede it. Thus, because of G-d’s love for His people, He (figuratively speaking) set aside His great light and concealed it through many contractions, and so on. This being so:

על אחת כמה וכמה, בכפלי כפליים לאין קץ, כי ראוי לאדם גם כן להניח ולעזוב כל אשר לו מנפש ועד בשר, ולהפקיר הכל

how much more, and an infinite number of times more, is it fitting that a man also should relinquish and set aside all he possesses, both spiritually and physically, and renounce everything,

בשביל לדבקה בו יתברך בדביקה חשיקה וחפיצה, ולא יהיה שום מונע מבית ומחוץ, לא גוף ולא נפש ולא ממון ולא אשה ובנים

in order to cleave to Him, with attachment, desire and longing, without any hindrance, within or without, neither of body nor soul — hindrances from “within”, nor money, nor wife and children — hindrances from “without”. None of these things should hinder him from cleaving to G-d. By renouncing them all he sets aside even his most important needs for the sake of his love of G-d.

ובזה יובן טוב טעם ודעת לתקנת חכמים, שתקנו ברכות קריאת שמע: שתיים לפנייה כו', דלכאורה אין להן שייכות כלל עם קריאת שמע, כמו שכתבו הרשב"א ושאר פוסקים

This will enable one to understand the eminently reasonable explanation of the Rabbinic enactment (Mishnah, Berachot 1:4) ordaining the recitation of the blessings of the *Shema*: two blessings preceding it, and so on.<sup>3</sup> For at first glance it would appear that they have no connection whatever with the recital of the *Shema*, as *Rashba*<sup>4</sup> and other halachic authorities have stated.

In this, they are unlike other Rabbinic blessings pronounced over *mitzvot*, where each such blessing refers explicitly to the *mitzvah* itself (as for example the blessing “...to put on the *tefillin*”).

ולמה קראו אותן ברכות קריאת שמע, ולמה תקנו אותן לפנייה דווקא

Why, then, were they termed “Blessings of the *Shema*?” And why was it ordained that they be recited specifically before it when they are in no apparent way connected to it?

The Alter Rebbe explains that the purpose of *these* blessings is to serve as a preparation to the *Shema*. The main objective of the *Shema* is attaining a “love of G-d with both one’s



inclinations” — so that not only the divine soul, but the animal soul and *Yetzer Hara* also come to love G-d. And for this one must first meditate on the contents of the blessings of the *Shema*, which describe the self-nullification of the angels and other creatures.

Thus, the blessings preceding the *Shema* are indeed similar to other blessings. Just as the Sages instituted blessings to be recited before performing any other particular *mitzvah* in order to make the person a fit receptacle for the beneficent flow he receives from its performance, so, too, did they institute the blessings preceding the *Shema* in order for one to properly perform that *mitzvah*.

אלא משום שעיקר קריאת שמע: לקיים בכל לבבך כו', בשני יצריך כו'

But the reason is that the essence of the recital of the *Shema* is to fulfill the injunction, “with all your heart...,” that is,<sup>5</sup> “with both inclinations...” — that a Jew should love G-d with the whole of his heart, even with his animal soul and evil inclination,

דהיינו לעמוד נגד כל מונע מאהבת ה'

that is to say, to withstand anything that hinders [him] from the love of G-d.

ולבבך: הן האשה וילדיה, שלבבו של אדם קשורה בהן בטבעו, כמו שאמרו רז"ל על פסוק: הוא אמר ויהי, זו אשה, הוא צוה ויעמוד, אלו בנים

For “your heart” alludes to one’s wife and her children, to whom a man’s heart is, by his very nature, bound. So have the Sages, of blessed memory, commented<sup>6</sup> on the verse:<sup>7</sup> “For He spoke and it came to pass,” that this refers to one’s wife; “He commanded, and it stood fast,” that this refers to the children,

I.e., it is G-d’s command that imbues a man’s nature with the bond to his wife and children. These are “your heart,” the things to which his heart is bound — and they are not to hinder his divine service.

ונפשך ומאדך: כמשמעו, חיי ומזוני

and by “your soul and might” is understood, literally, your life and sustenance; they, too, should not act as an impediment to spiritual service;

להפקיר הכל בשביל אהבת ה'

all are renounced for the love of G-d.

Thus, neither the things found “within” — the animal soul and evil inclination, nor those things “without” — one’s wife, children and sustenance, should hinder a person from those matters which lead to the love of G-d.

ואיך יבא האדם החומרי למדה זו

But how can physical man attain this level? — of G-dly love that nothing can obstruct.

לכך סידרו תחלה ברכת יוצר אור, ושם נאמר ונשנה באריכות ענין וסדר המלאכים העומדים ברום עולם

It is to this end, therefore, that the blessing of *Yotzer Or* was introduced to be recited first, for in this blessing there is stated and repeated at length — and this meditation must indeed be a lengthy one, taking into account all the specific details — the account and order of the angels “standing at the world’s summit,”

להודיע גדולתו של הקב"ה, איך שכולם בטלים לאורו יתברך, ומשמיעים ביראה כו' ומקדישים כו' ואומרים ביראה: קדוש כו', כלומר שהוא מובדל מהם ואינו מתלבש בהם בבחינת גילוי

in order to proclaim the greatness of the Holy One, blessed be He — how they are all nullified in His blessed light and “pronounce in fear...” “and sanctify...” G-d’s Name, and “declare in fear, ‘Holy’,”... meaning<sup>8</sup> by saying “Holy...” that He is apart from them, and does not clothe Himself in them in a revealed state,

אלא מלא כל הארץ כבודו, היא כנסת ישראל למעלה, וישראל למטה, כנ"ל

but where *is* G-d revealed? — “The whole *earth* is full of His glory,” namely, the Community of Israel above i.e., *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, the source of Jewish souls, which is called “earth”, and Israel on this earth below, wherein Jews perform Torah and *mitzvot*, for which reason specifically is this world filled with His glory: it is here that G-d clothes and reveals Himself, as has been explained earlier.

All the above refers to the comprehension of the supernal angels, the *serafim*, who are able to comprehend how G-d is apart from them and that only the earth is charged with His glory.

וכן האופנים וחיות הקודש ברעש גדול וכו': ברוך כבוד ה' ממקומו, לפי שאין יודעים ומשיגים מקומו

So, too, we find related in the<sup>9</sup> blessing of *Yotzer Or*, regarding other categories of angels, whose place is in a lower world than the *serafim*, and who are therefore unable to comprehend how G-dliness is separate and apart, that “the *ofanim* and the holy *chayyot* with a mighty sound” declare:<sup>10</sup> “Blessed be the glory of the L-rd and may it be drawn down from its place,” for they neither know, nor do they apprehend His place — the place from which G-dliness is revealed, for which reason they say “from its place,” wherever that place may be,

וכמו שכתוב: כי הוא לבדו מרום וקדוש

as we say a few lines later, “For He alone is exalted and holy.”

The various degrees of nullification of these angels are thus spoken of in the first of the two blessings preceding the *Shema*. When a person meditates on this matter he will begin to understand G-d’s greatness, for all the lofty angels are nullified to Him.

ואחר כך ברכה שניה

Then follows the second blessing, which declares G-d's great love of the Jewish people.

Notwithstanding the lofty service and the subjugation of all the heavenly angels, G-d saw fit to set them all aside, as it were, choosing instead to delight in the service of His people below. This blessing begins:

אהבת עולם אהבתנו ה' אלקינו, כלומר, שהניח כל צבא מעלה הקדושים

“L-rd our G-d, You have loved us with everlasting love.” That is to say, that He set aside all the supernal, holy hosts — the heavenly angels, for they are not the ultimate intent of creation,

והשרה שכינתו עלינו, להיות נקרא אלקינו, כמו: אלקי אברהם כו', כנ"ל

and caused His *Shechinah* to dwell upon us, the Jewish people, so that He be called “our G-d” in the same sense that He is called<sup>11</sup> “the G-d of Abraham,...” as explained earlier.<sup>12</sup>

Abraham was completely nullified to G-d. To the same degree that G-d is called “the G-d of Abraham,” He is also called “our G-d.” This is accomplished, as explained earlier, through the performance of Torah and *mitzvot*.

והיינו כי אהבה דוחקת את הבשר

This is because “love impels the flesh.”

Love effects concealment and contraction. So, too, did G-d's love for His people bring about a certain contraction, in that He chose the service of Jewish souls in the state in which they are found here below — encloded in physical bodies, and in the finite world.

ולכן נקראת אהבת עולם, שהיא בחינת צמצום אורו הגדול הבלתי תכלית, להתלבש בבחינת גבול הנקרא עולם

Therefore this love on G-d's part is called *ahavat olam*, literally, “a love of the world,” for it refers to the “contraction” of His great and infinite light, by assuming the garb of finitude, which is called *olam* (“world”) — the concept of “world” signifying the finitude of space and time. G-d brought about this “contraction”:

בעבור אהבת עמו ישראל, כדי לקרבם אליו, ליכלל ביחודו ואחזותו יתברך

for the sake of His love for His people Israel, in order to bring them near to Him, that they might be absorbed into His blessed Unity and Oneness through Torah and *mitzvot*.

וזהו שכתוב: חמלה גדולה ויתירה

This is also the meaning of what we say a little later on in the same blessing of *Ahavat Olam*, and in connection thereto: “Exceedingly abounding compassion,” i.e., more than You have bestowed upon others, “have You bestowed upon us,”

פירוש: יתירה על קרבת אלקים שבכל צבא מעלה

namely, [a compassion] exceeding the nearness of G-d toward all the hosts above.

G-d’s nearness to them comes out of His sense of compassion for them. This can in no way compare to the compassion G-d feels for us, for which reason He draws us closer to Him. The same blessing of *Ahavat Olam* then goes on to say:

ובנו בחרת מכל עם ולשון, הוא הגוף החומרי הנדמה בחומריותו לגופי אומות העולם

“And You have chosen us from among all nations and tongues”: this refers to the material body which, in its corporeal aspects, is similar to the bodies of the gentiles of the world.

True freedom of choice can only come about when one has two completely equal choices. When two things, however, are unequal, one does not freely choose one over the other — the qualities found in one and lacking in the other compel the choice.

It is therefore impossible to say that “You have chosen us” refers to Jewish souls, for there can be no comparison between Jewish and non-Jewish souls, inasmuch as a Jew’s soul<sup>13</sup> “is truly part of G-d Above.” Rather, “You have chosen us” refers to the Jew’s material body, which in its corporeality is similar to the bodies of non-Jews.

G-d freely chose Jewish bodies to be the proper receptacle for Jewish souls, desiring that through the deeds performed by the body (for all physical *mitzvot* demand bodily participation) the Jew should become united with Him. This the Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain, first continuing to quote from *Ahavat Olam*:

וקרבתנו וכו' להודות וכו', ופירוש הודאה יתבאר במקום אחר, וליחדך כו', ליכלל ביחודו יתברך כנ"ל

“And you have brought us near...to give thanks...” (the interpretation of “thanks” will be given elsewhere, where the quality of abnegation found in thanksgiving will be explained), “...and proclaim your Oneness...,” which means to be absorbed in His blessed Unity, as has been explained above.

The Alter Rebbe will soon conclude that meditating on the concepts appearing in the blessings of the *Shema* leads a Jew to the proper realization of the *Shema* — attaining an ardent love for G-d.

והנה כאשר ישים המשכיל אלה הדברים אל עומקא דלבא ומוחא, אזי ממילא כמים הפנים לפנים

When the thinking person will reflect on these matters in the depths of his heart and brain, then as surely as water mirrors the image of a face,

When the love likened to “water mirroring the image of a face” takes effect in a person, so that G-d’s manifest love for His people arouses in him a corresponding love towards Him, then:

תתלהט נפשו ותתלבש ברוח נדיבה, להתנדב להניח ולעזוב כל אשר לו מנגד, ורק לדבקה בו יתברך, וליכלל באורו בדביקה חשיקה וכו', בבחינת נשיקין ואתדבקות רוחא ברוחא כנ"ל

his soul will spontaneously be kindled with love for G-d, and it will clothe itself in a spirit of benevolence, willingly to lay down and resolutely to abandon all he possesses, for it will no longer be of major importance to him, in order only to cleave unto Him, and to be absorbed into His light with an attachment and longing, and so forth, in a manner of “kissing”, and with an attachment of spirit to Spirit, as has been explained earlier.

Just as kissing involves not only the cleaving of mouths but also a communion of breaths, so too does spiritual unity involve the union of man’s spirit with G-d’s: man’s spirit becomes one with G-d’s.

אך איך היא בחינת אתדבקות רוחא ברוחא

But how does the attachment of spirit to Spirit take place? I.e., what measures are to be taken if one seeks to desire to “only cleave to Him”?

לזה אמר: והיו הדברים האלה גוי' על לבבך, ודברת במ גוי'

To this end it is stated, soon after the phrase, “with all your heart,” and so on:<sup>14</sup> “And these words shall be... upon your heart.... And you shall speak of them....” As will soon be explained, this refers to immersing oneself in the study of Torah and speaking words of Torah.

וכמו שכתוב בעץ חיים, שיחוד הנשיקין עיקרו הוא יחוד חב"ד בחב"ד, והוא עיון התורה

As is explained in *Etz Chayim*, the union of “kissing” which incorporates the union of the “attachment of spirit to Spirit” is essentially the union of *ChaBaD* with *ChaBaD* — the union of man’s *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat* with G-d’s; that is, concentration in the Torah, which unites man’s *ChaBaD* with the intellect of above, i.e., Torah,

והפה הוא מוצא הרוח וגילויי בבחינת גילוי, והיינו בחינת הדבור בדברי תורה

while the mouth, as the outlet of the breath and its emergence into a revealed state, represents the category of speech engaged in words of the Torah,

By speaking words of Torah — as it is written, “And you shall speak of them” — the spirit emerges into a revealed state. Thus, the union of “spirit with Spirit” is mainly brought about by one’s immersion in Torah study. The reason for this follows:

כי על כל מוצא פי ה' יחיה האדם

for, <sup>15</sup> “By every word that proceeds from G-d’s mouth does man live.”

The mouth is thus the outlet of the breath. However, since what is crucial is *understanding* Torah, for through this the union of “spirit with Spirit” is effected, why must one *utter* the words in order to arrive at this love?

The Alter Rebbe now addresses himself to this question and says, that while it is true that for “man” himself — i.e., the divine soul — cleaving to G-d is attained chiefly through understanding Torah, yet this only suffices for the divine soul. In order for the divine plan to be realized, i.e., that G-dliness be drawn down upon the animal soul as well and into the world as a whole, one must *speak* words of Torah. This is because physical words are uttered by the animal soul, which in turn is affected by them.

Since a person has the strength to speak because he receives physical nourishment, it follows that when he utters words of Torah, G-d’s ultimate intent of drawing down holiness into this physical world is realized, and the “whole world is filled with His glory.”

(Understandably, this selfsame reason applies not only to speaking words of Torah, but also explains why *mitzvot* are to be performed with the physical body and utilizing objects of the material world, for it is through them that G-dliness is manifest in the animal soul and in the material world as a whole. Here, however, the matter under discussion is Torah knowledge. In this instance, although nothing can unite the divine soul with its Source more completely than the contemplation of Torah, it is nevertheless necessary for one to utter the words of Torah as well, in order to draw down G-dliness into one’s animal soul and, indeed, into the whole material world.)

ומכל מקום לא יצא ידי חובתו בהרהור ועיון לבדו

However, one does not fulfill one’s obligation by meditation and deliberation alone,

I.e., one’s *obligation* is not fulfilled thereby, even though such deliberation leads to the lofty union of his soul with G-d in a manner of the cleaving of “spirit with Spirit.”

עד שיוציא בשפתיו, כדי להמשיך אור אין סוף ברוך הוא למטה עד נפש החיונית השוכנת בדם האדם, המתהווה מדומם צומח חי

unless one expresses the words with his lips, in order to draw the [infinite] light of the blessed *Ein Sof* downwards even unto the vivifying soul which dwells in the blood of

man, which in turn is produced by the intake of food from the mineral, vegetable and animal [worlds].

That is to say: Eating and drinking produce the blood in which the vivifying soul is clothed, and G-dliness is drawn down into all the above-mentioned worlds when one speaks words of Torah.

כדי להעלות כולן לה' עם כל העולם כולו, ולכללן ביחודו ואורו יתברך, אשר יאיר לארץ ולדרים עליה  
בבחינת גילוי, ונגלה כבוד ה' וראו כל בשר וגו'

One thereby elevates them all — the vivifying soul, and the mineral, vegetable and animal worlds — to G-d, together with the entire universe, and causes them to be absorbed in His blessed Unity and light, which will illumine the world and its inhabitants in a revealed manner, in the spirit of the verse that says: [16](#) “And the glory of G-d shall be revealed” — so much so, indeed, that “all *flesh* shall see it...”

שזהו תכלית השתלשלות כל העולמות, להיות כבוד ה' מלא כל הארץ הלזו דוקא בבחינת גילוי, לאהפכא  
חשוכא לנהורא ומרירא למיתקא, כנ"ל באריכות

For this is the purpose of the progressive descent of all the worlds — that the glory of G-d may pervade this physical world especially, in a revealed manner, to change the darkness of *kelipot* into the light of holiness, and the bitterness of the world, whose life-force is from *kelipat nogah*, into the sweetness of goodness and holiness, as has been explained above in ch. 36 at length.

וזהו תכלית כוונת האדם בעבודתו: להמשיך אור אין סוף ברוך הוא למטה

And this is the essence of the intent of man's service: to draw the [infinite] light of the blessed *Ein Sof* down below.

Therefore, although man's spiritual service and deep understanding of Torah are able (through thought alone) to fulfill the objective of his love — to cleave to G-d in a manner of the cleaving of “spirit with Spirit,” yet the intent of his service should not only be for the sake of his divine soul. It must also be in keeping with G-d's desire of drawing down G-dliness into this material world. And this is accomplished through *speaking* words of Torah.

Now before commanding us to place “these words [of the Torah] upon your heart,” and continuing by saying that “you shall speak in them,” the Torah says: “You shall love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.” For before G-dliness is drawn down through Torah, man must first initiate an arousal of love on his part. Only then will G-dliness be drawn down through Torah and *mitzvot*. This is what the Alter Rebbe now says:

רק שצריך תחלה העלאת מ"ן

However, the initiative must come through the “elevation of *mahn*” (מן — an acronym of the words *mayin nukvin*, lit., “female waters,” which in Kabbalistic terminology signifies the arousal and elevation of the “female”, i.e., the recipient),

למסור לו נפשו ומאודו כנ"ל

surrendering to Him one's soul and one's all, as has been explained above.

In order for G-dliness to be properly drawn down through Torah and *mitzvot*, it is first necessary that there be the “elevation of *mahn*,” emanating from man's love of G-d to the degree that he is ready to forgo everything for His sake.

\* \* \*

With this the Alter Rebbe concludes the theme beginning in ch. 46 regarding the love likened to “water mirroring the image of a face,” and concerning which he had said that the *Shema* and its introductory blessings are especially effective in awakening it.

### Commentary of the Rebbe

#### On the Conclusion of Chapter Forty-Nine

“But how does... while the mouth.... However, one does not fulfill.... For this is the purpose....”

The Rebbe here asks six questions:

- (1) What, in general terms, is the Alter Rebbe's intent in introducing the passage that begins, “But how does the attachment of spirit to Spirit take place”?
- (2) The section from “while the mouth” to “does man live” seems to be superfluous. Since the Alter Rebbe goes on to say that in Torah study deliberation alone does not suffice, and one must also express the words with his lips in order to draw down the light of *Ein Sof* into the world, nothing appears to be gained by adding, “while the mouth... does man live.”
- (3) When the Alter Rebbe quotes the verse, “By every word that proceeds from G-d's mouth does man live,” and does not expound on it at all, he is evidently referring to the simple meaning of the text (and not as some would say, that it refers to *ChaBaD*, the source of Divine speech). What connection, then, is there between the simple textual meaning and the context?
- (4) What is the meaning of the words “and its emergence into a revealed state” in the phrase, “as the outlet of the breath and *its emergence into a revealed state*?” Indeed, the Hebrew original here would appear to be repetitious.



(5) How is this all connected to what is being discussed at the end of ch. 49?

(6) Moreover: “For this is the purpose of the progressive descent of all the worlds” surely belongs in ch. 36, where this matter is discussed at length. Indeed, the Alter Rebbe refers here to that chapter when he says, “as has been explained above at length.” Here, it would seem, is not the place to treat this subject at all, even briefly.

\* \* \*

In order to better understand the answers of the Rebbe to these questions, a brief introduction is in order.

The concept called the “unity of kissing” bespeaks the revelation of a level of love so inward that it cannot be revealed in speech. Thus, too, the verse that says, “He shall kiss me with the kisses of His mouth,” which alludes to Torah, indicates that through Torah a Jew is united with G-d in a manner of “kissing”; i.e., there is revealed within him a manifestation of G-dliness which is essentially removed from the realm of revelation. Only because of this inward love is it revealed at all.

This revelation comes about only through spirit and breath, and begins in “intelligence”; i.e., the revelation is drawn down to the Supernal *ChaBaD*. When the soul of a Jew understands the intellect of Torah, which is the Supernal *ChaBaD*, his spirit (intellect) is unified with the Spirit and Intellect Above. This unification of mortal *ChaBaD* with the Supernal *ChaBaD* is the highest existing form of unity (as explained in ch. 5).

Intellect itself, however, especially when it is involved in the stage of scholarly polemics, is found within a person in a concealed manner. Even after a debate crystallizes into a final *halachic* decision it is still concealed, when considered in relation to his soul at large, and especially in relation to his animal soul and body.

However, when the concept in question or its legal outcome is verbalized (and speech after all belongs to “the world of revelation”), then not only is there a revelation of the profound thinking that was involved in the stage of intellectual give and take, but even relative to the *revelation* of intellect as expressed in the final halachic decision, the Torah student’s speech constitutes a revelation.

From the above it becomes clear that the unity of “kissing” is effected chiefly at the level of *ChaBaD*; there it is able to reveal that which is essentially beyond revelation. This is also the meaning of the expression of the Sages, that “*HaKadosh Baruch Hu* sits and studies Torah.” This means that He who is essentially *Kadosh* — Holy, separate and apart — “sits” at (i.e., lowers Himself into) the level of Torah. And through Torah study it is granted to an individual to absorb this level within himself.

Nevertheless, the complete revelation of this connection both Above and below is accomplished through speech. When it is revealed in Supernal Speech and echoed in man’s speech, then it truly illuminates man’s soul.

\* \* \*

Following this introduction, the commentary of the Rebbe will be better understood:

Until this point it has been explained that as a result of the blessings preceding the *Shema* and of the *Shema* itself, “the intelligent person will reflect on *these matters* in the depth of his heart and brain,” and then “his soul will be kindled” and he will desire to cleave to G-d. The direction taken by this form of divine service is elevation “from below to above,” i.e., the individual desires to leave the bounds and limitations of the world, and become one with G-d.

This feeling can find expression in the “expiry of the soul” (*klot hanefesh*) in its love for G-d. (This surely does not result in any obligation to study Torah or the like in order to draw G-dliness down below. On the contrary, a person in this situation is in a state of longing and “expiry of his soul” in order to become united with G-d *as He is Above*.)

The Alter Rebbe therefore begins this passage by saying, “*But* how does the attachment of spirit to Spirit take place?” — Not as we may have expected, as described above, *but*: “To this end it is stated, ‘And these words shall be... upon your heart.’”

The Alter Rebbe is telling us something completely new: the cleaving of “spirit to Spirit” is accomplished not through the “expiry of the soul,” *but* through fulfilling the commandment that “these words shall be... upon your *heart*” — through applying one’s intellect to the study of Torah.

Moreover, it is accomplished through fulfilling the commandment that “you shall speak of them,” through *speaking* words of Torah — and the direction taken by this form of divine service is contrary to elevation “from below to above,” for speech signifies *drawing down*, and *revelation*.

Since there must be a “cleaving of spirit to Spirit,” and Supernal Spirit is Supernal Wisdom, i.e., Torah, concentration in Torah therefore effects (as explained in ch. 5) the ultimate unity of man’s *ChaBaD* with G-d’s — and this is the “cleaving of spirit to Spirit.”

However, one might think that uttering the words of Torah on which a person had already been deliberating only reveals the unification of *ChaBaD* with *ChaBaD*, and no more than this is accomplished by fulfilling the commandment that “you shall speak of them.” (In other words, we might think that speech merely relates that which has transpired in one’s intellect, namely, that his intellect is united with the Supernal Intellect.)

If this were so, it would contradict statements appearing in chs. 45 and 46, and also contradict the meaning of the verse, “He shall kiss me with the kisses of His mouth,” which as explained earlier signifies the unification of man’s *speech* with G-d’s *speech*, G-d’s speech being the *Halachah*.

The Alter Rebbe therefore goes on to state: “while the mouth,” i.e., the Supernal mouth as well as man’s mouth (kissing being from mouth to mouth), “is the outlet of the breath and its emergence into a revealed state.” He does not provide any additional explanation since he speaks of the simple meaning of these words, namely that the mouth *emits* the spirit and wisdom on which the person has previously concentrated. This is “its revelation,” the revelation of the spirit, which is the revelation of the thinking process and of its conclusion. All this is emitted by the mouth in a manner of *revelation*.

(This means the following: The “spirit” refers to intellectual concentration. Then there is “its revelation,” the revelation of the “spirit” being the intellectual conclusion. All this is emitted by the mouth in a manner of revelation. Before the words are uttered by the mouth, the conclusion existed only in the mind. Through speech, however, both the thinking process and its conceptual conclusion are revealed into actuality.)

The Alter Rebbe therefore concludes that “the mouth... represents the category of *speech* engaged in words of Torah.” It is necessary for the Torah concepts and conclusions of one’s study to be revealed within the spoken word. The reason for this is given in his next phrase: “for by every word that proceeds from G-d’s mouth does man live.” The word that *ultimately* proceeds from G-d’s mouth is not the preliminary stage of scholarly concentration and debate, but “the word of *Halachah*,” the final ruling on the question discussed. And on this does man live.

Yet, something still requires clarification: The need for “attachment of spirit to Spirit” through concentration in Torah is understandable. However, what impels us to say that the resulting desire to be absorbed in G-d’s *light* must find expression in *speaking* words of Torah? — For speech draws downward: its direction in divine service is exactly opposite to the desire of being absorbed in G-d.

The Alter Rebbe therefore says that were it only a matter of a person’s desire to be absorbed in G-d, then it really would not be necessary for him to *speak* words of Torah; meditation would suffice. However, were he not to speak words of Torah he would be shirking an obligation. As the Alter Rebbe goes on to say: “However, one does not fulfill one’s obligation by meditation and deliberation alone.”

A Jew is obliged to draw down the infinite light of the *Ein Sof* even unto the vivifying soul and the world as a whole. This obligation cannot be fulfilled through meditation and contemplation, but only through speaking words of Torah.

It would seem, however, that this is a distinct and separate obligation, quite unconnected with the love which results in the cleaving of “spirit to Spirit,” a level attained through the divine service involved in the blessings preceding the *Shema* as well as through the *Shema* itself.

The Alter Rebbe therefore explains that there indeed does exist a connection between the two. By speaking words of Torah and thereby causing G-dliness to descend upon his vivifying soul and the mineral, vegetable and animal worlds, the individual will thereby

also cause their elevation; they will all be raised to G-d, and absorbed in His *light*. Thus, the selfsame thing the person effects within himself through *meditating* on Torah, he also effects in his vivifying soul and in the world at large by *speaking* words of Torah.

There still remains to be understood the connection between (a) elevating the world to G-dliness and (b) the contents of the blessings preceding the *Shema*, as well as the beginning of the *Shema* itself (until “And these words...”). Seemingly they are separate and distinct manners of service.

Even the purpose of uniting man’s speech with G-d’s lies not in his being “kindled with love,” but is rather intended to achieve an opposite effect (as mentioned previously). All the more so with regard to the elevation of the material world to G-d. How is this connected with the blessings preceding the *Shema*, the *Shema* itself, and its resulting love?

This is explained by the Alter Rebbe when he goes on to say: “For this is the purpose of the progressive descent of all the worlds...,” and “this is the essence of the intent of man’s service.” Man’s purpose is to serve G-d, and the purpose of all worlds is for G-d’s glory to pervade them. This is the general content and the ultimate conclusion of the blessings preceding the *Shema* (for the purpose of the divine service of Jewish souls and indeed the purpose of all the Worlds is to draw down G-dliness below, as mentioned in the previous chapters regarding the meditation that should accompany the recitation of these blessings).

Thus there is a strong and direct connection between the ultimate purpose of these blessings and the elevation of the vivifying soul and the whole world to G-dliness.

But how is this connected to the love of G-d through the “cleaving of spirit to Spirit”? The Alter Rebbe explains this connection by concluding: “*However*, [one must take the step of] surrendering to Him his soul and his all.” This means to say that unless one first takes the initiative of surrendering himself to G-d, G-dliness will not be manifest in the world.

\* \* \*

According to the exposition of the Rebbe, all six above-mentioned questions are now answered; we understand the need for each and every phrase in the text. Additionally, many points found in other chapters of *Tanya* are now understood as well.

In ch. 5, for example, the Alter Rebbe speaks of the union of man’s *ChaBaD* with G-d’s through a deep comprehension of the Torah. He begins the chapter by giving an example of a person who understands a *halachah*. At the end of that chapter, however, when he is not intent on stressing the kind of unity that exists “from every side and angle,” he speaks of the knowledge of Torah in general, not specifically of the *Halachah*.

The reason for this is that in order to achieve unity “from every side and angle” through understanding Torah, it is necessary that this knowledge be revealed within one’s soul.

This revelation is achieved specifically through the final decision of the *Halachah*, and is lacking in the intellectual give and take which precedes it, as has been explained earlier.

In chs. 45 and 46, likewise, where the Alter Rebbe speaks of the unity of “kissing”, he emphasizes “the *Word* of G-d, which is the *Halachah*,” and not the intellectual debate preceding it. For only within the “*Word* of G-d,” the halachic ruling, is there to be found the intense degree of revelation which is called the “kisses of His *mouth*.” This serves to explain other sections of *Tanya* as well.

The Rebbe here solves an additional knotty problem: In chs. 45 and 46 the Alter Rebbe explains that “kissing” means *speaking* words of Torah. This is puzzling, for the distinctive quality of the degree of union called “kissing” lies in the fact that it *transcends* speech: it cannot be distilled in speech.

However, this will be understood in light of a statement of the Alter Rebbe in *Likkutei Torah, Shir HaShirim* (p. 1d), where he explains that the love described in the verse, “He shall kiss me with the kisses of His mouth,” which refers to Torah, is similar to the love of a father for his only child. The love felt by the father for his child is so great that it cannot be expressed in any spiritual manner, but must be contracted, ultimately finding expression in the form of a physical kiss. The same is true with regard to Torah.

It is thus evident that the extremely exalted revelation of the love called “kissing” can find expression only when it is contracted and condensed in the breath, spirit and speech of Torah.

The concept alluded to there (in *Likkutei Torah*), and discussed more elaborately by the Alter Rebbe in the *maamar* on *Shir HaShirim* in *Sefer HaMaamarim: Hanachot HaRappal* (p. 142), enables us to appreciate more fully what is actually *achieved* by fulfilling the commandment that “you shall speak of them.” For we see from the discourses cited above, that speaking words of Torah is no mere verbal *description* of what is occurring in the person’s *ChaBaD* (namely, that his *ChaBaD* is connected to G-d’s); rather, the very contraction represented by the descent of Torah into his speech is the *vehicle* through which the intense divine love termed “kissing” is expressed.

We also understand from those discourses why the union of “kissing” must be preceded by the person loving G-d through giving Him “his all.”

When the mode of divine illumination that does not normally descend to the point of revelation, leaps over the bounds of divine self-limitation, and is in fact revealed by means of *tzimtzum* (“contraction”, “condensation”), this transcending revelation is called *dilug* (lit., a “leap”). In order to trigger off such a “leap” in the Worlds Above, it is necessary for the individual below to make a corresponding leap — by loving G-d to the point of giving Him “his all.”

It now also becomes clear that the great merit of speech notwithstanding, “kissing” is primarily expressed in the unification of *ChaBaD* with *ChaBaD*. To borrow the phrase of

the Sages: G-d, who is essentially transcendent, i.e., *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* — the Holy (lit., *separate*) One, blessed be He — “\*’sits’ (i.e., *descends*) and studies Torah”: *the illumination descends below*.

The Rebbe also answers another vexing question. Generally, whenever unification of the level of “kissing” is discussed in *Chassidut*, the explanation is given that “kissing” results from the great love of the one who gives the “kiss”. This being so, what connection can this possibly have to *ChaBaD*, which is, after all, a manifestation of intellect, not of love?

According to the explanations in the above-mentioned discourses, this too becomes clear. The inner love transforms or creates the faculties of *ChaBaD*, so that by virtue of this inner love an illumination which is essentially beyond revelation is drawn down into *ChaBaD*. As this is expressed in *Tanya*: “His great Name” is drawn down to the Jewish people because of His great love for them. In similar vein, the Rebbe cites the *Siddur* of the Alter Rebbe, *Derushei Chanukah*, p. 273a, which states that “kissing” derives from the “internal aspect of heart *and mind*,” for it is by virtue of the inward love of the heart that revelation occurs in the mind.

To sum up: According to the commentary of the Rebbe on the explanation given in ch. 49 by the Alter Rebbe about the level of unification called “kissing”, we come to understand that it denotes the revelation of an illumination which essentially is beyond the pale of revelation. This love is “holy” (i.e., *apart*), and is revealed only because of G-d’s great inner love for the Jewish people. Concerning this love it is written, “He shall kiss me with the kisses of His mouth,” which refers to Torah.

Through studying Torah, a Jew is united with G-d in a manner of “kissing”, and of the “cleaving of spirit to Spirit.” This love is first manifested in the intellectual faculties of *ChaBaD*, the illumination first descending into Supernal Intellect. The Rabbis express it thus: “The Holy One sits and studies Torah” — G-d Who is “holy” (i.e., *detached*) “sits” and descends into Torah.

The intellect of Torah — Supernal Intellect — is the “Spirit” as it is found above. When a Jew thoroughly comprehends the Supernal Intellect that is vested in the Torah, then his spirit — his intellect — is united with the Supernal Intellect and Spirit, this being the “cleaving of spirit to Spirit.”

“Kissing”, however, takes place from mouth to mouth, for it is through one’s mouth that the inner spirit and breath is revealed, and it is through the mouth that the inner love is expressed. So, too, regarding Torah. When someone fulfills the commandment that “you shall speak of them,” this not only tells us that his *ChaBaD* (intellect) is unified with the Supernal *ChaBaD* and Intellect, but it also serves to reveal the halachic conclusion, the “spirit”, of Torah.

When one’s intellect is immersed in the depths of debate, the “spirit” is in a state of concealment. Only when it is *fully* revealed, when one articulates the crystallized *halachah*, does it reach its most complete state — the “kisses of the *mouth*.”

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [2.](#) *Bava Metzia* 84a. [3.](#)

Concerning the possibility that “and so on” alludes to the blessings which follow the *Shema*, the Rebbe notes:

“This is not [found] in *Tanya*. More important, the answer to this is *not* given. On the contrary, at the end of his question the Alter Rebbe explicitly says, ‘specifically before it’; he does not mention ‘after it,’ even by indicating this with ‘and so on.’ This is especially significant because there *is* a connection to ‘after it,’ for the latter blessings speak of accepting the Heavenly Yoke and the Exodus from Egypt (and these themes refer to the recitation of the *Shema*, as explained at the end of ch. 47).

”‘And so on,’ then, is intended either to include the recitation of the evening *Shema*, or it alludes to the conclusion of the above-quoted Rabbinic text: ‘two before it... *and in the evening*.’ Essentially both answers are the same. And although later on the Alter Rebbe specifies the morning blessings, the same can be understood from them regarding those in the evening.”

[4.](#) Quoted in *Beit Yosef, Orach Chayim* ch. 46. [5.](#) *Berachot* 54a. [6.](#) *Shabbat* 152a. [7.](#) *Tehillim* 33:9. [8.](#)

The Rebbe comments: The Alter Rebbe adds the word “meaning” in order to tell us that the declaration “Holy” does not mean here, as it does in other places, that notice is being given that the one spoken of is holy, or the like. For to make it known that someone is holy implies that the speaker is aware of and grasps the other’s holiness. (Likewise, regarding the Shunamite woman who called Elisha holy, the *Gemara* asks: “How did she know?”)

Here, however, when the angels proclaim “Holy” the intent is the very opposite: they *do not know* Him, for He is Holy — i.e., separate, and apart from them.

(This incidentally deflects another possible question: Since the angels are in a state of self-nullification, how is it conceivable that they “proclaim and announce”? According to the above, however, this may be understood: They “proclaim and announce” that they are nullified to G-d, that He is separate and apart from them, and that they have no conception of Him.)

[9.](#) In the passages preceding the *Shema*. [10.](#) *Yechezkel* 3:12. [11.](#) In the *Shemoneh Esreh*. [12.](#) Chs. 46, 47. [13.](#) Ch. 2, above. [14.](#) *Devarim* 6:6-7. [15.](#) *Devarim* 8:3. [16.](#) *Yeshayahu* 40:5.



## Chapter 50

This chapter warrants a brief introduction.<sup>1</sup>

In previous chapters, *Tanya* has discussed various levels and forms of love of G-d, each of which can inspire one to study Torah and observe *mitzvot* with increased enthusiasm. In all these levels, the love consists of a yearning to become joined with G-d, or else a desire that the Divine be revealed within one's soul. For this reason, the love of G-d arouses one directly to study Torah and observe its commandments, for through these a Jew becomes joined with G-d, and G-dliness becomes revealed in his soul.

Ch. 50 will discuss a different form of love. Rather than a yearning to become joined with G-d, it is a thirst and craving for the Divine to the point of *klot hanefesh*, an utter rapture that consumes the soul until it is on the verge of expiring into sheer G-dliness. The aim of this love, then, is that the soul tear itself *away* from the body, and from whatever ties it to the body, and expire into G-dliness.

Such a love of G-d cannot prompt one *directly* to observe Torah and *mitzvot*, for this is possible only when the soul is enclothed *within* the body.

Nevertheless, the ultimate aim of every love of G-d is to serve Him through fulfilling His Will — the Torah and the *mitzvot* — as a result of the inspiration of this love. In the case of *klot hanefesh*, however, it is not the state of love in itself which arouses one to serve G-d through Torah and the *mitzvot*. It is rather through a *contrary* inclination aroused within the soul — during the very sensation of burning love for G-d, when the soul is in a state of surging ahead towards Him and expiring into G-dliness. At this very moment, one realizes that expiring is not the ultimate Divine intent. On the contrary, this intent is that the soul remain enclothed *within* the body, there to continue its task of drawing G-dliness ever downward, and revealing it in this finite world.

This realization brings one to subordinate one's own feelings. Instead of enjoying the rapturous sensation of surging forward, and expiring into G-dliness, one comes to experience an opposite sensation — of *returning*, to become enclothed in the body, for the sake of fulfilling the Divine intent by observing Torah and the *mitzvot*.

All the forms and levels of love of G-d discussed *before* ch. 50 are grouped under the term *keseif* (lit., “silver”), which *Tanya* derives etymologically from the same root, meaning “desire”. *Keseif* comes under the category of *Chesed* (“kindness”), which *Tikkunei Zohar* calls the “right arm” of the Divine stature.

In the Kabbalah, the ten *Sefirot* are divided into three groups, called vertical “lines” — right, left, and center. The right line, known as the line of *Chesed*, consists of *Chochmah*, *Chesed*, and *Netzach*. The left line, known as the line of *Gevurah*, consists of *Binah*, *Gevurah*, and *Hod*. Thus, *Chesed* is an outgrowth of *Chochmah*, which begins its line, and *Gevurah* a product of *Binah*, which begins *its* line. (The other *Sefirot* are situated in the center line, which does not concern us here.)



The various kinds of love of G-d discussed hitherto all come under the category of *Chesed* and *keseif*, and are therefore an outgrowth of *Chochmah*. But the love of G-d in the form of *klot hanefesh* discussed in this chapter, comes under the category of *Gevurah*, which is called *zahav* (“gold”), and is an outgrowth of *Binah*.

והנה כל בחינות ומדרגות אהבה הנ"ל הן מסטרא דימינא, ובחינת כהן איש חסד

All the forms and levels of love mentioned above derive from the “right side,” from the level of *Kohen*, for a *Kohen* is called<sup>2</sup> “a man of kindness,” meaning that his form of serving G-d comes under the category of *Chesed*.

ונקראות: כסף הקדשים, מלשון: נכסוף נכספתה לבית אביך

They are called *keseif hakodashim* (“a longing for holy things”),<sup>3</sup> as in the words,<sup>4</sup> “You sorely longed for your father’s home” (where the Hebrew word for “longed” is etymologically related to the word *keseif*).

All these forms and levels of love of G-d thus express the desire and longing of a Jew to become joined with G-d. The words “for your father’s home” in the quoted verse refer to the level of *Chochmah*, which is called *Abba* (lit., “father”). This is also the connection with the term (*keseif*) *hakodashim*, for in the *Zohar*, *chochmah* is called *Kodesh* (“holiness”). As explained in the introduction to this chapter, all these forms of love come under the category of *Chesed*, which is an outgrowth of *Chochmah* (lit., “wisdom”), for they directly inspire one to observe Torah and the *mitzvot* which derive from Divine Wisdom.

אך יש עוד בחינת אהבה העולה על כולנה, כמעלת הזהב על הכסף

There is, however, another level of love which excels all these aforementioned levels, as gold is superior to silver.

This superiority subsists not in degree or intensity, but rather in quality and character. This is not just a quantitative superiority — in that gold (in the analogy) is worth more than silver, a small quantity of it fetching a higher price than a large quantity of silver. The superiority of gold lies in the fact that the most refined type of gold possesses a captivating luster which glistens in the eyes of the beholder (as explained in the *Zohar*<sup>5</sup>). All other types of gold are related to this type. Silver, on the other hand, does not possess this quality.

The same distinction exists between the form of love described in this chapter, which has the characteristic of thirst and rapturous expiry into G-dliness, and the other forms of love which do not have this quality.

והיא אהבה כרשפי אש

This is a love like glowing coals of fire — a burning love, unlike the aforementioned forms of love which are essentially “like water,” for the soul is drawn with a yearning towards G-d, like water which flows and is attracted in a certain direction. (Hence in the wording of the Prayer for Rain said on *Shemini Atzeret*: “Remember our forefather who was *drawn* after You like water”.) This love, on the other hand, has a totally different quality — that of glowing coals of fire.<sup>6</sup>

מבחינת גבורות עליונות דבינה עילאה

This derives from the level of the Higher *Gevurot* of the Higher *Binah*. In other words, the source of this love is from the level of *Gevurah* in *Binah*.

דהיינו, שעל ידי התבוננות בגדולת אין סוף ברוך הוא, דכולא קמיה כלא ממש השיב

The arousal of this love comes about through meditation on the greatness of the Infinite One, before Whom all is considered as absolute nothingness.

תלהט ותלהב הנפש ליקר תפארת גדולתו, ולאסתכלא ביקרא דמלכא

Then, the soul becomes inflamed and flares up towards the precious splendor of His greatness, in order to gaze upon the glory of the King. This is the content of this love.

כרשפי אש שלהבת עזה העולה למעלה

It is like glowing, fiery coals of a mighty flame which surges upward (not a love which is *drawn* towards some object, but one which ascends with the burning fire of *klot hanefesh*),

ולפרד מהפתילה והעצים שנאחזת בהן

and it strives to be parted from the wick and wood on which it has taken hold.

In the same way, the soul seeks to tear away from the body, which is compared to a wick (ch. 35) and to wood (ch. 29), in relation to the fire and light of the soul.<sup>7</sup>

והיינו על ידי תגבורת יסוד האש אלקי שבנפש האלקית

This results from the predominance of the element of divine Fire that is in the divine soul, unlike other forms of love which derive from the element of Water in the divine soul.

ומזה באה לידי צמאון, וכמו שכתוב: צמאה לך נפשי

From this, the soul comes to a thirst. Just as, in the physical domain, one becomes thirsty when the element of Fire predominates, so it is in the spiritual domain, too: the ascendancy of the divine soul's element of Fire creates a thirst within the soul, as it is written:<sup>8</sup> “My soul thirsts for You.”<sup>9</sup>

ואחר כך לבחינת חולת אהבה

Then it reaches the level of “lovesickness”,<sup>10</sup> where the soul is sick with love of G-d, just as an unquenched physical thirst brings on a state of sickness.

ואחר כך באה לידי כלות הנפש ממש, כמו שכתוב: וגם כלתה נפשי

And then it comes to a virtual expiring of the soul (*klot hanefesh*), as it is written:<sup>11</sup> “And my soul expires.” If not for the consequent contrary sensation of “retreat” and restraining oneself (as explained further), the soul would literally expire.

והנה מכאן יצא שורש הלויים למטה

From here, from the level of the Higher *Gevurot* of the Higher *Binah*, is derived the source of the divine service of the Levites below in this world.

ולעתיד, שהעולם יתעלה, יהיו הם הכהנים, וכמו שכתב האר”י ז”ל על פסוק: והכהנים הלויים, שהלויים של עכשיו יהיו כהנים לעתיד

(<sup>12</sup>In the future, when the world will be elevated, they will be the *Kohanim*<sup>13</sup> (unlike now, when the Levites are secondary to them, as it is written:<sup>14</sup> “They shall accompany you and serve you”), as our Master, Rabbi Isaac Luria, of blessed memory, commented on the verse,<sup>15</sup> “But the *Kohanim*, the Levites...” — that the Levites of today will become the *Kohanim* of the future.)<sup>16</sup>

ועבודת הלויים היתה להרים קול רינה ותודה, בשירה וזמרה, בניגון ונעימה

The Levites’ service of G-d was to raise their voice in melody and thanksgiving, with song and music, tunefulness and harmony. Music characteristically combines varied and even opposite moods, some serious (stemming from *Gevurah*) and others happy (stemming from *Chesed*).

בבחינת רצוא ושוב

Their music progressed in a manner of advance and retreat (*ratzo*, literally “running”, and *shov*, “returning”). This echoed their form of serving G-d: the headlong advance towards *klot hanefesh*, and the restraint, retreat and return from that point.

שהיא בחינת אהבה עזה זו, כשלהבת היוצאה מן הבזק, כדאיתא בגמרא פרק ב' דחגיגה

Such is the nature of this intense love, like a flame that flashes out of the *bazak*, as is mentioned in the *Gemara* (Chagigah, ch. 2).<sup>17</sup>

One translation of *bazak* is a crucible for refining gold, in which the flame flashes forth and immediately withdraws. In *Yechezkel* 1:14, the angels called holy *chayyot* “run to and from (*ratzo vashov*) like the appearance of the *bazak*.” Likewise, the love of G-d we are

discussing in this chapter first experiences *ratzo*, a state in which the soul surges forward as if about to expire. But then comes *shov*, as it is written in *Sefer Yetzirah*: “If your heart runs, return to One.” In other words, when your heart seeks to undergo *klot hanefesh*, expiring into G-dliness, then you should return to “One” — withhold yourself from this course and return, in order to bring the revelation of G-d’s Oneness into this physical world. At this point one realizes that *klot hanefesh* is not the Divine intent, which is, rather, that the soul *remain* in the body and observe Torah and the *mitzvot*, thereby revealing the “One”, G-d’s unity, in the world.

ואי אפשר לבאר ענין זה היטב במכתב, רק כל איש נלבב ונבון, המשכיל על דבר, ומעמיק, לקשר דעתו ותבונתו בה', ימצא טוב ואור הגנוז בנפשו המשכלת, כל חד לפום שיעורא דיליה

It is impossible to explain this subject clearly in writing. Yet every person with a feeling heart (i.e., who has perfection of heart), who is understanding (in that he uses his faculty of *Binah*), and intelligent in grasping a subject (by using his faculty of *Chochmah*), and delves deeply to attach his mind and understanding to G-d (by using his faculty of *Daat*), will find the goodness and light concealed within his intelligent soul, each according to *his* capacity:

יש מתפעל כו' ויש מתפעל כו'

(one is affected in one way, from one type of meditation,...and one is affected in another way, by a different form of meditation),

אחרי קדימת יראת חטא, להיות סור מרע בתכלית, שלא להיות עונותיכם מבדילים כו', חס ושלום

after prefacing this meditation by fear of sin, the fear of doing wrong by sinning, in order to become utterly removed from evil, withholding oneself from doing any wrong, to avoid “your transgressions interposing between you and G-d,...” G-d forbid.

In other words, whatever form one’s excitement with love of G-d takes, one must first be totally removed from evildoing.

\* \* \*

The Alter Rebbe will now explain that since this love of G-d is such that the soul is on the verge of expiring, it cannot inspire one directly to serve G-d through Torah and *mitzvot*.

והנה סדר העבודה בעסק התורה והמצות, הנמשכת מבחינת אהבה עזה זו, היא בבחינת שוב לבד

The order of one’s divine service through occupation with Torah study and *mitzvot*, a service deriving from this intense love, is possible only in a manner of retreat, i.e., when the soul withholds itself from expiring in order to fulfill the Divine intent, which can only be realized when the soul remains within the body.

כמו שכתוב בספר יצירה: ואם רץ לבך, שוב לאחד. פירוש ואם רץ לבך, היא תשוקת הנפש שבלב בחלל הימני, כשמתגברת ומתלהבת ומתלהטת במאד מאד, עד כלות הנפש ממש, להשתפך אל חיק אביה, חיי החיים ברוך הוא

As it is written in *Sefer Yetzirah*: “If your heart hastens, return to One.” “If your heart hastens” refers to the craving of the soul that is in the right side of the heart (the abode of the Divine soul), when this craving predominates and bursts into flame, and glows in such rapture that the soul is consumed with a desire (*klot hanefesh*) to pour itself out into the embrace of its Father, its Source, Who gives one life,

ולצאת ממאסרה בגוף הגופני וגשמי, לדבקה בו יתברך

and to leave its confinement in the corporeal and physical body to attach itself to Him, blessed be He.

When one is consumed with such an incontainable, rapturous love, seeking even at the cost of self-extinction to become attached to G-d, there must now be a deliberate “return to the One.”

אזי זאת ישיב אל לבו, מאמר רז"ל: כי על כרחך אתה חי

Then one must take to heart the teaching of our Sages, of blessed memory:<sup>18</sup> “Despite yourself you must live” — despite your craving for expiry in *klot hanefesh*, you must nevertheless remain alive,

בגוף הזה, להחיותו, כדי להמשיך חיים עליונים מחיי החיים ברוך הוא למטה, על ידי תורת חיים

in this body, to keep it alive, for the purpose of drawing down the higher life-force from the Life of life, blessed be He, through the life-giving Torah.

להיות דירה בתחתונים לאחדותו יתברך בבחינת גילוי

Through this, there will be a dwelling-place in the lower worlds and created beings for His blessed Oneness in a revealed state,

Just as in an ordinary dwelling, a person’s identity is totally revealed, so will the true essence of the Divine Oneness be then revealed among the beings of this lower world.

כמו שנתבאר לעיל

as explained above, that this is the ultimate Divine intent — that a human being’s service of G-d should make of the world a dwelling-place for Him. And this is the meaning of “Return to the One”: retreat from your love of G-d in a state of *klot hanefesh*, for the sake of the “One”, for the sake of revealing G-d’s Oneness in the world.

וכמו שכתוב בזהר הקדוש: למהוי אחד באחד, פירוש: שהיחוד הנעלם יהיה בבחינת עלמא דאתגליא

And, as is explained in the holy *Zohar*: “That there be One in one,” meaning that the unity which is hidden — the “One” of a higher spiritual world or level — shall become an aspect of the “revealed world,” becoming manifest in the Oneness of a lower world or level.

וזה שכתוב: לכה דודי וכי

And this is the meaning of the text: [19](#) “Come, my Beloved, to meet the bride (*kallah*)” — denoting *klot hanefesh* (*kallah* and *klot* being etymologically related). In this form of the love of G-d, one’s *klot hanefesh* should be expressed through causing “my Beloved” to “come” — i.e., through drawing down the Beloved One, G-d Himself, so that G-dliness will be revealed in this nether world.

ובזה יובן מאמר רז"ל: על כרחך אתה חי ועל כרחך וכי

With this one will be able to understand the saying of our Sages, of blessed memory: “Despite yourself, even against your will, you must live, and despite yourself you must die.”

From this saying, “Despite yourself you must live,” we learn that, in our service of G-d, we should in the first instance desire the opposite of staying alive (*klot hanefesh*), and that remaining alive within the body has to be performed, against our will. On the other hand, from the second saying, “Despite yourself you must die,” we learn that we should desire to remain alive, and that the opposite of life, *klot hanefesh*, should be against our will. If so, the question arises:

ואלא איך יהיה רצונו

What then should one’s desire be?

We can understand this according to what has been explained above: First one must come to the point where one can arouse within oneself such an intense love of G-d that one desires *klot hanefesh*, while remaining alive is “despite oneself” — only for the purpose of fulfilling G-d’s Will that one reveal G-dliness and His Oneness in the world. This is the meaning of “Despite yourself you must live.”

Afterwards, though, when one is already in a state of “retreat”, then one should once more arouse within oneself the love of G-d that surges ever forward in *klot hanefesh*. In this way, one injects into this state of “retreat” into the world a higher spiritual quality. Furthermore, in this state of withdrawing back into the world, one can possibly become drawn down into lowly mundane affairs. To forestall this possibility, one should once more arouse within oneself the sensation of “running forward,” loving G-d to the extent of *klot hanefesh*. This is the meaning of “Despite yourself you must die” — i.e., against your will which is now in a state of “retreat”, the very opposite of *klot hanefesh*, which denotes expiring and leaving the body.

וכמו שנתבאר במקום אחר באריכות על משנה זו: על כרחך אתה חי, בעזרת חיי החיים ברוך הוא

[This is] explained elsewhere at length with reference to this *Mishnah*: “Despite yourself you must live” — with the help of the “Life of life,” blessed be He, Who enables one to cope with this “compulsion” to live “despite yourself.”

This means that when one’s love of G-d is surging forward in *klot hanefesh*, one forces oneself against one’s will to remain “alive” within the body, in order to reveal down here in this world the “Life of life,” that divine force which gives life to the world.<sup>20</sup>

FOOTNOTES <sup>1.</sup> “See also *Pelach HaRimon, Vayeira* (119); conclusion of *Biur Tanya* (mimeo) of R. Shmuel Gronem [Esterman].” (— Note of the Rebbe.) <sup>2.</sup> *Zohar* I, 256b; 258b. <sup>3.</sup>

The Rebbe cites *II Kings* 12:5, which states: “All silver (*keseif*) donated for sacred purposes, is to be brought to the house of the L-rd” — and the following verse says that this silver is to be entrusted to the *Kohanim*. In spiritual terms this means to say that “sacred silver” (*keseif*), which as mentioned above is etymologically related to longing, is the province of the *Kohanim*.

The Rebbe also cites *Torah Or*, at the end of the Torah portion of *Ki Tisa*, where reference is made to the “sacred *shekel*,” which was a silver coin.

<sup>4.</sup> *Bereishit* 31:30. <sup>5.</sup> *Zohar* II, 148a. <sup>6.</sup>

The Rebbe comments that this appears to contradict a statement of the Alter Rebbe in ch. 9. He speaks there of one who has attained “a love of G-d, burning in his heart like a flame,...[and] his soul will...pine with desire,...rising to attain to the level of *ahavah rabbah* (‘abundant love’),” — and this *higher* level of love stems from “the element of Water.”

Here, however, the Alter Rebbe says that the superior form of love is that which “burns in one’s heart like a flame,...his soul pining with desire” — “as gold is superior to silver.”

The Rebbe answers his question by citing the response of the *Tzemach Tzedek* (in *Or HaTorah, Parshat Achrei*, pp. 95-96) to a similar question. The *Tzemach Tzedek* explains that there are two kinds of silver, ordinary silver and silver which has been refined sevenfold. This latter form of silver is even more valuable than gold. The same is true regarding the various forms of love: When the love is on the level of ordinary silver, then love which is like “flaming fire” and likened to gold is superior to it. However, “the great love of delights” is similar to that form of silver which is superior to gold.

<sup>7.</sup> “I.e., within the body itself this differentiation is between action and speech — and thought. (See *Likkutei Torah*, beginning of *Parshat Achrei*.)” (— Note of the Rebbe.) <sup>8.</sup> *Tehillim* 63:2. <sup>9.</sup>

The Rebbe comments that we cannot simply say that the Alter Rebbe quotes this verse in order to prove that a soul longs for G-d. (a) This is self-evident. (b) If proof is nevertheless needed, the Alter Rebbe should also have supported his statement that the soul reaches the point of “love-sickness” by citing the verse, “...for I am sick with love.” (c) If it is indeed necessary to prove that the soul thirsts for G-d, why does he not cite the verse in all the previous places in *Tanya* where he speaks of the soul’s thirst for G-dliness?

The Rebbe therefore explains that proof is specifically necessary here, for in this instance we are speaking of the *divine soul’s* longing for G-d, as opposed to the longing of the body and animal soul. For even when the divine soul finds itself in this world it still remains “truly a part of G-d above.” Since thirsting after and longing for G-d generally results from the person’s distance from Him, and the divine soul is not distant from Him, what is the reason for its longing?

In the case of a penitent this longing would be understandable. For as explained in ch. 7, the penitent’s soul thirsts for G-d like the parched desert soil thirsts for water. Here, however, we are speaking of an individual who has transcended even the level of “longing exceedingly for his Father’s house.” How, then, can we say that a person so close to G-d longs and thirsts for Him?

The Alter Rebbe therefore cites the verse which says that “*my soul* thirsts after you.” This was spoken by King David, who was of such a superior spiritual level that he had completely vanquished his evil inclination and had transformed his animal soul into holiness. Our Sages attest to this, when in commenting upon the verse, “My heart is slain within me,” they note that King David completely eradicated his evil inclination through fasting. When a person like King David who was totally devoid of any evil inclination states that his soul thirsts for G-d, he is surely referring to his divine soul. Thus we see from this verse that it is indeed possible for the divine soul of a totally righteous individual to thirst after G-d.

But the question still remains: How is it that someone so close to G-d still longs for Him?

This is answered in the concluding section of the verse which states: “...in a land of *barren wilderness*.” Since King David composed this psalm in the Judean Desert, while exiled from Jerusalem, he was in a state of longing. Spiritually as well: when a divine soul finds itself in this world it is in a desert. While it may attain a lofty degree of comprehension of G-dliness, thus finding itself in a *Judean* desert, its present spiritual state cannot at all compare to its former spiritual state, before its descent into this world. Hence its thirst for G-d.

In addition, writes the Rebbe, it may be said that the quoted verse also serves to show that the very contemplation itself leads to this thirst, for the phrase, “My soul thirsts after You,” is preceded by the words, “L-rd, You are my G-d: I shall seek You.” Thus, meditating upon G-d’s greatness, whereby the person seeks G-d, leads to “thirsting after You.”



This is also shown by the verse, “My soul expires [with rapture for G-d],” wherein King David — a completely righteous individual, not a penitent — demonstrates his soul’s longing for G-d.

[10. Shir HaShirim 2:5.](#) [11. Tehillim 84:3.](#) [12.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [13.](#)

The Rebbe notes that by saying that the Levites of today will become *Kohanim* in the future, the Alter Rebbe anticipates the following question:

Earlier on it was stated that the love which is like “flaming fire” is superior to the degree of priestly love. The Alter Rebbe now states that the love likened to “flaming fire” is related to the Levites. However, since the Levites are on a lower level than the *Kohanim*, how can it be that their love is superior to priestly love?

This is answered by saying that the Levites’ love is indeed superior; the *world*, however, is in need of elevation. When this shall come to pass, the present-day Levites will indeed become the *Kohanim* of the future, and will cease being subservient to them.

[14. Bamidbar 18:2.](#) [15. Yechezkel 44:15.](#) [16.](#)

The Rebbe notes that the Alter Rebbe adds the words "of today" ("the Levites *of today* will become the *Kohanim* of the future") in order to forestall the following question: The Torah was given "unto us and unto our children, forever" (*Devarim* 29:28). Rambam comments that we learn from this verse that one of the foremost principles of the Torah is that it remains immutable (*Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah*, ch. 9). How then can we possibly say that one of the laws of the Torah will (heaven forbid) be changed, so that the Levites become *Kohanim*, with all the changes in Torah law that such a transformation entails?

The Alter Rebbe therefore writes that this does not mean that those Levites born in the future will become *Kohanim*. Rather, it means that those Jews who are presently Levites will be born in the future into priestly families, thereby making them lawful *Kohanim*.

This, however, lead to another question: If this is the case, then there is nothing novel about it; it goes without saying that any child born to a *Kohen* is himself a *Kohen*.

The answer to this, says the Rebbe, lies in the fact that Levites are born as such because their soul's spiritual source and therefore their divine service - both in the Temple as well as now - is that of *Gevurah*. So, too, with regard to *Kohanim*: their source is *Chesed*. Since in the time after *Mashiach's* coming the service prompted by *Gevurah* will surpass that of *Chesed*, those who today are Levites will be born into priestly families so as to attain their superior spiritual level.

[17. 13b.](#) [18. Avot 4:22.](#) [19.](#) Liturgy, Prayer for Welcoming the Sabbath. [20.](#) "For a brief explanation and reason for all the above, see *Torat Chayim, Vayishlach*, discourse beginning *Vayikach*, ch. 4; based on *Torah Or* 25b. See also *Achrei Mot* 5649, p. 25ff." (- Note of the Rebbe.)

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# Chapter 51

The title-page of *Tanya* tells us that the entire work is based upon the verse (*Devarim* 30:14), “For this thing (the Torah) is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.” And the concluding phrase (“that you may do it”) implies that the ultimate purpose of the entire Torah is the fulfillment of the *mitzvot* in practice.

In order to clarify this, ch. 35 began to explain the purpose of the entire *Seder Hishtalshelut* (“chain of descent” of spiritual levels from the highest emanation of the Creator down to our physical world), and of man’s serving G-d. The purpose of both is to bring a revelation of G-d’s Presence into this lowly world, and to elevate the world spiritually so that it may become a fitting dwelling-place for His Presence.

To further explain this, ch. 35 quoted the words of the *Yenuka* in the *Zohar* that a Jew should not walk four cubits bareheaded because the *Shechinah* dwells above his head. This light of the Divine Presence, continues the *Zohar*, resembles the light of a lamp, where oil and wick are needed for the flame to keep burning. A Jew should therefore be aware, says the *Zohar*, of the *Shechinah* above him and keep it supplied with “oil” (good deeds), in order to ensure that the “flame” of the *Shechinah* keeps its hold on the “wick” (the physical body).

Basing himself upon this analogy of the *Zohar*, the Alter Rebbe asked (in the same chapter) why the “oil” — fuel — for the light of the *Shechinah* has to be good deeds. The divine soul is “truly a part of G-d above” (ch. 2); why is it not sufficient to serve as this “fuel”? He answers that the divine soul, even of a perfect *tzaddik*, is a conscious entity. This conscious existence of the soul does not become utterly overwhelmed and nullified by G-d’s Presence in the world to the extent that the soul can become one with G-d’s Presence. Therefore the soul cannot serve as fuel for the light of the *Shechinah*, for the “oil” must become totally converted into light (just as physical fuel is consumed, as it burns, to become converted into light), whereas the soul remains in conscious existence. Only good deeds — *mitzvot* — can serve as fuel for the light of the *Shechinah*, for they are G-d’s Will and His wisdom, which are expressions of His essence and thus utterly united with Him. For the soul to become united with G-d, it must therefore perform *mitzvot*.

In this union of the soul with G-d through *mitzvot* (ch. 35 continues) there are two levels. Through Torah study, the light of the *Shechinah* is revealed within the soul, together with the soul’s two inner “garments” — thought and speech — which become absorbed into G-d’s light and united with it in utter oneness. But for the *Shechinah* to rest upon the physical body and upon the animal soul that animates it, *mitzvot* must be performed in

actual deed, on the *physical* level — and this can take place only through the medium of the animating (or vital) soul, together with the body.

In further chapters, the Alter Rebbe explained how the ultimate purpose of the entire *Seder Hishtalshelut* is the *practical* performance of *mitzvot*, which alone can reveal G-d's presence in this physical world. From there, he went on to say that in order to observe the *mitzvot* properly, with enthusiasm and “soul”, one must have *kavanah* — devout concentration, animated by the awe and love of G-d. And in chs. 41-50 the Alter Rebbe proceeded to elaborate on various means of arriving at the different forms and levels of awe and love of G-d.

Ch. 51 now explains further the teaching of the *Yenuka* — that “this light (of the *Shechinah*) needs oil.” In the *Zohar*, “oil” usually refers to the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah* (lit., “wisdom”). Here, though, the *Yenuka* takes it to refer to good deeds. What is the connection between practical *mitzvot* — and “oil”, which refers to *Chochmah*? To clarify this, ch. 51 will explain the meaning of the concept that the *Shechinah* “dwells” (or “rests”) upon something, and how practical *mitzvot* do indeed derive from the Divine level of *Chochmah*, which is why they can serve as the “oil” which enables the light of the *Shechinah* to remain burning upon the “wick” — the human body.

והנה לתוספת ביאור לשון הינוקא דלעיל

For further explanation of the words of the *Yenuka*, mentioned earlier, in ch. 35, where the *Yenuka* was quoted as saying that the light of the *Shechinah*, which dwells upon a Jew, needs “oil”, meaning good deeds,

Now what connection do good deeds have with oil, which usually refers to *Chochmah*?

צריך לבאר תחלה, להבין קצת, ענין השראת השכינה, שהיתה שורה בבית קודש הקדשים

it is necessary first to explain (so that one may understand a little) the concept of the *Shechinah* “dwelling” — that it “dwelt” in the Holy of Holies,

Indeed, there are detailed laws defining the marks of respect due to the Holy of Holies because of the “dwelling” there of the *Shechinah*.

וכן כל מקום השראת השכינה, מה ענינו

and likewise any other place where the *Shechinah* dwells — what does this concept mean? What is meant when we say that a particular location is distinguished as being a place where the *Shechinah* dwells, rather than elsewhere?

הלא מלא כל הארץ כבודו, ולית אתר פנוי מיניה

Surely “the whole world is full of His glory,” and “no place is void of Him”!

The Alter Rebbe will now explain that the *Shechinah's* “dwelling” upon something means the *revelation* of that aspect of G-d’s Presence known as *Shechinah*. Although G-d exists everywhere, His existence is concealed. But when the *Shechinah* “dwells” upon something, this denotes a revelation of G-dliness.

א-דך הענין כדכתיב: ומבשרי אחזה אלוה

However, the key to understanding the subject is to be found in the text,<sup>1</sup> “And from my flesh I see G-d.” The Alter Rebbe understands these words literally: from what we see within ourselves, in our own soul and body, we can visualize the parallel on the spiritual level — in the Divine emanations and the world in general.

שכמו שנשמת האדם היא ממלאה כל רמ"ח אברי הגוף, מראשו ועד רגלו

By way of analogy: The human soul<sup>2</sup> pervades all 248 organs of the body, from head (the highest part of the body) to foot (the lowest part of the body);

The soul pervades the body to the extent that no organ or portion of it remains void of the soul.

ואף על פי כן עיקר משכנה והשראתה היא במוחו, ומהמוח מתפשטת לכל האברים

nevertheless, the soul’s principal abode (in a revealed form) and dwelling place (in an all-encompassing, non-revealed form) is in one’s brain, and from the brain the soul is diffused throughout all the organs;

This takes place in all the organs *simultaneously*, for (as the Rebbe explains) this “diffusion” of the soul refers to the life-force from which the organs derive their vitality — in which respect all organs are equal. This is *one* aspect of the soul’s emanation from the brain to the organs, and in chassidic terminology it can be termed “light” — a revelation which is equal throughout. A second aspect of the emanation that the organs derive from the soul which is in the brain is the following:

וכל אבר מקבל ממנה חיות וכח הראוי לו לפי מזגו ותכונתו

[moreover,] each organ receives *from it* (the soul) a different form of life force and functional power appropriate to it according to its (the organ’s) composition and character:

In other words, the difference between the functional ability of one organ and that of another does not derive from the *organ* itself (like water in a colored glass, for example, which takes on the color of its containing vessel). Rather does each organ draw *from the soul* its ability to see or hear, and so on, as the Alter Rebbe continues:

העין לראות

the eye receives from the soul a life-force and ability to see; the power of sight accords with the smooth and translucent nature of the tissue of the eye;

והאזן לשמוע, והפה לדבר, והרגלים להלוך

the ear receives from the soul a life-force and ability to hear, the mouth to speak, and the feet to walk<sup>3</sup> — each organ in the body, in accordance with its composition and character, receives its life-force and ability from the soul which “dwells” and becomes revealed initially in the brain —

כנראה בחוש, שבמוח מרגיש כל הנפעל ברמ"ח אברים וכל הקורות אותם

as we clearly sense how in the brain one is conscious of all that occurs within the 248 organs and of everything experienced by them, because the brain is the nerve-center and principal abode and source of the life-force of the entire body.

The Rebbe here adds a commentary which clarifies the subject.

By way of introduction: The life-force from the soul which animates the body comprises two aspects. One is its life-giving force — in that the whole body is alive and draws its vitality from the soul. In this aspect, there is no difference between one organ and the next. The head, for example, is no more alive than the foot, just as the foot is no less alive than the head. The entire body, with all its organs, is equally alive throughout. In chassidic terminology, this aspect of the life-giving force is called the “light” of the soul (for light shines equally upon everything around the light-source, regardless of the quality or nature of the objects receiving the light).

The second aspect of the soul’s life-force is the specific functional power which each organ draws from the soul. This power is unique to each organ — the eye receives from the soul the power to see, the ear to hear, the mouth to speak, and the foot to walk.

The manner in which the organ receives the latter life-force and functional power can be explained in two ways.

One is that the life-force emanating from the soul to the organ is utterly “plain” and uncompounded, possessing none of the diverse qualities and powers of the various organs. According to this explanation, the various functional powers of the organs would be differentiated (with respect to the life-force emanating to them from the soul) only after that life-force actually becomes encloded within the organs. For example, only after the life-force becomes encloded within the eye would it become the power of sight, and only after it becomes encloded within the ear would it become the power of hearing.

An analogy to this explanation would be water in a colored glass. Although it remains colorless, yet since it is seen through the walls of a white or red vessel, for example, it seems white or red to the viewer. Likewise each organ receives a plain, uncompounded life-force from the soul, and it is the *organ* that gives the life-force encloded within it its

specific functional ability: the eye enables the life-force to give the power to see, and the ear enables it to give the power to hear.

The second possible explanation — and that accepted by *Tanya* — is that the soul, despite its pristine, uncompounded essence, includes *in potential form* all the powers of the various organs, and it is these faculties which each individual organ receives. The eye *receives*, from the life-force of the soul, the power to see, and the ear *receives* from it the power to hear. These powers were originally included *in potentia* within the soul, and each becomes revealed as the life-force becomes en clothed within the respective organ. Thus the power to see or hear does not originate only when the life-force becomes en clothed within the eye or ear; it already exists *in potentia* within the comprehensive life-force emanating from the soul, although it is not yet revealed. *Tanya* proceeds to explain that this is the correct explanation.

The commentary of the Rebbe explains why we must accept this second explanation. If we were to say that the various functional powers are not differentiated (*in potentia*) within the life-force until *after* it becomes en clothed within the organs (like water or light which does not itself possess a color, but acquires it when viewed through colored glass), then the brain would be conscious of the same sensation from what is experienced in the eye as from what is experienced in the ear, *because these sensations have already left their respective organs*. (Thus too, water removed from a white vessel is no different from water removed from a red vessel: once removed from the vessel, it loses the vessel's color. Likewise, "messages" conveying sensations from the eye would be no different from those coming from the ear — since they have already *left* their respective organs.)

One might argue (according to this explanation which *Tanya* does not accept) that when a particular organ calls into being a functional power in the life-force drawn into it from the soul, this differentiation becomes *acquired* in the life-force (like an ingot of silver which, once it has been molded into the shape of a vessel, remains in that shape later, too). According to this argument, the difference effected by each organ in the life-force drawn into it from the soul, remains also in the sensation transmitted from the organ back to the brain — even after it leaves the organ. This would account for the different messages received by the brain for the varying sensations and occurrences experienced by the eye and ear, for example.

If, however, we say that the soul, which is based in the brain, utterly transcends *any* kind of differentiation (even a differentiation *in potentia*, in which the various powers of the organs are included within the soul), then the soul within the brain would not distinguish between the sensation of what happens in the eye and the sensation of what happens in the ear or other organs, because the soul itself (according to this explanation) is utterly plain and uncompounded. Even, therefore, if the messages coming from the various organs to the brain are indeed different one from another, yet this difference would not be distinguished by the soul in the brain, which utterly transcends all differences between organic functions.

We must therefore say that a difference exists between the various functional powers later revealed in the organs even *before* the life-force is actually drawn from the soul to the organs. The *Tanya* will now explain at which level of the soul this differentiation takes place.

והנה אין שינוי קבלת הכוחות והחיות שבאברי הגוף מן הנשמה מצד עצמה ומהותה, שיהיה מהותה ועצמותה מתחלק לרמ"ח חלקים שונים, מתלבשים ברמ"ח מקומות, כפי ציור חלקי מקומות אברי הגוף

Now, the variation in receiving the functional powers and life-force by the organs of the body from the soul, each organ receiving from the soul a life-force and power in a different form, does not derive from the soul's essence and being, that we should say that its being and essence is divided into 248 different parts, which are encloded in 248 locations, according to the design of the various locations of the body's organs,

Were this the case, we would say that within the soul itself there are already revealed and differentiated the various functional powers — of sight, hearing, and so on — and that these 248 powers which exist within the soul are encloded within the body's 248 organs, each in its appropriate location. We cannot, however, accept this approach:

שלפי זה נמצא עצמותה ומהותה מצוייר בציור גשמי, ודמות ותבנית כתבנית הגוף, חס ושלום

because, according to this, it would follow that the soul's essence and being is designed in a physical design, and a likeness and structure similar to the structure of the body, G-d forbid. Just as the organs of the body have various shapes and forms, so, according to this outlook, are the functional powers, while still within the soul, different from each other in form. But, again, we cannot accept this:

אלא כולה עצם אחד רוחני, פשוט ומופשט מכל ציור גשמי, ומבחינת וגדר מקום ומדה וגבול גשמי

Rather is the soul entirely a single spiritual entity — it is (1) a single entity, (2) a spiritual entity. As a "single" entity, its *oneness* is plain and uncompounded. As a "spiritual" entity, its *spirituality* is in a form which is divested of any physical design, and of any type of definition of physical space, measure, or limitation,

מצד מהותה ועצמותה

The soul is free of all such dimensions by virtue of its intrinsic being and essence. In fact, the soul is so "plain" and free of all these, that even when it is actually encloded *within the organs*, they cannot effect any change in the soul. Therefore, the Alter Rebbe continues:

ולא שייך במהותה ועצמותה לומר שהוא במוחין שבראש יותר מברגלים, מאחר שמהותה ועצמותה אינו בגדר ובחינת מקום וגבול גשמי

And it is not valid to say, concerning the soul's being and essence, that it is in the brain of the head more than in the feet, since its being and essence is not subject to the concept

and dimension of physical space and limitation. It is therefore impossible to attribute to the soul this limitation of being more in the head than in the feet.

רק שתרי"ג מיני כוחות וחיות כלולים בה, במהותה ועצמותה, לצאת אל הפועל והגילוי מהעולם

Rather, 613 kinds of functional powers and vital forces are included within the soul, within its being and essence, to become actualized and to emerge from this concealment and inclusion within the soul's essence. Previously, while still included within the soul's essence, they are only *in potentia* and therefore hidden within the soul — not even as functional powers which are revealed as such while still included within the soul. In other words, within the soul is concealed a *potential* for 613 functional powers “to become actualized and to emerge from concealment” (i.e., to become revealed):

להחיות רמ"ח אברין ושס"ה גידין שבגוף על ידי התלבשותם בנפש החיונית, שיש לה גם כן רמ"ח ושס"ה כוחות וחיות הללו

in order to animate the 248 organs and 365 blood-vessels of the body, through the functional powers of the divine soul becoming encloded within the animating (or vital) soul, which also possesses the corresponding 248 and 365 functional powers and vital forces.

Concerning these functional powers, as they are drawn and revealed from the soul into the body, the Alter Rebbe will now explain that the principal location to which they are drawn and where they are revealed is the brain. It is from there that the potential powers spread to all other organs of the body. But the essence of the soul exists equally in the foot just as in the brain.

Till now, the Alter Rebbe has mentioned mainly the 248 organs of the body and the corresponding 248 functional powers of the soul encloded within them. Now, however, he goes into more detail, referring to all 613 functional powers, both those of the 248 organs and those of the 365 blood-vessels, each of which has its own, unique life-force from the soul. This explains why he now refers to 613 rather than 248.

והנה על המשכת כל התרי"ג מיני כוחות וחיות מהעולם הנשמה אל הגוף להחיותו

Now, concerning the flow of all the 613 kinds of functional powers and vital forces which are drawn from the concealment of the soul, where they are previously hidden, and from where they are now drawn to the body to animate it, —

עליה אמרו שעיקר משכנה והשראתה של המשכה זו וגילוי זה, הוא כולו במוחין שבראש

concerning this flow [the Sages] have said that the principal dwelling-place and abode of this flow and revelation of the previously concealed powers and forces is entirely situated in the brains of the head.



ולכן הם מקבלים תחלה הכח והחיות הראוי להם, לפי מזגם ותכונתם, שהן חב"ד, וכח המחשבה, וכל השייך למוחין

Therefore it is they, the brains, which first receive the power and life-force appropriate to them according to their composition and character — namely, intellect which is divided into the three intellectual faculties called *ChaBaD* (*Chochmah, Binah, Daat*), and the faculty of thought, and whatever pertains to the brain. All these receive their life-force from the soul before the other parts of the body.

ולא זו בלבד, אלא כללות כל המשכת החיות לשאר האברים גם כן כלולה ומלוכשת במוחין שבראש

And not only this — that the brains receive their *own* life-force before the other organs — but also the overall flow of all the individual streams of vitality to the other organs, is also first included and enfolded in the brains of the head, before it becomes revealed in the individual organs,

ושם הוא עיקרה ושרשה של המשכה זו בבחינת גילוי האור והחיות של כל הנשמה כולה

and it is there, in the brain, that the core and source of the said flow exist in a form in which the light and vitality of the entire soul are revealed. In other words, when the general flow of vitality reaches the brain, then the “light” and vitality of the entire body begin to be revealed.

ומשם מתפשטת הארה לשאר כל האברים ומקבל כל אחד כח וחיות הראוי לו כפי מזגו ותכונתו: כח הראיה מתגלה בעין, וכח השמיעה באוזן, וכו'

From there, the brain, radiance flows to all the other organs, each of which then receives the functional power and vital force appropriate to it according to its composition and character: the power of sight is revealed in the eye, the power of hearing in the ear, and so on.

In other words: At which point does a power of sight come into existence, ready to be revealed in the eye, and a power of hearing in the ear? Only after the overall life-force of the whole body is drawn into the brain in a general manner, then a “radiance” is drawn from there to each organ, a radiance which is already constituted in accordance with the particular character of the individual organ.

וכל הכוחות מתפשטים מהמוח, כנודע, כי שם הוא עיקר משכן הנשמה כולה בבחינת גילוי

But all functional powers flow from the brain, as is known,<sup>4</sup> for there, in the brain, is located the principal dwelling-place of the entire soul, in a revealed form,

Although the soul actually exists all over the body equally, with no difference between one organ and another, yet the principal place in which the soul is *revealed* is in the brain.

שנגלית שם כללות החיות המתפשט ממנה. רק כוחותיה של כללות החיות מאירים ומתפשטים משם לכל אברי הגוף, כדמיון האור המתפשט ומאיר מהשמש לחדרי החדרים

since there, in the brain, the overall life-force which flows from the soul is revealed. It is only the individual faculties of the overall life-force which shine forth and radiate from there, the brain, to all the organs of the body, just as light radiates and shines from the sun into the innermost of rooms.

ואפילו הלב מקבל מהמוח, ולכן המוח שליט עליו בתולדתו, כנ"ל

(5Even the heart, which is a central organ from which all other organs receive vitality — “The heart diffuses to all organs” — receives its own vital force from the brain, which is why the brain naturally dominates the heart, as explained above.)

In ch. 12 it was explained that man is created with a natural supremacy of the brain over the heart, and the reason is explained here — because the heart, despite its centrality, must in turn receive its own vital force from the soul through the medium of the brain.

ככה ממש, על דרך משל, אין סוף ברוך הוא ממלא כל עלמין להחיותם

In a truly similar manner, figuratively speaking, does the blessed *Ein Sof* fill all worlds so as to animate them.

There is a marked similarity between the soul pervading the body and *Ein Sof* permeating all the worlds: Just as in the analogy, the soul is found within and suffuses the entire body, in a parallel manner *Ein Sof* fills and is found in all worlds.

ובכל עולם יש ברואים לאין קץ ותכלית, רבוא רבבות מיני מדרגות מלאכים ונשמות כו'

And in each world there are creatures without limit or end, myriads upon myriads of various grades of angels and souls, and so on,

וכן ריבוי העולמות אין לו קץ וגבול, גבוה על גבוה כו'

and so, too, is the abundance of the worlds without end or limit, one higher than the other, and so on.

In the realm of the spirit separate and distinct entities are the result of their being on different spiritual grades and levels. Thus, a *multitude* of worlds implies a multitude of varying levels of spirituality. Hence the sheer numerousness of worlds and created beings: each differs from the other in its spiritual gradation.

Earlier on, when explaining his analogy, the Alter Rebbe pointed out that despite the vast differences that exist between one bodily organ and the other, the soul's essence is equally to be found in them all. He now goes on to explain that in the analogue of the *Ein*

*Sof* as well, the essence of the *Ein Sof* is found in a hidden manner equally within all worlds.

והנה מהותו ועצמותו של אין סוף ברוך הוא שוה בעליונים ותחתונים, כמשל הנשמה הנ"ל

Now, the core and essence of the blessed *Ein Sof* is the same in the higher and lower worlds, as in the example of the soul mentioned above, wherein the Alter Rebbe explained that the soul's core and essence is not divisible, and thus it cannot be said of it that it is found in the brain to a greater extent than it is found in the feet,

וכמו שכתוב בתיקונים: דאיהו סתימו דכל סתימין

and as it is written in the *Tikkunim* that "He is hidden from all the hidden."

פירוש: דאפילו בעלמין סתימין דלעילא הוא סתום ונעלם בתוכם, כמו שהוא סתום ונעלם בתחתונים

This means to say, that even in the higher, hidden worlds He is hidden and concealed within them, just as He is hidden and concealed in the lower worlds.

Thus, the intent of the *Tikkunei Zohar* is not that G-d is more concealed than are all other hidden things, but that He is concealed even from the hidden worlds. The reason for this being:

כי לית מחשבה תפיסא ביה כלל, אפילו בעולמות עליונים

for no thought can apprehend Him at all, even in the higher worlds.

Because G-d is equally concealed from all worlds, no distinction can be made between higher and lower; He defies the comprehension of the higher worlds to the same degree that He cannot be apprehended in the lower worlds.

ונמצא: כמו שמצוי שם, כך נמצא בתחתונים ממש

And he is found, i.e., with regard to where G-d is to be found: just as He is found there — in the higher worlds — so is He to be found in the very lowest worlds.

וההבדל שבין עולמות עליונים ותחתונים הוא מצד המשכת החיות אשר אין סוף ברוך הוא ממשיך ומאיר בבחינת גילוי מהעלם

The difference between the higher and lower worlds is with regard to the flow of vitality which the blessed *Ein Sof* causes to flow and illumine in a manner of "revelation out of concealment,"

The Alter Rebbe will soon conclude that this revelation is intended for the purpose of vitalizing the worlds and their inhabitants, for the vitality of all worlds and creatures

derives from the revelation of G-dliness within them. Thus, the difference between the higher and lower worlds lies in the varying degrees of Divine revelation within them.

With regard to “revelation out of concealment,” the Alter Rebbe now states parenthetically that this manner of revelation is one of the reasons why the G-dly vitality found within the worlds is called “light”.

שזה אחד מהטעמים שההשפעה והמשכת החיות מכונה בשם אור, על דרך משל

(which is one of the reasons why the influence and flow of this vitality is figuratively called “light”),

In Kabbalistic literature the flow and vitality of G-dliness is termed “light” rather than *shefa* (“flux”), as it is termed in Jewish speculative philosophy (*chakirah*). “Light” signifies “revelation out of concealment”: previously the light had been concealed within the luminary, the source of the light, and subsequently it is drawn forth from this source and is revealed as light. Thus, in the case of “revelation out of concealment,” only a minute illumination of the source is drawn down into a revealed state. Not so *shefa*, where it is the actual “flux” and “stream” of the source that flows down and is revealed. Hence the phrase מים ושפעת (“a flow of water”; *Iyov* 22:11): the selfsame water that was previously in one place flows to another place.

The above-mentioned “revelation out of concealment” of light serves the purpose of:

להחיות העולמות והברואים שבהם

thereby animating the worlds and the creatures therein.

Herein lies the difference between the higher and lower worlds:

שהעולמות העליונים מקבלים בבחינת גילוי קצת יותר מהתחתונים

For the higher worlds receive this vitality and light in a somewhat more revealed form than do the lower;

I.e., even in the higher worlds this light and vitality is not manifestly revealed.

וכל הברואים שבהם, מקבלים כל אחד כפי כחו ותכונתו

and all creatures therein — in the higher worlds — receive the *revealed* aspect of vitality, albeit each according to its capacity and nature,

Just as in the analogy each bodily organ receives vitality from the brain according to its “character and nature,” so too does the Alter Rebbe state in the analogue that each creature receives its vitality according to its “capacity and nature.” (- Note of the Rebbe.) This means that each being receives vitality according to its capacity to have the life-

force and vitality revealed within it, and according to the manner in which this vitality is to be revealed — whether as a revelation of intellect and comprehension, or in an emotive manner.

(“But this is not to say that the ‘nature’ *conceals* the revelation; rather ‘it imbues and *illuminates* it.’” – Note of the Rebbe.)

שהיא תכונת ובחינת המשכה הפרטית אשר אין סוף ברוך הוא ממשיך ומאיר לו

which is the nature and form of the particular flow with which the blessed *Ein Sof* imbues and illuminates it.

והתחתונים, אפילו הרוחניים, אינם מקבלים בבחינת גילוי כל כך

But the lower worlds and creatures, even the spiritual ones, do not receive the Divine life-force in quite such a revealed form as it is received in the higher worlds,

רק בלבושים רבים, אשר אין סוף ברוך הוא מלביש בהם החיות והאור אשר ממשיך ומאיר להם להחיותם

but only by means of many garments, wherein the blessed *Ein Sof* invests the vitality and light which He causes to flow and shine on them in order to animate them.

The Divine life-force is garbed in many garments so as not to be revealed. This concealment involves not only a multitudinous profusion of garments — a quantitative manner of concealment — but a qualitative one as well: There is vast difference between the insubstantial garments that conceal the vitality in the higher worlds and the much denser garments necessary to conceal the G-dly vitality to the degree that creation of the physical becomes possible.

Were there merely to be a vast quantity of ethereal garments, the Divine life-force would only be capable of creating spiritual beings and not physical ones; in order for this physical world with its corporeal creatures to be created, much *denser* garments were necessary. It is this that the Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain:

וכל כך עצמו וגברו הלבושים אשר אין סוף ברוך הוא מלביש ומסתיר בהם האור והחיות

These garments, wherein the blessed *Ein Sof* invests and conceals the light and vitality, are so strong and powerful

I.e., the garments are not only numerous in quantity, but they are also of such a type that their ability to conceal is greater than that of ordinary garments,

עד אשר ברא בו עולם הזה החומרי והגשמי ממש

that thereby, with this life-force and light, He created this world that is verily corporeal and physical,<sup>6</sup>

ומהוהו ומחייהו בחיות ואור אשר ממשיך ומאיר לו

and [G-d] creates and animates it by the vitality and light which He draws down and shines forth unto it.

אור המלוּבש ומכוסה ומוסתר בתוך הלבושים הרבים והעצומים המעלימים ומסתירים האור והחיות

This illumination is a light that is clothed, hidden and concealed within the numerous and powerful garments, which hide and conceal the light and vitality,

עד שאין נראה ונגלה שום אור וחיות, רק דברים חומריים וגשמיים ונראים מתים

so that no light or vitality whatever is visibly revealed, but only corporeal and physical things that appear lifeless.

Gazing at corporeal things, such as at the physical orb of Earth, can cause a person to imagine them as utterly lifeless — totally devoid of any spiritual vitality.

אך בתוכם יש אור וחיות המהוה אותם מאין ליש תמיד, שלא יחזרו להיות אין ואפס כשהיו

Yet they contain light and vitality which constantly creates them *ex nihilo*, so that they shall not revert to nothing and naught as they had been prior to their creation.

Creation *ex nihilo* must be constant: the fact that the world and its creatures were already once created during the Six Days of Creation does not suffice. Rather, there must be a constant renewal of creation from its source. Thus, the G-dly light and vitality that is responsible for creation is constantly found within created beings, albeit in a concealed fashion.

ואור זה הוא מאין סוף ברוך הוא, רק שנתלבש בלבושים רבים

This light comes from the blessed *Ein Sof*, except that it is clothed in many garments,

וכמו שכתוב בעץ חיים, שאור וחיות כדור הארץ החומרי הנראה לעיני בשר הוא ממלכות דמלכות דעשיה

as is written in *Etz Chayim*, that the light and vitality of the physical orb of Earth, which is seen by mortal eyes, is derived from *Malchut of Malchut of Asiyah*,

*Malchut of Asiyah* is the lowest *Sefirah* of the World of *Asiyah*, the lowest of the Four Worlds. *Malchut* itself is composed of all Ten *Sefirot*, the lowest of which is *Malchut*. Thus, *Malchut of Malchut of Asiyah* represents the lowest degree of the lowest level of *Asiyah*.

ובתוכה מלכות דיצירה וכו'

and in it is contained *Malchut* of the next highest World, the World of *Yetzirah*, and so on; i.e., within *Malchut* of *Yetzirah*, in turn, there is contained *Malchut* of *Beriah*, and so on,

עד שבתוך כולן י' ספירות דאצילות

so that in all of them — within the level of *Malchut* of all Worlds, including the level of *Malchut* of *Asiyah* — are contained the Ten *Sefirot* of the loftiest World, the World of *Atzilut*,<sup>7</sup>

המיוחדות במאצילן אין סוף ברוך הוא

which are united with their Emanator, the blessed *Ein Sof*.

Thus, even the physical orb of Earth contains G-dly light and vitality. This results from the light passing through the *Sefirot* of the various worlds — the *Sefirot* being the G-dliness of each world — as well as through numerous and powerfully dense garments that serve to conceal this vitality.

The difference between the higher and lower worlds will be understood accordingly: The divine light and life-force is revealed to a greater extent in the higher worlds than in the lower, and within this physical world the light and life-force is completely concealed. However, this is the case merely in relation to the illumination of G-dliness. With regard to the core and essence of the *Ein Sof*, there truly exists no difference between the higher and lower worlds; He is equally concealed from all and He is equally found in them all.

FOOTNOTES <sup>1</sup>. *Iyov* 19:26. <sup>2</sup>. “Regarding the text that follows, note *Zohar III*, 257b.” (- Note of the Rebbe.) <sup>3</sup>.

The Rebbe writes that the Alter Rebbe specifically chose the four faculties of seeing, hearing, speaking and walking, because these powers correspond to the activities alluded to in the opening verse: “...in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it” — namely, thought, speech and action.

Vision and hearing arouse thought. More specifically: vision arouses the aspect of *Chochmah* and hearing arouses *Binah*. “The mouth for speaking” refers to speech; “the feet for walking” — action. Within action itself, walking is the lowest form of action. Thus the example given here is action as it descends even to its lowest level (and hence the example of the hand’s action is not given).

<sup>4</sup>. The Rebbe notes that the Alter Rebbe goes on to use seemingly repetitive expressions, since each one refers to a different level of incorporation within the brain. This is explained in the *Maamarim*, *Az Yashir* 5670; *UvaChodesh HaShevi’i* 5663; and in *Hemshech Rosh HaShanah* 5708, ch. 7. <sup>5</sup>. Parentheses are in the original text. <sup>6</sup>.

The Rebbe comments that the Alter Rebbe writes “this world that is verily corporeal and physical,” because this world exists on a spiritual plane as well, and the Alter Rebbe is

referring to the inanimate aspect of this world in which no vitality is revealed. However, those aspects of this world, such as the vegetative and animal, in which some measure of vitality is revealed, derive their life-force in a different and more revealed manner. This is so notwithstanding the fact that these levels, too, receive their vitality from *Malchut* of *Malchut* of *Asiyah*, as stated later on in *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle 20 (p. 264 in the standard edition of *Tanya*, Vilna, 1899).

Accordingly we can also understand (a) why the Alter Rebbe goes on to state that they receive their existence *ex nihilo*, after having previously stated that reference is being made here to this physical and corporeal world — a world whose creation must perforce be *ex nihilo*; (b) the expression “which is seen by mortal eyes”; and (c) a number of other intentionally specific phrases.

The reason for all the above is that the Alter Rebbe is speaking particularly of the inanimate aspect of this world. Concerning this he soon goes on to quote the *Etz Chayim*, which says that this vitality emanates from *Malchut* of *Malchut* of *Asiyah*. However, with regard to the World of *Asiyah* as a whole, which also includes the spiritual World of *Asiyah*, the Alter Rebbe will say in ch. 52 and 53 that they derive their life-force from *Malchut* of *Asiyah* and not from *Malchut* of *Malchut* of *Asiyah*.

[7.](#) “See further, p. ק"ג: ח. [p. 279 in the standard edition; *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle 25]: ‘The radiation that is in *Atzilut* pierces...and in this material world.’” (- Note of the Rebbe.)



## Chapter 52

In the previous chapter the Alter Rebbe began to expound upon the theme of the indwelling of the *Shechinah*, which resided in the Holy of Holies and likewise in other places. He asked: “Is not the whole world filled with His glory?” Since there is no place void of Him, what do we mean when we say that G-d chose a specific place for the *Shechinah* to rest?

He explained this according to the text: “From my flesh I see G-d,” using the analogy of the soul, which pervades all the 248 organs of the body, yet its principal habitation is in the brain. This cannot be said to apply to the soul’s essence, for that is found equally in all 248 organs, from the highest, the brain, to the lowest in the feet. Rather this refers to the general flow of the soul’s vitality *into* the body and its revelation there, before it is diffused and drawn down into all the bodily organs, each according to its particular capacity.



Concerning this general aspect we say that its principal province and indwelling is in the brain; from there, a mere glimmer of this vitality is drawn down and revealed in the other bodily organs.

The same is true, the Alter Rebbe explains, in the analogue of G-dliness and the world: The core and essence of the *Ein Sof* is the same in the higher and lower Worlds — He is concealed from them all equally, for even in the higher Worlds no thought can apprehend Him at all. At the same time He is equally to be found both in the higher and lower Worlds.

The difference between the higher and lower Worlds — as in the analogy of the bodily organs — subsists only with regard to the stream of vitality which flows and is revealed from the *Ein Sof* in order to create and vitalize the Worlds and their creatures. Concerning this level of revelation we say that in the higher Worlds G-dliness is revealed to a greater degree, and in the lower Worlds, to a lesser degree.

In the present chapter the Alter Rebbe goes on to further explain how the analogue of G-dliness and its place in the world relates to the analogy, in which the individual's vitality in its undiffused state resides in the brain.

וכמו שבגשמת האדם עיקר גילוי כללות החיות הוא במוחין, וכל האברים מקבלים אור וכח לבד המאיר להם  
ממקור גילוי החיות שבמוחין

And just as in the human soul the principal manifestation of the undiffused vitality is in the brain, while all the organs receive merely a light and potency which radiates to them from the source of the manifestation of the said vitality in the brain,

ככה ממש, על דרך משל, עיקר גילוי כללות המשכת החיות, להחיות העולמות והברואים שבהם, הוא מלובש  
ונכלל ברצונו וחכמתו ובינתו ודעתו יתברך, הנקראים בשם מוחין

so indeed, figuratively speaking, is the essential manifestation of the general stream of vitality, animating the Worlds and the creatures therein, clothed and contained in His blessed Will, wisdom, understanding and knowledge, which are called the “intelligence”,

The *Sefirot* of *Keter* (Will), *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat* as they exist Above are collectively called “intelligence”. Within them is en clothed the stream of undiffused vitality, which is the first revelation of the *Ein Sof* in the Worlds.

והן הן המלובשים בתורה ומצותיה

and these (Will, *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat*) are clothed in the Torah and its *mitzvot*.

This is their abode, for Torah law and the *mitzvot* are themselves the Will of G-d, desiring as He does that the law in a particular case should be specifically one way and not the other, and that a particular *mitzvah* be performed in a certain manner and not otherwise. Understanding the laws and knowing the reasons for the *mitzvot*, — this belongs to the

divine levels of *Chochmah* and *Binah*. Thus, within Torah and the *mitzvot* is en clothed the “intelligence” of Above, and in it is to be found the undiffused stream of vitality that descends into the Worlds.

וגילוי כללות המשכה זו

The manifestation of this general flow of life, which is similar to the undiffused stream of vitality found in the brain, takes place — as the Alter Rebbe will soon say — when the flow from “intelligence” descends into the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*. This manifestation:

הוא מקור החיות אשר העולמות מקבלים, כל אחד בפרטות רק הארה מתפשטת ומאירה ממקור זה

is the source of the vitality which the Worlds receive, each one in particular receiving but a diffused glow that shines forth from this source,

This refers not to the *general* stream of vitality found in “intelligence”, but to its *revelation*. This revelation is the source of the vitality received by all Worlds and their creatures, each according to its particular level. The diffused glow that shines forth is:

כדמיון אור המתפשט מהשמש, על דרך משל, וכחות אברי הגוף מהמוח הנ"ל

in a similar manner to the light that radiates from the sun, by way of example, where the rays are but a diffused glimmer of the sun’s essence, or as the faculties of the organs of the body derive from the brain, as discussed above, in the previous chapter.

ומקור זה הוא הנקרא עלמא דאתגליא

It is this source (this source being a *revelation* from the general stream of vitality found within “intelligence”) which is called in the *Kabbalah* the “world of manifestation,” because — as the Alter Rebbe will soon say — it is here that G-dliness first becomes manifest in the Worlds.

ומטרוניתא

and it is also called *matrunita* (Aramaic for “queen”), for the “queen” receives her vitality from *Kudsha Brich Hu* (Aramaic for “the Holy One, blessed be He”), the “king”,

ואימא תתאה

and it is also known as the “nether mother,” the lower level of “mother” — for *Binah*, too, is known as “mother” (as the verse says,<sup>1</sup> “Allude to *Binah* as mother”). *Binah*, however, is the higher level of “mother”, while *Malchut* is the “nether mother,”

ושכינה, מלשון: ושכנתי בתוכם

and is called the *Shechinah*, from the Scriptural phrase,<sup>2</sup> “...and I will dwell among them,” for its Hebrew root means: to dwell and be revealed.<sup>3</sup>

As the Rebbe explains, the Alter Rebbe now goes on to explain the meaning and character of each of the above-listed names, as well as their particular effect.

על שם שמקור זה הוא ראשית התגלות אור אין סוף

The above-mentioned source is called the “world of manifestation”: For this source is the beginning of the revelation of the light of *Ein Sof*, and since the source itself constitutes a revelation, it is itself known as the “world of manifestation” — because of its own nature, and not because it vitalizes the revealed Worlds.

אשר ממשיך ומאיר לעולמות בבחינת גילוי

It is called “queen” because it is this level which extends to and illumines the Worlds in a revealed manner — similar to a queen, for through her the wishes of the king are revealed.

Thus, the source of life, i.e., the first revelation of the light of *Ein Sof*, is first manifest in the “queen”.

וממקור זה נמשך לכל אחד האור וחיות פרטי הראוי לו

From this source there extends to each individual thing, World or creature, the particular light and vitality suitable for it, for which reason it is called the “nether mother,” for it is the “mother” and source of the particular form of vitality of each and every creature.

ושוכן ומתלבש בתוכם להחיותם

and it (the light) dwells and is clothed in them (in the Worlds and their respective creatures), thereby animating them.

Since it dwells, animates and is en clothed in every World and creature it is called *Shechinah*, which as previously explained means “indwelling”.

Until now the Alter Rebbe has clarified how the light is the source of the Worlds and creatures in general. He now goes on to explain how it is also the source of Jewish souls.

ולכן נקרא אם הבנים, על דרך משל, וכנסת ישראל, שממקור זה נאצלו נשמות דאצילות, ונבראו נשמות דבריאה וכו'

Therefore it is figuratively called “mother of the children” i.e., of Jewish souls, and is also called “community of Israel,” for from this source the souls of *Atzilut* have emanated, these being “emanations” and not “creations”, and the souls of *Beriah* have been created, and so forth,

וכולן אינן רק מהתפשטות החיות והאור מהמקור הזה, הנקרא שכינה

all of them — all the Worlds, creatures and souls — being derived only from the *extension* of the vitality and light which extends and streams forth from this source which is called *Shechinah*,

כהתפשטות האור מהשמש

in a manner resembling the radiation of light from the sun, this radiation being but a ray from its source.

אבל השכינה עצמה, שהיא ראשית הגילוי ועיקרו, מה שאין סוף ברוך הוא מאיר לעולמות בבחינת גילוי, והיא מקור כל המשכות החיות שבכל העולמות

But as for the *Shechinah* itself, namely, the origin and core of the manifestation whereby the blessed *Ein Sof* illumines the Worlds in a revealed form and which is the source of all streams of vitality in the Worlds,

שכל החיות שבהם אינו רק אור המתפשט ממנה כאור המתפשט מהשמש

(4their entire vitality being no more than the light which is diffused from it like the light radiated from the sun), —

אי אפשר לעולמות לסבול ולקבל אור שכינה, שתשכון ותתלבש בתוכם ממש, בלא לבוש המעלים ומסתיר אורה מהם

concerning the *Shechinah* itself, the source of all vitality for the worlds: the worlds cannot endure or receive the light of this *Shechinah*, that it might actually dwell and enclothe itself in them, without a “garment” to screen and conceal its light from them,

שלא יתבטלו במציאות לגמרי במקורם, כביטול אור השמש במקורו בגוף השמש, שאין נראה שם אור זה, רק עצם גוף השמש בלבד

so that they may not become entirely nullified and lose their identity within their source, just as the light of the sun is nullified in its source, namely, in the sun itself — where this light cannot be seen, but only the integral mass of the sun itself.

So, too, since the *Shechinah* is the source of vitality of the whole of creation, all of which receives but a ray of the *Shechinah*, then if the *Shechinah* itself — the actual source — would be manifest, all created beings would be nullified in that source. Their situation would be exactly similar to the sun’s rays as they are found within the orb of the sun, where they are completely nullified.

In order for the *Shechinah* to dwell within the Worlds and their creatures, there must therefore be a “garment” which serves to conceal its light. Only then can creation receive the *Shechinah* and not be nullified out of existence.

But what manner of “garment” can possibly conceal the *Shechinah* and yet itself not be affected by it, so that it, too, will not become nullified? Since the *Shechinah* is the source of *all* creation, it is of course the source of the concealing “garment” too.

In other words: If the *Shechinah* is manifest in the “garment”, i.e., if the garment is enveloped by its *source*, then it follows that it should be nullified out of existence, just as the sun’s rays cease to exist within the body of the sun. In effect, this would make the “garment” cease serving as a “garment” to conceal the *Shechinah*.

The Alter Rebbe anticipates this question by stating that the “garment” is G-d’s Will and wisdom, which are en clothed in Torah and the *mitzvot*. Since this “garment” belongs to a plane even higher than (the source of the world’s vitality known as) the *Shechinah*, it is not nullified by it.

However, asks the Rebbe, according to this explanation the question becomes even stronger: If creation cannot receive the light of the *Shechinah*, then surely it cannot receive the light of the “garment” which is even higher than the *Shechinah*.

This, the Rebbe says, is answered by the Alter Rebbe when he says, “only that it has descended by means of obscuring gradations.” This means to say: Since G-d’s Will and wisdom as found in Torah and the *mitzvot* “descended” in the gradations of the Worlds, being able to clothe themselves even in material things, they therefore can serve as a “garment” to conceal the light of the *Shechinah*.

We now understand why the “garment” itself is not nullified by the light of the *Shechinah*, as well as how created beings can receive this “garment” within themselves, for it is none other than G-d’s Will and wisdom which He en clothed in Torah and the *mitzvot* — as shall presently be explained.

ומהו הלבוש שיוכל להסתירה ולהלבישה ולא יתבטל במציאות באורה, הוא רצונו יתברך וחכמתו וכו'  
המלוכשים בתורה ומצותיה, הנגלית לנו ולבנינו

But what is this “garment” which is able to conceal and clothe it (the *Shechinah*) yet will not itself be completely nullified within its light? — This is His blessed Will and wisdom, and so forth (“and so forth” referring to the levels of *Binah* and *Daat* which are part of “intelligence” Above, as mentioned earlier), which are clothed in the Torah and its *mitzvot* that are revealed to us and our children,

Why are G-d’s Will and wisdom and so forth able to act as a concealing “garment” for the light of the *Shechinah* without themselves being nullified by it?

דאורייתא מחכמה נפקת, היא חכמה עילאה, דלעילא לעילא מעלמא דאתגליא

for “the Torah issues from wisdom,” namely *Chochmah Ila’ah* (“Supernal Wisdom,” which is the level of *Chochmah* of *Atzilut*), that is immeasurably higher than the world of manifestation (which is the *Shechinah*),

As mentioned earlier, *Shechinah* refers to the initial stage of revelation, for which reason it is called the “world of manifestation.” Since *Chochmah Ila’ah* is entirely beyond the pale of revelation it is therefore immeasurably higher than the *Shechinah*.

דאיהו חכים ולא בחכמה ידיעה וכו'

for “He is wise,” with the wisdom of *Chochmah* of *Atzilut*, “but not with a knowable wisdom,” and so forth.

וכמו שנתבאר לעיל, שאור אין סוף ברוך הוא מלובש ומיוחד בחכמה עילאה, והוא יתברך וחכמתו אחד

And as has previously been explained, the [infinite] light of the blessed *Ein Sof* is clothed in and united with the Supernal Wisdom — and He and His wisdom are One.

Thus, *Chochmah* as well as the other levels of Divine “intelligence” (such as *Binah* and *Daat*) are far superior to the level of the light of the *Shechinah*. They are therefore able to serve as a “garment” concealing the *Shechinah*, without being nullified by its light. But how can Divine “intelligence” serve as a “garment”, and how can created beings accept this garment when it is in fact loftier than the *Shechinah* itself? The Alter Rebbe now answers this question.

רק שירדה בסתר המדרגות ממדריגה למדריגה בהשתלשלות העולמות, עד שנתלבשה בדברים גשמיים, שהן תרי"ג מצות התורה

— Only this is because it (Supernal Wisdom and the Torah<sup>5</sup>) has descended by means of obscuring gradations, from a higher grade to a lower grade, with the descent of the Worlds, until it (the Torah) has clothed itself in material things, namely, the 613 commandments of the Torah.

ובירידתה בהשתלשלות מעולם לעולם, גם השכינה ירדה ונתלבשה בה בכל עולם ועולם

As [this wisdom] came down by progressive descents from World to World, the *Shechinah*, too, came down and clothed itself in it in each World.

Thus, within the Supernal Wisdom which descends into each World is to be found the *Shechinah* of that World.

וזהו היכל קדשי קדשים שבכל עולם ועולם

This is the shrine of the “Holy of Holies,” which is contained in each World.

I.e., the *Shechinah* resides with the “Holy of Holies” of each World, this being the Divine “intelligence” en clothed in the Torah of each particular World.

וכמו שכתוב בזהר ועץ חיים, שהשכינה, שהיא מלכות דאצילות שהיא בחינת גילוי אור אין סוף ברוך הוא  
חיות שמאיר לעולמות, ולכן היא נקראת דבר ה' ורוח פיו כביכול

So also has it been stated in the *Zohar* and *Etz Chayim*, that the *Shechinah*, which is *Malchut* of *Atzilut* ([6](#) being the manifestation of the light and vitality of the blessed *Ein Sof*, which illumine the worlds, wherefore i.e., since it is a revelation it is called “G-d’s speech” and the “breath of His mouth,” as it were, for the purpose of speech is to reveal that which was concealed in thought,

על דרך משל, כמו שבאדם הדבור מגלה מחשבתו הסתומה ונעלמה להשומעים

as in the case of a person, by way of example, speech reveals to the hearers the speaker’s concealed and hidden thought),

The same applies Above: *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, the level at which the light of *Ein Sof* and the previously concealed vitality becomes manifest, is called “G-d’s speech,” for it reveals G-dliness to the Worlds. This level of *Shechinah*, which is *Malchut* of *Atzilut*:

היא מתלבשת בהיכל קדשי קדשים דבריאה, שהוא חב"ד דבריאה, ובהתלבשותן במלכות דבריאה נבראו הנשמות והמלאכים שבבריאה

clothes itself in the shrine of the Holy of Holies of *Beriah*, namely, the *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat* of *Beriah*. Through the fact that [the latter *Sefirot*] clothe themselves in the *Malchut* of *Beriah*, the souls and angels which exist in the World of *Beriah* have been created.

At this point the Rebbe notes: “[The *ChaBaD* of *Beriah* clothe themselves in the *Malchut* of *Beriah*] together with the *Malchut* of *Atzilut* which is within them, for, as stated earlier [in this chapter], ‘from this source... have been created...’\*”

The souls and angels of the World of *Beriah* are created beings. Unlike the *Sefirot* of any particular World, they are not the G-dliness of their World, but are created from the level of *Malchut* therein. Thus, the souls and angels of the World of *Beriah* are created from *Malchut* of that World.[7](#)

וגם משם נמשך התלמוד שלפנינו

And from there also — from *Malchut* of *Beriah*, in which is en clothed the *Shechinah*, i.e., *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, which previously had clothed itself in the *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat* of the World of *Beriah*, after which the latter are clothed in *Malchut* of the World of *Beriah* — derives the *Talmud* that we possess.[8](#)

וכמו שנתבאר לעיל בשם התיקונים, שבעולם הבריאה מאירות ומשפיעות שם חכמתו ובינתו ודעתו של אין סוף ברוך הוא בבחינת צמצום עצום, בכדי שיוכלו הנשמות והמלאכים, שהם בעלי גבול ותכלית, לקבל השפעה מבחינת חב"ד אלו

And as has previously been explained in the name of the *Tikkunim*, that in the World of *Beriah* there shine and flow forth the *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat* of the *Ein Sof*, in a

powerfully contracted manner, in order that the souls and the angels, which are finite beings, shall be able to receive influence from these categories of *ChaBaD*.

Souls and angels in the World of *Beriah* are unable to receive influence from *ChaBaD* as it exists in its essential state, in *Atzilut*. Only after *ChaBaD* descends in a powerfully contracted manner into *Beriah* are they able to receive its influence.

ולכן נמשך משם התלמוד, שהוא גם כן בחינת חב"ד, שהתלמוד הוא טעמי ההלכות על בוריין, והטעמים הם בחינת חב"ד

Therefore the *Talmud* (not the *Mishnah*, but the *Gemara*) also originates from there — from the World of *Beriah*, for it (the *Talmud*) is also of the category of *ChaBaD*, for the *Talmud* is i.e., it consists of the clearly defined reasons of the *Halachot*, and the reasons being rational are from the category of *ChaBaD* (“intelligence”).

וההלכות עצמן הן ממדותיו של אין סוף ברוך הוא, שהן חסד דין רחמים כו' שמהן נמשך ההיתר והאיסור, והכשר והפסול, והחיוב והפטור

And the laws themselves found in the *Mishnah* derive from the *middot* (the emotive attributes) of the *Ein Sof*, namely, kindness, severity, mercy, and so on, from which originate permission and prohibition, permission deriving from kindness and prohibition from severity, ritual validity and invalidity, liability and blamelessness, ritual validity and blamelessness originating from the attribute of kindness, and ritual invalidity and liability originating from the attribute of severity,

כמו שכתוב בתיקונים

as is explained in the *Tikkunim*.

ובהתלבשות מלכות דאצילות במלכות דבריאה, מתלבשת בהיכל קדשי קדשים דיצירה, שהוא חב"ד דיצירה

By virtue of the clothing of *Malchut* of *Atzilut* in *Malchut* of *Beriah*<sup>9</sup> it then clothes itself in the shrine of the Holy of Holies of *Yetzirah*, this being the *ChaBaD* of *Yetzirah* — the *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat* of *Yetzirah*. It is in this manner that the *Shechinah* of *Malchut* of *Atzilut* ultimately comes to reside in the World of *Yetzirah*.

ובהתלבשותן במלכות דיצירה, נוצרו הרוחות

When later on the latter (*Malchut* of *Atzilut*, together with the *Sefirot* in which it is en clothed — in *Malchut* of *Beriah* and in *ChaBaD* of *Yetzirah*) are clothed in *Malchut* of *Yetzirah*, the souls which are called *Ruchot* are created,

For the three levels of souls, *Nefesh*, *Ruach* (singular of *Ruchot*) and *Neshamah*, correspond to the three lower Worlds: *Nefesh* originates in *Asiyah*, *Ruach* in *Yetzirah* and *Neshamah* in *Beriah*. With regard to *Neshamot*, the Alter Rebbe has said previously that



they are created from *Malchut of Beriah*. In now discussing the level of *Malchut of Yetzirah*, he writes that souls of the level of *Ruach* are created,

והמלאכים שביצירה

and the angels which are of the World of *Yetzirah*.

וגם משם היא המשנה שלפנינו, שהיא הלכות פסוקות הנמשכות גם כן מחב"ד של אין סוף ברוך הוא

From there too, from *Malchut of Yetzirah*, comes the *Mishnah* that we possess, which comprises the legal decisions that are likewise derived from *ChaBaD* of the blessed *Ein Sof*.<sup>10</sup>

Not only the *Gemara* within the *Talmud*, but the *Mishnah* too, derives from the “intelligence” of the *Ein Sof*. Even though it was stated earlier that the *Mishnah* derives from *middot*, yet since within the *Mishnah* there is concealed the *rationale* of the laws, they, too, emanate from the *ChaBaD* of *Ein Sof*.

רק שבחינת חב"ד, שהם טעמי ההלכות, הם מלובשים וגנוזים בגופי ההלכות, ולא בבחינת גילוי

Only that the categories of *ChaBaD*, that is, the reasons and interpretations of the *halachot*, are clothed and *hidden* within the laws themselves and are not in a revealed form,

In the *Gemara* the reasons for the laws are revealed, whereas in the *Mishnah* all that is revealed is the actual law itself, not the reasons underlying it.

וגופי ההלכות, שהן בבחינת גילוי, הן הן הארת מדותיו של אין סוף ברוך הוא בבחינת גילוי

while the elements of the *halachot*, which are in a revealed form in the *Mishnah*, are the very reflection of the *middot* of the blessed *Ein Sof* in their revealed form.

As mentioned earlier, the actual *halachic* decision that something is permissible derives from the divine attribute of kindness, and that something is prohibited derives from the attribute of severity.

כמו שכתוב לעיל בשם התיקונים, דשית ספירן מקננין ביצירה, שהן דרך כלל שני קוין, ימין ושמאל

Thus, it has been explained above in the name of the *Tikkunim*, that six *Sefirot* nest in *Yetzirah*. They the six *Sefirot* or *middot* comprise, in general, two extensions — right and left, right representing kindness, and left, severity,

להקל מסטרא דחסד, דהיינו: להתיר, שיוכל לעלות אל ה'

acting with forbearance deriving from the aspect of kindness, which results in adjudicating leniently, that is to say, to permit [a thing] to ascend to G-d,

For only that which is permitted to a Jew can ascend to G-d. Thus, when a ruling is lenient and the object in question is permitted for use, it enables the individual, through utilizing it in the performance of a *mitzvah*, to cause it to ascend to G-d. This, of course, is an act of kindness.

או להחמיר כו'

or acting in a stringent manner, and so on, declaring the object to be forbidden for use, and thereby precluding its elevation to holiness. This is an act of severity. These two traits, kindness and severity, represent the two general directions of the emotive attributes as they exist Above, and from which the *halachot* of the *Mishnah* derive.

והכל על פי חכמה עילאה דאצילות, ובינה ודעת כלולות בה

And all this, both the *Mishnah* and *Talmud*, is according to the Supernal *Chochmah* of *Atzilut*, and *Binah* and *Daat* are comprised in it (i.e., in *Chochmah*),

ומיוחדות באין סוף ברוך הוא, כי בתוך כולן מלובשות חב"ד דאצילות, שאור אין סוף ברוך הוא מיוחד בהן בתכלית היחוד

and they (the *Mishnah* and *Talmud*, and the illumination of *ChaBaD* and *middot* found in them) are united with the blessed *Ein Sof*, for in all of them are clothed *ChaBaD* of *Atzilut*, with which the light of the blessed *Ein Sof* is united in a perfect union.

Thus, when the *Shechinah* enclothes itself in the shrine of the Holy of Holies of the World of *Yetzirah*, and thereafter in *Malchut* of *Yetzirah*, that part of Torah which is called the *Mishnah* is drawn down, this being the receptacle for the light of the *Shechinah* as it is revealed in the World of *Yetzirah*.

וכן בדרך זה ירדה השכינה, ונתלבשה בהיכל קדשי קדשים דעשיה

In like manner, i.e., in the same manner that the *Shechinah* first clothed itself in the level of *Malchut* of *Yetzirah*, the *Shechinah* then descended and clothed itself in the shrine of the Holy of Holies of *Asiyah*.

וכל עולם מג' עולמות אלו מתחלק לרבבות מדריגות, הנקראות גם כן עולמות פרטים

And each of these three Worlds, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*, is subdivided into myriads of gradations, which are also called particular worlds,

ומלכות דאצילות מלובשת במלכות של כל עולם פרטי, יורדת, ומתלבשת בהיכל קדשי קדשים, שהוא חב"ד, שבעולם שלמטה ממנו במדרגה

and *Malchut* of *Atzilut* (the level of *Shechinah*) is clothed in (a) the level of *Malchut*\* of each particular World; (b) moreover, through the above-mentioned enclothing, it

descends, and (c) enclothes itself in the shrine of the Holy of Holies, namely, the *ChaBaD*, which is in the World below it in rank.

We thus have *Malchut* of *Atzilut* as it is enclothed in *Malchut* of a World of higher rank, descending into the *ChaBad* of a World of lesser rank. [11](#)

הגהה

ובזה יובן לשון הכתוב: מלכותך מלכות כל עולמים

\*NOTE

This will enable us to understand the wording of the verse: “Your kingdom is the kingdom of all Worlds.”

The text seems to imply that there is one level of kingship called “Your kingdom,” and another level of kingship known as “the kingdom of all Worlds.” The Alter Rebbe therefore explains that the verse is telling us that “*Your* kingdom” is the innermost aspect of “the kingdom of all the Worlds.” Within them all is enclothed “Your kingdom” — *Malchut* of *Atzilut*.

END OF NOTE

והנה מהשכינה המלובשת בהיכל קדשי קדשים של כל עולם ועולם כללי או פרטי, נמשך ומתפשט ממנה אור וחיות לכל העולם והברואים שבו: נשמות ומלאכים וכו'

It is from the *Shechinah* which is clothed in the shrine of the Holy of Holies of each and every general or particular World that light and vitality are extended and diffused to that whole World and the creatures contained therein — the souls, angels, and so forth,

The last phrase refers to the other beings of each World, such as the *heichalot*; they all receive light and vitality from the *Shechinah* as it is enclothed in the shrine of the Holy of Holies of that particular World.

כי כולם נבראו בעשרה מאמרות שבמעשה בראשית, שהם דבר ה' הנקרא בשם שכינה

for they were all created by the ten Divine utterances of creation, [12](#) these being G-d's speech, which is termed the *Shechinah*.

Divine speech revealed that which was previously concealed. This is also the purpose of the *Shechinah* — revealing to the world a light which is essentially higher than the world. Therefore, *Malchut* of *Atzilut* (which is termed the *Shechinah*, and which is G-d's speech as revealed in the ten Divine utterances of creation) is the level from which life and vitality are drawn down and revealed to all Worlds and created beings.

And all this is accomplished through Torah, for Torah is the shrine of the Holy of Holies (in which the *Shechinah* first resides) in every World. Thus, as mentioned earlier, it serves as a “garment” to the *Shechinah*.

FOOTNOTES [1.](#) See *Mishlei* 2:3; *Berachot* 57a (and *Chiddushei Aggadot* of Maharsha, *ad loc.*). [2.](#) *Shmot* 25:8. [3.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “In all the above no mention is made that this is the level of *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, and ‘Divine speech.’ Only later, as an introduction to the concept of ‘Holy of Holies’ and Torah, and the manner in which they descend from World to World, does the Alter Rebbe use the terms, ‘*Malchut* of *Atzilut*...,’ ‘*Malchut* of *Beriah*...,’ and so on. For inasmuch as he finds support for this in *Etz Chayim* he uses the terminology of *Etz Chayim* — *Malchut* (and not *Shechinah*, and the like). The *Tanya* itself, however, does not adopt the style of Kabbalistic writings.” [4.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [5.](#) The Rebbe notes: “Possibly this alludes *only* to Torah. See above, ch. 4, where exactly the same expression is used. See also beginning of ch. 53: ‘The Supernal Wisdom of *Atzilut*, which is the totality of the Torah.’ — This matter requires further investigation.” [6.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [7.](#) *Iggeret HaKodesh*, on the third page of Epistle 25. [8.](#)

The Rebbe explains why the Alter Rebbe has added, “that we possess,” i.e., the *Talmud* that we possess here, in this world. Possibly, he says, this was added in order to anticipate a question that might arise from ch. 23 above. There the Alter Rebbe says that Torah *is* the illumination of the blessed *Ein Sof*, for “He is the Knower...” This indicates that Torah is wholly one with G-d Himself. How, then, can it be said that the *Talmud* emanates from a level and *Sefirah* no higher than the World of *Beriah*?

The Alter Rebbe therefore explains that this refers only to the *Talmud* “that we possess,” as man studies it in this world. This concept sits well with the statement in ch. 23, that the laws are “particular streams *flowing from* the inner Supreme Will itself” — but an emanation from the Supreme Will. The Rebbe also cites the Alter Rebbe’s second note to ch. 40, which says that the core and the essence of the Supreme Will is in *Atzilut*, and only a glow therefrom radiates to each World according to its rank.

[9.](#)

The Rebbe addresses the question of why the Alter Rebbe repeats, “By virtue of the clothing of *Malchut* of *Atzilut* in *Malchut* of *Beriah*,” when it had already been stated: “Through the fact that [the latter *Sefirot*] clothe themselves in the *Malchut* of *Beriah*...”

He answers: The vestment spoken of earlier is much milder and conceals little. From it, therefore, there only come about entities of the World of *Beriah* such as the souls and angels of that World, or the part of Torah connected with that World — the World of *Beriah* being on the level of a “world of concealment.”

The vestment which the Alter Rebbe speaks of here is so much stronger and conceals so much more, that through this concealment creatures of the World of *Yetzirah* come into

being — the World of *Yetzirah* being on the much lower level of a “world of manifestation.”

The Rebbe provides an additional answer, which because of its complexity will be presented in capsule form.

There are two manners in which the *Shechinah* (*Malchut* of *Atzilut*) may clothe itself in the *Malchut* of every World. The actual manner in which it vests itself depends on its goal. When the vestment takes place in order to create creatures of that World itself (for example, when the *Shechinah* vests itself in *Malchut* of *Beriah* in order to create angels and souls of the World of *Beriah*), then the *Shechinah* first clothes itself in the *ChaBaD* of that World. Only after vesting itself there will it clothe itself in *Malchut*.

In such a situation, the prior vestment in *ChaBaD* is indispensable, just as in the analogy of body and soul, the vitality of *all* parts of the body derives from the brain — *ChaBaD*.

However, when the *Shechinah* vests itself in the *Malchut* of a lower World not for the sake of the World itself, but only in order to be able to descend into an even lower World (for example, when *Malchut* of *Atzilut* vests itself in *Malchut* of *Beriah*, in order to be later able to vest itself in *Malchut* of *Yetzirah*), then the vestment is direct: the *Shechinah* descends directly into the *Malchut* of the lower World.

Even if it were argued that in this instance too there must be some manner of prior vestment in *ChaBaD* of that World, still, in the subsequent vestment of the *Shechinah* in *Malchut*, no real effect of the prior vestment in *ChaBaD* is felt. At any rate, this lesser effect is present only to the degree necessary to enable the *Shechinah* to clothe itself in *Malchut* of the lower World.

This is why, when the Alter Rebbe begins discussing the World of *Yetzirah*, he first says, “By virtue of the clothing of *Malchut* of *Atzilut* in *Malchut* of *Beriah*.” This he does in order to emphasize that the vestment of the *Shechinah* in *Malchut* of *Beriah* is a *direct* (or at least a more direct) vestment, since it is not for the sake of *Beriah* itself, but rather for the sake of *Yetzirah*.

[10.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “For *all* of Torah is wisdom of the blessed *Ein Sof*, for which reason ‘Torah and G-d are truly one.’ This is why the distinctive quality of Torah surpasses even that of the *mitzvot*, as explained in many places in the *Tanya*.” [11.](#) The division of stages into (a), (b) and (c) is by the Rebbe; so too the repetition of “*Malchut* of *Atzilut*” in each and every one. It seems that the Rebbe is thereby indicating that the vestment in the Holy of Holies of *each* World relates to *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, and not to the *Malchut* of the lower Worlds in which *Malchut* of *Atzilut* vests itself. This corresponds with what the Alter Rebbe says further: “...and from the *Shechinah* which is clothed in the shrine of the Holy of Holies....” [12.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “For before this there were no Worlds (this being the meaning of ‘In the beginning’ — at the beginning point of creation — from *non-being* to being).”

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## Chapter 53

The Alter Rebbe explained in the previous chapter that the light of the *Shechinah*, an illumination utterly transcending the realm of the world, must have a “garment” which enables it to radiate there. The “garment” of the *Shechinah* is Torah.

In every World there is found the “intelligence” of that particular World, namely, the *Sefirot* of *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daat* of that World. They constitute the shrine of the Holy of Holies in which the *Shechinah* resides. After the levels of *ChaBaD* (in which resides the *Shechinah*) descend into the level of *Malchut* of a particular World, the creatures of that World are then created.

By vesting itself in *Malchut*, moreover, the light of the *Shechinah* is then able to descend into the shrine of the Holy of Holies of the next lower World. The Alter Rebbe explained this process as it applies to all Worlds down to and including the spiritual World of *Asiyah*.

In ch. 53 he will go on to explain how the light of the *Shechinah* descends and illuminates this physical world. During the times of the First and Second Temple the *Shechinah* was housed in the Holy of Holies. Today it finds its abode in a Jew’s study of Torah and performance of the *mitzvot*.

He will also explain the difference between the level of the illumination of the *Shechinah* in the First and Second *Beit HaMikdash* on the one hand, and the level of *Shechinah* which is drawn down through the study of Torah and the performance of *mitzvot*, on the other.

והנה כשהיה בית ראשון קיים, שבו היה הארון והלווחות בבית קדשי קדשים, היתה שכינה, שהיא מלכות דאצילות, שהיא בחינת גילוי אור אין סוף ברוך הוא

At the time the First Temple stood, in which the Ark and the Tablets were housed in the Holy of Holies, the *Shechinah* — which is *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, that is, the revealed light of the *Ein Sof*, a light which intrinsically is infinite and transcends all Worlds, and which nevertheless was revealed in them —

שורה שם, ומלובשת בעשרת הדברות

dwelled there, and was clothed in the Ten Commandments which were engraved upon the Tablets found in the Ark in the Holy of Holies,

ביתר שאת ויתר עז, בגילוי רב ועצום יותר, מגילוייה בהיכלות קדשי קדשים שלמעלה בעולמות עליונים

far more intensely, and with a greater and mightier revelation, than its revelation in the shrines of the Holy of Holies above in the upper Worlds.

This refers to the Worlds of *Asiyah* and *Yetzirah*.<sup>1</sup> For even in the World of *Yetzirah*, the *Shechinah* illumines only insofar as it has previously clothed itself in the shrine of the Holy of Holies of the World of *Beriah*. The level of *Shechinah* manifest in the First Temple, however, though it too was manifest only through having first been en clothed in *Malchut* of *Beriah*, was less completely concealed. Even after this concealment, therefore, the illumination in the First Temple was still on the level of the World of *Beriah*, and not of *Yetzirah*.

The Alter Rebbe now answers the following question: Inasmuch as the Temple was located in this physical world, how was it possible for the *Shechinah* to be found there to a higher degree than in the upper Worlds? He answers:

כי עשרת הדברות הן כללות התורה כולה

For the Ten Commandments are the all-embracing principles of the whole Torah,

As explained in the *Azharot* of R. Saadya Gaon, the Ten Commandments incorporate all 613 *mitzvot* of the Torah. See also beginning of *Tanya*, ch. 20.

דנפקא מגו חכמה עילאה, דלעילא לעילא מעלמא דאתגליא

which derives from the level of Supernal *Chochmah*, i.e., *Chochmah* of *Atzilut*, that is far higher than the “world of manifestation.”

It is far higher than *Malchut* of *Atzilut*, which is called the “world of manifestation” because it reveals the light of *Ein Sof* to the Worlds.

As explained earlier, for this reason the Torah is able to act as a “garment” that does not become nullified in the light of the *Shechinah* which garbs itself in it — since its source is higher than the *Shechinah*. However, in order for Torah to act as a concealing “garment” it must descend lower than the level of the *Shechinah*, thereby enabling the light of the *Shechinah* to be received by created beings.

However, as Torah descended into the Ten Commandments engraved on the Tablets, it did not do so in a manner that would make it similar to other physical things. Rather, as will soon be explained, it remained on a level which is higher than the previously mentioned upper Worlds.

וכדי לחקקן בלוחות אבנים גשמיים, לא ירדה ממדרגה למדרגה כדרך השתלשלות העולמות עד עולם הזה הגשמי

In order to engrave them on material tablets of stone, it (Supernal *Chochmah*, which is Torah) did not descend degree by degree, parallel to the order of descent of the Worlds

which descend by stages from a higher world to a lower world, until it reached this material world.

Generally, in order for a flow of Divine light to arrive at this physical world, it must first descend from World to World, coming down through the Worlds of *Yetzirah* and spiritual *Asiyah*, both of which are higher than its ultimate destination, this world. This, however, was not the case with the Tablets.

כי עולם הזה הגשמי מתנהג בהתלבשות הטבע הגשמי

For this material world functions through the garb of material nature,

והלוחות מעשה אלקים המה

while the Tablets are “the work of G-d,”<sup>2</sup> a Divine creation, in which G-dliness — not nature — is revealed,

והמכתב מכתב אלקים הוא

“and the writing is the writing of G-d,”<sup>3</sup> writing in which G-dliness is perceived,

שלמעלה מהטבע של עולם הזה הגשמי הנשפע מהארת השכינה שבהיכל קדשי קדשים דעשיה, שממנה נמשך אור וחיות לעולם העשיה, שגם עולם הזה בכללו

beyond the nature of this material world which is derived from the radiation of the *Shechinah* in the shrine of the Holy of Holies of *Asiyah*, from which light and vitality issue to the World of *Asiyah*, in which this physical world is also included.

The ray of the *Shechinah* which is in the shrine of the Holy of Holies of *Asiyah*, gives this physical world its vitality after first being garbed in *Malchut* of *Asiyah*, as explained earlier. This was not the case with the Tablets.

אלא בחינת חכמה עילאה דאצילות, שהיא כללות התורה שבי' הדברות, נתלבשה במלכות דאצילות ודבריה לבדן

But the level of the Supernal *Chochmah* of *Atzilut*, consisting of the totality of the Torah as it is encapsulated in the Ten Commandments, clothed itself in *Malchut* of *Atzilut* and of *Beriah* alone, and did not clothe itself further in the lower Worlds,

והן לבדן המיוחדות באור אין סוף שבתוכן

and they alone (*Chochmah* of *Atzilut* as it is garbed in *Malchut* of *Atzilut* and *Malchut* of *Beriah*, without further vestment), united as they are with the [infinite] light of *Ein Sof* that is within them,



הן הנקראות בשם שכינה השורה בקדשי קדשים דבית ראשון, על ידי התלבשותה ב"י הדברות, החקוקות בלוחות שבארון בנס

are referred to as the *Shechinah* which rested in the Holy of Holies of the First Temple, through its being vested in the Ten Commandments, which were engraved by miraculous means in the Tablets reposing in the Ark.

As the Sages tell us,<sup>4</sup> the letters *mem* and *samach*, circular letters hewn through the entire thickness of the stone, stood in their place miraculously.

ומעשה אלקים חיים

Moreover, the Ten Commandments upon the Tablets were the work of the Living G-d — *Elokim Chayim*,

הוא עלמא דאתכסיא המקנן בעולם הבריאה, כנודע ליודעי ח"ן

(<sup>5</sup>this being, in terms of the *Sefirot*, *Binah* of *Atzilut*, which is known as “the concealed world” which nests in the World of *Beriah*, as is known to those familiar with the Esoteric Discipline).

Those familiar with the *Kabbalah* know that *Binah* of *Atzilut* radiates into the World of *Beriah*, a world which still remains in the category of “a concealed world” — i.e., it is categorized as a World, but not a World whose independent being is revealed, in that the World of *Beriah* is aware of how it is wholly dependent on G-d.

ובבית שני, שלא היה בו הארון והלוחות

As for the Second Temple, in which the Ark and the Tablets did not repose, these being among the five things found in the First Temple and lacking in the Second,

אמרו רז"ל שלא היתה שכינה שורה בו, פירוש: מדרגת שכינה שהיתה שורה בבית ראשון, שלא כדרך השתלשלות העולמות

our Rabbis, of blessed memory, said<sup>6</sup> that the *Shechinah* did not abide there. This means *not* that, G-d forbid, the *Shechinah* did not abide there at all, rather it speaks of the category of the *Shechinah* which used to abide in the First Temple — which was not in the manner of the ordinary descent of the Worlds.

It was this level of *Shechinah* that did not abide in the Second Temple, but only a far lesser level.

אלא בבית שני היתה שורה כדרך השתלשלות והתלבשות: מלכות דאצילות במלכות דבריאה, ודבריאה במלכות דיצירה, ודיצירה בהיכל קדשי קדשים דעשיה

But in the Second Temple it abided according to the order of gradual descent, of *Malchut* of *Atzilut* vested in *Malchut* of *Beriah* and the latter in *Malchut* of *Yetzirah*, and the latter in the shrine of the Holy of Holies of *Asiyah*, that shrine being *ChaBaD* of *Asiyah*.

וקדשי קדשים דעשיה היה מתלבש בקדשי קדשים שבבית המקדש שלמטה, ושרתה בו השכינה: מלכות דיצירה, המלובשת בקדשי קדשים דעשיה

And the Holy of Holies of *Asiyah* was clothed in the Holy of Holies of the Temple below. In it rested the *Shechinah*, i.e., *Malchut* of *Yetzirah*, which was clothed in the Holy of Holies of *Asiyah*.

ולכן לא היה רשאי שום אדם ליכנס שם, לבד כהן גדול ביום הכפורים. ומשחרב בית המקדש

Therefore, because the *Shechinah* resided in the Temple's Holy of Holies, no man was permitted to enter there, except the High Priest on *Yom Kippur*. And since the destruction of the Temple,

of which the Sanctuary was a part, G-d resides in the shrine of Holy of Holies of Torah and the *mitzvot*, for as mentioned earlier, the *Shechinah* must reside in the Holy of Holies:

אין לו להקב"ה בעולמו אלא ד' אמות של הלכה בלבד

“*HaKadosh Baruch Hu* (the Holy One, blessed be He) has but the four cubits of *Halachah* alone.”<sup>7</sup>

Torah is the shrine of the Holy of Holies that connects G-d with the world, so that *HaKadosh* (the illumination of the *Shechinah*, which is *Kadosh*, i.e., separated and apart from the world) should become *Baruch* (from the Hebrew root meaning “to draw down”) — drawn down into the world.

ואפילו אחד שיושב ועוסק בתורה, שכינה עמו, כדאיתא בברכות, פרק קמא. פירוש שכינה עמו

And even if one Jew sits and engages in Torah study, the *Shechinah* is with him, as is stated in the first chapter of *Berachot*.<sup>8</sup> The phrase, “the *Shechinah* is with him” means that although he is a being of this material world, the *Shechinah* is nevertheless with him.

The level of *Shechinah* that is with him is:

כדרך השתלשלות והתלבשות מלכות דאצילות במלכות דבריאה ויצירה ועשיה

in order of the gradual descent and investment of *Malchut* of *Atzilut* in *Malchut* of *Beriah* and *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*.

It is thus inferior even to the indwelling of the *Shechinah* in the Second Temple, an indwelling that did not require the vestment in *Malchut* of *Asiyah*.

It differs from the drawing down of the *Shechinah* in the world in general, in which case the identical progressive descent occurs, in that the *Shechinah* which resides in the world passes through the additional “garment” of *kelipat nogah*, while Torah and the *mitzvot* do not.

The reason that it must go through *Malchut* of *Asiyah* is that the overwhelming majority of the *mitzvot* of the Torah involve physical action. The *Shechinah* therefore descends into the level of action — *Asiyah*, as shall now be explained.

כי תרי"ג מצות התורה רובן ככולן הן מצות מעשיות, וגם התלויות בדבור ומחשבה, כמו תלמוד תורה, ברכת המזון, קריאת שמע ותפלה

For the 613 commandments of the Torah are by and large precepts which involve action, including even those *mitzvot* which are fulfilled by word and thought, such as Torah study, the Grace after Meals, the recital of the *Shema*, and prayer,

This is so even though these *mitzvot* involve thought — seeking to grasp the concepts in one’s studies, and to experience the *kavanot* of the *Shema* and prayer — and as such they are not bound up with action,

הא קיימא לן דהרהור לאו כדבור דמי, ואינו יוצא ידי חובתו בהרהור וכוונה לבד, עד שיוציא בשפתיו

for it has been ruled that meditation has not the validity of speech, and one does not fulfill one’s obligation by meditation [in a manner of *hirhur*] and *kavanah* alone, even when his manner of meditation is close to speech, as is the case when one thinks about the way in which he will utter certain words, which is called *hirhur*, until he gives it utterance with his lips;

וקיימא לן דעקימת שפתיו הוי מעשה

moreover, it has been ruled that the motion of the lips while one is speaking is considered an “action” — in which case all these *mitzvot* involve a form of action.

The Rebbe explains that the Alter Rebbe will now anticipate the following question: It still remains to be understood why specifically the four cubits of *Halachah* take the place of the Holy of Holies; why should this be not so when a Jew studies a subject in Torah which is not *Halachah*, for there too the *Shechinah* is with him? The Alter Rebbe therefore explains that *Halachah* possesses the especial merit of expressing the Divine Will (as explained at length in *Iggeret HaKodesh*, Epistle 29).

ותרי"ג מצות התורה, עם שבע מצות דרבנן, בגימטריא כתר, שהוא רצון העליון ברוך הוא

And the 613 commandments of the Torah, together with the seven commandments of our Rabbis, combine to total the numerical equivalent of *Keter* (“crown”), which is the Supernal Will,

Will is called a crown, for like a crown it encompasses the head and brain; *Iggeret HaKodesh, loc. cit.*, where this is discussed at length.

המלובש בחמתו יתברך

which is clothed in His wisdom,

Thus, in addition to the fact that Torah is G-d's wisdom, which in its descent in the downward progression of Worlds becomes the shrine of the Holy of Holies for the *Shechinah*, there is the additional quality of its being the Supernal Will, which is even loftier than wisdom. This is uniquely found in the *Halachah* and the *mitzvot*, as they are expressions of the Supernal Will.

המיוחדות באור אין סוף ברוך הוא בתכלית היחוד

and they (G-d's Will and wisdom) are united with the light of the *Ein Sof* in a perfect union.

Further to an earlier statement that Torah derives from Supernal Wisdom, the Alter Rebbe will now say that the Oral Law also emanates from that source.

וה' בחכמה יסד ארץ, היא תורה שבעל פה דנפקא מחכמה עילאה, כמו שכתוב בזהר, דאבא יסד ברתא

“G-d founded the earth with wisdom.”<sup>9</sup> This refers to the Oral Law that is derived from Supernal Wisdom, as it is written in the *Zohar*, “The father (*Chochmah*) begat the daughter” (i.e., *Malchut*, the Oral Law; as it is written, “*Malchut* — the mouth, which we call the Oral Law”).

\* \* \*

The Alter Rebbe now concludes what he began to elucidate (in ch. 51) concerning the statement of the *Yenuka* in the *Zohar* — that the light of the *Shechinah* which shines above the head of a person needs oil. The *Yenuka* concludes, “...and these are good deeds” — the oil is the performance of the *mitzvot*.

In chassidic literature, however, oil traditionally refers to wisdom. What is the connection between the performance of *mitzvot* — and wisdom, which is called oil?

The Alter Rebbe explains that the light of the *Shechinah* must garb itself in wisdom, which is oil. For (as previously explained) wisdom, or intellect, is the vessel and “garment” for the light of the *Shechinah*, which is — *Chochmah* as it is garbed in Torah.

Yet, in order to *draw down* the light of the *Shechinah* so that it will shine upon the divine soul of the Jew, more than oil is necessary; one must also have a wick. Oil is transformed into light through the medium of a wick. It is the wick, which itself is burned, which keeps the fire from being extinguished.

In spiritual terms the wick refers to the vivifying soul which provides the person with physical life. This wick is burned through Torah and *mitzvot*. Just as the physical wick burns and is annihilated by the fire, so do the garments of thought, speech and action of the vivifying soul become burned in the light of the *Shechinah* through the Torah and *mitzvot* which a Jew studies and performs.

It is for this reason that the oil must also consist of “good deeds,” *mitzvot*, which have their source in G-d’s wisdom; Torah alone (even though it is itself wisdom) does not suffice. For only through the action required by the *mitzvot* will the light of the *Shechinah* be drawn down into the wick — the vivifying soul. This is accomplished when the vivifying soul is burned thoroughly in the light of the *Shechinah* which shines on one’s head.

וזה שאמר הינוקא, דנהורא עילאה דאדליק על רישיה, היא שכינתא, איצטריך למשחא

And this is what the *Yenuka* in *Zohar*, quoted in ch. 35, meant when he said that “the Supernal light that is kindled on his (the Jew’s) head, namely, the *Shechinah*, requires oil,”

פירוש: להתלבש בחכמה, הנקראת שמן משחת קדש, כמו שכתוב בזהר

that is, to be clothed in wisdom, which is called “the oil of the holy anointing” — and “holy” signifies *Chochmah*, or wisdom, as is explained in the *Zohar*,

Thus, the light of the *Shechinah* which is upon one’s head is in need of oil, i.e., it must be garbed in *Chochmah*, for that is the vessel for the light of the *Shechinah*. The *Zohar* then quotes the conclusion of the statement of the *Yenuka*:

ואינון עובדין טבין, הן תרי”ג מצות, הנמשכות מחכמתו יתברך

“and these are the good deeds,” namely, the 613 commandments, which derive from His wisdom.

Torah, which is itself oil, does not suffice; there must also be good deeds — the performance of the *mitzvot*, although they are only drawn down from wisdom.

כדי לאחוז אור השכינה בפתילה, היא נפש החיונית שבגוף, הנקראת פתילה על דרך משל, כי כמו שבנר הגשמי האור מאיר על ידי כליון ושריפת הפתילה הנהפכת לאש, כך אור השכינה שורה על נפש האלקית

Thereby the light of the *Shechinah* can cling to the wick, i.e., the vivifying soul in the body, which is metaphorically called a “wick”. For just as in the case of a material candle, the light shines by virtue of the annihilation and burning of the wick turning to fire, so does the light of the *Shechinah* rest on the divine soul, which is the candle (“The soul of man is the candle of the L-rd”),

על ידי כליון נפש הבהמית והתהפכותה מחשוכא לנהורא וממרירו למתקא, בצדיקים

as a result of the annihilation of the animal soul and its transformation from darkness of *kelipah* to light of holiness, and from bitterness of *kelipat nogah* to sweetness of holiness, in the case of the righteous — for *tzaddikim* (as mentioned in ch. 10) are those who transform the essence of the animal soul, its intellect and emotion, from evil into goodness and holiness,

או לפחות על ידי כליון לבושיה, שהן מחשבה דבור ומעשה

or at least through the destruction of its garments, which are thought, speech and action — which previously were garments of the vivifying soul, which is a soul of *kelipah*,

והתהפכותן מחשך הקליפות לאור ה' אין סוף ברוך הוא, המלוכב ומיוחד במחשבה דבור ומעשה של תרי"ג מצות התורה, בבינונים

and their transformation from the darkness of the *kelipot* to the Divine light of the *Ein Sof*, which is clothed and united in the thought, speech and action of the 613 commandments of the Torah, in the case of the *Beinonim*.

*Beinonim*, as explained in ch. 12, do not transform the essence of the vivifying soul into goodness and holiness. Only the soul-garments of thought, speech and action are transformed to goodness through being utilized for the thought, speech and action of the Torah and the *mitzvot*. In this sense the wick of the vivifying soul is annihilated, and is transformed into the light of holiness.

כי על ידי התהפכות נפש הבהמית, הבאה מקליפת נוגה, מחשוכא לנהורא וכו', נעשה בחינת העלאת מ"ן

For as a result of the transformation of the animal soul, originating from *kelipat nogah*, from the darkness of *kelipot*, to the light of holiness, and so forth, there is brought about the so-called “ascent of the feminine waters” — the spiritual awakening on the initiative of the recipient, which in turn causes an arousal Above,

להמשיך אור השכינה, היא בחינת גילוי אור אין סוף ברוך הוא, על נפשו האלקית שבמוחין שבראשו

to draw down the light of the *Shechinah* (not only like the oil of *Chochmah* and Torah which is but a *vessel* for receiving the light of the *Shechinah*, but actually drawing down the light of the *Shechinah*), i.e., revealed light of the *Ein Sof*, over one's divine soul principally dwelling in the brain of the head.

This is why the *Yenuka* says, “The Supernal light that is kindled over one's *head* requires oil,” for the light that is over one's *head* and “intelligence” is in need of the oil of the “good deeds.”

בזה יובן היטב מה שכתוב: כי ה' אלקיך אש אוכלת הוא

Thereby one may clearly understand the text,<sup>10</sup> “For the L-rd Your G-d is a consuming fire,”

Just as fire can only catch on an object when that object is being consumed by it, so, too, regarding the light of the *Shechinah*. In order for G-d to become “*your* G-d,” illuminating the Jew’s soul, there must be consumption by fire — burning and annihilating the wick of the vivifying soul, so that this soul of *kelipah* be transformed into the fire of holiness.

וכמו שכתוב במקום אחר

as is explained elsewhere<sup>11</sup> — that only when a Jew succeeds in nullifying himself to G-d in a manner where he ceases to exist as an independent entity, and is consumed in the flames of G-dliness, — only then will he draw down upon himself the light of the *Shechinah*.

נשלם חלק ראשון בעזרת ה' יתברך ויתעלה

*CONCLUSION OF THE FIRST PART, WITH THE HELP OF G-D, MAY HE BE BLESSED AND EXALTED*

FOOTNOTES [1](#).

The Rebbe notes that while the simple explanation of the phrase, “the upper Worlds,” would tend to favor the explanation given above — that it refers to the Worlds of *Asiyah* and *Yetzirah*, a more thorough analysis indicates that this is not so.

Were this indeed the case it would be extremely difficult to understand why the Alter Rebbe points out at length that the Ten Commandments are the “all-embracing principles of the whole Torah,” and so on. Moreover, why the lengthy explanation even before this — that the *Shechinah* resided in the Holy Temple “far more intensely, and with a greater and mightier revelation,” than in the upper Worlds? How is this “far more intensely,” and so on, when the only difference is whether or not the *Shechinah* was garbed in *Yetzirah*?

Most importantly, in *Shaar HaTalmud Torah* of the Alter Rebbe’s *Siddur*, it is almost surely indicated that what was revealed in the Holy Temple was a degree of *Shechinah* which surpassed the revelation in *all* of the higher Worlds. This is also indicated in *Or HaTorah, Bamidbar*, end of p. 16.

The Rebbe therefore understands that the Alter Rebbe speaks of two distinct qualities found in the Holy Temple. The first is that the revelation in the Holy Temple was greater than in all Worlds, because therein was found the Ten Commandments, which are the “all-embracing principles of the whole Torah.” Because of this, the revelation of the *Shechinah* was the illumination of *Chochmah* of *Atzilut*, after it had been clothed in *Malchut* of *Atzilut* and *Malchut* of *Beriah*.

A second quality found in the illumination of the *Shechinah* in the Holy Temple was the manner of its descent: it clothed itself only in *Malchut* of *Atzilut* and *Malchut* of *Beriah* (for “in order to engrave them on material tablets... [the *Shechinah*] did not descend...”).

Thus the *manner* in which the *Shechinah* was drawn down surpasses only the World of *Yetzirah*, but as to the actual illumination that shone there, this was a light which was higher than that in all the upper Worlds.

The special quality it possessed: (a) in the Temple there was revealed the *essence of the light of Ein Sof*, since the Tablets were there, as mentioned earlier; (b) in the Temple there was a “comprehension of essence,” and not only “knowledge of manifestation”; (c) the Temple was illumined by a revelation that transcended both transcendent and immanent manifestations of G-dliness. This was due to the Supernal Delight (*oneg ha‘elyon*) that was found there.

This was why “The place of the Ark did not take up space” — at one and the same time, it both took up space and yet did not take up space. Space derives from the immanence of G-dliness. That which transcends space derives from the transcendence of G-dliness. That which transcends *both* these levels finds expression in there being space — and yet at the same time this very real space occupies no space whatever.

[2.](#) *Shmot* 32:16. [3.](#) *Shmot* 32:16. [4.](#) *Megillah* 2b. [5.](#) Parentheses are in the original text. [6.](#) *Yoma* 9b. [7.](#) *Berachot* 8a. [8.](#) *Berachot* 6a. [9.](#) *Mishlei* 3:19. [10.](#) *Devarim* 4:24. [11.](#) Note of the Rebbe: “This possibly refers to what appears in *Likkutei Torah*, beginning of *Acharei*.”

